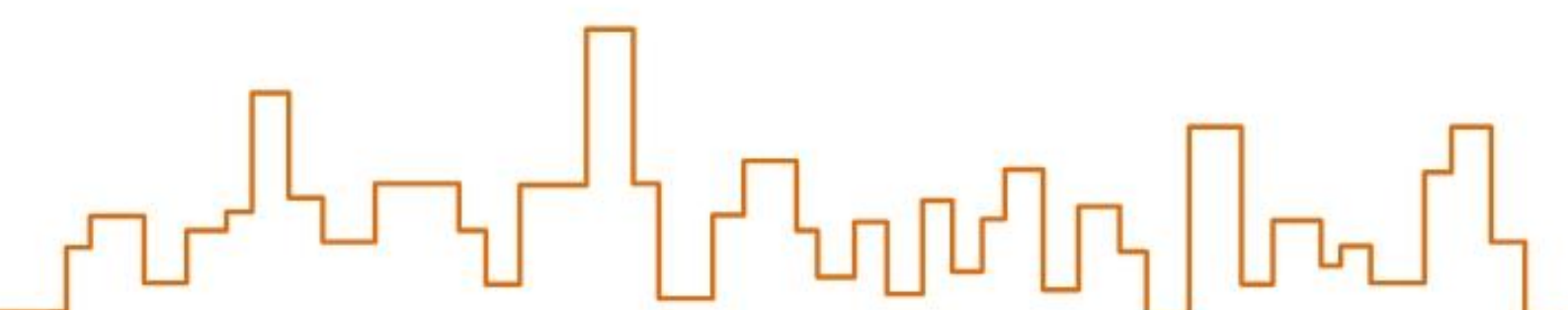


Study on Education Issues in China's
Urbanization Process
- Case of Pujiang in Chengdu

Guo Shuting



Center for city and competitiveness (CASS)



I. Research Background

The rapid growth of urban center has brought changes in all aspects of rural areas, and the observation and understanding of such change are the characteristics of early urbanization study (Burgess, 1925; Mann, 1965; Bryant et al, 1982; cited in Antrop, 2004). "Urban-rural transformation of population and constant improvement of human capitals have boosted the city's formation and development, and the urbanization process is a process of population transfer and enhancement of human capitals" (Lai Desheng and Zheng Qinhu, 2005). Those rural populations who transfer to urban areas, because of their low labor forces, will affect employment competition and incomes, which will constrain the optimization of employment structure and hinder urban economic development. There exists an important relationship between the growth of urban human capitals and growth rate of urban population (Black and Henderson, 1999). Luisito Bertinelli and Duncan Black (2004), with average educated period as measurement standard for human capitals, found that the urbanization ratio rises by 1%, the average educated period will be increased by 0.72 years. Therefore, Lai Desheng and Zheng Qinhu (2005) proposed that the urbanization has boosted the development of education scale, adjustment of education structure, reform of education resource allocation mechanisms and second-generation immigrant education. In this development process, the education is facing a series of problems, such as: education on migrant workers, and on left-behind children and migrant children, etc. (Guo Caiqin, 2010).

The research in Chengdu intends to observe the education issues in the urbanization process, and deeply interpret the relationship between education and urbanization, in order to contribute strategies to China's new urbanization development. Research methods include discussion of governmental departments, discussion of principals, school visits and document learning, etc. The research team specially inspected the educational situation of Pujiang County in Chengdu, and had in-depth understanding of teaching and management issues under the background of current urbanization. Ten school principals in Pujiang attended the symposium, and these ten schools cover primary school, junior middle school, nine-year school and vocational school. Furthermore, the research team made field visits to some schools, and held in-depth exchanges with management personnel on campus culture, student management, discipline construction, and relevant issues arising from population flow in the urbanization process. According to interviews, visits and comprehensive discoveries, we have made summary analysis of education in Chengdu and Pujiang County.

