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Collaborating to Build Futures The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Creating Education Opportunities for Migrant Workers’ Children in China

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Collaborating to Build Futures

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Creating Education Opportunities for Migrant Workers’ Children in China

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at Syracuse University

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Honors Capstone Project in Political Science

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“People tend to look down upon the children of migrant workers because they are poor. But in my eyes, they are just like dandelions. They have to drift with their moving parents, but they can thrive anywhere once they take root.”

~Zheng Hong, founder and principal of Dandelion Junior High School for migrant children in southern Beijing, China.
Abstract

This project examines how informal and legal relationships between the Chinese government, migrant communities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are useful for educating migrant workers’ children. Market reforms have increased internal migration of Chinese families and have sparked a growth in non-profit NGOs which assist under-privileged migrant youth. Contemporary Chinese urban education literature notes legal and financial obstacles which prevent millions of migrant students from being entitled to the same education opportunities as their non-migrant peers. I note that creating equitable schooling for migrant youth is highly important for the political, economic, and social health of the Chinese state. By drawing on scholarly research and a series of interviews I conducted with students, school administrators, NGO staff and volunteers, I describe how NGOs activate charity and volunteerism to improve migrant education in China’s urban areas. Yet obstacles such as transparency and accountability problems of the Chinese government and NGOs inhibit their capacity to educate migrant children. I conclude that establishing mutually-beneficial relationships between local governments, businesses, and citizens through the medium of NGOs is important for overcoming barriers which prevent these groups from providing migrant students with equitable schooling.
Table of Contents

Preface ..........................................................................................................................1
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................2
Advice to Future Honors Students ...............................................................................3

Chapter 1: The Importance of Migrant Education in China .................................6
   I. The Growth of Migrant Families Despite Hukou Restrictions ....................6
   II. The Need for Education to Transform Urban Migrant Poverty .............13
   III. Reliance on Civil Society for Help ............................................................49
   IV. The Global Significance of Educating Chinese Migrant Youth ............22

Chapter 2: Promising Migrant Education Reforms Hindered .............................26
   I. Education Policies Concerning Migrant Workers’ Children ..................26
   II. Challenges to Implementation: Localism ...............................................30
   III. Challenges to Growth: Benefit Conflicts & Social Stigma .................33

Chapter 3: Attempting to Measure The Gaps in Education ...............................37
   I. General Status of the Enrollment of Migrant Students .........................37
   II. The Substandard Qualities of Private Migrant Schools .......................41
   III. Complex Variation in Migrant Education Development .....................46

Chapter 4: Efforts of Civil Society in China to Narrow the Gaps .....................50
   I. Growing Partnerships to Improve the Education of Migrant Youth .......50
   II. Mobilizing Support to Make “Not-For-Profit” Possible .......................59
   III. Applicable Schooling Approaches for Migrant Youth .......................64
   IV. Facilitating Volunteerism and Awareness ............................................67

Chapter 5: Obstacles to NGO Assistance of Migrant Youth ..............................72
   I. Government Oversight: Registration and Expansion Constraints ..........72
   II. Trust and Accountability Issues Causing Publicity Challenges ............77
   III. Harmful Competition Between and Within NGO ..............................81

Chapter 6: Conclusion: Harnessing Organizational Capacity to Make a Difference ..........................................................84
   I. Why Migrant Education NGOs Deserve More Attention ....................84
   II. Helping NGOs to More Effectively Mobilize Community Resources ..87
   III. Strengthening NGO Accountability and Effectiveness .....................91
   IV. Global Relevance of China’s Migrant Education NGO Reform ..........96

Works Cited ...................................................................................................................98
Summary of the Capstone Project ..............................................................................109
Preface

While studying abroad in Beijing, China last spring I volunteered as an English teacher at a high school for the children of domestic migrants. I learned about Chinese migrants, citizens who have moved from the countryside to seek work in China’s growing cities. My students explained that as a consequence of a national household registration policy their rural migrant families lack the proper permits to receive the same education and healthcare benefits as registered city residents. This registration system, known as *hukou*, has persisted as a traditional Chinese government method to restrict population movement. Yet many Chinese migrant families have continued to move from the countryside, because the economic advantages of city life override the disincentives created by living in urban areas without difficult-to-come-by urban registration.

The national government legally entitles migrant students to attend public schooling, but complications of implementing these policies in China’s diverse localities make such promises unrealistic. The household registration system combined with inadequacy of decentralized migrant education funding has resulted in large obstacles to the successful futures of migrant children. Many migrant families resort to uncertified and understaffed private institutions to keep their children in enrolled. The meager education, if any, which these students receive often prevents them from getting basic jobs and contributing to the local and national economies later in life. Migrant students such as the ones I taught are unable to receive education to catch up with non-migrant students in cities across China. In turn, migrants are often turned into second-class citizens and are vulnerable to becoming stratified generations of urban poor. As such, within several decades of rapid political and economic change, Chinese migrants are often described by scholars as serious “losers” in the reform process. My investment in exploring how to improve the schooling of migrants through NGOs stems from the deep friendships I formed teaching these struggling youth.

After being touched by the difficult lives of the students I was volunteering in Beijing to help, I was compelled to extend my stay in China so I could continue researching and teaching migrant students. I coordinated a summer internship with Stepping Stones, a non-governmental organization which is assisting migrant schools and communities in Shanghai. I discovered that the rapid growth of charity NGOs in China over the last several decades has aided the migrant community in fighting the education gaps caused by barriers to the equitable urban education of migrant students. Now that the delivery of social services and education are no longer the sole responsibility of the state, non-profit NGOs play an increasingly important role in providing for the welfare of migrant children. While volunteering in Beijing and Shanghai, however, I was frustrated to observe that accountability and trust issues still prevent many NGOs from reaching as many struggling migrant students as they could.

I chose to use my Capstone project to improve my understanding of the advantages and difficulties of creating NGOs to activate collaborative volunteer partnerships among citizens and businesses to create educational opportunities for underprivileged students. I seek to address the questions of: (A) Which factors
have created the current gap in education between non-migrant and migrant children in cities; (B) Which political and social relationships have non-governmental organizations formed that increase access to education for migrant workers’ children; and (C) What obstacles prevent Chinese NGOs from effectively assisting migrant youth? Even though my answers to the broad scope of these complex questions will be incomplete, I hope to provide readers with an appreciation of the special role that NGOs can play in helping the Chinese government solve the critical issue of migrant children education. My thesis is unique, because I combine studies of migrant education policies and those which examine the increasing role of civil society organizations in assisting China’s poor with my own interview and teaching experiences.

It should be noted that many migrant parents have chosen to leave their children behind in the countryside where education resources are also commonly quite poor. Numerous NGOs who are focused on the education access of migrant workers’ children are aiming their efforts at the students in rural areas. In fact, most of the other branches of the Bai Nian Vocational School that I taught at in Beijing are located in rural towns. Although the plight of the many children who have been left behind is an important issue for research, it is beyond the scope of this project to discuss the numerous education problems they are encountering in depth as well. While the education of migrant workers’ children in the countryside is undoubtedly important, I will focus more on migrant workers’ children education in cities, as that is where the majority of my first-hand teaching experience and research on non-governmental organization efforts lie. The education of migrant youth and the efforts of NGO to enhance involves studying a complex set of emerging issues, which requires that I discuss China generally while also narrowing my thesis enough to so that I may form substantiated conclusions.

Considering the vast diversity of China’s growing cities, one of the most difficult aspects of my project is figuring out how to give readers a sense of common gaps in migrant workers’ children education in urban areas. To show the complexity of the problem I reference surveys which include variety of cities from the major geographical regions in China. Although this sample is nowhere near exhaustive in how it describes education gaps, it displays the degree to which the education of migrant children s a significant issue for urban communities across China. While there has been a multitude of scholarly research in China about the enrollment and education quality of migrant workers’ children, specific statistics to compare migrant education quality between cities are difficult to come by. Not only is it difficult to find detailed data sets concerning Chinese migrant children in English, but also to ensure the reliability of statistics which are reported. Accordingly, I fashioned my thesis around showing general trends which illustrate obstacles to equitable migrant education in cities.

Another difficulty of my research has been finding reliable standards and reports to utilize in order to compare differences in the quality of education between migrant and non-migrant urban schools. Notably, the problem of discovering objective standards to compare the benefits of schooling for different types of students is exacerbated by a lack of research on these comparisons in
China. Furthermore, even when data is available concerning the state of migrant versus non-migrant education, choosing which statistics to use as indicators of education value is inherently complex because of the ambiguous nature of the term, “quality.” Accordingly, I reference general trends about teacher credentials, facilities, and curriculum as observed by others in several prominent publications such as *Chinese Education and Society*. Although these measurements are nowhere near perfect for describing differences in education quality, they help illustrate the significant gaps in education between migrant and non-migrant students in contemporary urban China. I conclude that despite promising policy reform and NGO collaboration, significant obstacles still remain to ensuring migrant students have equitable education. I provide recommendations on how to increase collaboration between government, NGOs, donors, and migrants to overcome some of these challenges in order to improve the schooling and future employment of migrant youth in China.
Acknowledgements

First, I deeply thank all of my migrant students in Beijing and Shanghai for granting me the privilege to learn about their difficult lives and for inspiring me to write about the education that is so dear to them. I sincerely thank to S.U. Abroad Beijing Director, Dr. Caroline Tong, as it was by her recommendation that I began volunteer teaching at the Bai Nian Vocational School for migrant youth in Beijing. I am indebted to Bai Nian Vocational School Administrator, Li Jing, and Stepping Stones Program Coordinator, Victoria Steele, for their willingness to help me gain insiders’ perspectives on migrant education NGOs in China. Additionally, I owe my gratitude to Professor Stuart Thorson for his enthusiasm to help me formulate the structure of my thesis both before I left for China and after I returned. I also want to thank Xin Li, a PhD candidate at The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs from Wuhan, China, for helping me tackle the difficult challenge of finding data on Chinese education inequality. I offer special thanks as well to Lisa Zhang, Zhang Fang Yuan, Patrick Sheng, Yu Xin, Skipp Greenblatt, and numerous others who helped me learn about migration and education in China. Lastly, I am very grateful to Syracuse University and The Renée Crown University Honors Program for their generous support of my project through a Crown Award.
Advice to Future Honors Students

The best piece of advice I can give to future honors students is to lay a strong foundation for your Capstone project by the end of your junior year. If you give yourself enough time so that you can write in increments, you will have a strong draft by the Spring of your senior year and can spend time polishing it into something you are proud of. In order to get the ball rolling junior year it may be quite helpful to take a course related to your thesis interests. For example, I used the term paper requirement for an international relations course I was taking abroad in China as groundwork writing for my Capstone. I found that finishing my junior year with over 20 pages already written gave me a great sense of the direction of my thesis and what remaining questions I still needed to address. For editing, the Writing Center at S.U. is an excellent easy way to gain insightful feedback on the structure and content of your drafts.
Chapter 1: The Importance of Migrant Education in China

I. The Growth of Migrant Families Despite Hukou Restrictions

Contemporary political science scholars recognize the People’s Republic of China as an important rising power with increasing economic and political influence on world affairs. The ability of this large nation to continue on its upward trajectory, however, is conditioned by the Chinese government’s ability to maintain economic growth and domestic stability. Unlike the United States, whose political future is relatively constrained, China’s rise is full of possibility (Bell 3). Yet becoming a stable global superpower is still contingent on the success of the transitioning Chinese state’s efforts to achieve sustainable development. Structural reforms over the last several decades have dramatically enhanced economic development in China, but have also resulted in significant social unrest (Tubilewicz 4). The legitimacy of national and local Chinese governance is being put to the test by widening gaps in economic, legal, and political rights between its citizens (Zheng and Fewsmith 4). The labor of millions of migrant families in Chinese cities over the last several decades has indubitably bolstered China’s economic boom (Hsu 130). Yet migrants remain treated unequally by urban governments in a situation which makes the country’s economic and political future especially vulnerable.

The current gaps in education facing the migrant worker population and organizations who wish to assist them is particularly rooted in the relatively recent transition of the Chinese government and economic structure. The beginning of the reform era in 1978 heralded sweeping changes to the Chinese state and society
as the national government relaxed its control over a large host economic
management and social welfare operations (Lu 90). In turn, manufacturers and
service industries boomed in rapidly-developing cities and drew millions of
Chinese laborers from rural areas (Dong 140). As scholars on Chinese migration
Shahid Yusuf and Tony Saich report, “the migration of mainly young… has
promoted growth by enhancing the labor supply and by injecting an additional
dose of entrepreneurship and dynamism into the urban labor market (Bloom and
Williamson, 1997)” (7). Moreover, migrant families have increased the diversity
of trade resources and enhanced economic interconnection between China’s urban
areas (Chan 174). (Tuñón 5). Notably, the migration of families has been an
important way for rural Chinese to catch up to the living standards enjoyed by
many urban residents (Messinis and Cheng 6). Their journeys have been observed
by many as the “the world’s largest ever peacetime migration” (Amnesty
International). According to census data, the percentage of Chinese living in cities
between 1990 and 2005 increased from 26.4% to a staggering 43% (CNBS, 1991,
Central Intelligence Agency reports that as of 2010 at least 47% of the total
Chinese population now live in urban areas (”East and Southeast Asia: China”).

Yet these large populations of migrants in Chinese urban areas are placed
at a notable disadvantage in terms of their access to vital social services due to
their rural classification under the hukou household registration system. Through
the national government policy of hukou, residents are separated into distinct
classes of citizens with differing levels of access to fundamental public services
(Young 141). The original place of registration documentation is highly important, because a rural resident may hold an urban hukou and an urban resident may hold a rural hukou (Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada). Original place of registration is disconnected from the education and healthcare needs of the residents, however, resulting in a system described by academics and international human rights groups as directly “discriminatory in nature” (Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada).

As the Rural Education Action Project of the Stanford School of Education observes, “Without an urban hukou, migrants and their families have had limited access to housing, social security, legal advice…and education” (“Education for Migrant Children”). Across many different urban areas, the existing household registration system is reported as being largely incompatible with the needs of (rural hukou) migrant families for healthcare and education (Yi). A 1985 government policy certainly relaxed hukou so migrant families could be eligible to apply for temporary urban hukou which would give them access to more public resources (Young 148-149). Yet most migrant families are unable to pay the fees and meet the legal requirements necessary to obtain even a temporary residence permit and are therefore vulnerable to fines and forcible removal by urban authorities (Amnesty International.)

Although migrant families have been a vital labor source for Chinese cities, their movement has caused notable concern for the Chinese state. For one, Chinese authorities are worried about a significant decline in agricultural output in rural areas experiencing high rates of farmland abandonment (Chan 176). Many
peasants and their families have left farming in search of work in cities because of the dramatic disparities in the standards of living and employment opportunities between the countryside and urban areas (Tan). The resulting decreases in food crop output are problematic in light of rising national food prices and poor Chinese spending nearly half their income on sustenance (Medlock). Although China has changed enormously since the Great Famine of 1959-1961, the millions of Chinese who died due to food shortages during that time remain seared into the collective memory of the nation (Kane).

Accordingly, attempts of the Chinese government to discourage the presence of migrant families in metropolitan areas through the hukou registration system have some merits. Importantly, disincentives for migration provided by the household registration system help channel labor flows to cities that need them while diverting them away from areas which are already overcapacity (Chan and Zhang 830). Manipulating population flows appear to aid the modern Chinese state in its goals of social stability by helping prevent city infrastructure such as transportation from becoming overburdened by rapid influxes of migrants (Chan 175). Furthermore, the registration system has deep roots in Chinese history as an important tool for economic planning and building close state-society relationships (Chan 168). Hukou may be traced back through the Communist era all the way to the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.) as an indispensible way to create state stability and local accountability (Chan 168). Even though the widespread maintenance of the registration system may be appropriate to ease the
burden of destination cities, the way it exacerbates China’s rapidly expanding inequalities between migrant and non-migrant families raises troubling questions.

