**Globalization, Market Economy and Social Inequality in China:
Exploring the Experience of Migrant Teachers
Globalisation, économie de marché et inégalités sociales en Chine:
comprendre les expériences des professeurs migrants**

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Abstract

This study explores the experience of migrant teachers in China. In particular, it examines how China's market economy has impacted the status and living and working conditions of migrant teachers. The study adopts a case study approach, drawing on personal interviews with 21 school teachers in Shenzhen and Zhuhai of Guangdong Province. The findings reveal that despite China's economic miracle, migrant teachers' status and teaching and living conditions have not improved. On the contrary, they have deteriorated. Migrant teachers are paid less, live in poor housing conditions, and face heavy workload. Many teachers have to tutor outside of school hours or work a second job to make ends meet. Through an account of the experience of migrant teachers in China, this study contextualizes the concept of globalization by examining its impact on China through the influence of the market economy. It also reveals a number of social injustice and inequality in education which requires the Chinese government to take immediate actions to reduce and eliminate it.

Résumé

Cette étude analyse les expériences des professeurs chinois migrants et observe de ce fait l'impact que l'économie de marché a sur le statut ainsi que sur les conditions de vie et de travail des professeurs. La recherche se base sur une étude de cas qui fait appel à des entrevues personnelles de 21 professeurs qui travaillent dans une école à Shenzhen ou à Zhuhai, toutes deux dans la province de Guangdong. Les résultats de cette étude révèlent que même avec le miracle économique chinois, le statut et les conditions de vie et de travail des professeurs migrants ne se sont pas améliorés ; au contraire même, ils se sont détériorés. Les salaires des professeurs migrants ont baissé, ils vivent dans des logements précaires et leur charge de travail est élevée. Beaucoup de professeurs doivent donner des cours particuliers en dehors des heures de travail ou ont un autre travail afin de pouvoir joindre les deux bouts. Cette étude contextualise la globalisation et examine l'impact que l'économie de marché a sur la Chine au travers des récits des professeurs migrants. Elle dénonce de ce fait plusieurs injustices sociales et inégalités éducatives qui exigent du gouvernement chinois des actions immédiates afin de les réduire, voire même de les éliminer.

Introduction

Migration is a broad term used to describe the movement of populations from one place to another. Economic globalization and modern transportation technologies have greatly enhanced the mobility of people across national boundaries. With its international focus, the current debate on migration issues often ignores or overlooks the movement of populations within nation-states.

According to the recent census of China, China's migrant population reached 221 million in 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011). It is claimed that China is experiencing the largest internal migration in human history (Fishman, 2005). While globalization has contributed to the widening gap between northern and southern countries internationally, within China it has exacerbated the gap between China's eastern coastal and western regions. As a result, many migrants are moving to China's coastal cities, such as Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Zhuhai. It is estimated that another 300 million people are expected to move in the next three decades, particularly from rural to urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011). Migrant workers are often referred to as temporary workers from China's rural areas working in its urban construction industry, manufacturing, food and domestic services, and providing a source of abundant, cheap, and exploitable labour for China's market economy. What is less recognized, however, is that included among migrant workers is a large group of well-educated teachers – themselves migrants – teaching in migrant schools. Little is known about this group of teacher, and it is especially unclear how they fare as migrant workers in China's market economy. It is therefore the purpose of this study to explore the experience of migrant teachers in China. In particular, it examines how China's market economy has impacted the status and teaching and living conditions of migrant teachers.

Globalization, Market Economy and Internal Migration

China managed to resist globalization until 1978, when the late Chinese leader Deng Xiao-ping launched the “open door” policy that gradually shifted China toward a socialist market economy. With its ascension to the WTO in 2001 and the completion of its market opening pledges in 2006, China formally entered the age of the market economy. As a result, the country has experienced unprecedented economic liberalization, industrialization, migration, urbanization, and privatization – all required by economic globalization. According to Anderson (2002), mass migration is one of the new world disorders created by globalization. The integration of the world economy has required the mobility of people across national boundaries as “global nomads” (Jordan & Düvell, 2003). Migration has subsequently become integral to the creation and maintenance of a globally flexible workforce to be deployed at the discretion of the host country. As Jordan and Düvell note, migration is “a requirement of, a response to and a resistance against, global institutional transformation and integration of the world economy” (p. 63). Globalization and migration, then, are inextricably intertwined.

Ritzer (2007) defines globalization as “an accelerating set of processes involving flows that encompass ever-greater numbers of the world’s spaces and that lead to increasing integration and interconnectivity among those spaces” (p. 1). In the current literature on globalization, the neglect of the social dimension is “rather glaring”, particularly with regard to questions of social inequality, power and the global-local relationship (Robertson & White, 2007, p. 58). It is evident that globalization from above favours open markets, free trade, deregulation and privatization, all of which work for the benefit of wealthy nations and, moreover, the economic elite of these nations. There is evidence suggesting that we are experiencing widening gaps between the “haves” and the “have nots” in global society, devastating environmental problems, declining civic participation and community, and increasing mistrust and alienation among citizenries (Welch, 2001).