II. Research Discovery

(I) Overview of education in Chengdu

In Chengdu, the educated period in the suburb is much lower than that in urban area. In accordance with actual conditions, and in combination with "urban-rural economic and social development" strategies set out in the 16th CPC National Congress in 2002, Chengdu has begun to develop urban-rural integration education since 2004, and on this basis, creatively proposed urban-rural integration education mode in 2009, such as "integration of development planning, integration of schooling conditions, integration of education expenditure, integration of teaching staffs, integration of education quality, and integration of evaluation criteria", and in practice, constantly enriched and improved such mode, eventually developed Chengdu Mode (Lv Xinwei, 2013), a typical mode in China's urban-rural integrated education development. Chengdu Mode highlights integrity and systematicness from central urban area to remote area, and the whole development is an enhanced loop characterized by continuous improvement and dynamic enhancement. On the whole, Sichuan Province is the population output area in the urbanization process, but Chengdu is a big city with a large quantity of influx populations, so in the urbanization process, Chengdu faces many typical problems, such as the education of migrant children, and imbalanced educational resources, etc. In the suburban area of Chengdu, there exist many non-ignorable issues, such as dropout children, no posts for regular teachers due to the disappearance of village-run primary schools, flow and short of the outstanding teachers, etc. This paper will arrange and analyze some key issues.

(II) Inadequate preschool facilities

Kindergarten facilities in the resettlement community are inadequate or missing. It can be found from community visits, in some resettlement communities, the activity place is very small, and there is no kindergarten. Take Jinkeyuan Community for example, since 2005, the community has always had no kindergarten. There are 5,000 permanent populations and 6,000 temporary populations in the community. For private kindergarten, the cost is RMB 700-800 Yuan/month, and annual school-founding fee is RMB 1200-2000 Yuan, twice a year. For a better kindergarten, the school-founding fee has increased from RMB 9,000 Yuan to RMB 70,000 Yuan for four years. The school selection fee is RMB 20,000 Yuan- RMB 30,000 Yuan/year. Parents show that they are actually not sure about the future educational outcomes, employment, and returns, and school selection is a psychological need. These findings remind us that in the urbanization process, relevant authorities should attach great importance to pre-school facilities. In China's education system, the pre-school education is beyond compulsory education, but it cannot be ignored that domestic pre-school education contents, based on intellectual development, contain a lot of knowledge learning, so it is an indispensable link for connections between kindergarten and primary school. That is, for parents, the kindergarten demand is not optional, but required items. Therefore, relevant facilities are both important for kindergarten and primary school. If supporting public kindergartens are available, high charges will disappear naturally.

(III) Left-behind children issues

Pujiang County has 265,000 populations totally and 10,000 migrant workers. Pujiang is a relatively remote agricultural county in Chengdu, covering tea, high-end fruits and pig breeding. According to relevant statistics, the proportion of outflow populations is very low, and Pujiang is not a large population outflow or inflow place, so the significant education issues are not obvious in the urbanization process. But according to field researches, the population flow is larger in Pujiang County, and the education of local left-behind children and structure of teachers have become a major problem for education management in all schools. For example, at Songhua School, there are 271 students, including more than 50 left-behind children whose parents work outside (nearly 20%); at Datang School, there are 747 students, including 181 left-behind children (24%) (50% at most); at Ganxi School, there are 626 students, including more than 120 left-behind children (nearly 20%). These left-behind children are short of cares, and nobody can help them to do their homework. Although their education and life issues are concerned by the society, parental care is irreplaceable during the growing process. Therefore, in the urbanization process, a large number of left-behind children need to be concerned continuously, and various social circles need to observe their experiences and help them in mental construction.

(IV) Structure of teachers

At the seminar on principals organized by Pujiang County Education Bureau, the principals unanimously proposed the teacher management issues. On the one hand, a large number of population outflow led to substantial decline of enrolled students, but the original teaching staffs still remain unchanged, so the teaching staffs are superfluous. Meanwhile, the number of regular teachers has exceeded the required number, and new teachers cannot enter, resulting in the aging structure of teachers' knowledge and the shortage of young teachers. The second issue is the quality of teachers. Principals believe that current graduates are not suitable for elementary and kindergarten work, so teaching staffs cannot be connected seriously. Therefore, some principals proposed that at present, many schools are faced with unbalanced allocation of resources, and they believed that the structural system has not kept up with the urbanization development, so the structural system needs to be reformed according to regional differences. It can be seen that the urbanization has posed challenges for rational configuration of educational resources, and serious inconsistency between the structure of teachers and actual demands in Pujiang County is a miniature of population outflow place in China's fundamental education. Populations mainly flow internally in Pujiang County, but in the large-population and longer-distance outflow areas, this problem will become more obvious.