The *hukou* registration system has had justifiable intentions and historical precedent, but its continued use has prevented migrant workers’ children from receiving education equitable to that of non-migrant students in China’s cities. The *hukou* system has resulted in a government-mandated limitation on the education accessible to urban residents who lack permanent or temporary urban *hukou*. For example, lack of permanent resident status hinders youth with rural *hukou* from taking important tests such as university entrance exams in urban areas (Tuñón 15). In order to sit for essential high school entrance exams, the migrant students I taught at Fenfa Primary Schools in Shanghai will be required to return to their rural hometowns. The principal of Fenfa, Fang Yuan Zhang, explained that because the schools in the countryside have different testing requirements than the city, all the migrant children who need to leave Shanghai to take their exams are at disadvantage compared to their urban *hukou* peers. In attempting to create disincentives for rural workers to migrate to urban areas, the Chinese government has hampered the educational opportunities of a large population of migrating youth.

While the implementation of *hukou* policies by localities has generally made it more difficult for migrant families to gain access to education, the potential to change their socio-economic status by moving to cities often outweighs such obstacles. Coastal cities and those with river-accessible ports are particularly attractive to migrants because of their advantageous economic trading
positions (Yusuf and Saich 18). Thus, migrant workers continue to come to cities in search of work despite the lack of social services. Many of them bring their children, because they hope that their progeny may also gain from the exciting possibilities that urban areas seem to offer. In 2006 alone, 20 million of 43 million school-age children of migrant workers migrated with their parents (United Nations Children’s Fund) (Zhichao 299). Once migrant families have moved from the countryside to an urban area, however, they often continue to migrate in hopes of finding a higher standard of living for their family. When surveyed about why they had changed city schools which accept migrant students, migrant children noted following their parents’ work flow as one of the top reasons (Hong, Dongping & Yang 3). Accordingly, the education of migrant students is typically unstable because changes in their parents’ employment.

While market reforms lessening withdrawal of state control over business have granted Chinese citizens more economic freedom, they have also amplified problems resulting from employment insecurity among migrant families. Powerful shifts away from the communist “iron rice bowl” of job protection have increased employment instability (Cheng 77). Consequently, it has become more difficult for migrant workers to find steady work (Yip 71). Migrant laborers are often constrained to taking unstable jobs and face greater risk of being laid off than do registered city residents (Hussain 5). When lacking employment stability even for low paying jobs and frustrated about urban inequalities, migrant families are more likely to contribute to social unrest (Chan 176). As Hong Kong University Scholar Czeslaw Tubilewicz observes, “While the causes of social
unrest in contemporary China are numerous… rising economic inequalities… is the main source of the increasing discontent among the Chinese citizenry” (6). If many youth within the migrant population continue to be unemployed and lack education as is the current trend, there is the notable potential that they will turn to crime or stirring up political unrest (Solinger 256). Challenges to the legitimacy of the Chinese government in the form of protest are particularly a threat from unemployed workers with little to lose (Tang 4). Notably, migrants are unable to access poverty relief and unemployment benefits designated for Chinese urban populations (Hussain 5). Without jobs or opportunities to better their living situations, the question must be asked what alternatives are migrant youth left with? In lacking equitable employment, healthcare, and education opportunities, underprivileged migrant families have a worrisome potential to constrain the nation’s future economic and political viability.

When they arrive in urban areas, rural migrant students face discrimination by government officials and permanent city residents. One of the migrant students I taught in Beijing described his transition from the countryside to city as “the scariest thing in my whole life,” because of the hostility his family faced when they arrived (Anthony). Significant socioeconomic divisions between permanent city residents and many migrant families who have relocated to urban areas are enhanced by cultural perceptions about wealth being an indicator of social status (Pan 1, 87-91). Consequently, the schooling of which would enable to find gain migrant workers’ children to overcome prejudice and gain future employment in urban communities has become a critical social justice issue for
II. The Need for Education to Transform Urban Migrant Poverty

Educating migrant workers’ children is highly important for Chinese society to ensure that migrants, an important segment of China’s next generation of workers and leaders, do not slip through the cracks to become a stratified class of urban poor. As Chinese education researcher Cheng Kai-Ming aptly observes, “Education… is a very sensitive area which reflects the transformation of Chinese society. However, research on China’s education has received much less attention that it deserves” (85). The education of migrant workers’ children is an issue that demands the Chinese government’s attention in light of the instability that could result if these youth are not assisted. Many migrant parents have the option of leaving their children behind but do not wish to do so because of fear of the possible negative results of splitting their families apart (“Education for Migrant Workers’ Children”). Faced with millions of children on the move with their parents, the Chinese government cannot turn the clock back on market reforms and instead must move forward to construct policy effectively addressing education needs of poor migrant workers’ children living in cities. Considering the stress put on urban institutions by poor migrant students, a debate about how to implement migrant education policy continues within national and local levels of Chinese government and society (Guo 12).
Migrant families in urban areas serve as a particular source of stress for the Chinese government because their presence illuminates widening inequalities. The household registration system has had a disproportionally harmful effect on the education of migrant workers’ children, because it automatically separates their socio-economic status from those of their urban hukou peers. Professors Kam Wing Chan and Li Zhang argue that the persistence of this government policy has created “two ‘castes’” with immensely different opportunities as well as “a chasm in Chinese society [which] produced and reproduced social segregation and social disparity” (830). The hukou system has perpetuated a dualistic structure within education which has ripple effects into the social status and well-being migrant workers’ children and their families. When surveyed in 2008 about their feelings of injustice concerning patterns of educational inequality in China, migrant workers in cities held more feelings of injustice than did rural residents (Han and Whyte 204). Political scientists, Han and Whyte attribute this to rural people and farmers being less likely to see the significant inequalities in economic prosperity and living standards (204).

The position of poor migrant students in Chinese cities accentuates their comparisons to others and in turn, their awareness of unequal status at a time of widening wealth gaps in society. These comparisons are especially common in the context of modern Chinese cities, because of the rising incomes and associated elitism that is prevalent among the richer segments of the population (Solinger 259). Unfortunately, poor migrant workers’ children often face social stigma for their family’s lower standard of living when residing in cities. As Zheng Hong,
the founder of non-governmental organization-run Dandelion High School for migrant children in Beijing observes, “people tend to look down upon the children of migrant workers because they are poor” (Yingqi). In this quote, Hong deftly touches on a core ethical issue surrounding the education of migrant workers’ children. With contemporary Chinese society viewing socio-economic status as an indicator of individual worth, access to schooling which enables future employment is vital to grant migrant children social mobility.

The urban poverty of migrant families which fuels the Chinese government’s fear of instability is rooted in trends of migration to cities whose resources are not sufficient to accommodate rapid population influxes. Widening economic inequalities in China are linked to uneven development between the country’s multitude of regions, each of which has had varying degrees of access to trade and government investment (Tubilewicz 7). In response to international pressure to open up its economy, the Chinese government relaxed its control over the economy and opened its markets to foreign investment (Yip 74). Yet coastal provinces have received more attention by Chinese governance than interior and western locations starting with the introduction of Special Economic Zones (Wei 20). Such market reforms certainly created new employment opportunities (Cheng 78), but also sparked migrations towards cities so dramatic that urban infrastructure has been unable to keep up resulting in many migrant families becoming urban poor (Chan 166). While migrant labor has been necessary to fuel China’s economic booms, it has also come with the risks of having a considerable number of migrant workers’ families living in urban poverty.
An important way to prevent urban inequalities and employment instabilities from increasing to the point that they could cause regime collapse is to increase investments in the education of China’s poor migrants. When children in China do not receive education they lose from the start because they become less able to compete with other citizens for jobs. If migrant youth do not have access to education it is likely that skills critical for employment such as literacy will drop and in turn hinder China’s development (Mackerras 121). Due to the fact that migrant families are a significant growing subgroup of Chinese metropolitan areas, transforming their situation from one of poverty to that of an educated and employed class of citizens benefits local economy and community wellbeing (Zhichao 299). Notably, the career opportunities of Chinese students are very sensitive to the education they receive (Cheng 85).

Accordingly, ensuring that the education of poor migrant students be roughly equitable to their non-migrant peers in urban areas is quite important for tackling inequalities. Unfortunately, Chinese education systems are plagued by education gaps resulting from significant disparities in the quality of education resources and teachers available (Cheng 75). Although access to education within China has notably increased in the last several decades, inequalities are widening between the schooling of rich citizens and poor students such as migrants (Wei 3-5).

Expanding the education of migrant workers’ children is important for the legitimacy of the national and local Chinese governments due to the popular relevance of schooling for traditional and contemporary Chinese philosophy. As
University of Hawaii Professor Jing Guo concludes, “as one of significant welfare benefits given in Chinese society, education traditionally has been emphasized as the most important way to upward mobility and a better life” (7). In fact, the number of Chinese who believe it is essential to invest in their children’s education has risen over the last several decades (Mackerras 209). By both Confucian and Communist ideologies, education has been marked as a fundamental concern for contemporary and future China (Mackerras 209). As celebrated Chinese Scholar C.K. Yang observes, Buddhism and Taoism influence culture which helps connect citizens to social institutions such as education (Tang 3-4). Access to education has deep cultural roots and persists as a recognized framework for personal and collective advancement.

Notably, the Chinese government has responded to public concerns about the schooling migrant students with a series of policies aimed at removing obstacles education access. With the noticeable presence of migrants in overcapacity cities, the education of migrant workers’ children has been recognized by Chinese government and society as a critical social problem (Yi). Policies such as the 1986 Compulsory Education Law have focused on universalizing 9-year education for Chinese youth (Guo 2). Furthermore, public schools in cities have begun opening their doors to migrant children over the last decade as long as the students pay certain fees (Guo 4). Notably, the 2003 Notice to Improve Education of Children of Rural Migrant Workers also argued for a greater inclusion of migrant students in urban public schools by saying that the schooling of migrant workers’ children should brought up to national education
objectives and standards (Guo 8). These reforms were recognized as important steps towards updating the Chinese education system to be more accessible and useful to migrant and non-migrant students alike.

Yet the large obstacles exist to the effective implementation of equitable education for migrant children stemming from the structure of government funding policies. With the national reform of the late 1970s and early 1980s, state finance in social welfare and protection was cut significantly (Dong 139). As Hong Kong University Scholar Czeslaw Tubilewicz observes, “the widening gap—resulting from market reforms—between the haves and have-nots has transformed China from one of the most egalitarian societies in the world during the Mao era into currently one of the most unequal” (6). Moreover, local governments are burdened with the primary responsibility of funding the education migrant children (Guo 6). This financial decentralization accentuates divides between poor and wealthy localities which have uneven levels of resources for education finance (Cheng 74-75). A decentralized education financing system combined with the maintenance of a household registration system (hukou) fosters a situation where registered urban children are given preference over poor migrant youth. Lack of equitable entitlement to education financing for migrant has created notable gaps between the enrollment and quality of schooling of migrant and non-migrant students in Chinese cities (“Education for Migrant Workers’ Children”). The reality is that government polices to reform migrant schooling have not been sufficient to narrow gaps in educational resources between the children of permanent residents versus those of migrant workers.
III. Reliance on Civil Society for Help

The changing role of governance within Chinese economy and society over the last forty years has altered the way in which the government expects its citizens to receive social services such as education. While codifying compulsory public education laws, the Chinese state has also encouraged the education system become more privatized (Mackerras 207). This process of privatization in China has reduced direct government control over education by allowing both profit-seeking and charity groups to fill the places previously held by state-run schooling (Yip 51-54). As Chinese education scholar Cheng Kai-Ming observes, “local communities and non-education sectors have become new actors in the education arena” (85). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), synonymous with “non-profit” or “not-for-profit” organizations, have become particularly prevalent. As Chinese civil society researcher Wang Hongying observes, “the gradual withdrawal of the state from direct management of the economy has changed the relationship between state and society, and created both the need and the opportunity for NGOs to develop” (Wang 103). According to government statistics, between 1989 and 2003 the number of registered non-governmental civil society organizations increased at an annual growth rate of 34% (He 162).

With decreasing government investment and control, responsibility for much of the provision of education has noticeably shifted to a rapidly growing number of local and international NGOs in China. As civil society scholar Stuart Brown observes, “transnational NGOs can furnish financial and non-material resources that the government welcomes, as civil society occupies the vacuum left
by the retreating service-providing role of the state” (Brown 98). In this sense, NGOs are seen as “gap fillers” or organizations which are needed to fill voids left by the retreat of the Chinese state in the delivery of the social service of education (Hasmath and Hsu 1). Accordingly, not-for-profit organizations which are charged with aiding migrant workers’ children make up an important sector of China’s growing civil society network (Steele).

Non-governmental organizations have appeared to the Chinese government as a highly useful way to mobilize societal resources to fund the social welfare of migrants. The Chinese state has integrated a “welfare pluralism” approach whereby the sources and responsibility for social services are spread among a number of different organizations (Yip 73). Most NGOs are defined as either social government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) staffed by civil servants or more autonomous “popular” NGOs run by private individuals (Lu 89). By fostering the growth of such organizations, the Chinese state has expanded the variety of groups empowered to provide social welfare (Zheng and Fewsmith 3). A strong advantage of using these types of organizations to found urban schools for migrant children is their ability to garner considerable backing from government institutions, businesses, and Chinese citizens (Lu 89). As an administrator for the NGO-run Bai Nian Vocational School for migrant students in Beijing, Li Jing observed that a culture is emerging where not only government officials, but also local businesses and citizens are expected to participate in helping NGOs assist disadvantaged groups such as migrant workers’ children. Not only have Chinese NGOs marshaled local
businesses and communities to assist migrant families with basic healthcare and education needs, but they have also gone so far as to build schools specifically for migrant workers’ children (Li Jing).

While the number of NGOs focused on migrant education in China has increased notably over the last two decades, these organizations are plagued by institutional obstacles which hinder their development. The growth and capacities of NGOs operating in China to act as charitable organizations is particularly restricted by Chinese government policies (Lu 91). As a Senior Research Fellow at the China Center for Comparative Politics and Economics in Beijing, Zengke He observes, “negative institutional functions cause structural weaknesses…such as an inability to grow and expand, a shortage of fund, low capacity, low efficiency, and poor internal management” (He 163). He notes that these conditions prevent NGOs in China from growing beyond the status of mere “transitional organizations” (He 163). NGOs attempting to increase education opportunities for migrant workers’ children face a complex system of institutional requirements aimed at restricting and controlling their development (He 161). They are encouraged to play a greater role in functions such as poverty reduction while having no influence at all with politically sensitive issues such as human rights (Zheng and Fewsmith 3). Navigating effective partnerships between authoritarian politics and civil society organizations which serve migrant youth remains a key challenge for the ability of NGOs in China to increase education opportunities for migrant workers’ children. Accordingly, an important test of the Chinese state is whether it can develop practices of good governance with respect
to NGOs so that civil society organizations are autonomous enough to be effective but guided enough to remain accountable.

**IV. The Global Significance of Educating Chinese Migrant Youth**

Producing policies which effectively empower migrant youth is not only important for the domestic reputation of the Chinese government, but also for its international legitimacy. The Chinese state is being challenged by international NGO watchdog groups such as Amnesty International which are keeping track of the treatment of migrant families in relation to the government’s commitment to international treaties. Migrant education researchers George Messinis and Enjiang Cheng observe, “as major players in world economic development, domestic migrant workers offer researchers the opportunity to learn about the process of education in the developing world” (4). Transnational NGOs observe that the Chinese state has signed The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), agreeing to ensure freedom from discrimination for its workers. Yet they also bring attention to the fact that much of the current *hukou* system facilitates discrimination on the basis of social origin in violation of the Covenant (Amnesty International). The treatment of Chinese migrant youth is noted to be of international concern because of how the children are barred from receiving equitable education by the continued use of the household registration system (Postiglione 15).

