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# Residence Permits and Points Systems:

# New forms of educational and social stratification in urban China


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## ABSTRACT

This paper draws on detailed analysis of local policy documents and interviews with migrants and officials to explore the development, implementation and impacts of two aspects of China's 2014 *hukou* reforms that have been less scrutinised by scholars and the press than the abolition of the rural/urban distinction: that is, the mandatory use of residence permits and points systems for all migrants to cities with a population over 5 million. Taking migrant education as a case study, and focusing on Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing, the paper argues that central and local priorities are more to do with population control than social equality. Far from their stated aims of equalising migrant services with locals, the two policies introduce new forms of educational and social stratification, aimed at increasing control over migrant selectivity, with far-reaching consequences for Chinese social development.



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## 1. Introduction:

The household registration (*hukou* 户口) system has been a fundamental feature of social organisation in China since the 1950s and the era of high socialism.[2] Deep into the post-Mao era of Reform and Opening, it remained a contentious policy, dividing all citizens at birth into rural or urban classes and binding them to their place of origin administratively, even as huge waves of rural-urban migration challenged this legacy of Maoist social control. The ways in which the *hukou* has continued to dictate access to public goods in the Reform-era has been much studied, along with the resentments and imbalances it has caused, and attempts at reform in the last two decades have met with very limited success.[3] In July 2014, however, China's State Council issued *Advice on Further Hukou System Innovation*, setting out ground-breaking reform policies, aimed at ensuring that 60% of the population lives in cities by 2020. This reform included, to much press fanfare and scholarly commentary both inside and outside China, that Chinese citizens would no longer be separated into rural and urban as they had been since 1958, but instead registered universally as "residents" (*jumin* 居民).

Less widely scrutinised, though, were the reform's provisions that the "residence permit" (RP) (*juzhuzheng* 居住证) system for migrants should be applied nationwide, and that all cities with a permanently registered population of over 5 million must introduce "points systems" (*jifenzhi* 积分制) for transfer to local *hukou*.[4] The specified aim was to ensure that migrants could enjoy a level of public service similar to local urban residents, yet their impact on migrant access to services is not yet clear. While a great deal of attention has been paid to the historic abolition of rural and urban *hukou*, its impacts for social organisation in China, and its potential effects on unequal access to resources, much less has been written about the RP and the related

[2] The *hukou* system is the basic institution which documents population data and distributes public resources, and thus also controls internal migration in China. For details, see Kam Wing Chan and Li Zhang. "The *hukou* system and rural-urban migration in China: Processes and changes." China Quarterly 160 (1999): 818-855.

[3] Kam Wing Chan "China's urbanization 2020: a new blueprint and direction." Eurasian Geography and Economics 55(1) (2014): 1-9.

[4] State Council (2014) Guanyu jinyibu tuijin huji zhidu gaige de yijian [Advice on Further Hukou System Innovation], issued 24th July 2014. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2014-07/30/content_8944.htm

points systems. This paper therefore aims to 'unpack' the impacts of these two policies on the provision of state services to migrants in China's cities, focusing on the case study of migrant education to analyse the consequences both for rural-urban migrants and for wider Chinese society.

The intended functioning and effects of the new policies were outlined in the 2015 *Interim Regulations on Residence Permits*. In all megacities, the new RP would be part of a points system based on migrants' contribution to the city, educational and employment background and property ownership.[5] Through their new RPs, migrants would have guaranteed access to state services, including: nine years of education for their children; employment services; health and family planning services; cultural and sports services; legal aid; motor vehicle registration; and participation in vocational examinations.[6] By August 2017, 29 of China's 33 directly-administered provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions had implemented points systems to administer migrants, and over 43 million migrants had received their new RPs.[7]

The access to education of migrant children is a useful case study of the impact of RPs and points systems, since access to schooling is arguably the most significant stated benefit of the systems, and since there exists a large literature on the education of migrants in China already, including on (lack of) access to state schooling, alternative private migrant schools, and educational performance.[8] Much of this research has argued that migrant children, numbering at least 36 million in 2013, face

[5] There are currently 12 "megacities" with populations of over 5 million. These are Shanghai, Shenzhen, Beijing, Guangzhou, Tianjin, Chongqing, Wuhan, Chengdu, Nanjing, Zhengzhou, Hangzhou and Shenyang.