(V) New issues about education fairness

According to school visits, a large amount of extra students are children born outside birth-control plan. So school administrators are doubtful of this phenomenon: when 80% migrant children are enrolled by the school which originally enrolls local students, a large quantity of students born outside birth-control plan actually occupy the ex-site teaching resources under the conditions of violation of laws and regulations, is this new partiality in the education? People should be equal not only in the education, but also in the rules. Any shock to urban educational order, educational resources, and educational environment based on the violation of relevant rules is a great injustice for local people who comply with relevant rules, so it can be summarized that it is a new injustice caused by population flow and regulation destruction in the urbanization process. School administrators believe that appropriate considerations should be given to education access standard. For more correct and in-depth understanding of such issue, each school should, based on basic data, provide family structure and family information (whether multiple births or not). For special issues in China's urbanization process, it needs to analyze objective data and consider countermeasures.

(VI) Education chain mode: the superior boosts the inferior

In the education, there exists a long-term contradiction between limited superior resources and the pursuit of superior resources by most people, and fast-growing urban populations in the urbanization process have made this contradiction more prominent. To maximize social roles of superior educational resources, and reduce the promotion roles of superior schools in population agglomeration, Chengdu has extensively popularized the education chain mode. Each district has made great attempts and accumulated experiences in the aspect of boosting the inferior with the superior, thus teaching resources and experiences of downtown area have been widely popularized in the weak schools of each district. Education chain mode has provided many conveniences for residents to enjoy the superior educational resources in the urbanization process: driven by the leading schools, the originally weak schools can get considerable progress. Within the scope of various branch schools, all students should be enrolled by the nearest schools, so branch schools provide more choices to parents, and also reduce the pressure of superior schools. During the interview process, head of the leading school indicated, such development mode is common growth mode, either the leading school or assisted schools have obtained considerable progress in the process of mutual learning and resources sharing. Hence, a number of demonstration and exchange opportunities have contributed to the enhancement of the quality of teachers and hematopoietic function of education system. Meanwhile, those principals who participated in the interviews also talked about the difficulties of assisted schools under the education chain mode: they usually do not know how to do in the face of new things, and new systems and management modes have brought tremendous shocks and contradictions to faculties and staffs. Chengdu's education chain mode has enhanced the weak school's running capacity and also cultivated new superior schools, and Chengdu Yucai No.7 Middle School is a good example. Originally, No.7 Yucai Middle School was an inferior vocational school, but under the leadership of Chengdu No.7 Middle School, Yucai has made significant progress in the management and teaching, and then become present superior school. Currently, No.7 Yucai Middle School has used remote online teaching to popularize her teaching experiences into remote areas.

(VII) Status of vocational education and development issues

There are more than 2,000 students in Pujiang Vocational High School. The interviewees showed that current enrollment is very difficult, almost nobody applies for agriculture-related specialty, so they have no choice but to set agriculture-related specialty as optional course. In terms of the surrounding industries, the secondary and tertiary industries are dominant. There is a certain gap between demands for agricultural talents and training contents relating to the agriculture at vocational school, so only a handful of students apply for agriculture-related specialty. Evidence shows that there exists the discrepancy between the school's specialty setting and actual demands. Vocational education and local industrial planning should be combined together for advance operation, supplemented by the appropriate policy support. Those principals who participated in the discussions believed that why current enrollment for vocational education is difficult on the whole? It is because that the rising channel from vocational education to higher education is not smooth. All students are required to attend the college entrance examination, but vocational students cannot continue their learning. According to the findings in Pujiang, main problems of China's vocational education are demonstrated, and these problems will be resolved gradually as China has attached importance to vocational education. It can be said that China's vocational education will usher in the flourishing spring.