Whether the Chinese government can effectively enforce education rights for its migrants is an important international challenge to Chinese polity. As many
international non-governmental organizations focused on education access in China are aware, a fundamental right to education has been built into the Chinese National Constitution (Amnesty International). Article 46 of The Constitution of China of 1998 amended in 2004 states “Citizens of the People’s Republic of China have the duty as well as the right to receive education… the state promotes the all-round moral, intellectual, and physical development of children and young people” (“National Constitutional Provisions – China | Right to Education”). Notably, the right to education in The Constitution of China helps create pressure on the Chinese government to implement education policies effectively and cooperate with NGOs focused migrant schooling in order to attain more respect within the international community (Yin 533). Transnational NGOs have a large impact on the awareness of the international community about the Chinese government and their compliance with social service and human rights policies they have signed (Yin 533).

The Chinese state is being challenged to better coordinate with local governmental and non-governmental organizations so that enough resources are committed migrant education sector. As a result of education privatization reforms, the Chinese state has spent significantly less of a percentage of its GDP on education resources that many other industrial developed countries and developing countries (Mackerras 207). In fact, data as recent as 2009 shows that public expenditure on education in China remains quite low at 1.91%, lagging behind many other countries (see Fig. 2) (UIS 2009). Whether the Chinese state is able to boost public expenditure on education in order to improve the
employment possibilities of its migrant families is a concern to other countries whose economies rely on their labor force (Feng Xu 50). Without having their rights to education enforced, migrant children are vulnerable to becoming a part of child labor operations which endanger the legitimacy of the Chinese government (Lepillez 60).

Better collaborating with NGOs marshalling Chinese civil society resources to improve migrant education is an important way for the Chinese government to ensure migrant students do not drop out of school. As scholars Shahid Yusuf and Tony Saich astutely observe, “investing in human capital is the best insurance against unemployment and crime” (24). As a powerful driver of human capital, education provides many opportunities for migrant youth to become healthy contributors to Chinese society. By supporting efforts that are
working to close gaps between migrant and non-migrant students in urban areas, the Chinese government has the power to increase its domestic and international legitimacy.

The capacity of the Chinese central government to more effectively coordinate with migrant education NGOs is a significant indicator to the international community of China’s desire to close widening inequalities in education and standards of living. Non-governmental organizations are increasing acting as transitional collaborative mediums for government, businesses, and volunteers to assist disadvantaged populations around the world (Lu 89). China’s engagement of major inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) suggests to other countries that it values the use of international NGOs to tackle development gaps (Zheng and Fewsmith 5). The Chinese government has chosen to include itself in international bodies such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) whose intentions include “work programs to develop human resources on issues ranging from education…to capacity building” (“Human Resources Development Group). The Chinese state, however, remains concerned that international NGOs may present threats to stability by working within sensitive topics such as education (Zheng and Fewsmith 7). As Chinese governance is still authoritarian, cooperating with semi-autonomous domestic organizations presents a key challenge for the state to prove it is engaging meaningful social reform (Zheng and Fewsmith 8). It is important that the national Chinese government continue to take effective policy steps towards more effective relationships with NGOs
tackling domestic education gaps so that they can show the world that they are willing to engage civil society efforts to decrease expanding inequalities. I argue that such reform would also increase the international legitimacy of migrant education NGOs, allowing them to gain more donations and volunteers from the public to help underprivileged students.

Chapter 2: Promising Migrant Education Reforms Hindered

I. Education Policies Concerning Migrant Worker’s Children

The Chinese central government certainly has not turned a blind eye to the issue of migrant worker’s children schooling and has instituted a number of prominent reforms over the last decade addressing the problem. In 1986, the Compulsory Education Law of the Peoples Republic of China was codified and stated that “local people’s governments at various levels shall rationally set up primary schools and junior middle schools to enroll children and adolescents in schools near places where their residence is registered” (Zhichao 304). The creation of this policy would seem to be a strong message from the national government to Chinese society it is an important priority for all Chinese youth to have access to education. After the formation of the 1986 policy, however the methodology to achieve the education of migrant worker’s children continued to prompt much public concern and media debate (Dong 142). In response to concern about rising inequalities in education, scholars Chunping Han and Martin King Whyte note that both Chinese Communist Party leader Hu Jintao (see Fig. 3) and Premier Web Jiabao stated they want to change the nation “from an emphasis
on ‘growth at all costs’ to ‘growth with equity’ and to develop China into a harmonious society” (194). These public messages combined with a stated policy of compulsory education created pressure to enact policies enhancing the education of migrant youth and engage education institutions at local levels in order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of Chinese citizens (Li Jing). To the credit of the Chinese national government, significant pieces of policy continued to emerge from Beijing years with the education of migrant worker’s children firmly in mind.

Yet attempting to change the welfare of millions of school-age migrant children is easier said than done. In 1998, the newly-formed Ministry of Education set forth the Interim Measures on Schooling for Children among the Floating Population in order to attempt to deal with the large numbers of urban migratory students not receiving education (Yan 4). Within Article 7 of the policy, it stipulates that migrant children should enter and be given access to public primary or secondary schools (Yan 4). In doing so, the 1998 policy confirmed that the governments of cities hosting migrant children are to be “primarily responsible” for ensuring that the migrant students have access to education resources (Guo 6). Furthermore, the measure insists that public schools in cities have the onus of meeting educational needs of migrant students (Guo 6).
Problematically, however, urban public schools charge extra fees for migrant students that create significant barriers preventing many migrant youth from receiving schooling (Yan 5.) This “user-pays principle” has persisted as a way for schools to legitimately charge fees for education (Mackerras 207). As most migrant families hover around the poverty line, however, being charged fees for sending their children to school by localities was and is still too large of a burden to bear.

In response to pressures to remove fees to increase access to education for migrant workers’ children, the Ministry of Education created a promising policy called the 2003 Notice to Improve Education of Children of Rural Migrant Workers. Also known as the “Two-exemptions and one subsidy” policy, it attempted “to reduce financial costs of schooling to families for nine years of compulsory education in order to expand access” (Wong 88). This reform certainly alleviated the financial hardships for some migrant families, but it did not entirely remove education finance complications for migrant students (Dong 144). Due to the temporary status of most migrant families, the fees that public schools could charge still rendered their children’s education unaffordable (Dong 144). As Professor Fan Xianzuo of Central China Normal University notes, “despite the fact that various cities have been implementing the 2-main-responsibility policy through abolishing or reducing these fees, school expenditure is still the most burdensome for rural workers” (324). The problems school fees present for migrant education is exacerbated by the household registration system which require migrant families pay for their healthcare when
living in cities without urban *hukou* (Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada). As a result, spending on education must compete with other important expenditures for migrant families. In situations where migrants have to choose between solving the immediate health issues of their family members and financing long-term education of their children, it is not too difficult to guess which would often take priority for funding. While the 2003 policy was an important step towards making the education of migrant youth more affordable, it failed to effectively address problematic schooling expenses for poor migrants which still prevented them from enrolling in urban schools.

At first glance, the latest major National People’s Congress policy to improve the education of migrant worker’s children was a groundbreaking maneuver. The purported purpose of the 2006/2007 *Free Rural Compulsory Education Law* was “to take on nine years of compulsory education financed by public resources; to reduce financial costs to families in order to pay for access” (Wong 86). In doing so, the Chinese government would help fund the education of the schooling of students from poor families by providing them with school fee subsidies (Wong 86). Problematically, however, this policy also stipulates that school-age youth can only attend compulsory schooling “in places where their parents or other statutory guardians work or reside” (Zhichao 304) In other words, the policy does not guarantee migrant worker’s children to receive compulsory education in places others than their guardians’(rural *hukou*) registered residence. The result is that millions of migrant families who are living without urban *hukou*
status as unregistered residents in cities are still at problematic disadvantages in terms of schooling opportunities for their children.

**II. Challenges to Implementation: Localism**

The institutional barriers surrounding poor urban migrants have made implementing national migrant education policies quite difficult for local city governments. A complex fiscal system is inherent to the Chinese government, preventing many central-government or “top-down” reforms from being implemented effectively (Zhong 158). Although the authoritarian Chinese state appears strong, it frequently lacks the ability to successfully implement its policies at local levels (Zheng and Fewsmith 8). The dense Chinese government administrative hierarchy creates a system where responsibilities are constantly being handed off to other levels of government where resources for social services such as education are siphoned off at each level they pass through (Wong 87). This problematic structure, in turn, spawns a weak system of education policy implementation accountability for local governments because they are administratively distant enough from Beijing to evade responsibilities to actuate compulsory education (Zhichao 300). Unfortunately, the resulting non-compliance with education laws by local governments unfairly punishes migrant children who seek the education that the Chinese Constitution tells them is rightfully theirs.

The paramount issue highlighted by the implementation failures of national government education policies is the difficultly of effectively
coordinating with regional institutions to actuate national policies at local levels. The 1986 *Compulsory Education Law of the Peoples Republic of China*, places the responsibility of compulsory education on regional governments to administer supervise county governments to implement the laws (Dong 143). As Professor Jing Guo observes, “as a result of the decentralized reform of education financing and administration, local governments became the primary resource of compulsory education” (Guo 2-3). The Chinese state decided to shift the fiscal responsibilities of building and maintaining schools from high levels of government to townships and villages (Mackerass 207). This decentralization of managing and actuating education policy seemed to be common sense due to the fact that China includes a multitude of localities with different regional characteristics and educational needs.

Several major problems of the financial decentralization reforms, however, soon emerged. The policies of the central government operate on the assumption that these broad national education policies can effectively prompt regional governments who experiencing influxes of migrant students to effectively integrate them into their education systems (Zhichao 300). Yet the specific responsibilities of local government entailed by the compulsory education system are not clearly articulated (Yi). The central government education reforms of the 1980s suggest both local government and community organizations should share the burden of fund-raising, but did not specifically describe how to do so (Mackerras 207). As such, the question of how these localities pay for the education of migrant students is the source of political tensions. Yet how this
question is answered will largely determine whether these Chinese education policies may be successfully implemented (Dong 143). The lack of local government financing capabilities and action in light of the national policy of “the governments of immigration regions play a leading role” presents a huge barrier to the education of migrant youth (Zhichao 299-300). Serious gaps exist between central government migrant education policy goals and the financial capacities of local governments to accomplish them. Accordingly, the greatest challenge to the success of compulsory education programs in China is inadequate local government funding of schools with migrant student populations.

The household registration system policies combined with financial decentralizations of the Chinese governmental structures results in a lack of resources available to ensure education access for migrant children. Even though the Chinese Compulsory Education Law insists that youth between 6 and 15 years of age should be given the right to nine-year education, the national government does not ensure that local governments will be able to fund this promise (Guo 3). Unfortunately, localities’ budgets for funding education resources are tied to the number of permanent residents, or those with the local hukou. Accordingly, the fact that migrant children have rural hukou prevents resources from being allocated to their education by their host city government (Guo 3). In addition, there is no transfer of funding for education from the original rural localities of migrant children to their destination cities when they move (Yi). As a result, many Chinese cities experiences disconnects between their available resources for education funding and needs of the migrant students living there.
By decentralizing the responsibility of funding migrant schools, the national Chinese government created a situation where inequalities between schools were bound to emerge. In terms of budgetary expenditures, China is the most decentralized country in the world with local governments accounting for seventy percent total expenditure shares (Wong 77). As Professor Christine Wong of Oxford University noted in 2009, “counties, districts, and townships together account for 61 percent of public expenditures on education, including all basic education in the rural sector” (77). Yet, the compulsory education paradigm invariably favors the localities whose revenues are high enough that they can afford to setup special migration education funds. Accordingly, uneven levels of economic development between regions result in unequal levels of migrant education provision (Dong 143). Not only do migrant children face the institutional barriers to their education caused by the household registration system, but also funding obstacles resulting by government funding policy implementation failures.

**III. Challenges to Growth: Benefit Conflicts & Social Stigma**

With limited resources available for education finance, local city governments are forced to make difficult trade-offs between migrant and non-migrant schools. Such struggles stem from urban governments being required by national education policies to provide compulsory education but not being given the financial backup to do so (Dong 155). Having interacted with urban government officials as an administrator for the Bai Nian Vocational School for
migrant students, Li Jing reported that spending city resources on the education of children with urban hukou typically takes priority over migrant newcomers whose welfare seems less of an immediate concern (Li Jing). Investing in the long term economic future by increasing the education of a key segment of the urban poor is challenged by more short-term political goals of pleasing local permanent residents. As a result, there are notable gaps between the education resources allocated to permanent resident (urban hukou) students and migrant (rural hukou) students in China’s cities (“Education for Migrant Workers’ Children”). Consequently, responsibilities for funding the education of migrant students are often shifted to migrant families even though many of them cannot afford to pay (Dong 155).

Negative attitudes towards migrants held by urban officials and permanent also prevent national education policies from being implemented effectively. Migrant children are often marginalized because they are viewed by permanent urban residents as causing over-crowding and posing potential threats to their jobs (Li Jing). Victoria Steele, the Program Coordinator of Stepping Stones, the migrant education NGO I volunteered for in Shanghai, explained that perceptions held by residents that migrant families are undesirable are reinforced by the hukou system which clearly differentiates between those with registered local hukou (permanent residents) and those who have rural hukou (migrants). Allocation of financial resources by urban governments to migrant education is challenged by community members who view migrant students as unfairly competing for benefits with local registered students (Dong 155). Furthermore, some permanent
residents argue that migrant families are imposing their demands unfairly on the city, because they are be entitled to education and healthcare benefits by their home localities (Steele).

Unfortunately, migrant status in modern Chinese society is often considered to be an important indicator of social position. The migrant students I taught in Beijing such as Carl, Owen, David, and Molly described being identified by their accents and customs as “outsiders” and feeling discriminated against by other urban residents. Moreover, my students reported that their families are looked down upon as socially inferior because they work low-end jobs. Yet with few employment options open to rural migrants they are forced to take jobs which have minimal pay and have few benefits (Guo 4). As a result of being deemed to have a lower socio-economic status in urban areas, migrant families are often excluded and snubbed as being outsiders (Pan 1, 87-91). As Erving Goffman illustrates in his book, *Social Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, individuals with what is perceived to be an “undesired differentness” not entirely aligned with the norms of wider society face social stigma (4-5). Due to their rural *hukou* status they often face negative attitudes from urban communities and discriminatory government policies (Messinis and Cheng 7). The principal for the Fenfa Primary School for migrant children in Shanghai, Fang Yuan Zhang noted that many permanent residents did not feel compassionate towards the plight of migrant youth without education access and consequently are less likely to support policies which reserve funding to assist the migrant community. The notable 2006/2007 *Free Rural Compulsory Education Law* strengthens this
prejudice against migrant students by allowing city officials to provide 9 years of education only to students with permanent resident status.

Ironically, the success stories of migrants becoming wealthy entrepreneurs have limited the compassion of some registered urban residents towards migrant children. Even though millions of migrant workers’ and their children lack equitable access to healthcare and education resources, migrant population is so large and diverse that some families are not plagued by these problems. Statistics indicate that some migrant workers are not below poverty line standards and may in fact even be better-off than permanent city residents (Hussain 19-20). When I was teaching at the Fenfa Primary School for migrant workers’ children summer program in Shanghai, one the students’ parents would often pull up in one shiny vehicle or another, showing an appearance of wealth despite the poverty of the local migrant communities. Unfortunately, the minority of migrants who are wealthy of which this parent was a part of may help reinforce negative attitudes of registered urban residents towards poor migrants (F. Zhang). Permanent city residents may think that if migrants haven’t been successful it is due to their personal work ethic rather than because of government policy failure. Although questionable, such a cultural prejudice is not completely unheard of in the U.S. where some people argue that certain classes of urban poor are in poverty situations due to their lack of hard work rather than inadequate access to social services such as education.

