Bachelor's Thesis in Development Studies

Chinese NGOs
The Case of Migrant Children's Education

Priyanka Mellergård John

Table of contents

Abstract

Education is widely acknowledged as central to development. Equal access to education for internal migrant children in Chinese cities is hindered by various institutional barriers and additional disadvantages with poor quality schools. Meanwhile, Chinese NGOs are stepping in to bridge this educational gap. This thesis examines in what ways NGOs are able to influence migrant children's education, within a context where NGOs are tightly controlled by the state. Using previous research and fieldwork interviews of two Chinese NGOs, the findings suggest they are able to meet the immediate educational and social needs of the children. It also concludes that the NGOs are conditioned by the state and unable to influence greater structural impediments for migrant children's education attainment.

Acknowledgement

I would like to start by expressing my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Professor Franz-Michael Rundquist for all his support and encouragement. I am deeply grateful for his willingness to take me on and providing the support I needed throughout this process. I would also like to thank the participants and assistants in the fieldwork for all their help and their willingness to share their experiences. Lastly, I want to express my love and heartfelt gratitude to my husband, Jonathan, without whom this would have been impossible to accomplish, my sister Kirti, who has tirelessly cheered me on, and to my family and friends who have stood by me side.

Abbreviations

NGO   Non-Governmental Organisation

INGO   International Non-Governmental Organisation

GONGO   Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisation

MDGs   Millennium Development Goals

SDGs   Sustainable Development Goals

EFA   Education for All

1. Introduction

Education is considered as an important instrument for social change and a means out of poverty. The development agenda has promoted the importance of education with initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education for All (EFA) and in the current Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs). The SDGs calls to "*ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*" (UNESCO 2016). Education is also considered a means to achieve other goals, such as lower mortality rates and environmental protection, which influence development on an individual as well as a societal level (UNESCO 2015a). Yet in 2013, the number of children and young adolescents still out of school were 124 million (UNESCO 2015b). In the pursuit of achieving these goals, both governments and non-governmental actors have a vital part to play. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have taken an active role, especially where governments fail (Lewis and Kanji 2009). China has been one of the few countries to achieve a high enrolment rate among primary school children and an overall high literacy level among its population. The intense economic growth that the country has experienced has partly been attributed to this investment in education (Sen 2001).

Despite China's achievements, children to internal migrant workers living in urban areas have been gravely disadvantaged because of the household registration scheme, the *hukou* system*,* that prevents them for gaining access to public schools in the city. This has made education attainment a great challenge for most migrant children, who have little other choice than to join unofficial migrant schools that offer poor quality education (Kwong 2006). Although, some cities have taken important steps to ensure more inclusive policies, these are not enough for the large number of disadvantaged children across China (Zhang, 2011).

In the meantime, local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have taken an active role in addressing the needs of marginalized groups. The approaches taken by NGOs, and the actual changes they are able to achieve for the target group, occur in relation to other actors such as the state (Lewis and Kanji 2009). The Chinese government's attitude towards NGOs has shifted after years of strict control (Ma 2006).

NGOs have hence stepped in and tried to fill the gap in education provision and quality for migrant children (Pong 2013; Hasmath and Hsu 2009). However, the legal environment in which NGOs in China exist is complex, and NGOs use different strategies in order to continue their work (Ma 2006). Much of previous research on migrant children's education focuses on describing their situation (Ming 2013; Kwong 2006). Research on NGOs, on the other hand, has focused on the policy environment within which they exist and their ability to negotiate their existence within it (Lu 2009; Ma 2006; Howell 2011). However, little research has been done on how and what roles NGOs take in helping migrant children's education and what impact these interventions have in both educational attainment and on policy level (Pong 2013). Therefore, there is a need to explore how NGOs are impacting the educational attainment of migrant children in China. However, due to the difficulty of assessing the actual educational outcome for the migrant children, this paper focuses on the activities of the NGOs and their different roles in supporting the educational attainment of migrant children in China. This correlates to the larger debate of NGOs role in development in China. In order to make the research tangible I have chosen to conduct a case study on two anonymous NGOs in a large city in China.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the wider discussion on education in development and NGOs as agents in this process. In doing so, it focuses on the matter of Chinese NGOs role in migrant children's education attainment as a specific case to study.

The research purpose is to examine the role of two Chinese NGOs in supporting educational attainment for migrant children. The research questions are:

- What is the educational situation for migrant children in China?
- What are the conditions for Chinese NGOs?
- How do the two Chinese NGOs influence educational attainment for migrant children?

1.2 Definition of NGOs

Non-governmental organisations, NGOs, have a variety of definitions depending on country and context. A common definition is that they are organisations independent of the state, non-profit and with altruistic ideals of improving social, economic and political change in line with the greater development agenda of poverty reduction and equity (Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 11). Holmén (2010, p. 16) captures their diversity in his definition:

> "large and small, formal and informal, indigenous and foreign, political and apolitical associations with different management styles and modes of operation that engage directly or indirectly in a wide spectrum of activities, including development, child and maternity care, health, education, agricultural extension, environment conservation, savings, credit provision, small-scale industry, political and/or human rights advocacy, and sensitization."

This diversity is also reflected in the various names these organisations are referred to, which describes their different types and objectives. They are called community-based organisations, grassroots organisations, international NGOs (INGOs) and many others, also depending on the political context of their origin, ideology, or their function (Lewis and Kanji 2009, pp. 7-12). In order to create consistency, this paper will use the term NGO to refer to a wide range of non-governmental organisations engaged in social work, except where reference literature uses otherwise.

1.3 Disposition

Following the introductory chapter, the theoretical framework is presented. The theoretical framework is divided into three parts: the notion of development and education, the NGO-state relationship that conditions NGOs, and the different roles NGOs can take in development. Secondly, a methodology chapter presents the research design of the thesis and a presentation of the NGOs interviewed. Thirdly, the analysis chapter presents the findings. Finally, the thesis presents a combined discussion and conclusion.

2. Theoretical framework

The overarching area of interest for this thesis is education and development, and NGOs as agents in this matter. This section uses a literature review to offer a theoretical framework for this dissertation. It begins by providing an overview of development and education. In the subsequent section, the NGO-state relationship is discussed. The last section gives an account of the different roles NGOs can take in development.

2.1 Development and education

Educations central role in development comes from a dominating understanding of development, within the human development approach. Based on Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, the human development approach shifts the focus of development from economic growth to expanding people's freedom (Fukuda-Parr 2003; Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 53). Sen (2001, p. 87) argues that poverty must be seen as "*capability deprivation*", i.e. lack of access to opportunities, since poverty entails more than just lack of income. These opportunities can be hampered by different factors. In the case of children marginalized in education, these barriers can be institutional, such as laws preventing access to education, socioeconomic inequalities such as wealth, gender, ethnicity, language and location, but also cultural norms that discriminate against certain groups (UNESCO 2010b, pp. 6-7;111).

According to Sen (2001, p. 143), an additional barrier many people face is that deprivation is followed by "*coupling of disadvantages*". That is when one deprivation, e.g. poor quality education, leads to another deprivation, such as lack of literacy skills or inability to find work. Sen argues that in order to increase individual freedoms, institutions such as the state play an important role in providing basic opportunities and equity (Sen 2001, p. 143). However, the freedom to participate in the development process through political and civil rights is equally important as these value citizens as agents (Sen 2001, p. 288). NGOs and other actors play an important role in this matter (Sen 2001). According to Fukuda-Parr (2003, p. 303), the goal of development must hence be seen as "… *removing the obstacles to what a person can do in life*". An

9

obstacle considered more important than others is the lack of access to education (ibid.; UNESCO 2015a).

UNESCO argues that education helps individuals acquire capabilities that increases participation in society, builds human capital, and increases social mobility, all of which can lead to economic growth and poverty reduction (UNESCO 2015a). The emphasis on education is partly founded on a rights-based notion, but also that attainment of good quality education will accelerate the achievement of other objectives, especially those focusing on poverty reduction and general improvements in health (UNESCO 2010a, pp. 1-11). Therefore, education is given prominence as both the means and goal of development (Cremin and Nakabugo 2012). However, Sen (2001) claims that although education is important in enabling people to seize different opportunities, without participatory rights people are unable to fully enjoy their freedoms, especially those marginalized without possibility to voice their opinion. A variety of actors, such as the market, state, and NGOs, play a role in enhancing the opportunities and freedom of people (Sen 2001). Rose (2007) claims that in the case of education, there is a unanimous understanding that states have the primary responsibility for education. However, it is clear that such provision is not always realised and that NGOs often play a crucial role in reaching those marginalized in education. Institutions such as UNESCO (2015a) call for greater partnership between different actors to ensure education for the most underprivileged.