[6] Note that certain of these services were already available to some migrants in particular cities – but coverage remained uneven, and migrant access to all services in almost all cities was far less than that of local *hukou*-holders. State Council (2015) Juzhuzheng zhanxing tiaoli [Interim regulations on residence permits], issued 26th Nov 2015.Available at: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2015-12/14/content_5023611.htm

[7] The policy has not been implemented in the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau or the autonomous region of Tibet. Beijing began to implement the policy only in 2017-18. Xinhua (2017) Juzhuzheng zhidu quan fugai jiangyu niannei shixian [Full coverage of the residence permit system to be implemented within the year]. 6 August 2017. Available at: http://www.xinhuanet.com/legal/2017-08/06/c_1121439084.htm

[8] See, for example, Goodburn, Charlotte. "Learning from migrant education: A case study of the schooling of rural migrant children in Beijing." International Journal of Educational Development 29, no. 5 (2009): 495-504; Goodburn, Charlotte. "Migrant girls in Shenzhen: gender, education and the urbanization of aspiration." China Quarterly 222 (2015): 320-338; Julia Kwong. "Educating migrant children: Negotiations between the state and civil society." China Quarterly 180 (2004): 1073-1088; Zai Liang and Yiu Por Chen. "The educational consequences of migration for children in China." Social science research 36(1) (2007): 28-47.

inequitable educational access, quality and outcome.[9] However, there has been almost no examination of the impacts of the unfolding RP points systems on education, or indeed on the provision of any other state service to rural-urban migrants.[10] We therefore take education as a case study to compare the development of these systems, their motivations and their effects in three of China's largest cities – Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing.

Drawing on in-depth original analysis of local policy documents, supplemented with interview data from all three cities collected between 2014 and 2018, we argue that far from providing migrants with an education equal to that of local *hukou*-holders, the new policies have introduced new forms of educational segregation within the group of 'migrants'. While some cities have increased migrant access to state schooling, any increase in educational equity is not straightforward given the new forms of inequity we identify within the state education system. While implementation differs across the three cities studied, so that different groups of migrants are affected, the overall effect in each is likely to be one of increased, rather than decreased, social stratification. To a greater or lesser extent, all three cities use migrant status, property ownership, parental education and/or employment as key criteria for a higher 'score', and thus a higher quality education. This leads to a situation not dissimilar from that in the UK, where the distribution of educational resources is highly unequal by class and by immigration status.[11] However, this paper demonstrates that in the Chinese context the extreme social segregation of schools is produced not only by a lack of state intervention in the marketisation of education and school-choice practices of more affluent parents[12], but appears to be an intended consequence of local state policies,

[9] All-China Women's Federation, Woguo nongcun liushou ertong chengxiang liudong ertong zhuangkuang baogao [Report on the Situation of Left-Behind Rural Children and Migrant Children in China]. Available at: http://acwf.people.com.cn/n/2013/0510/c99013-21437965.html

[10] Zhonghua Guo and Tuo Liang. "Differentiating citizenship in urban China: a case study of Dongguan city." Citizenship Studies 21(7) (2017) pp. 773-791 is a notable exception, although its focus is on migrant citizenship rather than any more concrete policy outcomes.

[11] OECD, Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators, 2017, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en.

[12] John Coldron, Caroline Cripps, and Lucy Shipton. "Why are English secondary schools socially segregated?." Journal of Education Policy 25, no. 1 (2010): 19-35.

enabled and implicitly endorsed by the central government. The likely impact of this is a tendency towards social stratification at an even earlier age.

The next section reviews the existing literature on the use of points systems in governing migration, in China and elsewhere, and sets out the evolving context of Chinese rural-urban migrant education as well as the potential for social stratification. Section 4 sets out the data and research methods used in this paper. Section 4 outlines the development of RP systems in each of the three case study cities and the access to education for migrants in each, while Section 5 analyses in detail the city-level changes that have been brought in as a result of the 2014 hukou reform policy and related central-level policies, exploring the impacts for migrant education and the increasing stratification of China's urban education system. Section 6 discusses the wider implications of these impacts.

## 2. Points Systems, Migrant Education and Social Stratification

Points systems have long been in use in governing international migration. Through these systems, national governments can exercise a high degree of selectivity in admitting migrants, by devising a list of attributes deemed important in foreign workers and assigning each attribute a point score. Prospective migrants then apply directly to the relevant government agency, and those who can demonstrate a sufficient tally of points are awarded work visas. Traditionally points systems have been used to admit migrants on a permanent basis and to award citizenship, including in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. More recently, though, a number of European countries, including the UK and Denmark, have also used them to admit temporary workers.[13]

In China, several cities introduced points-based RP systems ahead of the 2014 reforms. In particular, Shanghai and the cities of Guangdong province were early adopters, and

[13] Demetrios Papademetriou and Madeleine Sumption. "Rethinking points systems and employer-selected immigration." Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute (2011).