(VIII) Status of community education

The urbanization process has brought the disappearance of numerous natural villages and re-combination of a large number of immigrants in the new community, and then caused huge cultural differences, habit differences, and in-adaptation of the original rural populations to new lifestyles. The community education aims to improve the resident's quality and enrich cultural life under this background. The community education is diversified in Chengdu, with different characteristics. Take Swellfun Community for example, through the cooperation with civil organizations, in the form of charity collection, charity teaching and charity network, it has raised the funds, mobilized the parents, interacted with the school, and then designed and launched a large quantity of activities. The research, in combination with information from relevant authorities, the school and the community, fully and truly reflected that the community education in Chengdu is led by the policies, initiated by the community, and attended by the schools and social forces. It can be found from the key visits in Pujiang County, the competent leaders have strongly popularized "Big Education", and encouraged the schools to open their teaching staffs and devices to the communities, and in practice, gradually formed distinctive modes and experiences, such as "experiential learning" mentioned by the interviewees. The setting premise of experiential learning is that farmers are reluctant to read books in the classroom, but prefer to absorb information at walking and observation. Therefore, the community education management personnel in Pujiang have designed the "Experiential Learning" method at the visits. The community education in Pujiang has benefited from open thoughts of "Big Education" and from unified management and resources sharing. The successful experiences of community education in Pujiang inspire us: Only providing space and possibilities for individual innovation capability can we perhaps find different solutions to various problems.

III. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

(I) Dynamic development of educational issues in the urbanization process based on data analysis

The findings in Pujiang remind us that current uneven distribution of educational resources needs more scientific analysis of resource configuration. The urbanization is a rapid development process, and any past-based empirical analysis is lack of thinking. Rational allocation of educational resources should be based on the analysis of future trend for population flow and economic development. For the analysis of resources allocation criteria for fundamental education in the urbanization process, it needs the following data: local short-term and long-term industrial development policy planning, local economic development data, local school-age children data, and number of population flow, whereabouts and cause analysis in recent years, etc. These data will provide reference-based analysis results for local education in the allocation of next stage educational resources. Meanwhile, it is necessary to take the corresponding measures to meet the needs of resource adjustment if there are reasonable deviations in the expected value. We need to cultivate people's research awareness and attitude for the acceptance of errors. Otherwise, too subjective criticisms will stifle the development of social science and social values.

(II) Care about psychological construction of left-behind children

In view of left-behind children issues, the community help and policy support are not enough to resolve current living and learning problems. People always form their characters in their childhood, so the experiences in the childhood will play irreplaceable roles in the formation of people's views on life and world. On the one hand, we should focus on the psychological construction of left-behind children, and on the other hand, we should take precautions for their future development and consider the appropriate remedies.

(III) Achieve equality and fairness: Education unification under theoretical guidance

For the school selection issue, it ultimately depends upon rational allocation of resources. One solution to this problem is education unification. All schools should implement the unified educational strategies and teaching methods, and then can enjoy the unified educational resources, thus will truly develop the experience sharing system of superior teachers. It needs specialized agencies to study and find the excellent experiences and talents, through theoretical analysis, change the experiences into operable practical guidance under theoretical guidance. China's education issues are not in the education itself, but rather, the entire society is short of the fear of social science and of analysis capability.

(IV) Establish nationwide teaching talent pool and demand library, and reduce the waste of resources

The structure of teachers in Pujiang reveals talent management issues in the education field. For rational and flexible use of teaching resources, the ultimate problem is induction and payroll payment. The central government can take advantage of information technology to manage nationwide teaching resources in unified way, after the teachers take office, they can obtain the rewards according to class hours and student assessment. The computing time for salaries can be studied, but basic salaries can be got at any time. Hence, it can gradually achieve the sharing of nationwide teachers, and break the original title, performance and resources allocation, etc. In short, the management of educational talents needs disruptive reform.

(V) Reform talent evaluation criteria and develop vocational education

The problems arising from vocational education in Pujiang once again pose doubts over college entrance examination, the only criterion for the selection of talents. People's intelligence can get significant development in different aspects, only objective review of different abilities can talents obtain diversified development. In this sense, if single standard for the selection of talents is changed, the vocational education will possibly provide a variety of talents for the society. Thus, the healthy development of long-lasting vocational education will attract more outstanding students to choose vocational education, which will bring healthy competitions between Chinese talents, and then enhance the overall strength of national talent reserves. Therefore, it can be said that China's vocational education needs to resolve career development planning at the macro level and then improve discipline building and teaching quality at the micro level.

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