As development and education advance in tandem, NGOs are crucial agents in enabling the most marginalised to participate. Nevertheless, the state and NGO relation is complex will be discussed in the following section.

2.2 NGOs and the state

The prominence of NGOs, both in the development agenda and within development studies, is a result of the diminishing role of the state as service provider, along with "*wider debates about politics and democratization, public participation and improved service delivery*" (Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 122-123; Holmén 2010, p. 204). The expectation that NGOs should be agents of political and social change, and the NGO-

state relationship that follows these expectations, derive from civil society theories. NGOs are considered actors within civil society. According to Bebbington et al. (2006, p. 6-7), civil society within development studies has been approached from an ideological/theoretical level:

> "…the notion of civil society has flourished most fruitfully within either the neoliberal school of thought that advocates a reduced role for the state or a post-Marxist/post-structural approach that emphasizes the transformative potential of social movements within civil society."

Holmén suggest that the neoliberals view the reduction of the state as a means to reduce costs by using NGOs charitable funding and voluntary work to avoid greater taxation. Meanwhile, the post-Marxist/post-structural approach, views the state as abusing its power to serve the elite and NGOs work as empowering the poor (Holmén 2012, p. 204).

Another popular framework for understanding civil society is the tripartite model. Here, the three sectors, civil society, state and the market, are believed to be in opposition to each other (Bebbington et al. 2008; Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 126). Most of these views are based on the idea of civil society as a group of organisations and a space between the state, market and household, "*within which ideas about the ordering of social life are debated and contested*" (Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 121; Bebbington et al. 2006, p. 6-7). NGOs are hence viewed as fostering participation and that their growth also means a growth in democracy (ibid.). Lewis and Kanji (2009, pp. 1-22; 52-58; 76-78; 89) claim that NGOs have on this notion also been credited with, in contrast to the state, a bottom-up, people centred, rights-based and participatory approach to development that holds empowerment as a central theme in the forming and achievement of their activities.

Yet, this idea of NGOs ability to influence their surroundings and possess all these attributes is not entirely accurate, Holmén (2010) argues. Instead he finds that in most cases NGOs are a mirror image of their local environment (Holmén 2010, p. 16), reflecting the structures and hierarchies of their own culture (Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 133). Furthermore, the diversity of organisations defined as civil society organisations incorporate a wide range of voluntary organisations such as anti-Semitic organisations and paramilitary organisations, many of which do not uphold virtues of equal development for all (Edwards 2011). Bebbington et al (2008, p. 6) claim that both the

tripartite model and the opposing theoretical approaches forget that in reality the boundaries between state and NGOs are not clear cut, and that as Gramsci's notion emphasises, there is a power struggle between these actors. NGOs many times have competing interests that do not necessarily contribute positively to development. While they can contest the power of the state, the state can also use groups within civil society to exercise and maintain power and status quo (Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 127-128).

Ultimately, Lewis and Kanji (2009, p. 26-28) claim, the nature of the state conditions the possibilities and legitimacy of NGOs, leaving NGOs to navigate within the space created for them. NGOs depend on the legal framework set out by the state for their room to manoeuvre (ibid), but also, within development practice, NGOs depended on the state for funding (Lewis and Kanji 2009; Beddington et al. 2008; Smith 2011).). While laws may inhibit NGO activity, Holmén (2010) argues that funding from donors make NGOs tied to donors' objectives, hampering development from below and forming unequal power relationships (Holmén 2010, pp. 215-216). Smith (2011, pp. 37-38) further elaborates this position, saying that as the role of NGOs as service providers is increasing in parts of the world, the dependency on government funding risks creating self-censorship among NGOs who fear that questioning their benefactors will have negative results on future funding. A dependent relationship is therefore feared to have negative effects on the NGOs autonomy, but also their accountability (Lewis and Kanji 2009; Holmén 2010, p. 215). Lewis and Kanji (2009) conclude that, while the legal framework and funding may make NGOs accountable to government and donors, NGOs often forget accountability to their recipients. Moreover, there are few means for recipients to influence and hold NGOs accountable (ibid.). Yet, being subject to the government's attitude towards NGOs, they may face persecution, expulsion and at other times partnership and cooperation (Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 26-28).

Development and education are processes led by agents such as the state and NGOs. Research argues that NGOs participation in development has increased through the reduction of the state, helping the state cover costs, but also promoting participatory and empowering approaches to development, and contesting the state. Yet, the nature of NGOs does not inevitably lead to positive development, and they may be used by the

state for its own purpose. Finally, NGOs are conditioned by the state by its legal framework, funding, and interest in cooperation.

2.3 The roles of NGOs in development

Although NGOs room for manoeuvre is conditioned by the state, NGOs are participating in development in various ways. Lewis and Kanji (2009) identifies three main roles that NGOs have in contemporary development practice: service delivery, partnership and catalysis. It is common that these roles overlap and NGOs have a variety of activities, where one role helps to advance another (Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 91). In the following section these three will be discussed in terms of their possibilities and weaknesses.

NGO's role in service delivery

Lewis and Kanji (2009) find that NGOs service delivery is important because it provides basic services in contexts where they are not available, or of poor quality. For NGOs engaged in education service delivery, this can entail directly providing education or complementary and capacity buildning to government schools (Rose 2007). NGOs have different reasons for delivering service. Some view it was their mission, while others are contracted by government, donors or companies. NGOs also have different target groups in their service delivery, such as the local community or even the government (Lewis and Kanji 2009, pp. 92-93). Some consider NGOs to have a "*comparative advantage*" in their services, such as "*flexibility, commitment and cost-effectiveness*", which is possible through being locally rooted and using volunteers (Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 93; 16). Their success is attributed to their ability to adapt services to the needs of the target group (Rose 2007, p. 20) and to create innovative solutions to problems (Ibrahim and Hulme 2011, p. 393-399). Studies have found that NGOs have proven to provide good services (Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 93; 16).

Holmén (2012, p. 212) claims that while NGO services are viewed as being participatory and empowering, and therefore "*demand driven*", most of the time the size

and capacity of NGOs hinder them. NGOs capacity varies and their ability depends on the context. Some studies have found that the quality of their service delivery has been poorly managed and that funding often cuts their lifespan short (Lewis and Kanji 2009, pp. 92-93). Others find that many NGO projects fail to reach the poorest (Ibrahim and Hulme 2011, p. 393-397). The long term consequences of service provision by NGOs can result in governments no longer feeling compelled to provide services for their citizens, as well as a risk of people turning into recipients instead of citizen who demand change from their governments. The long term impact of services on social, economic and political aspects are limited and difficult to prove as empirical results are not consistent (Ibrahim and Hulme 2011, p. 393-400).

NGOs role in partnership

In the current development policy agenda, increasing the number of partnerships between NGOs and key actors, such as governments, donors, other NGOs and businesses, is deemed important in order to increase the effectiveness of resources, coordination and creating sustainable development (Lewis and Kanji 2009). Through partnerships, NGOs can also connect the grassroots community with other levels of government and society. For NGOs, forming partnerships may be a way of broadening their network, increase capacity and abilities, but also an opportunity to access new resources that the partner is in possession of. Although some NGOs have formulated policy documents in order to clarify different roles and the terms of partnership (Lewis and Kanji 2009, pp. 112-113), many are caught up in unequal partnerships, especially in cases of external funding (Holmén 2010, p. 215). NGO programs are often done without strong linkages to other organisations and government programs, which inhibits up scaling (Rose 2007).

NGO's role as catalysis

As catalysis, NGO can advocate rights and act as watchdogs to hold authorities accountable. Many scholars consider advocacy to be a counterbalance to service delivery and a way to address issues of poverty on a structural level and therefore assumed to have greater effect. Advocating policy change is considered to be addressing

the source of the problem. There are several global and national advocacy efforts by NGOs that have changed policies. Lewis and Kanji (2009) find that NGOs strategies for doing advocacy varies. Some advocacy is done through interpersonal connections between NGO staff and government officials. At other times, advocacy is done by mobilizing the public and creating alliances with other NGOs (Lewis and Kanji 2009, pp. 97-101). The ability to do advocacy and act as watchdogs depends on internal and external factors (Smith 2011, pp. 37-38). Internal factors include size, skills, resources, and other abilities (ibid.), while external factors include the political openness of the government in a country and whether policy makers allow advocacy work. Ibrahim and Humle (2011, p. 391) claim that in the case of Bangladesh, NGOs were not able to accomplish much in the matter of advocacy due to the political climate there. However, they were more successful with service delivery and made lasting progress.