their experiences influenced the later national model. As early as 2004, Shanghai's government set out a stringent points system to attract highly educated and skilled migrants while excluding the less qualified. However, there is a severe lack of literature on the implications of such systems for the migrants concerned and, more broadly, for Chinese urban society. This may be because RP systems have been viewed as a mere administrative component of the much wider and more controversial *hukou* system. Li Zhang's study of citizenship in China's cities, comparing the introduction of points systems in Shanghai and Guangdong, is the only scholarly analysis of the early introduction of the systems on which later national policies would be based.[14] However, Zhang's focus is on the points criteria for *hukou* transfer, rather than the more recent effects of assigning a points score to all migrants and providing differential services based on these scores. Limei Li et al's 2010 article on *hukou* and residence cards in Shanghai examines the hierarchies implied by the *hukou* but does not discuss points systems.[15] A later study by Guo and Liang focuses on the Dongguan points system, exploring non-local access to urban citizenship status across a range of different axes, and concluding optimistically that in the long-term "peasant workers will enjoy equal citizenship with local residents".[16] However, neither study examines in any detail the implications of assigning points scores to the large number of migrants and their school-age children currently living in China's megacities, or the far-reaching social consequences of these implications.

Migrant children's educational issues have caused concern for many years, as the Chinese state has historically placed serious restrictions on the ability of the children of migrant workers to access education in urban China. Although legal and financial restrictions have been relaxed over the last 15 years, as the central government's attitude towards migrant children has softened from "complete rejection" to "gradual acceptance", children still face documentary and other restrictions.[17] To enrol in state

[14] Li Zhang. "Economic migration and urban citizenship in China: The role of points systems." Population and Development Review 38(3) (2012): 503-533.
[15] Limei Li, Siming Li and Yingfang Chen, "Better city, better life, but for whom?: The hukou and resident card system and the consequential citizenship stratification in Shanghai", City, Culture and Society, 1, 2010: 145-54
[16] Guo and Liang. "Differentiating citizenship".
[17] Yuan, Zhenguo, Nongmingong zinv jiaoyu wenti yanjiu [Research on education of children of migrant

schools, migrant children need official documents, which few have; are required to take entry examinations based on different curricula; and face strict quota systems.[18] Many migrant parents therefore have little alternative but to send their children to migrant private schools, typically unregistered, of much lower quality than state schools, and posing a significant cost burden to migrant parents.[19] In some cities, including Shanghai and Zhejiang, city governments have invested in private migrant schools, to improve their facilities and bring them within the remit of the state system.[20] In many others, however, children are still educated predominantly in fully private schools.

It is widely accepted, then, that lack of access to state schooling for migrant children has led to a situation of educational and social segregation. Migrant children are concentrated in low quality private schools whereas their urban peers enjoy high quality state education. This is problematic both in terms of fairness, and of the direction of China's economic and social development, which depends on the education of its future workers for the upgrading of its manufacturing and for social cohesion.[21] However, some scholars have also observed that there may be a second form of educational inequity affecting migrants: even if they gain access to state schools, migrant children may experience a poorer standard of education than their local counterparts. Discrimination against migrants from teachers, classmates and urban parents may undermine their progress, while the practices of individual schools – as in the case of the Shanghai school which separated migrant and urban children into different courses, classrooms and even school gates – perpetuate inequality.[22]

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workers]. 2012. Beijing Economics Science Press.

[18] Note that there is no system of preferential admissions for children from ethnic minority backgrounds.

[19] Goodburn, Charlotte. "Migrant girls in Shenzhen"

[20] Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2008 nian benshi nongmingong zinv yiwu jiaoyu qingkuang [2008 Compulsory Education of Migrant Workers' Children in the City], 2008. Available at: http://www.shanghai.gov.cn/shanghai/node2314/node22512/node22516/u8ai23513.html
Renmin News, Zhejiang taizhou zhengfu choujian nongmingong zidi xuexiao jiejue nongmingong zinv shangxue nan [Taizhou in Zhejiang establishes more migrant children's schools to solve enrolment difficulties], 2011. Available at: http://news.163.com/11/1216/04/7LCC6M2N00014AED.html

[21] Eg Chengfang Liu, Linxiu Zhang, Renfu Luo, Scott Rozelle, Brian Sharbono, and Yaojiang Shi. "Development challenges, tuition barriers, and high school education in China." Asia Pacific Journal of Education 29(4) (2009): 503-520.

[22] Charlotte Goodburn, "Learning from migrant education"; Pei-chia Lan, "Segmented incorporation: The second generation of rural migrants in Shanghai." China Quarterly 217 (2014): 243-265.