Unfortunately, the presence of civil society channels in which urban hukou Chinese can become more sensitive migrant education issues has not occurred
until relatively recently. NGOs in China have begun to more actively organize campaigns to increase the awareness of urban Chinese about the difficult lives of migrant students living in their cities (Steele). The success stories of some migrant families are important to encourage migrant students that socio-economic transformation is possible (Li Jing). Yet such success may also help preserve social stigma around migrants associated with the notion that they are poor because they do not work hard enough (F. Zhang). The fact remains that a substantial percentage of migrants living in cities are quite poor compared to registered urban residents (Hussain 21). Appreciating the difficulty of migrating to cities with non-urban hukou by volunteering through NGOs to help the migrant community helps give Chinese with urban hukou a more compassionate perspective (Steele). Accordingly, it is of great importance to the fair treatment of migrant students that the Chinese government implements institutional approaches which encourage NGO inclusion of permanent residents in civic engagement helping underprivileged migrant youth access educational opportunities.

Chapter 3: Attempting to Measure The Gaps in Education

I. General Status of Enrollment of Migrant Youth

Gaps in education resources between migrant workers’ children and the youth lucky enough to be born into families with urban hukou are widening. As the Research Education Action Project sponsored by a number of leading research institutes such as Stanford University and Tsinghua University explains, “there is
a growing segment of the population that does not fit neatly into the rural-urban dichotomy traditionally characterizing the economy and the school system…the children of the rural-to-urban migrants that are flooding China’s cities have fallen into a conspicuous gap in the provision of public education” (“Education for Migrant Workers’ Children”). As of 2009, the level of education of migrants was higher than rural laborers, but remained notably lower than the schooling permanent city residents (Messinis and Cheng 8). Serious inequalities in the accessibility and quality of education resources persist between permanent urban students and migrant youth.

In order to give a sense of the gaps in education that migrant workers’ children are facing in a range of urban areas I have chosen to examine a set of surveys including cities with significant migrant communities in China. By referring to general trends, particularly in Beijing, I describe level of education gaps as (1) Percentage of migrant workers' children enrolled out of total eligible migrant population, and (2) Quality of the private schools in which migrant students enrolled compared to the public schools which non-migrant students are enrolled in. Although such a sample is nowhere near exhaustive or entirely representative in how it describes education gaps, it displays the degree to which the schooling of urban migrants lags behind that of their non-migrant peers. The data suggests that the quality of education migrant children receive at private schools is significantly lower than public schools in which students with urban hukou are enrolled.
While quantifying education for migrant students is difficult because of issues with collecting statistics for a range of localities, example figures show the worrisome lack of schooling that is occurring. According to one of the most recent national censuses, China now has a “floating population” of over 0.12 billion parents who are migrating with approximately 20 million school-age children (Yi). As of 2005, drop-out rates among migrant students were as high as 9.3% with almost 1 million children of the large Chinese migrant community not enrolled in any school (Yi.) In a 2008 sample survey of nine cities including Beijing, approximately 9.6% of migrant children could not afford to go to school; a shocking total of more than two-hundred and sixty thousand students unable to enroll (Xianzuo and Pai 323).

While the number of urban schools for migrant children is on the rise, there still remain large gaps between the total eligible migrant student population and those actually enrolled in these institutions. The Rural Education Action Project (REAP), a research group backed by Stanford University and partnered with a number of leading studies on migrant workers’ children, has produced several notable projects which illustrate how enrollment gaps persist. As these studies note, the number of migrant schools in Beijing has increased notably between the recent years of 1998 and 2008, with institutions tripling in number (see Fig. 4) (“Education for Migrant Workers’ Children”). They also show that while there have been substantial increases in the number of migrant schools and enrolled students, there are still many school-age children not enrolled in any education institutions. In 2006, for example, only 60,000 (or 24%) of the total
eligible population of 320,000 migrant students were enrolled in migrant schools. Certainly a number of the 260,000 school-age migrant children not enrolled in Beijing migrant schools in 2006 may have been able to afford entrance to non-migrant public schools (“Education for Migrant Workers’ Children”). Yet the parents of a substantial number of school-age migrants are stuck in the position of not being able to afford the enrollment of their children in either public schools or private migrant institutions in Beijing (“Education for Migrant Workers’ Children”).

My students Carl and David explained that their parents had decided to move to Beijing because it is known in the migrant community as being one of the best cities for migrant schooling. Yet they faced considerable financial barrier when they arrived. By contrast, the children of permanent residents with urban hukou in Beijing, are automatically entitled to public education and do not have these serious financial obstacles (Li Jing). The studies published by REAP illustrates that even in a city thought of as being one of the most progressive in educating China’s migrant youth Beijing, a considerable number of migrant children contribute to an enrollment gap. When I began researching the number of migrant youth in Beijing not enrolled in any schools, I was greatly saddened to discover there were so many. I realized that the students I was teaching at NGO-run Bai Nian Vocational School in Beijing could have easily been a part of this large population of migrant students unable to receive education. My students explained that if weren’t for the great generosity shown to them by BNVS they would likely be a part of child labor operations.
II. The Substandard Qualities of Private Migrant Schools

Problematically, even when migrant worker’s children do have the opportunity to attend school, they are often unable enroll in institutions with
quality equitable to that of public schools. In the face of numerous fees imposed on migrant students who wish to attend urban public schools, a more affordable option for migrant parents is to send their children to privately-run migrant schools. Private migrant schools have emerged in response to the absence of local government initiatives to create better access to public schools for migrant youth and currently appear to be the best choice for migrant families with no other alternatives (Zhichao 301). With public schools already overcapacity and charging high fees to admit migrant students, entrepreneurs in the early 1990s began setting up private schools to meet the growing demands for the education of migrant children (Dong 144). Many of these schools have been formed by migrant communities that wish to provide education for their children who have been refused access to urban public schools or charged exorbitant fees to enroll (Mallee 98). Trends illuminated by 2010 data released through the National Bureau of Statistics of China show that most migrant students in the surveyed cities including Beijing attended private schools rather than public schools (Hong, Dongping & Yang 3).

Although most migrant families in urban areas have turned to private migrant schools as answers to their call for education access for their children, many of them are disappointed by the failures that frequently pervade these institutions. Privately-run migrant schools in Chinese cities such as Beijing are often illegal and prone to being shut down by local authorities for violating local government building codes. For example, in 2006 the Beijing Haidian District education committee cited concerns of poor safety conditions within 37 schools
for migrant youth and as a result closed all of them, resulting in 15,000 migrant students being displaced (Zhichao 301). These schools are regularly shut down by local officials because they do not meet local urban planning, safety, and educational standards (Mallee 98). According to a 2008 Beijing government statistic, approximately 38% of migrant school children were only able to access private migrant education schools, of which 26% were unlicensed due to quality issues (Xianzuo and Pai 323). The poor quality of many private schools exacerbates the instability of the education of migrant youth by prompting many of them to keep switching schools in hope of better teachers and educational resources (Li Jing). The number of migrant students who transfer between schools is notably larger for those enrolled in private migrant schools than public institutions (Hong, Dongping & Yang 3).

A central reason why private schools for migrants have high rates of student turnover is that leaders of these institutions often prioritize their ability to make a profit over the welfare of their students. Most of the revenue from the small fees that private school administrators charge migrant families go directly to the owners rather than to improving the school facilities and teaching staff (Dong 145). The conditions in private migrant schools are often quite poor with the structures made from cheap building materials and poorly-paid, under-educated teachers instructing overcrowded classes (Dong 145). While I was helping the Shanghai NGO called Stepping Stones coordinate volunteers at several private migrant schools in Shanghai I was dismayed to discover that the administrators of one school were secretly demanding enrollment fees from the parents. An
important condition of the agreement between Stepping Stones and the institution was that the school would not charge any fees for the free English lessons provided by the NGO volunteers. We discovered in hindsight that only a fraction of the students had come to class out of those that were expected because many of their families could not afford the fees being charged to them on the side. To avoid criticism about such costs, the principal lied to the local migrant community that it was Stepping Stones who was requiring payment for the English courses. As a result of the greed and deception of the school officials, many local migrant students were prevented from attending useful classes.

Although cities such as Beijing have led efforts to improve migrant education, the education of most migrant students living in these urban areas still lags behind the schooling of the children of permanent residents. According to statistics released in 2010, migrant youth enrolled in private schools are older on average for their grade than their public school peers (Hong, Dongping & Yang 3). The migrant youth who can go to school typically attend when they are older than the prescribed age and cannot complete their education within the nine compulsory years without high risks of dropping-out beforehand (Xianzuo and Pai 322). To make matters worse, private schools of questionable quality are unlikely to get them back on track in time to pass national exams successfully (Li Jing). As noted in a 2009 study used by the Rural Education Action Project, while the quality of the schooling of public schools for permanent residents in urban and rural areas has been generally improving, the resources of urban institutions for migrant youth have remained relatively poor (see Table 1) (“Education for
Migrant Workers’ Children”). Moreover, even though the quality of private migrant schools in cities is substantially worse than urban public schools, migrant students are still charged a number of relatively expensive fees ("Education for Migrant Workers’ Children"). Consequently, migrant youth are often forced to turn to work at an early age rather than going to schools, because their families are unable to afford expensive private schooling lags behind the schooling of non-migrants (Li Jing).

Table 1
Comparisons of major education components among urban, rural and migrant schools in China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education components (for successful education)</th>
<th>Urban Schools</th>
<th>Rural Schools</th>
<th>Schools for Rural Migrants in Urban Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Good, improving</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>POOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Good, improving</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>POOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Good, under reform</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>POOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition and Mandatory Fees</td>
<td>0 (for in-district students)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>RELATIVELY EXPENSIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of students</td>
<td>Very high (nutrition; parents' care and interest; access to equipment/tutoring)</td>
<td>Still poor (in poor areas, especially)</td>
<td>POOR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While such comparisons observe important aspects of the gaps between the education of migrant and non-migrant students in urban areas, it is important to break these indicators down further. Notably, the quality of teaching in migrant schools is described as comparatively poor, because many educators in these institutions lack the training and accreditation to teach in non-migrant public schools (Han 38). Furthermore, the quality of urban migrant school facilities is
quite poor compared to urban public schools as they generally fail to meet even basic sanitation requirements. Not only do they often lack restrooms, drinking water, heating, and ventilation, but schools for rural migrants in urban areas are also frequently overcrowded (see Fig. 5) (Han 44). In addition, the curriculum of these institutions lacks the uniformity and depth of lesson planning in public schooling and is undermined by a lack of teaching resources to be fully implemented and developed (Han 45). Together, these widespread aspects of urban migrant education point to large gaps between the quality of schooling between migrant and non-migrant students in Chinese cities (“Education for Migrant Workers’ Children”). Considering Chinese education policies have notably failed to eliminate these inequalities, taking effective reactions to address these disparities is important for the government to maintain public legitimacy.

III. Complex Variation in Migrant Education Development

There is no avoiding the enormous challenge of trying to equalize education opportunities in a country as locally and economically diverse as China. When discussing gaps in education between migrant and non-migrant students in urban areas, it is important to note that there are financial disparities between cities in different regions (Guo 9). As Professor Jing Guo observes, “the education resources and school equipment standards are a function of local economy, which
substantially differs between regions” (9). Additionally, there are large differences in the degree to which localities implement national government migrant education policies (Guo 11). There are notable contrast between different geographical regions in migrant populations and how their education is financed and implemented (Cheng 73). Accordingly, it is difficult to draw accurate comparisons between cities with different levels of migrant education policy implementation and economic growth that are experiencing influxes of migrant children.

In order to appreciate the effects of variations in migrant children populations on schooling in cities it is important to compare inter-province migration of migrant students versus intra-province movement. To compare migrant workers’ children education between the countryside and city schools I draw from a set of recent surveys of migrant youth in 10 cities that has been compiled and analyzed by several Chinese scholars. The authors chose several cities to study from West, Interior, and East China, all with migrant education access issues. Beijing, Shanghai, Ningbo, and Suzhou are all notable cities in the East region because they have high numbers of migrants from other provinces (Hong, Dongping and Yang 1). The province of Guangzhou in the southeast of China experienced comparatively high economic growth, attracting large populations of migrant families to its urban centers of Guangzhou, Dongwan, and Shenzhen (Wei 20).

Due to economic reforms targeting coastal cities, the interior and west regions of China feature cities with migrants that typically do not have the same
resources as the East (Chan 171). Wuhan represents a city with a significant number of migrant workers and a subsequent large number of migrant children as well. Unlike Eastern cities, Wuhan has received a particularly high number of migrant students from outside its province (Hong, Dongping and Yang 1). Moreover, schools with migrant children in cities such as Guizhou and Chengdu in the West region of China enroll mostly children from other provinces (Hong, Dongping and Yang 1). Together, these 10 cities drawn from East, Interior, and West China allow us to gain a sense of the scale of the challenge of migrant education how gaps in education between migrant private schools and non-migrant public schools exist in different cities.

Due to particularly high percentages of inter-province migrations, schools in Eastern cities face the difficulty of designing curriculum which is flexible enough to accommodate students with high variations in hometown education backgrounds. Notably, there are high degrees of variation about percentages of intra-province versus inter-province migration between Western and Eastern provinces. Cities in the East such as Beijing, whose percentage of migrant student from other provinces is near 99.8% must prepare for higher influxes of “outsider” children than do Western provinces whose students are mostly intra-province migrants (Hong, Dongping and Yang 1). In fact, the percentage of migrant students coming from other provinces in the surveyed Eastern cities has notably increased by at least 8% between 2005 and 2010 (Hong, Dongping & Yang 1). Although the Western province of Guizhou has also experienced increased inter-
province migration, the percentage of migrants coming from other provinces has decreased in both Wuhan and Chengdu (Hong, Dongping & Yang 1).

Designing curriculum for youth from many different provinces in China was one of toughest challenges I encountered as a volunteer teacher at NGO-supported migrant schools in the Eastern cities of Beijing and Shanghai. Most of the students I taught in Beijing had recently migrated from different areas and thus had received dramatically different levels of English education and types of schooling. The significant variation in the English levels of these migrant students required me to create lessons which could be easily adapted to range of education backgrounds while still remaining relevant to all the students. When I moved to designing curriculum for migrant students in Shanghai, I observed that I was having a very similar experience as when I taught in Beijing. Most of my students came from a number of different hometowns across China with different quality of local education.

Ironically, diversity was the main commonality between the students. When I talked with some of the main teachers of the schools, however, I realized they were not fazed by such high variation in the education backgrounds of their students. They explained that being a part of a migrant education NGO inherently means adapting quickly to such challenges so that the students can learn together quickly to catch up to their non-migrant peers who are receiving quality education in public schools. Accordingly, I realized that migrant education NGOs are a very important practical solution for tackling the worrisome education inequalities in China.
Chapter 4: Efforts of Civil Society to Narrow the Gaps

I. Growing Partnerships to Improve the Education of Migrant Youth

In the face of challenges to the equitable enrollment and education of migrant youth in China’s cities, non-governmental organizations play an important role in marshalling public and private urban resources to create migrant schooling opportunities. As Chinese civil society scholars Reza Hasmath and Jennifer Hsu observe, “NGOs have a strong potential to improve and widen the space for Chinese citizens to engage in the human and social development of the nation” (1). Where private for-profit migrant schools have failed, non-governmental (not-for-profit) organizations which form partnerships with urban community actors have notable opportunities to succeed.

While volunteering as an English teacher at the Beijing branch of Bai Nian Vocational School and interviewing administrators, I learned that the non-profit nature of NGOs such as the Bai Nian Vocational School (BNVS) helps it form political and social relationships which increase access to education for migrant workers’ children. Li Jing, a long-time administrator at BNVS, explained to me that the founder of the school, Yao Li, was able to build the school by gathering support from business associates, government officials, and local volunteers. By creating a non-profit organization after a successful corporate career, Li was able to prompt her business partners, government entities, and Chinese universities to give substantial donations investing in the futures of Beijing’s migrant students. Through maintaining such support, BNVS has been able to provide poor migrants with practical job-training without charging any of the fees normally associated
with private migrant schools (Li Jing). The BNVS students even get free lunch and clothing.