While some might not view being a catalyst as their objective at all (Smith 2011, pp. 37-38), others can use their experiences from service delivery to highlight policy issues. NGOs who can act as intermediaries between the target group and officials and also mobilize stronger ties with other NGOs have better success as catalysis (Ibrahim and Hulme 2011 p. 396). Acting as catalysis can also entail educating the public or the stakeholders in different issues relating to policies. This can create awareness that can in turn be mobilized into putting pressure on policymakers (Bebbington et al. 2008, p. 135-136). Critics argue that in order to ensure long term effects of policies and their implementation NGOs would need to introduce bodies that would monitor and sanction non-compliance (Lewis and Kanji 2009, p. 105).

2.4 Summary

The theoretical framework suggests that development for marginalised groups is hampered by lack of capabilities, and that this reinforces disadvantages. Meeting the needs of the marginalized is a responsibility of both states and NGOs, but the nature of these actors and relationship between them is primarily conditioned by the state. Finally, the different roles that NGOs play in the field of development and education is as service deliverers, through partnerships, and as catalysis, are conditioned by external and internal factors.

3. Methodology

In order to answer the research question on how Chinese NGOs can support educational attainment for migrant children in China, the following section describes the research method and design for this study.

3.1 Research Design and Limitations

In examining how Chinese NGOs can support educational attainment for migrant children in China, I have chosen a case study research design with a qualitative approach. This is suitable for the research question as case studies are used in research where the goal is to examine a complex "*contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context*" (Yin 2003, p. 1). In doing so, the research design allows for the use of various sources of data that come together through triangulation (Yin 2003, pp. 13-14). The research design however limits generalisation, but this is not the objective of this paper (Bryman 2012, pp. 69-70). Instead, this study intends to give an example of a complex issue. Though relying on a theoretical frame to conduct its analysis, the thesis does not set out to test theoretical propositions.

In order to answer the research questions, both secondary and primary data has been collected. The first two questions have been answered using secondary sources such as monographs, anthologies, research articles, NGO reports (China Development Brief), and news websites. Although I am limited to using English language literature, there is a great deal of research in English to answer the questions. Due to the lack of secondary data on what Chinese NGOs are doing for migrant children, I chose to collect primary data. The primary data was collected using semi-structured interviews with two NGOs in China. This interviewing technique is useful as it allows for flexibility, but also helps the researcher focus the theme of the interview. Using Bryman's (2012, pp. 470-472) interview-guide, a number of questions were selected for the interviews (see Appendix). As interviews were made with the same people on two separate occasions, the second set of interviews allowed for more specific questions to clarify information. I was also able to visit one of the NGOs programs and a school they cooperate with.

The limitation in this research design is firstly the amount of the data that could be collected. Using both secondary and primary data helps triangulate the results in order to provide more information and increase the validity of the data collected (Yin 2003, p. 13-14). This is also why I chose more than one NGO. A second limitation is the reliability of the answers. Due to the excessive government control of NGOs in China and the sensitive nature of the topic of migrant children's education, the answers provided by the interviewees may have be altered due to self-censorship. The answers may also be *coded* with underlying information, which, due to my lack of language skills, I may have missed. The interviewees may also exaggerate their own work and importance.

A third limitation is the fact that the dissertation is influenced by my experiences and values as a NGO-practitioner within the field of adult non-formal education. It has influenced my choice of topic, but more importantly the interviews and data analysis. While doing the fieldwork, instead of trying to do the impossible of discarding my predisposition, I chose to use it to my advantage by sharing my own experiences of NGO work with the interviewees to make them feel more at ease and willing to share their challenges. However, this may have obstructed and guided the additional interview questions and affected my data analysis.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

The primary data was collected through fieldwork in China, from March to April 2015. Having visited China for a few months on a separate research project some years back, I had some local contacts that were useful for getting me in touch with the Chinese NGOs and provide assistant/translators. The Chinese NGOs were chosen by convenience sampling, but they were both relevant as they worked with supporting migrant children's education more broadly. Convenience sampling is a common approach in organizations research (Bryman 2012, p. 202), but also what Marina Svensson (2006, p. 269) has found to be prevalent in research in China: "*In China, information and research contacts are after all often gained through contacts and human relationships built up by acts and expectations of reciprocity.*". The latter part of reciprocity is tricky in China. In my own case, the NGOs that agreed to be informants did so because of

relationships and reciprocity to our common contact. I if were to ask for favours from the NGOs, such as contact information to other NGOs, my contact would be the one who owed these organisations rather than me. This put limitations on the number of NGOs I could interview. Also, due to the limitation of time, both my own and that of my informants, as well as the scope of this paper, the number of interviews was limited. The interviewees answers may or may not be representative for the NGOs. I used two interpreters that were provided to me by my contacts. They were not professional interpreters, but both had worked in an English speaking environment and with translation in their work for many years. Using non-professional interpreters is common in research in China (Thøgersen 2006, p.123).

The interviewed NGOs will from here on be referred to as NGO-A and NGO-B. I was able to do two separate interviews with the manager of NGO-A and an additional two group interviews with three volunteers (a total duration of six and a half hours). NGO-A also allowed me to visit one of the schools they worked with and an afterschool program. I did two interviews with the manager of NGO-B (approximately four hours in total), but they did not allow any visits to their programs. This was considered to be difficult to arrange, due to fear over how a foreigner might raise suspicions.

Their fear of the government was also reflected in their choice of location for the interviews. NGO-B invited me to their office, whereas the interviews with NGO-A were conducted in cafés in an area with many foreigners, at our common contacts business office, and a phone interview with their manager. The choice of doing interviews in cafés has implication when transcribing. The translator also mentioned the difficulty for the more talkative interviewee to actually answer the questions, something I too noticed. The notes from that interview are therefore complied according to topic, and organised by the translator and myself. The translator and I agreed that the answers provided insight into NGO-A's lack of professionalism which became even more evident when speaking to NGO-B who showed the opposite.

The collected data was analysed thematically (Bryman 2012, pp. 578-580). Firstly, it was organised according to the three distinct research questions as three different themes. Secondly, different sub-themes emerged out of the three main themes.

3.3 Ethical Issues

Drawing on Bryman's (2012) guide to ethical principles the following steps were taken. The interviewees were informed of the research project and they agreed to have the interviews recorded on a mobile phone. However, two interviews with the NGO-A manager were not recorded. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject and the NGOs, an agreement was made to deleted recordings after transcription. The field visit that NGO-A arranged was possible only together with a group of other foreigners. Therefore, people at the school did not know of the research project, hence observations were made and notes taken from the principal's presentation. The NGOs had different positions on anonymity. NGO-A was very clear from the beginning that they and the city had to be anonymous because of threats by local authorities to anyone who spoke to 'outsiders'. Whereas NGO-B said that this information was old news and that it was important to name the place as it was different compared to other large cities. The significance of their different positions is discussed in the analysis chapter. At NGO-A's request, all places and names are anonymous.

3.4 Presentation of the Interviewees

NGO-A

NGO-A (or NA) was established in 2008 by a physician, primarily to work with children in rural areas, but started working in the city with migrant children in recent years. They registered as an NGO in 2014. This has entitled them to some funding to work with migrant children, but their main funding comes from faith based organisations and private donors as well as an INGO they collaborate with. The NGO is based on a core group of ten volunteers, except for one part-time staff, and hundreds of volunteers registered with them annually. The informants from NGO-A are:

Manager, founder for the NGO: Manager

Volunteer and activity manager (long term volunteer): V1

Volunteer (long term volunteer): V2

Staff and volunteer: V3

NGO-B

NGO-B (or NB) started in 2001 as a small project by an INGO, but was registered as a NGO in 2004. According to their website they were created as a response to the growing number of urban poor in the city. Initially they catered to unemployed and laid off factory workers with micro-credit schemes, but since 2005 their focus changed to migrant children and their families. Since 2008, migrant children are their primary focus. Their funding comes primarily from the government, but also from the INGO, some private companies and private donors. NGO-B has ten paid staff and hundreds of volunteers registered with them annually. The informant from NGO-B is the manager.

4. Analysis

The analysis is structured into three parts. Firstly, it examines the barrier to education for migrant children. Secondly it explores the conditions for Chinese NGOs. Thirdly, the different roles of the two Chinese NGOs are examined in relation to migrant children's education.

4.1 Migrant children and their barriers to education

In the past decades, rural to urban migration has increased massively across all China as low skilled labour is attracted to the cities (Young 2013, p. 88; Kwong 2006, pp. 165-166). In the Chinese judicial definition migrants are defined as "*people who have lived in places other than one's household registration for more than half a year*" (Qu and Wang 2011, p 224). As a result of discrimination by their urban counterparts, they usually live in secluded run down areas, away from the urban residents, in close knit communities. Nevertheless, their numbers keep increasing and their patterns of migration has changed from moving on short-term basis to settling down in the cities (Kwong 2006, pp. 165-167; 166). An increasing number have begun bringing their families, resulting in the growing number of migrant children. In Beijing, migrant children constituted 14.2% of the migrant population in 2006 compared to 9.2% in 2000 (Qu and Wang 2011, pp. 225-226). One of the biggest challenges facing migrants in China is the household registration system, called the hukou system (Young 2013).