This second form of inequity, *within* the state school system, has received relatively little scholarly attention, in part because few migrants have historically been able to enrol in state schools, and because the studies that do exist on migrants in state schools typically show much better academic performance than migrants in private schools.[23]

The first form of inequity, lack of access to state schools, is therefore (correctly) taken to be the key factor in determining the quality of education that migrant children receive, while the second, inequality within the state school system, has received little attention. One might suppose, then, that if migrant children can be successfully included in urban state schools, as per the stated aims of the new RP system, these problems will be addressed. However, in practice, this is not what is happening. Instead, as this article demonstrates, migrants as a group are now sub-stratified by the new system, and allocated differential resources within the state school system, with significant impacts for the second form of educational inequality identified above. We argue that this introduces new issues of fairness and more complex social segregation, in which more affluent and more highly-educated migrant parents gain access to better schools, thus compounding existing inequality of educational opportunity between rich/poor and migrant/non-migrant. Any positive effects of increases in migrant access to state schools, then, need to be considered in light of the increasingly stratified education migrants receive within the urban state education system. This is a particular problem because, when poorer children are educated in schools with concentrations of other poor students they do not progress as well as they would in a school with a more balanced intake, while those already advantaged and educated with their more affluent peers flourish.[24]

Socially segregated schooling is also implicated in the reduction of social cohesion. Children and adults from different social backgrounds rarely interact, and the

[23] Yuanyuan Chen and Shuaizhang Feng. "Access to public schools and the education of migrant children in China." China Economic Review 26 (2013): pp 75-88.
[24] John Coldron et al, "English Secondary Schools"

polarisation leads to mal-recognition and denigration.[25] Moreover, while a highly segregated education system is not uncommon globally, such stratification is not usually the intended result of government policy, but the result of a failure to intervene adequately in market conditions, create equitable housing policies and effective school allocation plans. Of course, all societies create rules to allocate scarce resources, including access to high-quality schooling. In this paper, we do not propose an account of how such choices must be made. However, as Amartya Sen has argued in his highly influential account of *The Idea of Justice*, even in the absence of a full account of perfectly just arrangements, it is still possible to identify clear instances of injustice which should be resolved.[26] In China, this paper argues, increasingly socially-segregated schooling is a direct and foreseen consequence of the new RP and points system, which aims at allowing cities greater selectivity in governing in-migration. Despite claims that *hukou* reform will equalise migrant services with those of locals, then, it seems that both central and local levels of the Chinese state give a much greater priority to population control than to social equality or cohesion.

## 3. Methods and Case Study Cities

We focus on Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing. These cities, in the east, south and north of China respectively, are three of the country's largest megacities, with urban populations of approximately 24, 16 and 22 million, and attract enormous numbers of migrant workers – the highest of any cities in China.[27] Each of them has implemented RP points systems, and related these to school enrolment policies, yet each has adjusted

[25] See Sharon Gewirtz. "Conceptualizing social justice in education: Mapping the territory." Journal of Education Policy 13(4) (1998): 469-484; Andrew Sayer. (2005) The Moral Significance of Class. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Diane Reay, "'Unruly Places': Inner-city Comprehensives, Middle-class Imaginaries and Working-class Children." Urban Studies 44(7) (2007): 1191-1201.

[26] Amartya Sen, The Idea of Justice. Harvard University Press (2009): ix

[27] Note that the officially estimated populations are conservative and, for Shenzhen in particular, the true population may be more reliably drawn from unofficial sources. Shanghai Statistics Yearbook 2017. 10th Dec 2017. Available at: http://www.stats-sh.gov.cn/tjnj/nj17.htm?d1=2017tjnj/C0201.htm ; Beijing Statistics Yearbook 2017. 10th Dec 2017. Available at: http://tjj.beijing.gov.cn/nj/qxnj/2017/zk/indexch.htm;
China Times, Shenzhen 8 cheng shi zuke duo zhu chengzhongcun [80% of Shenzhen's population rent in urban villages], 2017. Available at http://www.chinatimes.com/cn/newspapers/20171123000904-260301

the specific enrolment criteria according to their respective situations (as recommended by the 2014 *hukou* reform). They also have quite different development trajectories, roles within the contemporary Chinese urban geography, and attitudes towards migration and population management. For this reason, it is instructive to compare the development and practice of RP systems and their impacts on migrants' access to education across the three cities, in order to understand how motivations, operation and outcomes differ in key aspects, yet are broadly similar in terms of their overall societal impacts.