China’s market economy coincided with a new stage of globalization when the integration of the world economy required China’s cheap labour, abundant natural resources, and gigantic consumer market. Indeed, over the past 30 years, China has experienced “an economic miracle” (Dutta, 2006, p. xii) and a “massive, protracted, and unexpected economic upsurge” (Brandt & Rawski, 2008, p. 1). In 2010, its economy became the second largest in the world after the United States in terms of gross domestic product. Despite the claim that the Chinese enjoy more freedom than at any time in recent history (Jiang, 2008), China is also facing unprecedented challenges, including rising unemployment, socio-economic disparity, corruption, environment degradation, and an inadequate social safety net (Cheng, 2008). In particular, despite the fact that migrant workers have made indispensable contributions to China’s booming economy, their social and political status remains low. They work long hours, often and possibly at the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs. Despite this, they are “underpaid or even unpaid after months of hard work” (Lo, 2007, p. 138). In some places, the overdue or defaulted payments to migrant workers have become an important cause of social instability (Xiang, 2004). In their adaptation to urban life, migrants face multi-faceted barriers (Guo & Zhang, 2010). As institutional and economic barriers have denied migrant access to affordable public housing, many of them live in “migrant enclaves,” which are officially regarded as “slums or shantytowns with chaotic land use, dilapidated housing, severe infrastructure deficiency, intensified social disorder, and unsightly urban eyesore” (Zhang, 2005, p. 250). As a result, a new urban underclass consisting of migrant workers emerged in many Chinese cities (Solinger, 2008).

While many migrants are temporary sojourners, some bring families to the cities. One prominent issue facing migrant families concerns access to

education for migrant children (Liang & Chen, 2007; Lu, 2007; Zhu, 2001). Given the transient nature of migration, it is difficult to assess exactly how many migrant students there are in China. It is estimated that approximately 20 million migrant school-aged children have accompanied their parents in relocating to cities in China (Wong, Chang, & He, 2009). Despite China's education law, which putatively provides equal access to nine years compulsory education for all school-aged children, migrant children are often deprived of such opportunities because they do not have urban household registration or *hukou*. Research shows that migrant children are much less likely to be enrolled in school compared to local children; a relatively large proportion of migrant children delay schooling owing to the interruption of migration (Liang & Chen, 2007). Liang and Chen also point out that migrant children suffer most during their first year of relocation. Amongst these children, enrollment is only about 60 percent. Parity is reached only after five years. Furthermore, there are substantial regional variations regarding migrant children's education. Surprisingly, migrant children in destinations with high levels of development and high concentrations of migrants, such as Shenzhen and Zhuhai, tend to experience more barriers to education because local governments in these regions are more likely to impose rigid controls as a way of deterring permanent settlement of migrant families (Lu, 2007).

Until recently, to enter local public schools, migrants were required to pay a number of extra fees, including "education endorsement fees" (*jiaoyu zanzhu fei* 教育赞助费), "education rental fee" (*jiaoyu jiedu fei* 教育借读费), "education compensation payment" (*jiaoyu buchang fei* 教育补偿费), "school choice fee" (*zexiao fei* 择校费), often totaling in the thousands of yuan (1,000 yuan=\$157 CAD). Because most migrants work at low-paying jobs, they cannot afford the additional fees. Even with the recent ban on extra fees, many migrant children are still excluded because they do not have the documents (e.g., temporary residence permit, one child certificate, education rental permit) to satisfy entrance requirements. Local prejudices mean that, even with all the required documents, public schools still use every excuse to refuse accepting migrant students due to concerns that migrant children will lower their academic standard and ranking. Even for the "lucky" ones who manage to enter the public system, migrant children often face cultural and social stigmatization and discrimination because of their migrant status, out-of-date clothing, and regional accents (Li et al., 2010; Wong, Chang, & He, 2009). As a result, many children suffer from social isolation, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. According to Wong et al. (2009), migrant children are more likely to receive discipline from their teachers, treatment that might have a subsequent impact on their mental

health. Wong et al. also identify discrimination as another significant risk factor for the psychological wellbeing of migrant children. It is possible that migrant children who experience discrimination and unfair discipline at school may feel so alienated and misunderstood that they eventually drop out of school at an early age. Hence, one of the greatest challenges is to help students overcome a sense of inferiority wrought by their subjugated status (Inwin, 2000).