4.1.1   Institutional barriers

In China, the population is divided into rural and urban residents in a household registration system called the hukou system (Wang et al. 2015). This is not merely a census and registration system, but it also serves to control the movement of the population. It is a way to restrict urban and rural population growth and entitlements (Young 2013, p. 47; Wang et al. 2015, p. 279). The hukou system was relaxed with the economic reforms in 1978, allowing people to move into cities for work. This has resulted in a massive rise in the urban population, from 170 million to 730 million between 1978-2013 (Wang et al. 2015). Although the laws on movement have changed,

the hukou system has until recently restricted entitlements to those with a local hukou. Without local hukou, residents are deprived of social services such as education, healthcare, and land and housing contracts. Transferring one's registration from a rural to an urban hukou is expensive and has only been possible through studying, marriage, or when rural land becomes urban through urban expansion (Young 2013; Wang et al. 2015). Quotas and other rules restrict the number of people able to obtain an urban hukou, and without temporary residence permits that legalizes their stay and employment, many are considered "*illegal workers*" (Young 2013, pp. 48; 49). Due to their ambiguous legal status, they lack "*political representation or channels through which to voice their opinion*" (Kwong 2006, p. 167). This makes them vulnerable to harassment by both urban residents and local officials, where the latter have been known to evict migrants and suddenly close down housing areas where migrant families reside. Those migrants who are able to integrate well into the urban setting are migrants who have higher education qualifications and therefore also more financially beneficial jobs (ibid.).

In cities like Beijing and Shanghai, the hukou system also limits the type of jobs available to migrants, confining them to a number of low-skilled jobs, often with low pay and long working hours (Kwong 2006, p. 166). Migrants also suffer from other forms of discrimination by urban residents who complain that migrants have contributed to overpopulating cities, rising crime levels, and a reduction of "*...the 'quality' of the city population.*" (Young 2013, p. 49). For children of migrant workers, the hukou system creates many barriers to educational attainment. China has several laws that support education for every child, such as the nine-year compulsory education law (1986) (Zhang et al. 2011 p. 8), and additional laws from 2006 and 2007 that aim to increase access and completion rates by removing all tuition fees, textbook fees and other costs (Chai and Cheng 2011, p. 114). At the same time, there have been a number of measures taken to decentralize the educational funding responsibility to the county level. Migrant children have been the losers in this arrangement, as many counties do not view it as their responsibility to cater to migrant children who lack local hukou (Postiglione 2006, pp. 3-8).

There have been several government white papers on the issue of migrant children's education, taking a clear stand on the matter of giving them equal access to compulsory

education. Different cities have adopted different measures to address the issue. One example is the city of Nanjing, which allowed all migrant children equal access to education in 2006. Other cities, such as Tianjin and Guangzhou, allow enrolment in schools before residence permits are complete. In Shanghai, the local government assists capacity building in migrant schools through teachers training and training for principals. Nevertheless, implementation continues to be a problem (Qu and Wang 2011, pp. 237;242-243). In its most recent plan, *The New Urbanization Policy 2014-2020*, the Chinese government commits to addressing some of the problems of the hukou system by making it more "*people-oriented*" (Wang et al. 2015, p. 281). The plan aims to grant migrants basic public services along with ensuring equal access to education for 99% of migrant children by 2020. But the new plans also aim to further control the movement of migrants by introducing a new form of urban hukou that makes it easier to register for urban hukou in smaller cities and very difficult in larger ones (Wang et al. 2015).

Earlier policies have not always been implemented due to lack of accountability systems (Zhang et al. 2011, pp. 31-32). The lack of accurate data on the number of migrant children also makes the planning of schools and funding a difficult obstacle in implementing the goal (Qu and Wang 2011, p. 243). The institutional barriers prevent migrant children and their families from residing in the cities as equal residents, leaving migrant children with few educational options.

4.1.2 Disadvantages fuelling additional barriers

The educational options available to migrant children are public schools or private schools (Qu and Wang 2011, p. 231). The public schools have limited seats for migrant children (Ming 2013), and when they do enrol migrant children, many schools charge extra tuition fees and other miscellaneous fees, not applicable to urban residents (Kwong 2006, p. 168-169). These are often too expensive for the migrant families (Ming 2013). Although, such extra fees were banned by the central government, studies show that they continue at school level (Goodburn 2009). They also need to provide birth certificates and other paperwork such as work and residence permit which are difficult to obtain for many migrant families (Kwong 2006, p. 168-169). Even when children do have the means to pay for public schools, they face additional hurdles as

teachers having little incentive to help migrant children in class because their performance is not considered in the teacher evaluations. These children are also many times subject to discrimination by other students, as a result of their different social and cultural background (Qu and Wang 2011, pp. 232-233).

Another institutional barrier is the high school entrance exam. The exam, which is a precondition for attending high school, must be taken in the place of one's hukou registration. With no high schools available in the cities for migrant children, they have to return to the location of their hukou if they want to continue their studies, a place many have not lived in (Ming 2013). Since the curriculum varies between provinces, migrant children are poorly equipped to take such exams. The educational barriers therefore continue all throughout the different levels of education (Qu and Wang 2011, p. 233). For most migrant children the only option for education in the cities are private migrant schools (Kwong 2006).

 The migrant schools are privately run, by for example the principal, and profit driven. They are usually unlicensed and often referred to as "*black schools*" (Goodburn 2009, p.498). Tuition fees are affordable to parents and admission does not require any permits (Goodburn 2009). The schools are often run in very simple and poor conditions, such as shops, warehouses, or even sheds. However, some manage to rent space from public schools. Most of them lack facilities such as adequate desks, chairs, and blackboards, but also toilets and playgrounds (Kwong 2006; Goodburn 2009). Some schools have 20 students while others have as many as 1000 (Goodburn 2009). While there may be many students, schools have a shortage of teachers and the teachers available lack qualifications, with many occupying positions earlier as hawkers, caregivers or labour workers. As a result, the turnover rate among teachers is high. Due to the lack of both monetary and human resources, the schools only offer subjects such as Chinese and mathematics. (Kwong 2006, pp. 171-172).

Since many of the schools are unlicensed, they are subject to closure by local governments. Migrant schools in Beijing have been shut down without prior notice and without any provision of alternative education for the children. These often reopen at other locations, but this uncertainty not only hampers the continuity of the children's education, but also impedes the incentive for any investments in the quality of school facilities (Goodburn 2009, p. 500). Due to their legal status, unlicensed schools cannot

grant students any diplomas that are valid in the formal education system, hampering the possibilities for further education (Kwong 2006, p. 173). Yet many migrant children are not in school. A survey in nine cities across China found that 47% of all 6-year-old migrant children were out of school. The dropout rate among migrant children, in the same study, found that it increased with age peaking at 15,4% at the age of 14 (Qu and Wang 2011, p. 230).

The educational opportunities for migrant children are blocked by institutional barriers, with the hukou system and lack of policy implementations preventing equal access to education. Their situation is furthermore deprived by socioeconomic and cultural barriers, discrimination in public schools, and poor quality education in migrant schools. A lack of political representation also inhibits them from demanding their rights.

4.2 Conditions for NGOs in China: control and negotiation

The Chinese definitions of NGOs have incorporated much of the Western notion of NGOs, as non-profit organisations independent of the state. Nonetheless, the regulations, classification and terminology for organisations is complex (Ma 2006, pp. 78-82). One form of NGOs, that question the autonomy of Chinese NGOs, are the eight so-called "*mass organisations*" or Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisations (GONGOs), founded by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). These are directly accountable to the party and state council (Ma 2006, p. 82). In contrast, "*popular organisation*" are NGOs started on voluntary basis and that are registered with The Ministry of Civil Affairs, MOCA (Lu 2009, pp. 2-3). The two are generally categorised into the officially organized "*top-down*" NGOs and the popular "*bottom-up*" NGOs (Lu 2009, p. 29). The NGO-state relations hence vary between the two different groups. As a result of different classifications, it is difficult to find consensus over the number of NGOs in China (Shieh and Brown-Inz 2013). There were 500 000 registered NGOs in 2014, but many of them were GONGOs, causing disagreement over whether they should be included.1.5 million NGOs were expected to not be registered due to the bureaucracy of registering, working with sensitive issues, or being registered as companies (The Economist 2014). Counting all the different groups that could be

considered NGOs, the number could be as high as 8.8 million (Shieh and Brown-Inz 2013, pp. 7-9).