When national and local Chinese governments are willing to assist NGOs such as BNVS which educate migrant youth, they build mutually-legitimating relationships whereby all parties have strong incentives to collaborate. In terms of economics, advancing the education of millions of migrant workers’ children has an important impact on China’s urban and rural economic growth and continued ability to produce brilliant young entrepreneurs. Not only do young migrants create entrepreneurship in urban areas, but they also help increase the living standards and consumptions abilities of rural areas by sending significant percentages of their incomes back to hometowns in the countryside (Yusuf and Saich 6.) With government policies allowing some NGOs to establish regional migrant education branches, successful migrant education models such as the vocational training curriculum BNVS could been effectively replicated. In turn, more migrant children can gain education that boosts their economic competitiveness and entrepreneurship potential.

There are many success stories to show that collaboration between local government, business, and Chinese civil society can dramatically enhance the futures of migrant workers’ children. A popular example used at BNVS to encourage students to dedicate themselves to their education is about an electrician student who came to the school from a very poor family. After interning at an electrical company through BNVS, he was able to save up a substantial amount of money from the job he was offered from the company after
he graduated the migrant high school. With these earnings he opened up a successful noodle shop in Beijing and was able to help lift his family out of poverty. As observed by the Administrator of Curriculum Development at BNVS, Li Jing, this student’s story was only possible because the Beijing government granted the school the permission to operate within the city limits without being shut down. Moreover, the development of the talents of this student wouldn’t have been possible if the donations and volunteerism provided local businesses and community members hadn’t enabled BNVS to effectively enroll and educate so many students (Li Jing).

Hua Dan in Beijing is another important illustration of a NGO which has used its partnerships capabilities to improve the education of migrant workers’ children. Founded by a visionary Englishwoman, Caroline Watson, in 2004, the organization has gathered support from a diverse group of Chinese and expats since. Not only does Hua Dan show the usefulness of engaging interactive ways to improve the educational opportunities of migrant youth, but it also displays the importance of building collaborative atmospheres so that their programs can reach as many students as possible. While volunteering to teach migrant students in Beijing, I often heard stories from students and school administrators about how Hua Dan

Figure 6. “Children's Programme”. Hua Dan 2010-2011 Annual Report, Beijing, China, Web, 21 February 2012.
has actively reached out to a multitude of migrant education schools and community centers to create and implement mutually-agreed upon learning goals and curriculum. The non-profit has now formed a migrant education center in Beijing where migrant children are welcomed to learn about issues ranging from women’s empowerment to education through art and theater (see Fig. 6) (“About”).

In addition, Shanghai Sunrise is a notable model of a non-profit organization forming relationships to decrease education disparities in urban areas. The Director of Shanghai Sunrise, Yvonne Kimman, informed me that it was founded in 1995 under the auspices of the Shanghai Charity Foundation as a way to improve education opportunities for poor children. She explained that the organization focuses on providing scholarships to particularly disadvantaged students such as those living in urban poverty, orphans, children with only one parent, and those with detrimental illnesses or life-long handicaps (Kimman). Shanghai Sunrise discovers these “vulnerable” youth by collaborating with the Shanghai branch of the Chinese government Bureau of Civil Affairs. Shanghai Sunrise is in active communication with the Street Committee of local district government so that they can understand what students are most critically in need of additional financial support (Kimman). Unlike many NGOs which avoid contact with local authorities, Sunrise recognizes that collaboration with different levels of the Shanghai government allows them greater ability to connect poor migrant children with public education resources. Notably, coordinating with this organization boosts the Shanghai government’s public legitimacy because they
ask local officials to be the ones who hand the Sunrise scholarships to migrant children (Kimman).

The particular contribution which Shanghai Sunrise makes towards the campaign to narrow education inequalities in Chinese cities is through their student sponsorship programs. The organization began as a way to improve the education of non-migrant Shanghai hukou students identified as below the familial per capita income line of 700RMB (approx. 112USD) in urban areas and 600RMB (approx. 96USD) in suburban locations (“Shanghai Sunrise Today”). Yet studies identifying large financial challenges inhibiting migrant children education persuaded Shanghai Sunrise to assist rural hukou students living in Shanghai as well (Kimman). The shift to assist disadvantaged migrant students was particularly prompted by the implementation of a 2008 education policy whereby the fees for both primary and middle school students with Shanghai hukou were paid for by the local government (Kimman). Accordingly, the Shanghai Sunrise Board of Directors decided to offer scholarships for migrant children to cover the expenses of going to public primary schools in hopes of increasing their enrollment (Kimman). Furthermore, the organization gives financial advice to struggling migrant families with children, grants high school and university scholarships for students to continue to higher education, and also allocates resources to libraries to particularly poverty-stricken areas of Shanghai (“Shanghai Sunrise Today”).

During the summer of 2011 that I discovered Shanghai Sunrise I also interned with Stepping Stones, an NGO which coordinates various volunteers to
teach English at schools and community centers for migrant families in Shanghai. The overall purpose of the Stepping Stones Shanghai Volunteer English Teaching Program is to help children in migrant schools gain interest and confidence in their English language abilities so they can pass important school entrance examinations. In serving the local migrant community in Shanghai, Stepping Stones has been instituting ESL (English as a Second Language) teaching projects in over eighteen different schools where the English teaching standards of these locations is low. As the Program Coordinator of the NGO, Victoria Steele explained that the organization targets migrant schools that are in special need volunteers to assist with English exam preparation during school days or weekends. Due to various national government policy restrictions on the creation and growth of NGOs in China, there is currently only one branch of Stepping Stones and it remains comparatively small (Steele). In fact like most other NGOs in China, this organization remains unregistered despite laws stating that it obtain official government sponsorship. The director and founder of Stepping Stones, Corinne Hua, informed me that registering is not necessary right now because of the micro scale on which the organization operates and the difficulty of applying for and maintaining local registration.

Stepping Stones shares an office space with several other NGOs such as Shanghai Sunrise which are also unregistered. I discovered that this space was provided to these organizations by the goodwill of Frank Yih, the founder and director of the Huaqiao Foundation, which is a Hong Kong-registered non-profit organization that coordinates Rotarians to support various charitable projects.
throughout China. Mr. Yih owns the entire building and uses the floor Stepping Stones is situated on in order to help fledging charitable organizations trying to improve the education and general welfare of disadvantaged children in China get a start in Shanghai. This display of charity is highly important for NGOs trying an office space Shanghai, because the rent charged for living and work areas is increasing expensive in Eastern cities (Steele). I learned that Stepping Stones is operating in a specific and yet growing field which involves grassroots NGOs founded by local Chinese and expats who are forming collaborative relationships with one another to expand the education opportunities of migrant children (Steele).

Even though these civil society non-profit organizations are not publicly recognized as legitimate by local Chinese governance, they are still able to collaborate with local urban schools to make a positive difference in the lives of migrant students. Stepping Stones, for example, has been able to help a number of migrant schools in Shanghai without being officially registered (Steele). The principal of Fenfa Primary School, a private institution with a particularly active relationship with Stepping Stones, explained that what was important to her was the assistance that the NGO could provide, not whether it has been registered or not (F. Zhang). Principal Zhang described how their partnership has allowed Fenfa to increase the number of students attending classes. Moreover, she insisted that volunteer teachers and education resources sent by Stepping Stones have been highly useful for the school to prepare the school’s students for difficult
middle and high school entrance examinations required by Chinese education institutions (F. Zhang).

Stepping Stones is a member of a variety of migrant workers’ children resource networks which connect migrant students and organizations looking for NGOs focused on improving the lives of migrant families to contact one another (“About Us”). The Migrant Resource Network (MRN) serves as a useful platform for NGOs focused on improving the lives of migrant families to contact one another (“About Us”). The Migrant Resource Network fosters innovation among non-governmental organizations by enhancing channels for them to form collaborative relationships to empower disadvantaged migrant communities (“About Us”). The Director of Stepping Stones, Corinne Hua, described the MRN as a significant way for migrant education NGOs around China to gather and share information about the education of migrant workers’ children (Hua). For example, I attended a Migrant Resource Network meeting in Shanghai in which Stepping Stones, HandsOn Shanghai, and several other active migrant education NGOs shared methodology for enhancing their volunteers’ training and performance. Discussions on how to manage volunteers’ expectations turned out to be quite useful when I began coordinating volunteer teachers at Fenfa Primary School a week later.

Compassion for Migrant Children (CMC) in China is another notable example of an organization which acts as a networking tool to partner non-profit groups that increase the urban education opportunities of migrant workers’ children. CMC is an important forum to connect migrant education NGOs, business donations, and volunteers together to make important differences in lives
of migrant youth (*Compassion for Migrant Children*). When I volunteered to teach at a CMC school in Shanghai for elementary-level migrant workers’ children, I was able to observe firsthand the active partnership that the organization maintains between NGOs. Charlotte Johnasson, a Swiss expat serving as a local school coordinator for Compassion for Migrant Children, described how the organization has partnered with a number of other active volunteer service groups such as BEAN Shanghai and Stepping Stones to give English lessons for migrant students at community centers. BEAN Shanghai is a branch of the transnational charity NGO, BEAN, founded in the U.S. and focused on building relationships between young people in urban areas through community service activities (“Vision- BEAN Shanghai”).

CMC, BEAN Shanghai, and Stepping Stones collaborate to provide afterschool activities, weekend classes, and summer program for young migrant children in southern Shanghai. CMC Shanghai was able to turn small section of a large migrant farmers’ market in Xinan, Shanghai into a small school where the children of the sellers could come to be cared for instead of being left unattended while their parents sold their goods (Johnasson). CMC then collaborated with several non-enterprise NGOs in Shanghai such as Stepping Stones to gain access to school materials and teaching resources. Moreover, CMC coordinated with BEAN Shanghai to increase the pool of volunteers available to assist with weekend programs for the local migrant children (Johnasson).
II. Mobilizing Support to Make “Not-For-Profit” Possible

When non-governmental organization partnerships consider how to promote equitable education between urban hukou and rural hukou students in urban areas, the issue of inadequate financial resources for migrant education is at the forefront. As a China migrant education scholar, Jing Guo observes “the biggest challenge identified through surveys with educational authorities and school principals is the financing of migrant children education in their schools” (10). Non-governmental organizations play a particularly important role in tackling education gaps in cities by initiating fundraising campaigns which add much needed resources to the schooling of migrant workers’ children.

Non-government organizations such as BNVS and Stepping Stones use their partnerships with businesses to create publicity and mobilize direct donations. BNVS in Beijing actively uses its business and social networks to reach out to companies and individuals in order to increase its ability to sponsor high school students (L Jing). Notably, many international companies operating in China such as Nike or Intel allows their workers to be paid for volunteering during a certain number of work hours (Steele). Stepping Stones is actively working to expand its network of businesses willing to donate time and resources to improve the education of migrant workers’ children. The director of Stepping Stones asked me to assist with a charity event taking place at Fenfa Primary School in southern Shanghai where several eye doctors distributed glasses that their optometrist company was donating to about thirty migrant school children (see Fig. 7). I was tasked with taking pictures of the event for publicity purposes.
to display how Stepping Stones can attract businesses and organizations to donate resources to the migrant community.

![Figure 7. Migrant student receiving new glasses at Fenfa Primary School in the Minhang District of, Shanghai, China, Stepping Stones, 30 June 2011.](image)

After the event I had the chance to speak with the doctors about why their company had chosen to help the migrant students was teaching. I learned that although the event was good for the company to show their customers that they are involved in charity, the main reason they wanted to help migrant workers children was because of their sympathy towards the education difficulties of these particularly disadvantaged students (Shang). By informing these doctors of the eyesight issues which were inhibiting the schooling of these poor middle school migrant children, Stepping Stones was able to provide them with notable incentives to donate resources.

In addition, Compassion for Migrant Children is able to call on wealthy companies and business executives in Shanghai to help underprivileged migrant
youth by pursing a variety of fundraising activities. For example, they have organized fashion shows and celebrity dinners to draw the attention of Shanghai’s wealthy elite to plight of numerous children who lack equitable access to education (Johnasson). Additionally, CMC staff and volunteers have approached a business groups directly to ask for support. For example, they were able to persuade a large hotel to donate resources to a local migrant community center (Johnasson). Not only has CMC partnered with NGOs and businesses to gather aid for migrant students, but they have also reached out to a number of traditional charity groups such as local Buddhist temples.

Shanghai Sunrise is another notable example of a non-profit organization marshalling local community engagement to improve migrant student education financing. The NGO has increased the number of migrant children attending public primary schools and going on to higher education by connecting these students with donors who are local Chinese, expats, or businesses looking to help young poor Chinese students (“Shanghai Sunrise Today”). The Dutch Director of Shanghai Sunrise, Yvonne Kimman, explained that it helps people who want to assist disadvantaged students such as migrant children but do not know how to do so by pairing them with particular students to sponsor (Kimman). In return for contributing small donations to the students they are paired with, the sponsors receive a number of updates from the student about how his or her life and education is being improved by the scholarship (Kimman). Shanghai Sunrise also helps coordinate meetings between sponsors and students so that they can benefit by having a personal relationship if they wish to. Kimman noted that these
updates and meetings were “highly useful for encouraging donors to continue their sponsorship of students because they were helped to further activate their compassion.” Shanghai Sunrise represents how an NGO can increase its funds to improve urban migrant education by engaging donors with the poor students they are assisting,

Involving local urban community members with the schooling of migrant students has also successfully helped BNVS attract donors and volunteers from the private sector in Beijing. The BNVS Administrator of Curriculum Development, Li Jing, explained that specialists such as electricians and pastry chefs as well students from local universities are drawn to teach and inspire BNVS students every day of the week except Sunday (Li Jing). The support of local businesses that the founder of BNVS, Ms. Li, has drawn allowed her schools to flourish with migrant students who feel more integrated into their new home cities by these community players (Li Jing). BNVS is certainly a unique case and not a solve-all formula, but it can definitely be replicated and stands as a testament to the power of NGOs to foster support from a growing class of transnational philanthropists and government institutions who wish to make a difference in lives of disadvantaged migrant children. In fact since its founding in 2006, BNVS has opened five other branches across China (Li Jing).

By focusing on technical training at the high school level, BNVS represents another notable way that civil society in China is stepping up to fill gaps left by withdrawal of state investment in education. Vocational schools are an important aspect of the Chinese education system by providing training for
major societal roles such as teachers, engineers, and scientists (Mackerras 209). Yet public vocational schools charge schools fees to migrant students because they insufficient government financial support to provide training without cost. Unlike public vocational schools, BNVS is able to use its transnational non-profit status to garner enough support that it doesn’t need to charge school fees to its migrant students (Li Jing). As such, BNVS symbolizes the way in which public education responsibilities to institute technical training have shifted to civil society whose more flexible financing policies maybe more effective for funding migrant workers’ children education.

Unfortunately, NGOs focused on enrolling and educating migrant workers’ children in quality schools often suffer from lack of funding. Research as recent as 2011 shows that many Chinese education NGOs are experiencing problematic staff shortages, because they lack the money to provide acceptable salaries (Chen). Some popular not-for-profit organizations receive direct local government contributions, but this support is often insufficient to fund salaries as well as effective education projects (Lu 95). In order to provide migrant children with quality education, NGOs must have the financial resources to hire a sufficient number of staff members (Li Jing). Without a surplus of donations, NGOs such as Stepping Stones are unable to develop their migrant education programs further because their non-profit status prevents them from collaborating with commercial enterprises too heavily to increase funding (Steele). Thus most migrant education non-profit organizations are aware of more problems than they have resources to solve and must focus on basic necessities first such as staff salaries (Steele). As a
result, many NGOs focused on educating migrant children rely on active partnerships with local donors and fundraising campaigns to increase their funds available to staff projects.