Where public schools are neither accessible nor affordable to migrant families, a common option has been to enroll their children in unlicensed, underfunded and inadequately staffed schools specifically for migrant children (Inwin, 2000; Kwong, 2004; Woronov, 2004). It is estimated that there are between 200 and 300 migrant schools in Beijing alone (Inwin, 2000). While some proprietors of such schools are altruistically motivated to provide affordable education for migrant children, others are driven by profit or the need to make a living, or a combination of these reasons. Unfortunately, these schools lack the good conditions of public schools. Many of them are shanty schools housed in makeshift sheds, typically unsafe and overcrowded, with poor lighting and inadequate air circulation (Kwong, 2004; Zhu, 2001). In addition, pedagogical standards are low and the quality of teaching poor owing to lack of qualified teachers, adequate equipment, books and other teaching materials. More importantly, they do not have governmental recognition or support because they are seen to encroach on government jurisdiction (Li et al., 2010). Furthermore, local governments are concerned that if they provide the financial support for migrant schools, such actions might lead to a drastic expansion of the migrant population, and thus create a further burden (Zhu, 2001).

Despite the recent proliferation of research on internal migration in China and migrant children's education, none of these authors have mentioned the situation of migrant teachers. These are teachers, themselves migrants, whose job is to teach in schools specifically built for rural to urban migrant children. The purpose of this study is to explore the teaching and living conditions of these teachers under China's market economy.

Research Design and Methodology

Grounded in a wide conceptual and contextual framework as discussed above, a case study approach was adopted for this investigation because as a research methodology it enables a focus on the particularity and complexity of a single case to understand an activity and its significance (Stake, 1995). Examining a particular case sheds light on something other than the case itself, that is, the case study was conducted so as to understand the unique conditions, challenges, and experiences of migrant teachers for the purposes of developing indicators of the

wellbeing and status of migrant teachers. Shenzhen and Zhuhai in Guangdong Province were purposefully selected as its research sites for this case study because it was there that Deng Xiaoping initiated experiments with the market economy in the 1980s, a policy shift that led to the subsequent mass migration needed to support the booming economy. By 2009, Shenzhen's population had reached 8.9 million, including 6.5 million migrants (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, 2010). One third of Zhuhai's population is people without local *hukou* (household registration). Given the growing migrant population in both cities and the challenges facing their adaptation, data collected from this study will provide a glimpse of changes in education and the experience of migrant teachers under China's market economy.

The study employed literature review, document analysis, and in-depth interviews. Literature review and document analysis focused on the social, political, and economic contexts within which recent educational changes have taken place. Crucial contextual information is provided by policy documents relating to recently introduced policies dealing with migration and migrant children's education. Twenty-one teachers from six elementary and secondary schools were interviewed. Semi-structured face-to-face interviewing was selected because it represents flexibility in asking in-depth questions and using interview guide (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The interviews focused on teachers' lived experience of teaching under China's market economy, including their remuneration, teaching and living conditions, social and political status, and access to professional development. In selecting participants, efforts were made to take into account age, gender, educational qualifications, years of teaching experience, and grades and subjects taught. All interviews were conducted in Chinese, audio-taped and fully transcribed. Each interview lasted for about 1 hour. All university research ethical guidelines were strictly followed.

A four-stage process was developed for data analysis: (a) identifying main points, (b) searching for salient themes and recurring patterns, (c) grouping common themes and patterns into related categories, and (d) comparing all major categories with reference to the major theories in the field to form new perspectives. The four stage process assured that there was frequent interplay between the data and theory. In addition, site visits and in-class observations provided the researcher an opportunity to gain first-hand experience with migrant teachers' teaching and living conditions. These observations helped the researcher better apprehend information gleaned from the document analysis and interviews. Multiple research methods and data sources of documents, interviews, observations and researcher reflections mean that this study adopted a

triangulation approach (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) which guaranteed the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

Research Findings

Context

One important feature of case study is that it generates thick descriptions that go beyond mere facts and surface features of the case to include details, context, and other such descriptive and interpretive elements of the case (McGinn, 2010). The thick description generated by this case study gives readers information needed to understand the context of Shenzhen and Zhuhai as well as migrant teachers' experience. As stated earlier, Shenzhen and Zhuhai were selected as research sites because they were two of the first four special economic zones (SEZs) established in China in the early 1980s. It was in Shenzhen that China decided to experiment with capitalism and the market economy in 1980. Subsequently, Zhuhai, Shantou, and Xiamen followed suit. Its success led China to expand its SEZs to include another fourteen coastal cities across ten provinces (Dutta, 2006). One reason for the initial choice of Shenzhen and Zhuhai as China's first SEZs was their proximity to Hong Kong and Macao and their potential to lure foreign investment. This strategy also meshed well with the thirst of the world economy for cheap labour and natural resources. As globalization has penetrated China over the past 30 years, Shenzhen and Zhuhai developed into a high-tech and manufacturing hub.