In contrast to the tripartite model, with NGOs and state in opposition with each other, GONGOs are a product of the State. GONGOs such as the All-China Women's Federation and Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) are partly a result of the state starting its own NGOs in an attempt to reduce the size of the state (Ma 2006, p. 82; Howell 2011). The GONGOs relationship to the state is therefore superior to that of popular NGOs, mainly because they already have legitimacy and better access to information though their contacts (Lu 2009). However, they are able to use this platform and further their autonomy. This is most evident in the case of Project Hope, started in the 1990s, by the China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF).[1] The CYDF managed to launch Chinas biggest NGO education project to address the needs of rural children's education, despite this being a sensitive issue at the time and challenging many of the CCPs regulations. This can be viewed as exercising autonomy. Their close relationship with the CCP that allowed them to experiment by taking an 'do first ask later' approach. Both GONGOs and popular NGOs are hence dependent on the state for their existence. The latter are, however, in a more disadvantaged position, and need to develop close informal relations with government officials who can help them with information and communicate with the authorities (Lu 2009). There may be blurred boundaries between the State and Chinese NGOs, and a close NGO-state relationship may help NGOs negotiate both the boundaries and exercise greater autonomy.

The institutional environment for NGOs in China is partly a result of the government's need to support NGOs in order decrease the size of the state (Saich 2000), but mostly out of fear for social instability. This is their reason for both suppressing NGOs and slowly improving the legal framework (Howell 2011, p. 167). The institutional environment for NGOs is crucial for their ability to function, and in China there are several restrictions (Lewis and Kanji 2009). The laws and regulations for popular NGOs impose a "'*dual management system*'" (Lu 2009, p. 29). This requires NGOs to register with MOCA and be supervised by a state department within a similar field of work. This supervision includes having the NGOs ideology and political aspects monitored,

---

[1] Founded by the CCYL

along with its finances, staff, overseas contacts and donations (Lu 2009, p. 29). This not only increases the workload of NGOs, but also limits their room for manoeuvre. The government also does not allow for more than one of each kind of organisation at each administrative level. This results in NGOs sometimes registering as non-profit enterprises or not registering at all, to get around the regulation. The government is, furthermore, concerned with NGOs expanding and networking. Regulations therefore prevent NGOs from starting branch organisations and NGOs leaders from starting other NGOs (Lu 2009).

All these regulations are, however, difficult to implement, and are used by both officials and NGOs to negotiate their space for manoeuvre. There are conflicting agendas between state agencies and administrative levels regarding NGOs and therefore the central government has difficulty enforcing policies on the local level. The local governments are more concerned with acting in their own self-interest than aligning with national strategies (Ma 2006, p. 73; Lu 2009, pp. 110-113; 146). This is partly due to decentralization policies that have made it difficult for local governments to fund different services, such as education (Postiglione 2006). Therefore, some wish for NGOs to fund certain public services with external means, leading them to not scrutinize certain NGOs, but also to prevented media from doing so, because bad publicity for NGOs would mean that the government would need to provide the service instead (Lu 2009, pp. 110-113; 146). This lack of control gives the NGOs more autonomy, while diminishing accountability. It also prevents the government from taking its responsibility and using the voluntary services of NGOs to reduce its costs (Bebbington et al. 2006; Lewis and Kanji 2009).

This inconsistency in their rhetoric, regulations, and actions is also related to the fact that some issues are considered more threatening, such as human rights, while others such as the environment are not (Teets 2015). But sensitivity for issues can also be based on location. For example, authorities in Shanghai have been more relaxed and supportive regarding issues relating to migrant children (Hasmath and Hsu 2009, pp. 137-140) whereas those in Beijing have been more restrictive (Pong 2013, pp. 86-89). Most service provision oriented NGOs are therefore found in large cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, or Guangdong, where local officials at MOCA promote reform and support NGOs with the monetary means to provide services. Out of 250 NGOs in a

survey, a majority worked with service delivery, concentrated on issues relating to education (42%), environment (47%) or disabilities (41%). This concentration to large cities is, of course, also a result of where the largests number of people without local hukou reside (Shieh and Brown-Inz 2013, pp. 13-14). It is evident that the state conditions NGOs by locality and issue.

Under President Xi Jipings leadership, steps have been taken to ease registration and other supportive measures to assist NGOs (ICNL 2016). Meanwhile, parts of the NGO sector have also seen an increased clampdown on actors who have been detained and imprisoned for working with sensitive issues such as advocating rights for minorities. Both actions come as a result of several measures taken by the government to reinstate its power, by cracking down on so called Western ideas such as "*universal values, freedom of speech, and civil society, to be forbidden in public discussion*" (Yuen 2015, pp. 51-56). These measure are a sign that the Chinese government supports NGOs working with providing services but not advocacy (ICNL 2016). NGOs in China are therefore dependent on the state for which role they can take.

The conditions for Chinese NGOs varies between government levels, issue and location. The legal constraints, and the latest clampdown, tends to confine NGOs to roles as service provides within certain areas. These conditions make NGOs dependent on the state, but their autonomy is negotiated by the varying interests of different levels of authority.

4.3 Two Chinese NGOs supporting migrant children's education

In this section I start by presenting the two Chinese NGOs activities and then examine their roles in relation to migrant children's education.

The activities NGO-A and B engage in to support migrant children's education are either in relation to the schools that the migrant children attend or afterschool programs, some of which is through partnership with the government. NGO-A works with five licenced schools, while NGO-B works with more than ten unlicensed schools. The

schools cooperating with NGO-B had a tuition fee of 800-1000 CNY[2] per semester, while two schools working with NGO-A cost between 1000-2000 CNY per semester, and the others are cheaper and cost between 300-800 CNY per semester. NGO-A mobilizes 100 volunteers per year, while NGO-B has 200-3000 volunteers annually.

The informants from NGO-A are: Manager, founder for the NGO: Manager; Volunteer and activity manager (long term volunteer): V1; Volunteer (long term volunteer): V2; Staff and volunteer: V3

The informant from NGO-B is the manager.

4.3.1   Supporting migrant schools

The first set of support is concentrated to activities in relation to the migrant schools. While it is more common for NGOs to either be running their own schools or supporting public schools with complementary activities (Rose 2007), the two NGOs in this study support private schools with complementary services. These services are comprised of material support and capacity building, along with additional educational support. Many of the migrant schools NGO-A works with are poorly equipped and have difficulty funding the necessary improvements. NGO-A has therefore helped the schools by providing old desks from a public school to three different migrant schools. NGO-A also donated books so that two schools could set up their own libraries. This support has been a part of their strategy to help the schools receive government funding. According to their manager, the local government has a list of criteria for schools to receive funding, such as the number of students, test scores and how many continue their education. According to the informant at NGO-A, low preforming schools did not get financial support from the government. One of the schools they supported started in a farmyard. As the NGOs started to hold educational holiday camps at the school, the school's reputation improved and more students joined the school. The growing numbers improved the finances of the school, and the necessary improvements could be made which ultimately led them to reach the criteria necessary to receive government

---

[2] 1000 CNY (Chinese Yuan Renminbi) = 12690 SEK/ 153 USD (www.xe.com, 2016-05-18)

funding. Two of the schools that NGO-A works with have reached the required criteria to receive funding.

In terms of capacity building, the licensed schools that NGO-A works with are provided with teachers training by the local government, but the unlicensed schools are not. NGO-B explain that because the migrant schools cannot afford qualified teachers, the teachers know little about teaching and their turnover rate is very high, with half of the teachers being replaced every semester. NGO-B therefore provides teachers training every semester to the migrant school teachers. The manager explains how this has been important:

> "The concept of education, the attitude towards kids [has changed]. From the beginning the principal of this school, they want something, they have their own personal agenda going into the cooperation. But after cooperating with our organization, the principal started realizing that apart from school scores, there are other values and other abilities that need to be grown and developed. The teachers used to punish the students physically, and after we provided training in children's protection and children's psychology, the teachers changed. No more do they simply punish the kids, instead they want to know more about the children. And the attitude changed." (NB2)

The training is important for building the capacity of the teachers and improves the learning environment for the children. Additional support provided to the schools are NGO-B's classes in moral education and career planning for students, while both NGOs facilitate parenting classes or arrange parent meetings at the school. For the students who are poor, NGO-A have also provides school equipment such as pens, notebooks and school bags. Both NGOs also pay full or part of the tuition fees for the poorest of the children attending the migrant schools. Information on the number of students receiving financial aid was not provided.

As these findings illustrate, the NGOs take on the role as service deliverers to supplying migrant schools with materials and financial support, teachers training and education or parents and students in support of the migrant children. Yet, whether they actually reach the ones most in need is difficult to assess. However, since NGO-B works with unlicensed schools, this could indicate that they reaching more marginalized children than NGO-A. The findings show that the support is small in scale I terms of the number of activities as well as the total number of schools the NGOs support (approximately fifteen).