This article uses three kinds of data. First, policy documents and statistical data issued by the city governments of Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing from the 1990s to present day, including historical and contemporary materials related to RPs and points systems, are examined in detail and analysed comparatively. Second, policy documents at the district level of the three cities are also explored, focusing particularly on school admissions policies and local interpretations of national and municipal guidelines in districts with a high number of in-migrants. Third, in order to supplement the policy analysis and provide concrete examples of policy impacts, where appropriate we also draw on interviews with government officials, teachers, migrants and their children, conducted between 2014 and 2018 as part of existing projects on migration, education and access to resources. These interviews were conducted separately by both authors in Mandarin, with approval from the research ethics panel of King's College London. Interview notes were taken with pen and paper. For reasons of confidentiality, all interviewees are pseudonymised.

## 4. Controlling migration and education before the 2014 reforms

This section reviews city-level policy documents to examine migration, population control and the education of migrant children before 2014, and explores the reasons for the evolution of three different migration-control regimes in the three case study cities. Since 1958, the *hukou* system classified every Chinese resident as rural or urban and

assigned them a location. For much of the 1950s-70s it was difficult for those without urban *hukou* to move to urban China, where they would be reported to the authorities or unable to obtain food. After the mid-1980s, however, large-scale migration again became possible with a relaxation in *hukou* implementation and the re-commodification of many goods. This was formalised in 1984, when the State Council issued a circular allowing peasants to migrate to towns and small cities if they brought funds for investment or business, and provided food and shelter for themselves.[28] From 1985 until 2001, a fixed annual quota was also set by the central government, permitting around 0.02% of rural *hukou*-holders to transfer to urban *hukou* each year.[29]

From 1985, individual cities, including Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing, therefore required migrants to register for temporary residence permits (TRPs), to be renewed regularly at local police stations.[30] These TRPs were introduced nationwide in 1994, and those without a TRP could be deported back to the countryside through the system of "custody and repatriation" which ended in 2003.[31] However, as the regulation of migration had begun to be implemented primarily by local, rather than central government, cities gained significant authority to regulate their own *hukou* policies.

Shanghai in particular, as a provincial-level city and the country's economic and financial capital, led the way for other megacities in reformulating the rules that govern migration and eligibility for *hukou* transfer, and in setting some of the strictest criteria for settlement, in order to select migrants to a high degree of specificity. Located in the Yangtze River Delta, the former treaty-port city declined in global influence after 1949, but intense redevelopment since the 1990s led to its re-emergence as the "showpiece" of the Chinese economy. It has attracted large numbers of migrant workers, up from 1.5 million in 1986 to 4 million in 2000 and nearly 10 million today – the highest number

[28] State Council, Guanyu nongmin jinru jizhen luohu wenti de tongzhi [Circular on settlement of peasants in market towns], Guowuyuan Gongbao 26(447), 1984: 919-20.
[29] Ministry of Public Security, Guanyu chengzhen renkou guanli de zanxing guiding [Temporary regulation on management of urban population] Guowuyuan Gongbao 26(478) 1985: 908-909
[30] Chan and Zhang. "The hukou system": 839.
[31] Renmin Ribao, Zhongguo zhengshi feizhi shourong qiansong zhidu [Abolition of Regulations on Custody and Repatriation of Vagrants and Beggars in Cities]. 19th June 2003. Available at: http://www.people.com.cn/GB/paper39/9817/902640.html

of any Chinese city.[32]

Controlling both quantity and quality (*suzhi* 素质) of these migrants has long been a concern of the Shanghai government. Prior to the introduction of the RP points system, Shanghai implemented a series of different *hukou*-related policies with similar purposes, including the 1994 "blue-chop" (*lanyin* 蓝印) *hukou* scheme, aimed at encouraging investors, property buyers and talented workers employed by public institutions to settle in the municipality.[33] In 2002, the blue-chop *hukou* was replaced by special "talent" (*rencai* 人才) RPs for migrants with high education levels and special talents deemed in need by the city. In 2004, Shanghai took the lead in introducing a RP points system, aimed at attracting talented migrants and excluding the lower-skilled from the city. By then, its population was approximately 21 million, of whom 17 million were local *hukou*-holders and 4 million migrants. By 2013, the local population had decreased to approximately 14 million while the migrant population had grown to nearly 10 million.[34]

Shenzhen has a very different history and a different relationship to migration. A region of small towns and fishing villages on China's south coast adjacent to Hong Kong, with only around 310,000 residents in 1978, Shenzhen grew through massive in-migration after its designation as China's first Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in 1980 reaching an estimated population of around 14 million by 2008.[35] The city has been a pioneer of *hukou* reforms, facilitated by its exceptionally high percentage of migrants (currently two to one local *hukou*-holder) and its status as a special zone where new policies are tested before being nationwide unrolling. During the early 1980s, rural migration into Shenzhen became widespread, despite strict national restrictions.[36] However, the Shenzhen government wanted to attract not only