Turning to the educational context of Shenzhen and Zhuhai, in 2009 Shenzhen had 974 kindergartens, 346 elementary schools, and 285 secondary schools (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, 2010). In addition, there were more than 255 non-government schools in Shenzhen, many of them are run by entrepreneurs or corporations primarily for migrant children. These are referred to as *minban* (people managed) schools. It is estimated that there are 255 *minban* schools in Shenzhen (BBS, 2011). The primary interest of this study is with this group of schools. Four schools were chosen from Shenzhen's 255 *minban* schools: one elementary school (School A) and three combined elementary and junior high schools (School B, C & D) (see Table 1). Zhuhai's educational system is much smaller than Shenzhen's, consisting of 170 kindergartens, 192 elementary schools, and 53 secondary schools (Zhuhai Municipal Government, 2009). There are 31 *minban* schools in the city of Zhuhai serving a population of half a million migrants. Two schools were chosen from amongst all public and *minban* schools, a combined elementary and junior high school (School E) and a junior high school (School F). With respect to the combined elementary-junior high schools, this study only focused on the experience of secondary school

teachers there. In total, 21 teachers were interviewed, five elementary and 16 junior high school teachers.

Table 1: Selection of Shenzhen and Zhuhai Schools

Name	Location	Grade	Year of Est.	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Ownership	Annual Fee
School A	Shenzhen Urban	Elementary (Grade 1-6)	1997	1,500	52	Collectively owned	¥2,600
School B	Shenzhen Urban	Combined Elementary and Junior High (Grade 1-9)	2002	1,900 (Elementary: 1400; Junior High: 500)	58	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥3,000; Junior High: ¥5,000
School C	Shenzhen Urban	Combined Elementary and Junior High (Grade 1-9)	2002	1,900	55	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥1,600; Junior High: ¥2,300
School D	Shenzhen Suburban	Combined Elementary and Junior High (Grade 1-9)	2003	1,600	60	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥1,100; Junior High: ¥1,800
School E	Zhuhai Urban	Combined Elementary and Junior High (Grade 1-9)	1997	2,000 (Elementary: 1,200; Junior High: 800)	70	Privately owned	Elementary: ¥1,400; Junior High: ¥2,100
School F	Zhuhai Urban	Junior High School (Grade 7-9)	1987	1,800 (migrant: 1,000; Local <i>hukou</i> : 800)	91	Public	Free

Table 1 summarizes the history, student population, number of teachers, ownership, and fees each school charges. Each school is relatively new, having been established in the late 1990s or early 2000s. School A is owned by an incorporated entity whose share holders are former village residents whose agricultural land was given over to urbanization. The villagers invest collectively in real estate and other businesses under a limited corporation. They rent out School A to a board for ¥500,000-800,000 (\$77,583-\$124,133 CAD) a year. The other four school sites are privately owned by entrepreneurs. Some own more than one school, with one owner surprisingly holding more than 10 schools of this kind. Most hire retired principals from outside of Guangdong province to run the school, but they hold little authority over school finances. School fees are monitored by municipal governments, but vary significantly (from ¥1,100 to

¥5,000) based on the location of the school and its physical condition. Because most migrants work at survival level jobs, many find the tuition fees excessive.

Built in 1987, School F is the oldest and the only public one included in the study. It enrolls both locally born and migrant children. As the “indigenous” population has dwindled, the school has gradually opened up to the migrant children who now account for 60% of the school population. Not every migrant child is eligible for admission. In order to enroll, they have to have been residents of Zhuhai for a minimum of five years, and must provide a number of documents (e.g., temporary residence permit, one child certificate). Unfortunately, many migrants cannot meet these requirements. For example, with respect to the one child certificate, many families are from the rural areas where more than one child is allowed under China’s family planning policy. Additionally, the children of parents who fit into categories known as “special talents” do not have to meet these requirements. These include those designate “high-tech talents,” business people with certain amount of investment, and people from Hong Kong, Macao, or Taiwan. Although public schools are banned from charging extra fees, in reality the new policy still discriminates against rural migrants when it comes to granting access to public school.

Conditions vary significantly among these schools. Some have new buildings; others are located in deserted factories. Adequate space is a problem in most, with the exception of School F which remains a public school despite its intake of migrant children. One school uses its roof for extracurricular activities because of inadequate courtyard space. Students in another have to rotate when they come to do morning exercises and extracurricular activities. It is important to note that all six schools were recommended and approved by the local education bureau. All have not only been licensed by the local education authority but also awarded the title of municipal key school (市一级学校). The condition of unlicensed and non-recommended *minban* schools is left to the reader’s imagination.