A distinct advantage of internationally-connected NGOs such as BNVS over local non-profits is that they are able to foster a wider range of support through their transnational capacities. These NGOs have had a notable impact on migrant students’ education access by activating generous international funding for local migrant schools (Hasmath and Hsu 4). Advantageously, some international NGOs have been officially recognized in China by gaining special approval from the national government under the status of a “foreign foundation” (Yin 525). In turn, they have been able to create effective international awareness campaign migrant education access issues and gather substantial donations to their cause in the process (Steele).

III. Applicable Schooling Approaches for Migrant Youth

Non-governmental organizations which have founded schools in China focused on increasing the educational opportunities of migrant youth are in a particularly valuable position because of the creativity they may employ in forming curriculum. Unlike government-run public schools, NGO-administrated private schools are institutions which can create and test the effectiveness education content and methodology (Li Jing). Rather than having to follow strict government-mandated curriculum, private schools such as BNVS can change the amount of time devoted certain subjects in response to feedback (Li Jing). Notably, migrant education NGOs are given significant discretion in deciding
what content to prioritize in order to educate their migrant students and prepare them for future employment most effectively.

Arguably, one of the most crucial components to the success of BNVS Beijing’s curriculum is its practical approach to migrant workers’ children education. Rather than spending several years preparing their students to graduate and pass college entrance exams like most public high schools, BNVS focuses on integrating its students into the local economy and civic life. Although within the BNVS curriculum migrant students are still educated about general subjects such as history, English, Culture, and Civic Ethics, they spend the majority of their time developing useful skills which would help them accomplish the important task of finding a job (Li Jing). This approach to curriculum is a strong example of the dynamic way that migrant schooling by NGOs is advantageous.

Due to the flexibility of their curriculum, NGO-run schools like BNVS can tailor the education they provide in order to meet the employment concerns of the local migrant community. As finding employment remains one of the most important needs of migrant families in Chinese cities (Messinis and Cheng 2), schooling focused on increasing the job opportunities of migrant students is highly useful. As the principal of Fenfa School, Fang Yuan Zhang explained that when her migrant students are unable to enroll in high schools which increase their chances of finding urban employment, many quit after middle school to go to work in oftentimes illegal conditions. By preparing migrant students for direct entrance into full-time employment, vocational schooling NGOs play a notably
constructive role in helping to raise to the income and standard of living of poor migrant families (Li Jing).

When I was teaching at BNVS I also learned from a school administrator that Hua Dan is particularly known in the Beijing not-for-profit organization community for providing innovative methods to educate migrant workers’ children (Li Jing). Emphasizing the educational power of theater, Hua Dan has implemented a number of successful workshops at its school focused on relationship and leadership skills improvement of migrant children (“About”). Hua Dan helps stimulate the employment viability of migrant youth by allowing them to gain leadership experiences through coordinating workshops. The organization has even hired a number of migrants to continue working with the programs as full-time staff members (“About”). Considering that finding employment is one of the most stressful aspects of life for rural migrants in urban areas, the attention to leadership training which Hua Dan emphasizes serves as an example of how NGOs in China can directly assist the migrant community.

Unlike BNVS and Hua Dan, however, some non-profit organizations in China such as Stepping Stones are not able to draw on sufficient resources and cut through enough red tape to found their own education institutions. The Director of Stepping Stones, Corrine Hua explained that instead they are forced to focus on growing resources to donate to existing schools. Without the ability to create a central school for migrant students to come to, NGOs such as Stepping Stones must coordinate with a range of private migrant schools and community centers in order to help as many students as possible (Hua). The majority of these private
schools are run by local Chinese who are typically better equipped to navigate local government and community relationship than are international actors (Steele). Even though they may be pursuing the schooling of migrants for profit and lack sufficient resources to meet local standards, these private schools receive support from NGOs who want to increase the quality of the urban education alternatives for migrant youth (Steele).

Due to the diversity of the needs at private migrant schools, NGOs assisting these institutions are challenged to tailor their resource support to each place individually. Stepping Stones staff members often rely on local school administrators to tell them which combinations of resources would be most effective to assist them. In turn, financial sponsorships, classroom supplies, and volunteer teachers are allocated to different institutions based on the most urgent need (Steele). Furthermore, curriculum developed by Stepping Stones for these schools is tailored to the education levels of the enrolled migrant children. When I was designing lesson plans for English summer program at Fenfa Primary School I was instructed to make the material flexible enough that it would apply to students with a range of different educational backgrounds.

IV. Facilitating Volunteerism and Awareness

Organizations such as the Migrant Resource Network, BEAN Shanghai, Compassion for Migrant Children in Shanghai and Shanghai Sunrise are riding and propelling an emerging wave of civic engagement in China. As noted by an active volunteer in the Shanghai migrant education community, Yuna Zhang,
volunteering to help educate migrant youth gives domestic Chinese an appreciation of the challenges faced by migrant children. By helping poor migrant students, Chinese citizens are likely be more sympathetic to the plight of the migrant community and less likely to view migrant youth as second-class citizens (Li Jing).

NGOs have been able work towards fill gaps in the delivery of social services for migrants by marshalling the help of volunteer groups. As described by Program Coordinator of Stepping Stones, Victoria Steele, youth groups in Chinese public schools and universities have been marshal to help improve the education of migrant workers’ children. These Chinese institutions now have a civil service requirement that students may completed by volunteering at urban private schools for migrant youth (Steele). The Communist Youth League, for example, sends volunteers to migrant schools to increase the number of young volunteers who can serve as role models for the underprivileged migrant children (Steele).

While assisting with Stepping Stones’ volunteer training seminars I was able to gain more of a sense of why Chinese citizens are motivated to help educate migrant children through non-profit organizations. Some local Chinese who attended, such as a young Shanghainese lawyer, said they were motivated to volunteer their time and resources to help migrant workers’ children because they wanted to give back in the light of the benefits they had received. The fact that Stepping Stones and similar NGOs help migrant students prepare for difficult middle school, high school, and university entrance exams boosts their
attractiveness to Chinese volunteers who also have had to undergo such difficult testing, but had the luxury of attending public schools to prepare for them (Y. Zhang).

Moreover, NGOs in China organize local events increasing the awareness of urban Chinese about the difficult lives of migrant students. For example, Stepping Stones and several other migrant education organizations hosted a musical performance for the Chinese public featuring migrant students and their volunteer teacher (Steele). Such an event is an important mechanism for non-profit organizations to activate donations and volunteerism towards narrowing gaps in education between migrant and non-migrant students.

What I came to more fully understand through my volunteer work with Stepping Stones was how personally and professionally beneficial it may be to serve with an organization whose cause you are strongly motivated you. Having a strong emotions connection to the efforts of the NGO I was volunteering for fostered by daily interactions with poor migrant children sustained and improved my work output dramatically. Consequently, I discovered that I desire to align my future volunteer service as much as possible with my passion for civil service so that I can a reach a higher potential than I would without such compelling drivers.

Although I recognized that this system of work inspiration is personalized in the sense that it relates to my particular set of values, I also learned that sharing your motivated vision can help inspire other team members as well. After I reminded some of the volunteers who were showing up late to class that they were there for our students, their attendance and preparedness for teaching increased
substantially. Fortunately, Stepping Stones runs a number of programs every year where volunteers can see the direct impacts of their efforts such as The Giving Tree which involves giving donated clothing and holiday gifts to local migrant children (Steele). As a result of the emotional investment they gained by directly engaging migrant students, many of these volunteers have continued to return each year to give to the children (Steele). These examples illustrate how tangible engagement with the vision and service of an NGO helps foster volunteerism.

Notably, sharing their vision has also been an important element for the Bai Nian Vocational School to garner enough altruistic volunteer support to provide migrant higher school students with free education. As the BNVS Administrator of Curriculum Development noted, having such a higher number of teachers who do not expect salaries because they are committed volunteers is a highly useful way for NGO to be able to provide a practical, but low-cost education (Li Jing). Even without monetary rewards, the volunteers benefit by being able to engage meaningful civic action through assisting underprivileged students. What kept me coming back to volunteer at BNVS every weekend while I was a full time student at Tsinghua University in Beijing was the emotional investment that came with being touched by the stories of my students (see Fig. 8). I was struck by their difficult lives and as a result was dedicated to volunteer
to help them as much as possible.

Figure 8. BNVS Students engaged with volunteers in a classroom activity; Beijing, China, Author, 26 March 2011.

A volunteer event coordinated by CMC and BEAN Shanghai which I participated in called “Reading Buddies,” is a good example of how NGOs collaborate to create an event which motivates volunteerism. This bi-weekly event coordinated by both organizations prompted numerous domestic Chinese and foreigners living in Shanghai to assist migrant children in need of literacy help. The local school coordinator, a young Swiss woman named Charlotte Johnasson, explained that the partnership between BEAN Shanghai and CMC is effective because it creates a win-win situation for both the students and the volunteers. The migrant students benefit by having a variety of volunteers actively investing in their education without needing to pay the substantial fees which would
normally accompany such assistance (Johnasson). The volunteers are incentivized to participate in this program, because it allows them to make a positive difference for disadvantaged children in the city they live in, while also gaining useful networking opportunities. Accordingly, this active relationship between CMC and BEAN Shanghai shows how partnerships between NGOs in urban China can boost volunteerism to enhance the education opportunities of migrant workers’ children.

Chapter 5: Obstacles to NGO Assistance of Migrant Youth

I. Government Oversight: Registration and Expansion Constraints

Although there has been a rapid growth of NGOs which help educate migrant youth, many issues still prevent them from effectively closing gaps between the schooling of migrant and non-migrant students in urban China. Chinese government NGO registration and monitoring policies resulting from fears that NGOs will be used by disadvantaged populations to incite social unrest can cause substantial grief to migrant education organizations (He 161). Migrant education non-governmental organizations trying to register face a number of bureaucratic hurdles which often require too many resources to be overcome effectively (Hasmath and Hsu 3). For not-for-profit organizations to even consider registering they are first required to find a government department which will agree to sponsor them (Su). Yet many government departments are difficult to navigate and unwilling to associate with NGOs that do not already have well-known reputations (Su). These problems result from a “civil society versus the
state” view held by government authorities who are concerned that NGOs may fundamentally disrupt the political stability of China (He 160). Accordingly, many institutional barriers still limit the successful creation and development of migrant education non-profit organizations.

Some of the most significant government-enforced limitations on NGOs in China are restrictions on non-profit organization formation and growth possibilities. Civil society groups in China can be formed by either government officials (“top-down”) or private citizens (“bottom-up”) (Lu 89). Yet as a result of fears that NGOs will threaten government legitimacy, both locally and internationally-created NGOs in China are restricted by the national Ministry of Civil Affairs from being set up by migrant workers or establishing regional branches (Lu 91). Consequently, the ability of migrant families to build NGOs from the grassroots level is constrained by complex registration and sponsorship requirements (Hasmath and Hsu 3). Moreover, the effectiveness of migrant education non-profit organizations to coordinate to reach large groups of migrant workers is severely diminished by government policies which restrict the growth of NGOs (Steele). According to a 2001 investigation of Chinese civil society organizations by the NGO Institute of Tsinghua University, the efforts of the majority (68.7%) of the organizations were limited to one county, county-level city, or district with only 1.1% of those surveyed had activities extending to two or more provinces” (Deng 43-44). With so many NGO constrained to operating only on a small scale, the potential of migrant education non-profit organizations
to grow their services to educate more migrant students in other areas is severely diminished.

Notably, central governments Ministry of Civil Affairs’ policies are often needlessly restricting the replication of NGO models that successfully increase access to education for migrant students. For example, Stepping Stones has a proven track record of increasing education opportunities for migrant workers’ children in Shanghai as shown by a number of impact surveys (Steele). Yet government oversight has prevented NGOs like Stepping Stones from growing to the point that it has branches in other regions of China so it export useful volunteer assistance models to other cities (Steele). An investigation in 2005 by the Center of China’s Associations of Peking University on Zhejiang and Beijing found that most civil society organizations are very small, with 60 percent of the organizations having fewer than 1,000 members (Li). Expanding the size of the organization to serve a larger population of migrant children is reliant on establishing a number of connections with government entities (Hasmath and Hsu 3). Launching a branch of the organization in another city, therefore, would require building extensive local government contacts and hiring local staff. The Director of Stepping Stones, Corrine Hua, explained that the necessity of using a new director of the branch to navigate local government registration would likely cause a lot of the knowledge of the practical vision of Stepping Stones not to be transferred.

With respect to NGO registration and expansion, government officials unfortunately give preferential treatment to those organizations which are popular
and officially recognized. These groups are able to register, network, and execute larger-scale projects more easily than most NGOs, because they are given special access to information needs to navigate government policies and practices (Lu 93). Without having insider knowledge of local government attitudes towards their projects, most non-profit organizations such as Stepping Stones are not able to campaign too loudly for fear of unknowingly treading on the wrong toes (Steele). Given the lack of transparency with regard to government regulation of civil society, many NGOs are forced to choose between being heavily dependent on the whims of local authorities and staying small enough in hopes that their efforts will not criticized.

Small international NGOs such as Stepping Stones are able to bypass difficult registration requirements and operate “outside the law.” The difficult organization registration requirements stemming from fear that NGOs will damage political stability are combined with weak government capacity to enforce NGO laws (Hasmath and Hsu 3). As a result there are high rate of non-compliance among civil society organizations (Su). Yet Chinese government restrictions still limit the services they can provide to migrant workers’ children. The unregistered status of Stepping Stones creates a host of liability concerns with regard to how it cooperates with local schools. While being free from constant government supervision, the unregistered nature of the organization makes it vulnerable to being easily shut down by local government officials (Steele). Even though Stepping Stones promised to supply certain resources such as classroom supplies to local migrant schools, they would have to break those agreements if
they became the subject of government criticism. One of the great difficulties of maintaining support of non-governmental migrant schools that they are liable to be shut down by government officials who deem the school conditions to be unsafe or illegal (Dong 145). Survival is a challenge for private migrant schools and non-governmental support of those schools alike.

A staffing requirement is another difficult constraint placed by the Chinese state on migrant education NGOs which wish to register with local urban authorities. The Director of Shanghai Sunrise, Yvonne Kimman, explained to me that the organization certainly wants to register with the Shanghai government in order to increase its legitimacy and avoid being shut down. Yet the organization has been prevented from doing so by regulations requiring all non-profit groups who wish to register to have several to employ several full-time staff. Besides one paid secretary in charge of record-organization and research, the staff of Shanghai Sunrise is entirely made up of both expatriate and domestic Chinese volunteers committed to improving the welfare of poor urban Chinese children (Kimman). The organization can only afford to keep one full-time employee so that it has sufficient money for its student scholarships. Yet the local Shanghai government insists that more employees are necessary for registration. Such a requirement is particularly problematic considering that most NGOs do not have full-time staff. An investigation by Tsinghua University in Beijing during 2001 revealed that less than 5 percent of non-profit organizations at the time had full-time staff with the rest of them only having between 1 and 40 part-time staff (Deng 59). Yet, the
percentages have not been observed to have changed significantly over the last decade (Steele).

II. Trust and Accountability Issues Causing Publicity Challenges

Migrant education NGOs in Chinese cites face obstacles to their efforts to improve migrant education not only from government policies, but also from Chinese citizens who are suspicious of their intentions. Popular organizations that are necessarily dependent on government support to navigate local bureaucracy lose the trust of citizens who distrust Chinese governance (Lu 94). Some migrant families are wary of civil society organizations such as BNVS in Beijing which appear to have close relationships with local government authorities (Li Jing.) Conversely, NGOs may suffer distrust by the local government if they appear notably detached from government authority out of concerns that successful civil society organizations may weaken the rule of the state (He 167). Many non-profit migrant education organizations are caught in a difficult bind between trying to officially register their organization to appear legitimate the eyes of the government and also attempting not to get too close to the Chinese state in the process out of fear of losing support from local migrant communities and civil society volunteers.