[32] Shanghai Statistics Yearbook 2017
[33] Shanghai Municipal Government. (1993). Shanghaishi lanyin hukou guanli zanxing guiding [Temporary regulations on blue-stamped Hukou in Shanghai]. 23 December 1993
[34] Shanghai Statistics Yearbook 2017
[35] Guangzhou ribao, Shenzhen renkou midu paiming quanqiu diwu [Shenzhen ranked world's fifth for population density]. January 15, 2010. Available at: http://news.sohu.com/20100115/n269599067.shtml
[36] Shenzhen Statistical Yearbook 2017

labourers but also wealthy investors, highly skilled workers and those who would purchase apartments, so from 1995 until 2006 a blue-chop *hukou* policy similar to that of Shanghai was adopted.[37] In 2007, Shenzhen began to replace its TRP system with a new RP card, but it was not until 2010 that the provincial authorities of Guangdong province (of which Shenzhen is a part) set out policy guidelines on the introduction of a points system through which migrants could acquire a local *hukou* in any cities of the province.[38]

The city of Beijing, China's capital and a direct-controlled municipality under the national government, has a different story again. Residence controls were introduced in Beijing much earlier and more strictly than national *hukou* legislation in 1958, and until the mid-1990s Beijing operated the strictest *hukou* policies in China.[39] Official statistics suggest that in 2001 residents without a local *hukou* amounted to around 3 million, increasing to over 7 million by the time of the 2010 census (out of a total population of nearly 20 million).[40] While much of the effort of the Beijing municipal government appears to have been focused on restricting the quantity of migrants, efforts were also made to improve their "quality". Although Beijing had no blue-chop *hukou* system, a different policy connected real estate with local *hukou*: migrants could apply for a Beijing small-town hukou after investing more than 500,000RMB in one of the designated small towns, purchasing an apartment there and paying a development foundation fee.[41] Unlike Shanghai and Shenzhen, Beijing retained its TRP system until 2017, and since the early 2000s has periodically conducted campaigns to check migrants' documents and enforce compliance – typically during politically sensitive

[37] Shenzhen Municipal Government (1995) Shenzhenshi huji zhidu gaige zhanhan guiding [Shenzhen Interim Regulations on Hukou System Reform]. Issued 24 October 1995.
[38] Guangdong Provincial Government, Guanyu kaizhan nongmingong jifen zhiru hu chengzhen gongzuo de zhidao yijian [Suggested guidelines for the implementation of points-based urban hukou grants] issued 23 June 2010.
[39] Xiaoying Feng. "Chengshi renkou guimo tiaokong zhengce de huigu yu fansi - yi beijingshi wei li" ["Review and Reflection on the Control Policy of the Urban Population Scale-Exemplified by Beijing."] Population Research 29 (2005): 40–47.
[40] Beijing Statistical Yearbook 2017.
[41] Beijing Municipal Government, Beijingshi jiaoqu xiao chengzhen jianshe shidian chengzhen huji guanli shixing banfa [Trial regulations of urban household registration in small towns in Beijing suburbs]. 1997. Available at: http://www.gsfzb.gov.cn/FLFG/Print.asp?ArticleID=19078

events. Beijing was the last Chinese megacity to unroll a RP points system in Spring 2018.

In all three cities, and indeed in many large cities across China, migrants were barred from enrolling their children in urban state schools until 1993. Even after they were officially allowed entry, high legal "sponsorship" fees and a range of extra-legal fees prevented most from receiving a state education. In Shanghai and Shenzhen, one of the main advantages of acquiring the blue-chop *hukou* was that holders could enrol their children in local state schools. Since the nationwide abolition of all tuition fees for the nine years of compulsory education in 2008, migrant children are, like all children, entitled to receive primary and middle schooling free of charge. However, many city governments, with constrained budgets and a lack of tax-raising powers, have neither the incentives nor the financial resources to accommodate them, and many have therefore continued to be excluded from the state education system and enrolled in private, often unlicensed, migrant schools.