Motivations for Migration

Among the 21 interviewees, five were elementary school teachers and the rest were junior high school teachers. Thirteen had bachelor’s degrees, six had 2-3 year diplomas from junior teachers’ college, and two had master’s degrees. All 21 teachers had migrated from elsewhere in China, with the majority from Hunan and Hubei provinces. During the interviews, one of the discussions focused on reasons for migration and whether the market economy has created more opportunities or simply false hope. Responses from migrant teachers clearly

show that economic reasons were the most important motivations for their migration to Shenzhen and Zhuhai. One teacher from Heilongjiang explained:

Relatively speaking the economy in the north is not as developed as the south. Maybe there are more opportunities in the south. I always believe people in the north are more conservative in terms of ways of thinking and managing things. This is why I decided to move here to give it a try. (E097)

Shenzhen and Zhuhai attract people from all over China because they are symbols of “all things possible” (Fishman, 2005). As Fishman notes, people from elsewhere in China, particularly young people, see them as places “where a migrant’s dreams of work, adventure, and love might all come true” (p. 90). One respondent explained that it is the attraction of city life that drew her to Shenzhen. In her words, “I’d like to experience the outside world while I’m still young” (A085). Many moved to Shenzhen and Zhuhai to satisfy their curiosity. Another respondent stated:

Shenzhen is at the forefront of reform in China. It is also the centre of international communication and exchanges. Many expected things can happen here. I know I have to give up a lot of things for my move to Shenzhen, but I also experience many advanced things here. This is where I can chase my dream. (B087)

Shenzhen and Zhuhai also offer escape from workplace or family problems for some of the teachers. One teacher from Hebei relocated many years ago because she was not happy with her former school principal. She explained:

I was a teacher for 13 years at my hometown. The reason I came here is because of an unhappy incident at home. In 1993 I was still teaching at a rural *minban* school. There was an opportunity to change my status to a government-paid teacher. There was a quota for five people for the whole county. I was the only one who passed the examination in my township. When it was time to complete the form, I found my name disappeared from the list. I was very upset. I was mad with the principal’s management style. During the same time, a friend of mine who was already teaching here [Shenzhen] told me that a new school just opened. So I applied. (A086)

As with migrants in general, one issue facing many migrant teachers is that they do not have local *hukou*. Most are registered as temporary residents. Instituted in 1958, *hukou* is a registration system originally designed to prevent rural-to-urban migration. Under the *hukou* system, everyone is assigned a *hukou* location, either rural or urban. Whereas the benefit of the former is the way it ties people to agricultural land (and, thus, to a means of subsistence), the latter provides access to jobs, housing, and benefits. In essence, the *hukou* system defines who you are, where you belong, what your life chances are, and how much access you have to resources (Fan, 2008). Because it was extremely difficult for rural migrants to survive in cities without urban *hukou*, the system

once had the effect of keeping rural–urban migration to a minimum. Owing to labour shortages resulting from the economic boom, the relaxation of *hukou* since the mid-1990s has facilitated labour mobility and pushed forward China’s urbanization, which increased from 19.6% in 1980 to 43% in 2005 (Yusuf & Nabeshima, 2008). In large cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen, however, *hukou* remains a primary gatekeeper. One has to meet many requirements to obtain a local *hukou*, including maximum age, years of residence, level of education, employment status, etc. Since most of these teachers are employed on a contract basis, it is almost impossible for them to obtain a local *hukou*. Without it, however, it is impossible for them to enjoy welfare benefits or to find schooling for their children. Considering all these difficulties, several married teachers have left their children with their parents in their hometowns. The teacher from Hebei who was introduced earlier said she lives in Shenzhen on her own. Her husband is taking care of her elderly parents-in-law in her hometown. They only have time to visit during school holidays. When asked about her plan to apply for Shenzhen *hukou*, she had this to say: “I’m 45 years old. I’ve already exceeded the eligibility age for applying for Shenzhen *hukou*” (A086). Even with local *hukou*, all participants believe that rocketing housing prices mean that they will not be able to afford to buy an apartment and settle down in Shenzhen and Zhuhai permanently. Many indicated that they will eventually return to their hometowns. It is sad that many migrant workers, including teachers, cannot become active participants in the way they had originally hoped, despite the fact that they contribute significantly to the building of new cities like Shenzhen and Zhuhai.

Issues of Workload

As Kwong (2004) notes, many migrant schools are inadequately staffed. In public schools, teachers usually teach 2 classes a day, usually at the same grade level. Most subject teachers in migrant schools teach 3-4 classes a day, although not necessarily at the same grade level. At School D, the only fine art teacher teaches 17 classes of fine arts across different grades to almost half of the school’s students. The scale of this problem is magnified by large class sizes. In the past 10 years, China has begun to tackle the problem of excessive class size. In Shenzhen and Zhuhai, for example, education authorities have regulated standard class size to about 50 students per class, still large by European or North American standards, but nevertheless an improvement. In addition, homeroom teachers (*ban zhu ren*) have many more responsibilities than subject teachers. They not only teach academic subjects, but are also required to do administrative work, including keying student records into the data base and performing a

number of pastoral duties. One homeroom teacher described her daily routine involving supervising student's morning exercise and reading classes, cleaning the school compound, and escorting students home. Teachers usually start their day from around 7:30 in the morning and finish up around 5:30 pm. Some also work in the evenings and during weekends. It is common for teachers to work 12 hours daily. Because many students live far away and do not go home at lunchtime, homeroom teachers have to supervise students' midday naps. It is clear that teachers' responsibilities go far beyond teaching academic subjects, even extending to the care for students' safety and basic needs. One teacher described homeroom teachers as "nannies".