Cultures of distrust may particularly emerge around migrant education NGOs whose services come without charge. In assisting BNVS with its student recruitment process, Li Jing explained to me that the school had difficulty of attracting migrant families when the programs started and are still dealing with
significant distrust. Several of the BNVS students I interviewed such as John and Molly explained that they applied to the school without their parents knowing and only told them after they were accepted because they knew their families thought that free tuition was “too good to be true.” The Program Coordinator for Stepping Stones, Victoria Steele, described the biggest challenge of her job as “just getting migrant students and schools to trust us and say yes to help.” While marshalling financial resources to improve their programs may be difficult not-for-profit organizations such as Stepping Stones, finding students and institutions which will trust them enough to accept their support may be even more challenging.

Yet arguably many permanent residents and migrant communities are correct to be concerned with the transparency and accountability of non-profit organizations focused on charity work. Civil society organizations in China have received increasing public criticism following the emergence of several famous cases of illegitimate use of donated funds. Stories of civil society organizations engaging in fraud and embezzlement have increased public distrust of not-for-profit organizations in China (He 167). For example, Project Hope of the China Youth development Fund was accused of mishandling about 100 million RMB (approximately 15 million USD) from donors by spending it on a failing business in Beihai city (Hasmath and Hsu 2). Additionally, China’s Red Cross Society (CRCS) is a large non-profit organization which has drawn public attention to the possibility of corruption within NGOs. CRCS experienced a severe decrease in donations in 2011 after being accused of using charity funds to operate several commercial enterprises and overcharging hospitals for expensive medical
In a notable show of distrust after these scandals, famous winner of the 2011 French Open tennis match, Li Na, publicly refused to donate 500,000 RMB (approx. 77,000 USD) to the CRCS. The public outcry about NGOs such as Project Hope and China’s Red Cross Society illustrate how Chinese society and media have become increasingly critical of the ability of Chinese charity NGOs to correctly use funds donated for disadvantaged children. As legitimacy in the eyes the local community is now paramount to NGOs after these scandals, organizational transparency has become an important concern for charity organizations focused on migrant workers’ children education (Li Jing).

Problematically, however, weak accountability measures by urban governments do not sufficiently motivate many non-profit organizations to take significant steps towards improving transparency. The poor governance of NGOs by national and local officials creates a context where unregistered organizations may act illegitimately until they are loudly complained about (Hasmath and Hsu 3). As a result of difficult registration processes, it is estimated that millions NGOs are operating without registration outside the law (Su.) For example, although government statistics reported there to be 266,612 civil society organizations in 2003, scholars estimated that the actual number is much closer to 8 million when unregistered groups are accounted for (He 162). The existence of many civil organizations outside the purview of Chinese civil society laws and practices, in turn, greatly weakens the authority of NGO administrative bodies (He 166). Problematically, such widespread lack of registration makes monitoring holding migrant education NGOs accountable even more difficult. As Chinese
NGO scholars Hasmath and Hsu note, “with the government more concerned with controlling and supervising the work of NGOs to avoid any politically sensitive topics, the financial misdeeds of some NGOs are gone unpunished” (3). As the education of migrant youth is not a particularly sensitive topic, most NGOs involved in educating migrants are paid little attention too unless they are publicly criticized (Steele).

If local NGOs are accused of transgressions, however, they are finally paid attention to by local government and are often liable to be promptly shut down and publicly humiliated. NGO-run migrant schools can be shut down easily by government officials without thorough investigation, potentially resulting in thousands of displaced students (Xianzuo and Pai 323). Accordingly, most NGOs are susceptible to “obstructive and predatory behavior” by government agencies and officials (Lu 93). Unfortunately, it is ultimately disadvantaged groups such as migrant children who are truly suffering from the heavy-handed Chinese government attempts to crack down on fraudulent civil society organizations.

Distrust of charity organization has made it more difficult for NGOs working on improving education opportunities for migrant workers’ children to gain access to channels where they can promote their vision in order to attract donors and volunteers. Shanghai Sunrise, for example, has had trouble finding sponsors for their migrant student scholarships, because of a lack of media access in which to campaign for migrant youth education scholarships (Kimman). Although the NGO has many active sponsors, these donors haven’t been able to help the organization communicate to the larger Shanghai community. The
organization has needed to rely on publicity through the larger Shanghai Charity Foundation, but in doing so must compete for attention with a number of programs which the Foundation also promotes (Kimman).

Many NGOs experience the frustration of knowing many ways to assist migrant education but not being able publicize well enough to gather sufficient volunteers and monetary resources. Stepping Stones’ June Volunteer Teacher Training Day, for example, was a useful event for anyone in the Shanghai area interested in helping migrant education, but only a fraction of the expected volunteers showed up (Hua). Although Shanghai Sunrise and Stepping Stones are able to broadcast their events and projects through a number of offline and online publications, these are most only read by local expats (Kimman, Steele). A large obstacle to the overall success of these organizations is forming better relationships with local Chinese news media so that they can reach more potential volunteers.

III. Harmful Competition Between and Within NGOs

Another significant obstacle to the efficacy of migrant education NGOs in China is rivalry between non-profit groups that make useful inter-NGO collaborations difficult to sustain. As an administrator who helps coordinate relations between BNVS and other NGOs, Li Jing observed that competition constrains the ability of non-profit organizations to measure the results of their efforts and those of other organizations like theirs to educate migrants. As a result selfish motives to appear better than other organizations there is a general lack of
data-sharing between migrant education NGOs operating in China (Li Jing). Instances where it would not be absolutely win-win for NGOs to coordinate with one another often create situations where the organizations think they are rivals competing for resources. For example, the Program Coordinator of Stepping Stones, Victoria Steele, explained to me that Stepping Stones and HandsOn Shanghai were initially working with one another to create volunteer teachers training seminars. Yet HandsOn Shanghai soon wanted Stepping Stones to work under them to recruit and train volunteers, which was unacceptable to the Stepping Stones’ staff who wanted to remain an autonomous organization and didn’t need HandsOn help to find volunteers (Steele). Although they still communicate with one another, these organizations now compete counterproductively to attract volunteer teacher resources (Steele). When NGOs do not receive obvious mutual benefits for coordinating, unhelpful competition may arise between them.

Furthermore, conflict may occur between international and local Chinese NGOs whose ability to accomplish their original vision is restricted by receiving substantial support from one another. Although collaboration between civil society organizations is typically quite useful for providing social services such as education to migrants, it may also destabilize the original objectives of some of involved groups (Steele). The research of Greenwood-Bentley (2003) on relationships between international and local NGOs in China suggests that local non-profit organizations risk unhealthy development when they accept donations from international organizations that may not have a realistic understanding of
what is accomplishable with such funding (Hasmath and Hsu 4). Moreover, the interaction of international organizations with local NGOs may damage the ability of these organizations to establish and maintain grassroots connections (Hasmath and Hsu 4). As Yao Li gathered support to develop BNVS as a local charity for migrant children in Beijing she had to carefully negotiate with international donors to ensure that the expectations they attached to their financial contributions could be met (Li Jing). She was concerned that if the school was held to higher objectives than could be reasonably actuated its reputation would be damaged among international and local NGOs (Li Jing).

Not only may non-governmental organizations operating in China have difficulty with coordinating with one another, but they may also be weighed down by issues of internal conflict. The employees of NGOs are often working based on multiple incentives that may clash with one another (Steele). Even with having increasing education opportunities for migrant workers’ children as the stated primary goal of the organization, leaders of local Chinese NGOs in particular, may still be pursuing such altruistic causes mostly for profit motives (Hasmath and Hsu 3). Yet even when the staff of NGOs are not particularly motivated by monetary gain, they may still be working for entirely self-serving purposes (Lu 95-97). Such individualism is often rooted in desires to use the successes of the organization in order to be in the limelight (Steele). Pursuance of civic engagement work for self-fulfillment feeds into NGO cultures which involve constant internal power struggles which may easily be counterproductive of the success of the organization as a whole (Lu 97). These conflicts within migrant
education NGOs are especially problematic, because they place the personal
agendas of staff over the important schooling goals for which the organizations
exist.

Chapter 6: Conclusion: Harnessing Organizational Capacity to
Make a Difference

I. Why Migrant Education NGOs Deserve More Attention

The question for a Chinese government publicly committed to balancing
economic growth and social equality is: how can the stated policies of ‘socialism
with Chinese characteristics’ be implemented to decrease the apparent inequalities
in access to education? Notably, no single aspect of migrant education efforts
alone, whether it is simply government funding or civil society support is
sufficient to narrow worrisome gaps. Instead, an integrated approach which
combines the efforts of various stakeholders through the medium of NGOs is vital
for successfully educating migrant children. The Chinese government has
certainly taken notable steps to increasing access to education for migrant workers’
children in cities, but the remaining inequalities in education show that their
efforts alone have not been sufficient. Accordingly, collaborating with non-profit
organizations is important for local governments to mobilize sufficient resources
from urban communities to fund the equitable education of underprivileged
migrant youth. NGOs and their successful relationships with Chinese government
and society help stimulate financial support for migrant education, increasing the
quality of migrant schooling and reducing problems of urban poverty. If that can
successfully coordinate to tackle education inequality between migrant and non-
migrant students, the Chinese state and NGOs may both benefit with increased international and local legitimacy.

An increase of the role non-profit organizations in the urban education of migrant children is highly important decreasing educational disparities between migrant and non-migrant which threaten the legitimacy of the Chinese polity. Considering Chinese education researcher Ka-Ming Cheng observes, “local governments and local communities are the key funders of basic education,” the Chinese state must better coordinate with local organizations to mobilize resources (72). Due their non-profit nature, NGOs have the unique ability to attract donations from Chinese businesses and citizens to support migrant education schooling. In turn, NGOs can transfer these resources to migrant schools so they are better enabled attract accredited teachers and administrators. Moreover, migrant education NGOs develop events which prompt volunteerism among urban Chinese society, increasing citizens’ awareness of the difficult lives of migrant students. In addition, the private status of local urban NGO-run schools allows them to provide services such as vocational schooling and work training which are not part of normal public school curriculums. In light of fees charged by a multitude of both public and private schools which accept migrant students, institutions such as BNVS which do not charge tuition to migrant children are an important boon to the migrant community.

NGOs are quite useful for Chinese education systems because alleviate the burden of urban public schools and poor-quality private migrant to enroll migrant youth by providing students equitable education alternatives. These schooling
methods are likely more practical because they may be specially tailored to the educational needs of migrant students. The expansion of NGOs beyond private international schools, to private donor-funded schools with requirements to only accept migrant students allows not-for-profit organizations to fulfill a crucial niche in migrant education schooling. Practical work-experience-based schooling by non-governmental organizations are particularly important for equipping migrant students to be integrated into local urban economies. This job-preparation-based methodology, in turn, helps migrants transform their social status by gaining respect and fiscal capabilities within Chinese society through work experience. These institutions provide important alternatives to schools whose focus is on university preparation rather than post-high school job entrance.

Accordingly, Chinese government actions are urgently needed to better enable civil society to bolster migrant youth education increasing the percentages of enrolled students out of the total eligible population and improving the quality of their education resources. While non-governmental organizations have played quite a useful role so far in increasing the access of migrant youth to educational institutions in cities across China, the sheer need of migrant families in the face of education policy implementation failure has still led to many abandoned students. The combination of high influxes of school-age migrant children and low revenues of local governments to dedicate towards their education has created a dangerous recipe for migrant youth left in limbo without access to education. Even with the help of migrant schools and non-profit organizations, migrant
students noticeably lag behind their registered urban peers and risk contributing to social unrest, child labor, and urban poverty.

Importantly, increasing the success stories of migrant children in cities can help prevent policy implementation failure and overcome discrimination towards migrant families by urban residents which leave migrant youth with few ways to change their socioeconomic status. The education of migrant students to increase their urban employment viability is an important tool to combat localism and stigma which resists investment in urban migrant education. Although the Chinese state has expanded public school vocational and technical training, the fees that the urban public schools charge is still too high for poor migrant youth to enroll. Following the BNVS model, other non-governmental organizations can assist migrant students gain work experience related to jobs they could realistically attain within the local economic context that they live in. I argue that several recommendations would increase useful collaboration between NGOs such as BNVS, donors, and migrants in order to improve the schooling, socio-economic status, and future employment of migrant youth in China. An important test of the Chinese state is whether it can develop practices of good governance with respect to NGOs so that civil society organizations are autonomous enough to be effective but guided enough to remain accountable.

II. Helping NGOs to More Effectively Mobilize Community Resources

Increased Chinese government public recognition of the organizational capacity of NGOs is important to boost the ability of these organizations migrant
workers’ children to attend quality schools. NGOs such as BNVS and Stepping Stones suffer from a lack of trust by potential donors and students which prevents from helping as many migrant children as they could. If non-governmental organizations which foster such efforts to mobilize support from local businesses and volunteers are more often acknowledged as legitimate organizations by local governance, they would be trusted to a greater extent. With greater trust they could mobilize more resources to effectively increase the access of migrant students to quality education.

Accordingly, I recommend that urban city governments host charity awards ceremonies with a specific category for migrant education NGOs and the donors they are partnered with. When I thought of this idea I checked to see if these ceremonies already occurred and discovered while a national charity recognition ceremony was initiated recently, there are very few tailored to specific urban civil society communities. I propose that ceremonies sponsored by urban governments publicly recognizing those who have been making an important difference would encourage the creation of more migrant education NGOs and prompt existing organizations to step up their efforts. These events are an important way to extend public legitimacy to NGOs with a proven history of accountable and responsible use of donations. If city officials instituted civil society recognition ceremonies, non-profit organizations could gain more public attention and consequently enhance their abilities to form relationships advocating on behalf of migrant children, increasing donations from businesses, and inspiring volunteerism.
Due to public distrust of non-profit organizations, it is essential that Chinese governance recognize those who have been using donations lawfully so that they may more easily fundraise for migrant children schooling. As I learned during my interviews with Li Jing, a full-time administrator of BNVS, aspects of the current Chinese culture still prevent many migrant families and private individuals from trusting the intentions of migrant education NGOs. Thus, at the founding of BNVS, finding supportive businesses and migrant youth who had confidence in the truth of the tuition-free promises of the school was a fundamental challenge. Since its founding in 2006, however, support of the school from large businesses and well known public officials has garnered a lot more trust by donors and migrants (Li Jing). Consequently the number of donations and students applications the school receives has risen. Using BNVS a case example, I argue that the more that non-profit organizations are shown to be successful, the more likely it will be that businesses and individuals will donate their time and money to narrowing gaps between migrant and non-migrant students through NGOs. Moreover, the incentives created by charity award ceremonies could help overcome the obstacle of intra-NGO competition by encouraging the staff of non-profit organizations to work together more effectively.

In addition, local governments could show Chinese society that they actively supporting efforts to improve the education of migrant youth through these civic engagement recognition events. As non-governmental organizations have become major actors in the schooling of migrant workers’ children, it is highly important that local government act to help non-profits to more effectively
educate migrant students. National and local Chinese government recognition of non-governmental organizations is important to activate funding for migrant workers’ children schools so that urban public schools do not need to bear the entire burden of schooling migrants. The Chinese state would gain legitimacy in the eyes of those who wish to see educational inequalities narrowed and also have the opportunity to persuade those who discriminate against migrants to change their mind. Importantly, the media attention drawn to these ceremonies due to their government sponsorship would provide incentives for more businesses to donate resources to help migrant education so viewers of the ceremony could hear about their company.

Additionally, media coverage the award ceremonies would show Chinese citizens what their peers are doing to help one another and in turn encourage more civic engagement efforts. Through forming public relationships over an issue which has direct impacts on the future of the Chinese nation and its image abroad, the government and NGOs can expand the role of Chinese citizens in public service efforts. By becoming more involved in civic engagement migrant education efforts, citizens benefit by becoming more compassionate to the difficulties of living as a migrant in urban areas. Moreover, joining volunteer groups such as BEAN Shanghai allows citizens to gain valuable networking opportunities. Although urban migrant education represents an important way for relations between governments, civil society, and volunteers to be expanded, what is particularly important is at the end of the day the lives of Chinese citizens are being changed for the better. Award ceremonies stimulating mutually-beneficial
interaction between these groups lose much of their virtue if poor migrant students are not ultimately being served by them. Thus my proposal to institute these events at local urban levels must go hand in hand with recommending a measure to increase the accountability of migrant education NGOs.

