

Migrant Workers' Education in China: Changing Discourses and Practices

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Researchers of China's internal migration have long investigated the measures aimed at guaranteeing the citizenship rights of rural migrant workers, who are simultaneously portrayed as "altruistic," cheap labourers in the urban economy and as resource snatchers by their urban counterparts. Existing scholarship either examines the life chances and bargaining power of rural migrants in the urban market or interrogates the unequal treatment of their children in urban schools.

In *Migrant Workers' Education in China*, Fusheng Jia draws on qualitative data collected in 2012 (with some follow-up over the seven consecutive years) to analyse a relatively underexamined topic – the continuing education of rural migrants. In particular, he teases out the changing discourses and practices in two government-sponsored education programmes ("Yuanmeng Plans") for rural migrants in south China. Indeed, Jia's work provides a snapshot of the processes and effects of top-down intervention programmes, which helps us understand the life trajectories of individual migrants in the context of large-scale improvement initiatives in education.

Jia invokes Foucauldian concepts to view the adult education of rural migrants as an arena of power relations. He contends that the exercise of power governs the day-to-day praxis of adult education. As he deftly illustrates, this theoretical lens provides an insight into rural migrants' adult education with the aim of answering several questions. For example, who benefits from the educational opportunities of the Yuanmeng Plans? Who amongst rural migrants are the "educated persons" that the nation-state has "ceremonially inducted" through adult education? To what extent does adult education address the educational needs of rural migrants? How do teachers and rural migrants perceive and construct their identities? And, finally, how do teachers assess the academic performance of students? In Jia's critical and rich analysis of these questions, rural migrants exhibit agency, struggle, aspiration and imagination as they grapple with the powerful structures shaping their adult education.

Delving into the narratives, Jia suggests how to integrate the various types of power into our understanding of the realities of adult education, thus demonstrating the Foucauldian theory of the mutually constitutive relationship between power and school education. In terms of the unequal distribution of educational opportunities, Jia shows how some large companies selected rural migrants whose behaviour was considered obedient (dubbed "excellent workers") to access Yuanmeng Plans (p. 65). Because the programmes received funds from the local Workers' Union or municipal government, the inculcation of socialist doctrines topped the priorities of Yuanmeng education, in order to nurture an elite workforce that would contribute to the realization of "the Chinese dream." However, both educational processes and assessment were essentially formalistic. The programmes' learning and teaching activities were unable to address the educational needs of the students, leading to a shaken faith in formal education and a decline in motivation. For example, school administrators urged Jia, who then worked in a school as a volunteer teacher, to simplify test contents and reduce the requirements made of students so that an appropriate number of candidates could pass the exams.

Another effect of this exercise of power is characterized by the confrontations between various discourses. Jia interrogates how those contesting discourses simultaneously operate in the two educational sites and thereby create tensions. Put starkly, these confrontations are between socialist ideologies and modern commercialism that prioritizes individual success (see p. 81), between

collectivism required in learning activities such as teamwork and the individualized ways of assessment (pp. 94–99 and chapter seven), and between the over-emphasis on school credentials in career promotion and the value of informal and non-formal learning in shopfloor experiences (pp. 155–160). The prevalence of these discourses reveals how adult education is entrenched in the social structure (e.g. the socialist market economy and the urban–rural divide). Regrettably, Jia situates his findings in comparison with Western studies on adult education. The omission of Chinese scholarship creates a mirage that these discourses are distinctive to China’s adult education, and perhaps leads the author to suggest some misguided and infeasible measures to revamp Yuanmeng Plans.

Furthermore, Jia reiterates the theoretical framework of assemblage developed by Deleuze and Guattari throughout the book. He conceives adult education as an assemblage in which active agents, rules, resources, events and power come into play, and he also suggests that it is possible for workers to navigate through assemblages. This thesis leads to grand and sweeping conclusions about the adult education of rural migrants and leaves the various mechanisms uninvestigated. Presumably, the use of the concept of assemblage leads to the insufficient presentation of thick descriptions in the book. There are some riddles waiting to be unraveled. What is the hidden curriculum in Yuanmeng Plans that affects interactions between teachers and rural migrants? How do teachers who venerate individuality and personal success make sense of the teaching processes? What are the trajectories of social mobility for Yuanmeng students? As well as the model students and workers that the author came across in an industrial park, it is necessary to listen to the silenced voices of ordinary students.

Most striking in Jia’s analysis is that continuing education in the Chinese context strengthens the stratifications within the group of rural migrant workers (see p. 27). This finding confirms the cliché in the field of sociology of education, reminding us that schooling is not a level playing field and education is not an equalizer to compensate for “deficiencies” originating from students’ ascribed status.

It is a pity that Jia spends little time analysing the socioeconomic status of the rural migrants and ignores stratifications along lines of gender and ethnicity. This means it is still difficult to gauge to what extent Yuanmeng Plans intensify stratifications. As the author suggests, education colludes with larger society by shaping discourses and related practices to reproduce the status quo. At the same time, when envisioning the future of rural migrants in China and their adult education, other social forces such as the incorporation of digital technologies within formal education may also bring about transformations and obstacles. As researchers and educational practitioners, we should be aware of the upcoming challenges because these forces are implicated in the (re)production of social hierarchies in which the dynamics between power and education have placed rural migrants at a disadvantage.

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Violent Intimacy: Family Harmony, State Stability, and Intimate Partner Violence in Post-Socialist China

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Tiantian Zheng’s new book, *Violent Intimacy: Family Harmony, State Stability, and Intimate Partner Violence in Post-Socialist China*, is a scathing indictment of a society that has time and