R: Frankly, if we put it simply, the homeroom teacher is like a nanny.

I: Like a nanny?

R: No matter how trivial things are, the homeroom teacher is like a nanny of the class. They have to take care of many things, including things required by the school, we just mentioned noon nap and lunch. I have to serve them lunch by myself and the younger students need supervision after lunch. We have about 10 minutes break after lunch and the school will ring the bell for the noon break. Students will then go back to their classrooms to rest and sleep. If the students cannot sleep, they can read a while. The school requires the homeroom teacher to monitor them at that time because some students may go out for example to internet café so if something happens to the students both the school and the teacher will be responsible for it. So the teacher will sit in the classroom resting with the students. (E096)

Many teachers have to spend evenings and weekends marking assignments, preparing for new lessons, or attending meetings. In interviews, teachers discussed their evening work in further detail. In School D, teachers are required to report to the school office at 7:30 am. Because School D is located in an isolated suburban village, most teachers live on campus. After a whole day's work, teachers have to attend two regular weekly meetings in the evening after dinner, one for the whole school and another of the academic subject teaching group. They also have to visit with students in the evenings. It is unlikely that they have any time left for recreational activities, nor the space or facilities to do so. Trapped in the school compound 24 hours a day, teachers have become commodities who are sold to the school and dispatched at the discretion of school owners and management.

Teacher's Pay, Living, and Working Conditions

Despite working long hours and taking on heavy responsibilities, migrant teachers are paid poorly. The majority surveyed in this study earn between ¥1,000 (\$157 CAD) and ¥3,000 (\$471 CAD) a month, far below the average monthly income of ¥6,000-7,000 (\$942-\$1,099 CAD) earned by public school teachers in Shenzhen and Zhuhai. To compare the two cities, pay in Shenzhen is

even lower than in Zhuhai, although it has the highest GDP per capita among major Chinese cities. This fact draws our attention to another important point of comparison, i.e., public school teachers are not well paid in comparison with other professions, such as engineering or information technology. Interviewees were also keen to point out that a factory worker or vegetable vendor can make ¥2,000 (\$314 CAD) a month.

At this stage it is important to discuss the impact of teacher's earnings on the quality of teacher's lives. If we compare the current salary with that of a decade ago, it appears that at the present teachers are better off. However, it is well known that China has experienced significant inflation in the last thirty years – 8.7% in 2008 alone, a number reported to be the highest in a decade (CNN, 2008). More importantly, food prices jumped by 23% in 2008. One teacher commented that her salary does not last till the next pay day so she often has to ask for help from her parents. Another teacher compared the current pork price with the 1990s and stated that they used to pay a few yuan (1 yuan= \$0.16 CAD) for a pound of pork and now it costs more than 10 yuan. In reality, the material conditions of teacher's lives have deteriorated because increases in salary have not matched inflation.

One manifestation of the impact of teacher's salary on the quality of their lives relates to their housing problem. Before China adopted privatization and marketization approaches, teachers enjoyed housing benefits, although they often lived in poor conditions (Guo, 2005). With such welfare schemes dismantled, teachers are expected to purchase their own housing. In light of this, we explored with interviewees the possibility of teachers purchasing their own homes under current market conditions. Emphatically, these teachers believe that it would be impossible. In the district where School A is located, the average price for purchasing an apartment is ¥10,000/m² (\$1,570 CAD), which is not the highest in Shenzhen (the highest had reached ¥30,000/m² or \$4,710 CAD). The price in Zhuhai is slightly better at ¥15,000-20,000/m² (\$1,355-\$3,139 CAD). This is an excerpt from a conversation with one Shenzhen teacher:

I: Are you going to buy your own place?

R: How can I buy an apartment with 2,000 yuan [\$314 CAD] a month? Are you kidding me? The price in Shenzhen has reached ¥10,000 [\$1,570 CAD] per square meter. It is impossible to buy my own apartment.

I: ¥10,000 [\$1,570 CAD] per square meter in this district?

R: You see even if my parents help me pay the down payment, I still cannot buy an apartment... I can tell you this is impossible. Actually I feel very sad. I studied for so many years and I cannot even take care of myself, let alone look after my parents. I may even depend on them in fact. I feel how to say, it's hard to say, everyone has their own expectations of life but the reality is life is too cruel. (A084)

How do teachers survive in a marketized and commercialized society on such meager salaries? Some have to rely on their spouses, usually the husband, to bring in a bigger pay cheque. Others have to get a second job, usually tutoring in their spare time. Because it is prohibited by the school, interviewees were very cautious to say much about this practice, despite the researcher's emphasis on confidentiality. One teacher commented: "It is impossible to survive here in Shenzhen without an additional job. Teachers' salary can't make a living. It is common that people have other jobs besides teaching." (C091)

Since most teachers are migrant workers, they need places to live. Since they cannot afford to buy their own places, they have to rely on the schools. Luckily all six schools provide dormitories, mainly for single teachers, as part of their remuneration package. The challenge, however, is for four to six people to share a room in poor conditions. These are often located on the top floor of a classroom building. It is noisy and hot in summer and cold in winter. One teacher commented that it is not even as good as university dorm:

I: Do you live in the school dorm?