**III. Strengthening NGO Effectiveness and Accountability**

In order to make public endorsement of non-profit organization-run migrant schools viable for Chinese governance, accountability mechanisms would need to be enforced regularly. The Chinese government certainly benefits from publicly endorsing migrant education NGOs because of how doing so could increase donations to NGOs to build and manage schools that decrease the gaps in education. Yet the Chinese government would also be taking risks by endorsing not-for-profit organizations in light of the potential public backlash which could occur if one of the recognized organizations was found to be misusing its donations.

To increase the publicity of migrant education NGOs while also improving their accountability, I recommend the creation of a government-organized non-governmental organization (GONGO) that can serve as a mutually-beneficial middle ground between urban government and NGOs. An NGO Accountability GONGO could be formed whose purpose is to encourage the transparency of NGOs and monitor how they are using their funds while providing these organizations with useful advantages. GONGOs are government-backed NGOs in China staffed by civil servants and special access to national and
local government resources (Klein 11). The type of GONGO I am recommending would have a nation-wide scope and branches in each urban area that NGOs are present. Non-profit organizations could be persuaded to coordinate with this GONGO by given a number of incentives such as the relaxation of current of current limitations on the size and growth of NGOs in exchange for the willingness to become more transparent.

The reduction of restrictive registration laws for NGOs which are willing to work with a GONGO would allow migrant education non-profit organizations the flexibility necessary to operate more effectively and increase local government legitimacy. As a Senior Research Fellow at the China Center for Comparative Politics and Economics in Beijing, Zengke He observes, “a civil society organization must be: organizational, non-governmental, non-profit, autonomous, and voluntary” (He 163). Accordingly, it is important that non-governmental organizations which increase access of migrant workers’ children be allowed enough autonomy to operate with high organization effectiveness. Moreover, allowing migrant education NGOs more flexibility register would decrease the number of migrant education organizations operating illegally. As recent as 2010, the Chinese central government has initiated efforts to ease restrictions on NGOs and improve registration processes (Simon). Yet many political barriers still exist to legitimate NGOs which require developing policy more flexible to the building and operation of these migrant-niche schools (Simon). By having NGOs educating migrant youth coordinate with a nationally-
recognized GONGO to increase their transparency, local authorities would be recognized as encouraging stronger and more effective civil society governance.

Clearer registration laws with regard to migrant schooling NGOs coordinated through an NGO Accountability GONGO would allow these organizations and the treatment of migrant students to be more closely monitored. Non-profit organizations such as BNVS, Stepping Stones, and Shanghai Sunrise keep records to show that the migrant they assist are getting the education, teaching, and scholarships that they are told they would. With more transparent registration rules, existing NGOs would have better mechanisms to show the accountability GONGO that they have been operating truthfully. More flexible registration laws would encourage effective cooperation between local and international NGOs, national government, and Chinese public that would increase accountability and transparency of migrant education NGOs. As NGO researchers Reza Hasmath and Jennifer Hsu observe, if crucial stakeholders in the education of migrant workers children, NGOs are likely to be held accountable by these groups (Hasmath and Hsu 4-5). Accordingly, the mutual benefits created by establishing an NGO Accountability GONGO are a useful way to encourage increased collaboration between groups concerned with the quality of migrant schools.

Erasing sponsorship and staff requirements for migrant education NGOs that coordinate with the accountability GONGO would be another important incentive for non-profit organizations to share their information. NGOs recognized to be doing quite positive things for disadvantaged children have been
left waiting for their petition to be registered to go through for almost a decade (Su). These are valuable years which such organizations could have spent expanding their efforts to reach more youth had they been recognized by the Chinese government as legitimate entities. Notably, China’s Ministry of Civil Affairs was reported to be actually considering the removal of the requirement for state run charity NGO as of July 2011 (Su.) Even with this reform, however, a multitude of “grassroots” international and local migrant education organizations such as Stepping Stones and Shanghai Sunrise would still require sponsorship.

The national GONGO could target its sponsorship requirement removal non-profits which educate migrants so that these organizations could be registered and subsequently coordinate more effectively with local city governments to decrease schooling disparities.

Notably, registering more migrant education organizations with the NGO Accountability GONGO is important for creating transparent education institutions and gaining legitimacy for local governments. NGOs such as BNVS can assist the central and local government in effectively implementing compulsory education policies by helping to mobilize public support and private donations (Yin 531). By enhancing the opportunities for migrant youth through better-funded public schools and officially-recognized private schools, Chinese citizen’s trust in local government and education institutions is more likely to increase. Moreover, NGOs would be encouraged to coordinate with the GONGO to show they are accountable and transparent to their donors, volunteers, and students. My hope would be that in time registering with the GONGO would
become the norm for migrant education NGOs who wish to appear legitimate to their local and international sponsors.

As it would act as an intersection between NGOs, the NGO Accountability GONGO with a nation-wide scope that I am proposing could serve as important information providers. Accordingly, the GONGO could be a useful way to overcome competition between NGOs that prevents them from sharing data about their practices. Allowing migrant education NGOs to collaborate and network more fully would make it easier for them to gather migrant education impact surveys to gauge which private schooling practices have been most effective in different contexts. The NGO networks facilitated by the GONOG could create a better curriculum tailoring process by having migrant education groups share what has worked and what hasn’t for their schools and students and collaborate to form new ideas. The Program Coordinator of Stepping Stones, Victoria Steele, explained to me that having tangible results of the success of NGO-assisted migrant schooling, in turn, is vital to increasing the trust of donors and local migrant community. If non-governmental organizations helping migrant youth are more enabled to coordinate with one another, they will better help one another avoid mistakes which lost them trust and capitalize on strategies which were successful.

Importantly, creating more flexible laws for the expansion of successful migrant education NGOs would allow them to expand to other cities more easily. Organizations such as Stepping Stones which can show tangible ways they have positively enhanced migrant youth schooling should be given the opportunity to
expand their successful model to other cities. Expanding currently requires a substantial amount of networking and coordination with government in destination cities in order to spread the organization to these new contexts (Steele). If migrant education NGOs could partner with groups in the cities they plan on expanding to through the GONGO they would be able to build trust with local governance, businesses, migrant communities, and volunteer networks to make their transfer easier.

**IV. Global Relevance of China’s Migrant Education NGO Reform**

My project shows how the education of migrant youth in China’s cities is one of global significance for governmental and non-governmental organizations alike. The ability of the Chinese government to collaborate with migrant education NGOs is an important indicator to other countries of China’s desire to close widening inequalities in education and standards of living. Accordingly, a series of award ceremonies recognizing successful migrant education civil society efforts sponsored by urban governments would show other countries that the Chinese government is actively supporting civil society effort to educate underprivileged migrant youth. Notably, more recognition of effective civil society actors would also increase the “transnational transfers” of ideas and resources with respect to NGOs that decrease education inequalities (Brown 3-5). International actors can view these charity awards to see what has been working to decrease education inequalities in China as thoughts to consider for tackling their countries own domestic education disparities.
In addition, the creation of a Chinese NGO Accountability GONGO charged with creating better government coordination with non-profit organizations would show the international community how the Chinese government is developing a middle ground between authoritarian politics and autonomous civil society efforts. Moreover, the formation of the GONGO could encourage more transnational NGOs to help educate Chinese migrant children in urban areas as it would become easier for them to operate in China more easily. Notably, China’s attractiveness to global civil society helps mobilize transnational funding transfers for important domestic civil society efforts such as the education of migrant workers’ children (Wang 105-115). The coordination of international NGOs and government in China to fund effective migrant schools such as BNVS is an important example of how global civil society volunteers can be inspired to improve the lives disadvantaged students in developing nations. The Chinese state’s successful mutually-beneficial interactions with transnational NGOs could become an important model for how developing countries can utilize international civil society to educate underprivileged students.

Figure 9. Another volunteer teacher and during our last day at BNVS receiving touching thank you gifts made by our students for our service to the school; Beijing, China, 15 June 2011. Photo courtesy of Alyssa Hillman.
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Summary of the Capstone Project

Description of the Project

I am advocating for the relevance of reforming relations between the Chinese government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to better educate migrant workers’ children in China’s metropolitan areas. Migrant youth are children transitioning from the countryside to Chinese cities with their parents who are in search of a better standard of living. A population control policy referred to as the hukou household registration system prevents migrant students from being entitled to the same educational opportunities as non-migrant urban students. Although migrant families have been a vital labor source for Chinese cities, their movement has caused notable concern for the Chinese state. In attempting to create disincentives for rural workers to migrate to urban areas, the Chinese government has limited the educational opportunities of a large population of migrating youth who do not possess the special permits and funds needed to attend public schools. As a result, many migrant families resort to sending their children to low-quality private schools which are prone to being shut down by urban authorities.

Contemporary scholars on Chinese education describe how financial obstacles prevent poor migrant children from attending any type of education institutions, whether they are public or private. Accordingly, the enrollment levels and quality of schooling of migrant students is notably lower than their non-migrant peers in Chinese cities. A series of national government policies have emerged over the last several decades specifically to increase the education
opportunities of migrant youth. Yet my paper illustrates how responsibility to implement these acts is handed-off to local governments who often lack the appropriate funding to effectively the reforms. Additionally, benefit conflicts between migrant families and permanent residents and stigma associated with migrant students prevent the effective integration of migrant communities into urban life. Significant policy challenges remain of how to implement legal rights to education in Chinese urban areas.

The education of migrant children affects local and international legitimacy of both the Chinese government and NGOs as they are both responsible for improving enrollment levels and quality of schooling for migrant students. The gaps in education resulting from migrant students not being entitled to the same education opportunities as non-migrant students in China’s cities are noted be an issue of social injustice for Chinese society. My project examines how the informal and legal relationships between government and non-governmental organizations play key roles in educating migrant workers’ children living in urban areas of China. I draw on scholarly and my own interview-based research to describe how the non-governmental status of many growing non-governmental organizations helps activate entrepreneurial Chinese citizens and foreigners to assist needy migrant communities. I note that although there has been a rapid growth of NGOs which help educate Chinese migrant youth, many obstacles still prevent them from effectively engaging public-benefit activities. Although the education of the migrant children left behind in the countryside is also a notable issue of concern for the Chinese state and NGOs, this thesis has
been narrowed to discussing the schooling of urban migrant youth. This choice was made in order to avoid having too broad of a scope for my project, which would prevent me from writing about the challenges and opportunities of urban migrant education in depth.

I conclude that mutually-beneficial relationships between local governments, businesses, and citizens through the medium of NGOs are essential to adequately fund migrant education. Furthermore, these relationships with transnational non-state actors are shown to be a vital way to build accountability and trust between migrant community stakeholders. I show that collaboration with civil society organizations is important for local governments to be able to mobilize urban communities to fund the education of underprivileged migrant youth. NGOs and their successful relationships with the Chinese government help stimulate financial support for migrant education which create growth in economic activity and reduce the problems of unemployment.

**Discussion of Methodology Used**

The primary aim of this thesis project is to use a writing methodology which combines a broad array of scholarly research with observations from my first-hand experiences volunteering to teach migrant children in China. Accordingly, I extensively researched major government policies concerning migrant youth such as the *hukou* system and education reforms. Moreover, I conducted a literature review of contemporary studies of civil society organizations which serve underprivileged groups in China. While volunteering at
the Bai Nian Vocational School for high school children in Beijing and a primary school in Shanghai, I conducted interviews with migrant students to gain a sense of how they experienced migrating and finding educational opportunities. At the same time, I conversed with administrators of these institutions to learn about the curriculum they use to teach migrant students and the obstacles they face in attempting to educate migrant youth. In order to get a tangible understanding of the difficulties they encounter in designing curriculum I designed two months worth of lesson plans for migrant students studying at Fenfa Primary School in Shanghai. Furthermore, I interviewed staff and volunteers of non-governmental organizations that develop resources for migrant education. I then integrated these experiences and voices into my discussions of scholarly research on Chinese migrants, government policies, and NGO activities in China to craft the structure of my thesis.

The Project’s Significance

The equitable education of migrant students in Chinese cities is a fundamental concern of Chinese central and local governance, national and regional economic health, non-governmental organizations, and migrant families who wish for a better future for their children. The education of migrant workers’ children is highly important for the emergence China’s next generation of workers and leaders. The position of poor migrant students in Chinese cities accentuates their comparisons to others and in turn, their awareness of their unequal status at a time of widening wealth gaps in society. Even minor instability resulting from an
under-privileged migrant population remains a threat to local government legitimacy. Accordingly, creating education policies which ensure that migrant workers’ children have access to equitable education is an important for many levels of Chinese governance. Redistributing education resources to narrow gaps between migrant and non-migrant students in urban schools remains an important issue for a variety of state and non-state actors.

Whenever I have mentioned my thesis topic to students I met in China or Chinese studying at Syracuse University, the responses I received made the significance of these issues for contemporary Chinese society apparent to me. Over and over again, it was emphatically explained to me how important ensuring the welfare of migrant children is for the economic and political future of the nation. The education of migrant workers’ children was described to me as being a central facet of the widening inequalities in China’s urban areas. The enrollment and subsequent schooling of migrant workers’ children which allows them to find employment has become a critical social justice issue for governance and civil society. Whether reforms can be successfully in order to reduce such divides and maintain domestic stability remains a critical issue for the Chinese state. My project is an important example of how personal experiences can be integrated into an academic paper to ground scholarly insights with the voices of those directly engaged with the issues discussed. Interacting with NGO efforts to educate migrant youth and proposing recommendations to increase the efficacy of these organizations is highly relevant to me because of my emotional investment in the futures of the migrants I taught in China.
My thesis proposes a several policy recommendations that I argue would be attractive to Chinese government, civil society, and citizens due to their mutually-beneficial nature. Importantly, I posit that these actions would increase the ability of Chinese society to increase education opportunities for migrant workers’ children, students whose futures will help mold what China will become. My first major proposal is for urban governments to host charity award ceremonies where non-governmental organizations, businesses, and volunteers are publicly recognized for outstanding efforts to improve migrant education. I also recommend the creation of a government-organized non-governmental-organization (GONGO) which monitors the non-profit organizations and require information sharing for to increase their organizational transparency. NGOs would be encouraged to coordinate with this nation-wide GONGO so they can show they are accountable to their donors and gain registration requirement and growth restriction relaxation. I argue that the mutually-beneficial relationships between migrant communities, education NGOs, local governments, businesses, and volunteers would be enhanced by the presence of civic engagement recognition ceremonies and an accountability-focused GONGO. In turn, rivalry between migrant education NGOs and distrust of these organizations can be decreased so that they more effectively reduce urban schooling disparities to successfully educate poor migrant students such as the ones I taught in Beijing and Shanghai.

I posit that NGO reforms which improve the education of migrant workers’ children are not only significant for the future of these youth, but also the
legitimacy of Chinese governmental and non-state actors internationally. Observing how migrant workers and their children are treated by governance if of critical concern consumers in countries such as the U.S. which rely on Chinese migrant laborers for their product manufacturing. The Chinese state is being challenged by international NGO watchdog groups such as Amnesty International which are keeping track of the treatment of migrant families in relation to the government’s commitment to international treaties. I note that an important test of the Chinese state is whether it can develop practices of good governance with respect to NGOs so that civil society organizations are autonomous enough to be effective but guided enough to remain accountable. My paper observes how the ability of the Chinese state to collaborate with migrant education NGOs is an important indicator to other countries of China’s desire to close widening inequalities in education and standards of living. My thesis connects readers to a global issue through the voices of scholars on Chinese migrant education and civil society, as well as my real life experiences. Accordingly, I observe that the successful relationships between the Chinese state and migrant education NGOs may serve as useful models for other developing countries attempting to eliminate education inequalities.