In many cities, including Shenzhen and, especially, Beijing, private migrant schools were periodically forcibly closed by the local authorities, though some had a "blind eye" turned to them since they educated large numbers of migrant children who could not be accommodated in local state schools. Both cities set out strict criteria to determine which migrants could enrol in the state system. From 2005 in Shenzhen migrants required a total of six official documents (the "5+1" or *wujiayi* 五加一) for enrolment, which included a TRP or RP as well as proof of employment, social insurance and other items.[42] Since professional and educated migrants were more likely to have these documents, this prioritised the education of the children of those migrants the city government was keen to attract. Although the 2007 RP card was promoted as giving migrant workers the same rights as urban residents, a Shenzhen *hukou* still entitled the holder to far more benefits, including access to education. In Beijing, similarly, to enrol

[42] Shenzhen municipal government, Shenzhenshi renmin zhengfu guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang he wanshan renkou fuwu guanli de ruogan yijian [Several Opinions of Shenzhen on further improving population management], 2005 Available at: http://www.sz.gov.cn/jyj/home/bsfw/fwxxkz_jy/ywjy2/tsjy/ttzgg/201608/t20160816_4300346.htm

in a state school a total of five certificates (including TRP and work permit) were required, but local authorities took a firmer stance against unlicensed migrant schools while imposing extremely strict criteria for licensing.[43] According to schoolteachers interviewed in Beijing in 2016-18, migrant children studying in unlicensed private schools still do not receive a unique official student identity, and are thus unable to register in the national student system.[44]

By contrast, Shanghai took a different approach to the schooling of migrant children. In 2008, the city implemented a three-year action plan for the education of migrant children.[45] After conducting inspections and closing down the worst private migrant schools, the local authorities signed contracts with several of the better migrant schools, allocating an average of RMB500,000 to each school to improve teaching facilities. By 2009, the Shanghai Municipal Government had approved 151 "upgraded" migrant schools and admitted 119,000 students, accounting for 28% of the total migrant children receiving compulsory education in Shanghai.[46] In the same year, the Shanghai Education Commission issued Elementary Education Article 3, incorporating migrant children into Shanghai's compulsory education system as legally-registered students.[47] As a result of these measures, full-time state schools or state-supported "upgraded" migrant schools became the main sources of education for migrant children in Shanghai, and the number of unlicensed private schools was vastly reduced. Before the integration of school enrolments with the RP points system, then, the "Shanghai model" of migrant education was widely cited as a "benchmark of educational inclusion" and as an "admirable and persuasive example" for other cities to follow.[48] As the next section

[43] Charlotte Goodburn, Learning From Migrant Education
[44] Interview BJCP02, 30/08/2016; BJSY04, 14/08/2018
[45] Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, Guanyu 2008 nian shizhengfu shishi xiangmu wancheng 60 suo nongmin gong zinv xiaoxue banxue sheshi gaizao bing naru minban jiaoyu guanli de shishi yijian [Opinions on the 2008 municipal government's implementation of 60 projects for the reconstruction of migrant workers' primary schools and the incorporation of private education management]. Issued 22nd May 2008, Available at: http://old.moe.gov.cn//publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s6642/201207/139499.html
[46] Shanghai Municipal Education Commission , Yiwu jiaoyu jieduan xuexiao zhaosheng ruxue gongzuo de shishi yijian [Opinions on Implementation of Enrolment of Schools in the Stage of Compulsory Education]. Issued 7th April 2011. Available at: http://www.shmec.gov.cn/attach/xxgk/4676.doc
[47] ibid
[48] Ting Liu and Ronald Laura, "From Education Segregation to Inclusion: the policy ramifications on Chinese internal migrant children", Policy Futures in Education, 16(3), 2018., pp237-250: 242

shows, however, these improvements in inclusivity have been fundamentally reversed by policy changes since 2014.

## 5. RP points systems and their impacts on migrant education

This section focuses on each case study city in turn, to examine the operation of RPs and the related points systems and their impacts on the schooling of migrant children, as well as discussing the implications for urban development. Here, particular attention is paid to the variations in motivations, operations and intended outcomes between the three cities, while the following section examines the similarities in terms of impacts on migrants and on Chinese society more broadly. Shanghai provides an example of the oldest and most developed points system; Shenzhen a more recent system with a different emphasis in school allocations; and Beijing a city where the newly-announced points system has not yet been formally applied to educational enrolments.