R: Yes, all single teachers live here. Married teachers live outside.

I: Is your dormitory upstairs?

R: Yes, on the third and fourth floor.

I: What is it like? Like the dorm in university?

R: Frankly, it cannot be compared to my university dorm. There are four single bunk beds in one room. Basically every bed is taken. We store things in the upper bed and sleep in the lower one. We have shared washrooms and two big tables, no closets. The conditions are worse than university dorms. Not only the room is small, but also the beds are very shabby. The bathrooms don't have showers. We have to boil water with kettle and use the bucket to take a shower. Frankly, the conditions are not good. (E099)

None of the schools provide housing for married couples. In School D, one couple who are both teachers at the same school live in a 10 m² room built in the empty space between staircases. They considered themselves "lucky". The researcher got permission to visit this room. Basically there is a single over a double bunk bed, a desk, a wardrobe for storing clothes, a computer, and a TV. They have a two and a half years old child who is living with grandparents in their hometown because they cannot look after him properly. They used a similar space in the stairwell one floor below to build a washroom that is shared with another family. When asked how they coordinate the shower timing, she told me:

Before we use the washroom, we usually check with each other. They live downstairs and we live upstairs. They like to take a shower in the morning and we're used to having a shower in the evening. Usually the time works out fine. (D095)

Food was another hot topic in the interviews. There are two major challenges with school canteen food. Firstly, teachers eat in the same canteen

with students. Usually four to five chefs cook for over a thousand people. The quality of food is a problem for most teachers. One teacher compared it with her university student canteen food and felt “we might have more choices in university, but not here” (B089). Secondly, people come from different parts of China, but the local chefs mainly cater to Guangdong tastes, a style food considered bland and dull by outsiders. One teacher stated, “I understand it is hard to satisfy a lot of people with different tastes. For instance, people like me from Hunan like spicy food, but they only provide mild food here” (B091). Several teachers commented that they have to get used to the food because they do not have enough money to eat outside, nor do they have the time or facilities to cook for themselves. If they do not adjust their tastes or accept this affront, they will go hungry.

A consistent message received from interviews with migrant teachers is that workloads at *minban* schools are heavier than public schools; pay is lower and working and living conditions are poorer. Under China’s market economy, the nature of teaching has also changed. Once conceived as a highly respected profession, teaching has become a commodity that is traded in the market. The responsibilities of teaching have been transformed from teaching academic subjects to include providing services to students. In addition, teachers’ working conditions are far from adequate. Besides the issues discussed above, office space is a problem for all of them. Two schools use renovated factories and four have relatively new buildings. Luckily none of them are housed in makeshift sheds (Kwong, 2004; Zhu, 2001). However, offices are crowded, typically holding 10 teachers in a small office. School C has 14-15 people sharing an office. Teachers felt comforted that classrooms are equipped with multimedia facilities such as computers and LCD projectors, and that they can now use Powerpoint for teaching. In most schools, however, the same subject groups or teachers teaching the same grade (5-10 people) share a computer. Many teachers had to use their personal laptops for teaching or lesson preparation. It is important to keep in mind that all the schools we visited were recommended by local education authorities. These schools are not only licensed, but have also won the title of key municipal schools (市一级学校). There are schools which are not licensed where the situation could be even worse.

Social and Political Status of Teachers

As discussed above, Shenzhen and Zhuhai are places where the market economy first took hold in the early 1980s. In light of this, it is important to ask: Has the market economy created more opportunities for migrant teachers? Has teachers’ social and political status been improved under China’s market economy? We

had numerous discussions with migrant teachers about these questions. When the questions were posed, participants hesitated to respond because they feel that the market economy has nothing to do with them. One teacher argues that the market economy created instability for teachers because their teaching contracts could be terminated at any time:

Many teachers don't feel secure to teach in a *minban* school or work as a substitute teacher. We used to have an "iron rice bowl" with a secure employment teaching in public schools in our hometowns. Now we have a porcelain rice bowl. The situation could change any time. There are too many unstable factors. (B088)

Another teacher reported that one thing the market economy has brought to the society at large is that it has stimulated competitive consumption (F103). Many teachers feel the pressure to purchase a house or a car in order to keep up with the rest of the society.

To return to the question "has the market economy improved teachers' social and political status?", the reality appears rather disappointing. Here is one response:

Most parents in our schools are migrant workers. Like migrant workers, our social and political status is low. Public school teachers look down upon us. We do the same job [as public school teachers], but are paid one seventh or one eighth of their salaries, or even one tenth. They can get more than 10,000 yuan [\$1,570 CAD] a month, and we only get 1,000. Sometimes we internalize all this. We don't see any future. We even look down upon ourselves sometimes. (C091)

The same teacher compared teachers' current situation with the 1990s and said that "teachers' status is even lower than the 90's when parents thought highly of us. But now I can't find my value. Sometimes I ask myself 'Why am I still a teacher?'" (C091).