During my visit at one of the schools cooperating with NGO-A, I took note that the principal downplayed the support they received. The principal claimed that they only

received some pens and notebooks to the school, and that around 20 students were provided with financial aid. Most noteworthy was the fact that the principal did not mention the NGO as their benefactors, although their representatives were present in the room during her presentation. This also gives an indication as to the relationship between the schools and the NGO as an unequal partnership.

4.3.2   Mending the cracks

Being flexible in accommodating services needed for the target group is considered a strength of NGOs. This flexibility is demonstrated in both NGO-A and B's after school programs for children. NGO-B explained that these programs were initiated "*because their parents are gone most of the day, they lack someone to take care of them*" (NB, 1). Both NGOs also emphasized that the after school programs were needed because the parents have limited education, some even being illiterate, and therefore cannot help their children with their homework. Responding to these problems, both NGOs set up activities for migrant children that take place after school hours and on holidays. Part of these after school activities consist of homework support, music classes, culture and sport activities, visiting libraries, interest classes and themes activities. NGO-B also mobilises members of the local community and the children themselves to be volunteers at their activities. Both NGOs arrange these activities at the schools and at community centres. They also arrange summer- and winter camps, many of which take place at the schools' facilities. The week-long camps have different themes, such as environmental care, handicraft, and military camp (aimed at self-discipline not military activity). Both organisations have English-language camps that are organized with NGO partners from abroad, who send volunteers to teach children English.

These services are in a sense driven by demand, as they provide service to a practical issue in the migrant children's everyday life, namely a safe space to be, at times when they are without a guardian and educational support that cannot be provided by their parents (Holmén 2010, p. 212). A further example of these accommodating services are NGO-A's visiting programs. In their visiting program, volunteers visit chosen families regularly to support children who, according to them, have special psychological or emotional needs. Around 60 families are part of their visiting program. It was not

defined exactly what this support entailed, but one volunteer's accounts from the visiting program gives an idea of the extent of their support:

> "…Because all the children have very different situation, we accompany them for a time…There was a boy who had burns. I helped him with his plan. I gave his information to a foreign medical group and he got free surgery...after the surgery I helped him with the school work that he had missed. When everything stabilised, he had to go back to his original life. I phased out the visits. I had other things to do." (NA1,V2)

Through the program, they were able to facilitate medical services to the injured child that he would otherwise not been able to receive, due to his lack of hukou, and supported his studies when (presumably) no other such support was available. Both NGOs provide services that are adapted to the needs of the children and their families.

Although these are small scale services, the limitations of what the two NGOs are able to provide are not only a result of limited resources and volunteer dependency. Factors outside their control also impact their choice of services as both organisations express:

> "We see many children and families have changed…before, they had very low confidence and now they are confident…*Honestly, we have hard time following a family because they are very mobile and it is difficult to follow*. But we encourage ourselves that it is good that we can see the family and children through us have little change. For example, the children who dropped put out of school came back. Children with low confidence who become more confident. The children whose parents do not communicate with the children but they do now." (NB1)

> "The situation is special for the families as many of them keep moving around. When the children start high school, we lose contact with them. For study or other reasons, the parents move back them back to the village." (NA1, V2)

With families constantly on the move, the impact and choice of activity has to be small scale and the expected outcomes likewise. These external factors also inhibit the possibility for long term projects. So the flexibility of the NGOs allows them to cater to the immediate needs of the migrant children. These activities are also empowering in that they expose the children to ways of organising society, and increasing participation in other areas of society than just school and work.

4.3.3   The pros and cons of partnering with the government

Partnerships with NGOs have become more frequent in China. Since 2014, both NGOs have started collaborations with the government, where the government wants them to work to increase social stability. NGO-B is receiving a substantial amount (60%) of its funding from the central government through contracting. Despite being registered with

MOCA since 2004, they worked for years in "*silence*" as their manager puts it ("*we used the method of our INGO and be very silent*" (NB1). In order to obtain the contract, they had to repackaged their project plan to fit the government's objectives. The funding has to be applied for annually. Short term grants could hamper long-term development and create unequal partnerships, however, NGO-B's expressed that their experience of cooperating with the government has been positive. Since the new funding, they have experienced a shift in their relationship with other actors, especially other government agencies at different levels, whom they feel have a more positive outlook on them: "*the government trusts and gives money to this organisation...we trust you also*" (NB1). Whilst earlier they needed to rent places for activities, the local government is now providing such facilities for free. Being visible to the authorities also has additional financial benefits, as the authorities are willing to refer additional funding to them:

> "For example, some private funds, for example from some company, of course they don't know about the NGOs, so they will go to the government directly. And then the government will refer these funds to the NGOs, or to cooperate together. Just because the government trusts us..." (NB, 2)

Furthermore, NGO-B adds that "*when we got it* [the funding], *it was very important for us and give us power to move forward with our work.*" (NB1). One such step is the collaboration with provincial institutions like the women and children's organisation (linked to the government) whom NGO-B collaborate with at community centre's called Children's Home. This collaboration aims for the Children's Homes to serve as a model that can be replicated throughout the province in the future. Based on NGO-B's experience of partnership with the government, there has been a positive outcome for them in more funding and additional partnerships. Their partnership on the Children's Home also has the aim of scaling up services.

On the other hand, the experience of NGO-A, who recently registered, is not the same. They too worked in silence and recall their relationship with the government earlier as being non-existent. However, the government knew of them and their projects even when they were unregistered. Since 2014, they have been contracted by the local government to work with three afterschool centres. Unlike before, being registered and contracted they now have to give account of their finances and the government is monitoring their activities. According to them, "*the camps have been very successful, so that is why the government has trusted us with these* [afterschool activity] *centres*"

(NA1, V1). Although they seem to be proud that they have been chosen to receive funding, there are downsides to the funding. One of the volunteers claimed that. "*the government sees the work* [the activity centres] *as their work and their results*" (NA2, V2). This suggests that the partnership is more contracted work than a mutual partnership.

A further illustration of their different relationships with the government is their different position on anonymity in this paper. Although both NGOs have been granted funding and collaboration opportunities with the government on different levels, NGO-A seems to be in a more inferior position with the local government than NGO-B. This is most evident from the fact that NGO-A wanted to remain anonymous in this paper. They had been told not to speak to any outsiders regarding the migrant children, because some previous researchers visiting the area had published work that allegedly criticized the government. NGO-B responded to this claim by saying

> "It is not necessary to keep the city name anonymous. These last few years, the situation has improved. Since Xi Jiping, the situation has changed. Even in the government reports, the government emphasises the NGOs social work. ... Since last month [date], that day is NGO day. Our NGO organised this event. The [NGO-B] centre; the government has a lot of faith in us. All these reports [pointing to reports] are written by government officials about the [NGO-B] centre. High officials have participated in our activity. It isn't so sensitive anymore." (NB1)

The claims of NGO-A where according to NGO-B old news. NGO-B even insisted that the naming of the city was important since the situation for migrant children here differed a lot from other Chinese cities. Although it may be true that the information available to the two organisations are different, it also reveals that perhaps the recognition that NGO-B receives by being granted central government funding, places them in a better position in relation to local authorities than NGO-B. Their unequal relationships have more to do with which level of government support they are receiving.

Partnership with the government has allowed the two NGOs better possibilities to work for migrant children. For NGO-B, this has been increasingly important in opening doors for additional cooperation's. Yet, the two NGOs are being limited to service delivery and the partnership is not on equal terms. The partnership, except for the Children's Home, seem to be on a contractual basis, and there are few signs of enabling linkages between the target group and the authorities. The guiding notion of social stability that

the government want the two NGOs to contribute to, ultimately encroaches on their room to question injustice in society.

4.3.4   "We really don't know them"

While a partnership with the government can serve as platform for promoting a certain issue, this requires skills from the NGOs. Although, both NGO-A and B are working with the local government, advocating for migrant children's education is a role none of the organisation actively take on.

Creating alliances with other organisations is an effective means to influence policy, but also facilitate sharing of knowledge. From the interviews with NGO-A and B, it is clear that there is little interaction between NGOs working in the same field. NGO-A mentioned an annual provincial gathering arranged by an NGO for actors working with children. They attended this gathering, but did not know if there were other NGOs present. When asked how many other NGOs were working with the same issues in the city, NGO-B said between two to three other NGOs, whereas NGO-A said that there were three to four. However, none of them mentioned each other. This suggests that there is little knowledge among the NGOs of other actors and activities for the target group. The lack of information hinders their cooperation and learning. But this may also be due to regulations restricting networking building (Ma 2006).