Teachers had a lot to offer when asked what can be done to improve teachers' social and political status. One teacher commented:

Personally speaking, to improve teachers' social and political status, the first thing is to raise teachers' salaries. Only by doing this can we improve how students and parents view and treat teachers. Students and parents know how much we earn. If the salary is increased, teachers don't need to go for another part-time job. They will devote wholeheartedly to teaching. With a monthly salary of 1000 yuan [\$157 CAD] and no savings, some young teachers have to borrow money from colleagues for a visit back to their hometown. (C091)

The suggestion to raise teachers' salaries is shared by another interviewee, who is a school principal. He argues that the issue needs to be tackled urgently. If it is not handled properly, it could cost the society more than just money. He stated:

The biggest challenge for our school [School D] is that teachers' salaries are too low. The

teachers' average monthly salary is about 1,600 yuan [\$251 CAD], for new teachers 1,300 [\$204 CAD] to 1,400 [\$220 CAD], and older teachers about 2,000 [\$314 CAD]. It is too low. Teachers cannot even afford trips to visit their hometown. Some teachers haven't got married at the age of 27 or 28 because it is hard for them to find spouse with such low salaries. It is time to raise teachers' salaries. If this is not done in 3 years, it will become one of the most serious social problems for Shenzhen City. (D093)

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the experience of migrant teachers in China with the intent of finding out how China's market economy has impacted the status and teaching and living conditions of migrant teachers. Adopting a case study approach, it drew on one-on-one interviews with 21 school teachers in Shenzhen and Zhuhai of Guangdong Province. The study reports that, fuelled by forces of globalization, China has gradually shifted from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. As a result, China has experienced unprecedented economic liberalization, industrialization, urbanization, and internal migration. The profound socio-economic and political transformation poses significant fundamental changes to education in China. Despite China's economic miracle, migrant teachers' status and teaching and living conditions have not improved. On the contrary, they have deteriorated because migrant teachers are living in poor housing conditions and being paid less owing to high inflation rates, expensive living costs, and soaring housing prices. Furthermore, they face heavy workloads and greater responsibilities, and, consequently, more pressure and stress. Many teachers have to tutor outside of school hours or work a second job to make ends meet. Under China's market economy, the nature of teaching has also changed. Once conceived as a highly respected profession, teaching has become a commodity that can be traded in the market. In addition, teachers' working conditions are far from adequate.

The experience of migrant teachers speaks to the paradox of internal migration under China's market economy – migrants are “discursively marginal, yet simultaneously central” (Woronov, 2004, p. 301). On the one hand, migration is central to China's booming economy; China's economic success depends on low-cost migrant labour, including migrant teachers. Migrant workers perform tasks that no one else wants to do and have contributed significantly to the economic boom of China. On the other hand, the government is not willing to recognize migrant workers as bearers of substantive rights as urban citizens because they are often seen as a source of trouble and social instability. Migrant workers may be allowed to work in cities, but are deprived of a wide range of entitlements to urban welfare and benefits (Zhang, 2008; Zhang & Wang, 2010). In elucidating how the notion of urban citizenship is interpreted in reform-era

China, Zhang and Wang argue that migrants, even those holding a residence permit, experience higher survival and opportunity costs to themselves and for their family members. They are entitled to only partial social protection, suffer from social exclusion and marginalization, and face many uncertainties and insecurities for their future. Migrant workers are often considered as temporary and floating outsiders and transients (Zhang, 2008).

This study evokes debates on issues more important than those initially laid out. Through an account of the experience of migrant teachers in China, this study contextualizes the concept of globalization by examining its impact on China through the influence of the market economy. One important debate this study evokes pertains to issues of social justice and equity. Many argue that the market economy has produced not only an economic miracle but also glaring inequality (Davis & Wang, 2009; Lee, 2009; Postiglione, 2006). As Davis and Wang note, the practices and institutions of socialism appear to have receded into a distant past. China is converging toward a pattern of inequality in which “the returns to capital exceed those to labour” (p.16). As Lee (2009) further explains, social injustice is ubiquitous, a view that is not restricted to the “losers” but also to ordinary Chinese of different generational, educational, and occupational backgrounds. It seems clear that there is a dire need for the Chinese government to take active measures to reduce social injustice and inequity. In light of the challenges facing migrant teachers, a number of ameliorative measures seem inescapable, including reducing teachers’ workload, decreasing class size, increasing teachers’ salary, improving teachers’ welfare, and raising teachers’ social and political status. More importantly, migrant teachers deserve recognition as legitimate urban citizens with equal rights and entitlements.

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