NGO-B believes that the government is interested in listening to NGOs in general. They exemplify with how during 2014 the funding they received from the central government did not allocate any to administrative costs. However, all the NGOs who received funding gathered together and voiced their opinion on the matter, resulting in an 8% administrative cost incorporated into the budget. Although this was successful, the manager is doubtful over their own capacity to do advocacy work on issues regarding migrant children. The problem, according to NGO-B, is that they have difficulty interpreting government policies in order to question them, but also because as NGO-B puts it "...*we really do not know them* [the government]...*how they function and think*" (NB1). Even when they have been asked by government officials to give proposals, NGO-B says, they have been unable to. This reveals that NGO-B themselves feel that they are lacking the capacity to do advocacy, but also that advocacy requires trust

between the NGO and the state. Although NGO-B are in an advantageous position, and express that the government trusts them, they have a difficult time trusting the government.

Furthermore, NGO-B claims that when it comes to dealing with government officials it depends very much on the person. The outcome depending on the particular official, their interests and the relationship they are able to build with them. Unfortunately, officials are frequently replaced, making lasting relationships difficult to establish. More importantly, planning for long-term projects becomes challenging. Nevertheless, this illustrates that the different levels of government in China have different interests, but also that here too the trust between an official and the NGO is important in NGO-state relationship.

NGO-A reported that they have been invited by the authorities to have dialogues regarding the situation for the migrant children. They did not reflect on the difficulty of influencing the government, but instead expressed:

> "We continue our work and they [the authorities] will be influenced. We want to help, but the government wants political fame….Yes, we think we can influence. We believe that God has put us here. We use our power to influence decision makers. One generation influence the next. We influence each other." (NA2, V1)

While this may be a more confident attitude of their abilities to influence the government, they also express their lack of trust in the government, and particularly in the government's agenda. While the NGOs may lack the ability and information needed to work as catalysis, they are primarily hindered by their lack of trust for the government.

4.3.5 Summary

The results show that the two NGOs roles as service deliverers enable them to provide basic services to the migrant children through after school programs, and complementary services for the migrant schools that build the capacity of the schools. Their services are adapted to the needs of the target group, enabling both access and improved quality of education. Yet, these activities are conditioned by the abilities of the NGO, i.e. working through volunteers and the limited funding. But also of external limitations put by the government and reality of migrant children to keep moving. The

quality of their services are difficult to assess. They are on the one hand small scale and dependent on volunteers. However, they have a long-term commitment through engaging in these matters long before being contracted by the government. There are few indications of their service delivery being directly participatory and empowering in its approach. However, it is clear that the role of service delivery is a primary role for these two NGOs.

The findings, furthermore, suggest that the two NGOs role in partnership is mainly with the government on different levels. These partnerships are, however, characterized by a business/contacting relationships rather than equal cooperation. Nevertheless, the partnership provides funding that increase the activities and also build the capacity of the NGOs, through the need to professionalize. The partnership has also enabled other partnerships for NGO-B, which is now engaged in projects that intend to be scaled up and are part of larger government strategies. Yet, their own lack of skills, but also the vagueness of the government which inhibits trust, prevent them to link the grassroots with the government. The nature of the government in this context, with lack of transparency, also creates an unequal partnership. The legal framework and lack of information also inhibits them to create partnerships within the NGO sector, in order to coordinate the work for migrants more efficiently.

It is clear from the data, that the role as catalysis is the least achievable for the two NGOs. This is due to internal factors such as size and skills, but also lack of information and trust in relation to the government and other NGOs. Other external factors, such as the continuous replacement of officials, also hampers their ability to create long-term contacts, which could help them get information and enable them to influence the government through relationships. The dependent relationship with the government, for legitimacy and funding, also makes them more accountable towards the government and less able to hold the authorities accountable. Moreover, their inability to truly understand and trust the government also hampers advocacy, even when they are asked to join a dialogue. Although they do not actively mobilize the public or other actors to work for advocacy, they are however, able to create awareness among those who volunteer.

In summary, these result show that the way the two NGOs are able to influence migrant children's educational attainment is through the role as service providers and through partnership with the government. Through these roles they are able to meet the immediate educational and social needs of the children. However, without the role as catalysis, they are unable to influence the structural issues causing the problems in the first place.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In the following section a brief discussion on the findings will be presented and followed by a conclusion. This dissertation aims to contribute to the debate on education in development and the role of NGOs in development in China, using the case of Chinese migrant children's education attainment and the role of two Chinese NGOs in this matter. In doing so, it intends to answer questions regarding the educational situation for migrant children in China, the conditions for Chinese NGOs and how two Chinese NGOs can influence educational attainment for migrant children. With a limited sample, it is difficult to draw any substantial conclusions, hence the findings and discussion provide at best an indicator to matters that can be investigated further.

The study has identified that migrant children lack equal opportunity to formal education and are subject to additional disadvantages through poor quality education and discrimination. The results show that, in the case of China, there are conflicting regulations that inhibit education for migrant children. While the hukous system, prevents entitlements such as education, other laws grant free compulsory education and some policies promote greater access for migrant children. The loopholes of these contradictions allow local governments avoid their responsibility in providing education for migrant children, and the central government provides no solution for how to implement the laws. The state also ignores the challenges for further education for the migrant children who have difficulty taking the high school entrance exam. The findings also show that, while the state ignores its duty, other actors, such as businesses and NGOs, take on the responsibility for education provision. While this is common in other places too (UNESCO 2015) in the Chinese case these actors are also vulnerable and subject to different forms of repression by the state. The migrant schools that the children attend are important in providing basic education, yet they are many times subject to closure and obtain minimal or no support from the government. They are thus able to provide substandard education through inadequate facilities, teachers and curriculum. While the state is important for providing basic opportunities and equity (Sen 2001), the data shows that the Chinese government have difficulty fulfilling both for migrant children.

The results furthermore, show that NGOs in China face a difficult legal framework, under which they endure excessive control and navigate within the local government agenda. The local agendas often result in an inconsistency in implementing regulations, which in comparison with the situation for migrant children, is something what enables NGOs to gain more room for manoeuvre. The local government can for instance, as in the case of the two NGOs, turn a blind eye to the activities of NGOs, as when they were working with migrant children as unregistered or *in silence*. However, this is also a form of control. The NGOs are thus not only conditioned by the state (Lewis and Kanji 2009), but in China they are immensely dependent on the government for their existence.

From the results I can conclude that the two NGOs in this study have two primary roles to play, i.e. service delivery and partnership, and not as catalysis. The implication this has on the education attainment of the migrant children they meet is difficult to assess. However, the results show for instance, that the partnership between the two NGOs and the government in service provision indicates an unequal partnership. The implication this may carry is a risk for these NGOs, to continue to treat the symptoms of the problem through service delivery, and also of becoming a tool for the state to maintain status quo. Findings also show that the partnership is unequal because of a lack of trust on the part of the NGOs, who cannot fully *know* the government, as they claim. The government's inconsistency in their actions, may be a reason for the mistrust. Unequal partnerships and lack of trust between NGO and the government, might ultimately affect the situation for migrant children negatively, as NGOs are unable to use their knowledge of their situation to propose solutions, in fear of funding cuts or other ramification on them. The two NGOs hence reflect much of the attitude of other NGOs in previous literature (Holmén 2010).

Furthermore, the findings show that the two NGOs lack skills to act as catalysts, which hinders them from holding the government accountable. For the migrant children's educational attainment this means that, the two NGOs are not able to hold the government accountable to the laws and policies regarding education for migrant children. This might affect the process of implementation negatively and the local governments will continue to make local decisions based on their own interests.

40

Moreover, their inability may also leave migrant children without any representatives for their cause.

Despite the limitations that the results show, for both migrant children themselves and the two NGOs ability to further the children's educational attainment, the results also provide support of the importance of NGOs role. The findings presented show that the two NGOs support educational attainment within their limitations. The two NGOs provide support that improve the education at the migrant schools, and they do meet the needs of after school care and additional educational support. And although it is not conclusive, they foster a level of skills through gatherings and community centre activities and show the children how communities can organise themselves. Nevertheless, while it might be legitimate to say that the two NGOs are able to increasing opportunities for migrant children, they are, however, unable to remove the obstacles in the way to further opportunities (Fukuda-Parr 2003).

This thesis set out to examine how two Chinese NGOs could influence the educational attainment for migrant children in China. In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that NGOs role in development in China is deeply conditioned by the state. Their influence of is thus limited to providing services within the situation the children are in. Meanwhile, without drastic changes made for migrant children's education, the results continue to be devastating for social mobility and fighting poverty in China. China's achievements in high enrolment rates and economic development, is tainted by the lack of equity for all children. This inequity unfortunately follows these children into adulthood. With the SDGs challenging countries to take on a more inclusive approach, the Chinese government has major challenge ahead of them. With the new policies in place for migrant children and the hukou system, and the simultaneous increase in domestic funding to Chinese NGOs to take on service delivery, it is important that future research follow both these developments to consider how education is achieved for the marginalised in China.

Bibliography

Bebbington, Anthony, Hickey, Samuel & Mitlin, Diana C. (ed.) 2008. *Can NGOs make a difference?: the challenge of development alternatives*. London: Zed Books

Bryman, Alan 2012. *Social research methods*. 4. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Chai Chunqies and Cheng Gang 2011. 'Policies on China's Basic Education over the Last Thirty Years', pp. 111-164, in Zhang Xiulan (ed) 2011.

Cremin, Peadar, and Nakabugo, Mary Goretti 2012. 'Education, development and poverty reduction: A literature critique', *International Journal Of Educational Development*, 32, pp. 499-506, ScienceDirect, EBSCO*host*, viewed 21 May 2016.

Edwards, Michael (ed) 2011. *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society. [Electronic Resource]*, n.p.: New York; Oxford : Oxford University Press, cop. 2011, Library catalogue (Lovisa), EBSCO*host*, viewed 18 May 2016

Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko 2003. 'The Human Development Paradigm: Operationalizing Ideas on Capabilities', *Feminist Economics*, 9, 2/3, p. 301-317, Academic Search Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 18 May 2016

Goodburn, Charlotte 2009. 'Learning from migrant education: A case study of the schooling of rural migrant children in Beijing', *International Journal Of Educational Development*, 29, Education and Development in Contemporary China, pp. 495-504, ScienceDirect, EBSCO*host*, viewed 18 May 2016.

Hasmath, Reza and Hsu, Jennifer 2009. *China In An Era Of Transition. [Electronic Resource]* : *Understanding Contemporary State And Society Actors*, n.p.: Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009., Library catalogue (Lovisa), EBSCO*host*, viewed 21 May 2016.

Holmén, Hans 2010. *Snakes in paradise*: NGOs and the aid industry in Africa, Sterling, VA, Kumarian Press

Howell, Jude 2011. 'Civil Society in China', Edwards, in Edwards, Michael (red.), *The Oxford handbook of civil society [Electronic resource]*, Oxford University Press, New York

Ibrahim, Solava and Hulme, David 2011. 'Civil Society and Poverty', pp. 391-403, in Edwards, M (ed) (2011).

ICNL 2016. 'NGO Law Monitor: China', *The International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law,* 11 March 2016, http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/china.html 2016-05-18

Kwong, Julia 2006. 'The Integration of Migrant Children in Beijing Schools', in Postiglione, Gerard A. (ed.) (2006). *Education and social change in China: inequality in a market economy*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe

Lewis, David and Kanji, Nazneen 2009. *Non-governmental organizations and development*. London: Routledge

Lu, Yiyi 2009. *Non-governmental organizations in China: the rise of dependent autonomy*, Routledge, London

Ma, Qiusha 2006. *Non-governmental organizations in contemporary China: paving the way to civil society?*. New York, NY: RoutledgeCurzon

Ming, Holly H. 2013. *The Education of Migrant Children and China's Future: The Urban Left Behind* (Routledge Studies in Asia's Transformations), Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition

NA1, V1, NGO-A Interview one, Volunteer 1, March 2015

NA1, V2, NGO-A Interview one, Volunteer 2, March 2015

NA2, V1, NGO-A Interview two, Volunteer 1, April 2015

NA2, V2, NGO-A Interview two, Volunteer 2, April 2015

NB1, Interview one, Manager, March 2015

NB2, Interview two, Manager, April 2015

Pong, Myra Wai-Jing 2013. 'Understanding migrant children's education in Beijing: policies, implementation, and the consequences for privately-run migrant schools'. PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, British Library EThOS, EBSCO*host*, viewed 22 May 2016

Postiglione, Gerard. A 2006. 'Schooling and Inequality in China', pp. 3-24, in Postiglione, Gerard A. (ed.) (2006). *Education and social change in China: inequality in a market economy*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe

Qu Zhiyong and Wang Li 2011.'Compulsory Education of Migrant Children: Problems and Policy Reaction, from the Angle of Equity', pp. 223-254, in Zhang, Xiulan (ed) 2011

Rose, Pauline 2007. Consortium for Research on Education Access T. 'Supporting Non-State Providers in Basic Education Service Delivery'. Create Pathways to Access. Research Monograph No. 4. *Online Submission* (serial online). June 1, 2007; Available from ERIC, Ipswich, MA. Accessed April 15 2016

Saich, Tony 2000. 'Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China [article]', *China Quarterly*, 161, p. 124, HeinOnline, EBSCO*host*, viewed 21 May 2016.

Sen, Amartya 2001. *Development as freedom*. [2nd ed.] Oxford: Oxford University Press

Shieh, Shawn and Brown-Inz, Amanda 2013. Mapping China's public interest NGOs In *Chinese NGO Directory: A Civil Society in the Making*. Beijing: China Development Brief, http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.org.cn/upload/userfiles/files/Special%20Report%20final.pdf 2016-05-18

Smith, Steven Rathgeb 2011. 'The Nonprofit Sector', pp. 29-41, in Edwards, M (ed) (2011)

Svensson, Marina 2006. 'Ethical Dilemmas: Balancing Distance with Involvement', pp. 262-279, in Heimer, Maria and Thøgersen, Stig (ed.) (2006). *Doing fieldwork in China*. København: NIAS Press

Teets, Jessica 2015. 'The Evolution of Civil Society in Yunnan Province: contending models of civil society management in China', *Journal Of Contemporary China*, 24, 91, pp. 158-175, Humanities International Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 18 May 2016

The Economist 2014. 'China's future: Enter the Chinese NGO', *The Economist*, 12th of April 2014, http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21600683-communist-party-giving-more-freedom-revolutionary-idea-enter-chinese-ngo 2016-05-12

Thøgersen, Stig 2006. 'Beyong Official Chinese: Language Codes and Strategies', pp. 110-126, in Heimer, Maria and Thøgersen, Stig (ed.) (2006). *Doing fieldwork in China*. København: NIAS Press

UNESCO 2010a, *The central role of education in the millennium development goals,* UNESCO, September 2010, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001905/190587E.pdf, 2016-05-22

UNESCO 2010b. *Reaching the Marginalized: Education for all, Global Monitoring Report 2010*. Paris & Oxford: UNESCO, UNESCO Publishing & Oxford University Press http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606E.pdf 2016-05-22

UNESCO 2015a. *Education for all 2000-2015: achievements and challenges: Education for all, Global Monitoring Report*. Paris: 2: ed., UNESCO, UNESCO Publishing http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232205e.pdf, 2016-05-22

UNESCO 2015b. 'Out of School Chidren', *UNESCO Institue of Statistics* 20th of
October 2015, http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/out-of-school-children.aspx, 2016-05-23

UNESCO 2016. 'Sustainable Development Goals for Education'. *UNESCO,*
http://en.unesco.org/sdgs/ed, 2016-05-23

Wang, Xin-Rui, Hui, Eddie Chi-Man, Choguill, Charles and Jia, Sheng-Hua 2015. 'The
new urbanization policy in China: Which way forward?', *Habitat International,* 47, pp. 279-284, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host,* viewed 18 May 2016

Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Case study research: design and methods*. 3 ed. Thousand Oaks:
Sage Publications

Young, Jason 2013. *China's Hukou System. [Electronic Resource]*; *Markets, Migrants
and Institutional Changes*, n.p.: Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan : [distributor] Not Avail, 2013., Library catalogue (Lovisa), EBSCO*host,* viewed 18 May 2016

Yuen, Samson 2015. 'Friend or Foe? The Diminishing Space of China's Civil
Society', *China Perspectives*, 3, pp. 51-56, Academic Search Complete, EBSCO*host*, viewed 18 May 2016.

Zhang Xiulan, Hu Xiaojiang, and Qu Zhiyong 2011. 'Establishing a New Policy-
Making Mechanism and Actualizing the Transformation of the Policy-Making Models: Reflections on How to Build a Modern People-Oriented National Education System', pp. 1-60, in Zhang Xiulan (ed) 2011

Zhang, Xiulan (ed) 2011. *China's Education Development and Policy, 1978-2008.
Social Science Studies in Reform Era China [E-book]*, Brill Academic Publishers Leiden, Koninklijke Brill NV

Appendix

Interview Guide - Questions for the NGOs:

- Can you tell me about your organisation?

- What activities do you have?

- How do you work with migrant children?

- What issues regarding the migrant children are you addressing?

- What kind of partnerships does your NGO have? With whom and why?

- What does your partnership entail?

- What do you want to achieve and how can you see your achievements?