### a) Shanghai:

Shanghai was the first city in China to establish a points system in 2004. A long-term migrant with professional employment in the city would qualify for Shanghai *hukou* if her/his academic, skills and other qualifications met the (annually determined) stringent points requirements.[49] The aim was to build the city's human-capital infrastructure by rewarding talented professionals with local *hukou*. However, in 2013, the city extended this system to evaluate all RP-holders – even those not applying for *hukou* transfer – according to their educational background, professional titles and tax payments. For example, 60 points were awarded for a BA degree and 110 for a doctorate; 15 to 140 points for professional technical skills, depending on the level; 30 points for being employed in an advertised shortage profession; 30 points for gaining an award from local government offices; and 10 points per year for

[49] Zhang. "Economic migration": 508

owning a business employing at least ten Shanghai *hukou*-holders or paying at least RMB100,000 in tax.[50]At a certain points level, privileges were granted. For instance, RP-holders with 120 points could enrol their children in the Shanghai university entrance examination.[51]

As set out in the previous section, schooling for migrants had been considerably more accessible in Shanghai than in other Chinese cities in the early 2000s. However, this situation has been sharply reversed since the implementation of the RP points-system. In 2013, the '*Notice on the enrolment issue of migrant children in Shanghai*' specified that migrant children could receive compulsory education in Shanghai on presentation of the RP and other certificates, but that all parents were now required to submit documents through the official online application system, before being allocated a school near their registered residence.[52] Crucially, this included those who would receive places in state-sponsored private migrant schools. As a result, the many migrant children, typically the poorest and most marginalised, who lack the necessary certificates are now excluded not only from state school but also from private migrant schools, and thus have no access at all to any form of education in Shanghai. Therefore, while government sponsorship of migrant schools may have improved their quality, the access of migrant children has been vastly reduced. The first form of educational inequity – differential access – has thus been extended even into the private sector.

Interviews with migrant families in Shanghai in 2016 revealed several reasons why many migrant families may lack the necessary certificates. These include, most commonly, informal sector employment, which cannot provide employment permits, and failure of landlords to provide proper rental contracts for their accommodation, typically let out illegally. Lacking such documents, it is almost impossible for migrants

[50] Shanghai Municipal Government, Shizhengfu yinfa 'shanghaishi juzhuzheng jifen guanli shixing banfu' de tongzhi [Notice of the Shanghai Municipal Government on issuing the "Trial Measures for the Management of Residence Certificates in Shanghai City"]. Issued 1st July 2013. Available at http://www.shanghai.gov.cn/nw2/nw2314/nw2319/nw12344/u26aw36130.html

[51] Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, Guanyu laihu renyuan suiqian zinv jiudu benshi ge jige lei xuexiao shishi yijian [Notice on the enrolment issue of migrant children in Shanghai]. Issued 24 December 2013. Available at: http://www.shanghai.gov.cn/nw2/nw2314/nw2319/nw11494/nw12331/nw12343/nw31884/u26aw37668.html

[52] ibid

to acquire RPs, also required for school admission. Furthermore, school enrolment requires proof of social insurance payments for a full three years, such that the children of recent migrants are automatically excluded. As a consequence, many children have been forced to drop out of school after migration, or to return to their area of origin for education.

Shanghai's new RP policy not only perpetuates and – through incorporating migrant schools into the state system – increases the traditional migrant/local educational inequality based around access to state schools, it also contributes significantly to the second form of educational inequity identified in section 2: unequal treatment within the state system. Moreover, it does this in a much more widespread, formal and institutionalised manner than previously, by basing enrolment priority on RP points scores. The 2014 *Notice* states that "The education departments of different districts and counties can implement the enrolment regulations for migrant children without Shanghai *hukou* according to the actual situation".[53] This vague-sounding statement allows district education authorities to set enrolment regulations in accordance with the number of applicants and their local resources. For instance, the official website of Hongkou district stated in 2015:

> *"Hongkou district will allocate to schools nearby first those children who live in the place of registered permanent residence, and then based on the number of applicants and the distribution of educational resources, deal with the enrolment of children who do not live in the place of registered permanent residence and those who do not have Shanghai* hukou*. After verifying registration information, relevant departments will allocate migrant children to schools according to the priority of their Shanghai Residence Permit score, property ownership certificate… and employment and unemployment*

[53] Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, (2015). Shanghaishi hongkouqu 2015 nian yiwu jiaoyu jieduan xuexiao zhaosheng ruxue shishi yijian [Enrolment policies and requirements of Hongkong district of Shanghai] .Issued 11th March 2015. Available at: http://www.age06.com/Age06.Web/Detail.aspx?InfoGuid=c6cfa3cd-bb6b-415f-9d56-0f39f8797ee8&CategoryID=d1eb03bf-5218-4b59-a91c-a0f1f95a33c3

*registration certificate.*[54]

Thus, after local children have been allocated school places, migrant parents' RP points scores are the determining factor in the kind of school to which children are assigned. Children of those with high scores (above 120) are admitted first, and are thus more likely to be given places at high quality state schools. Once state schools have filled their quotas, applicants with lower scores are sent to lower quality state schools and state-sponsored migrant schools, which – according to interviews with schoolteachers and our own observations in 2016 – still have inferior teaching facilities compared to most state schools.[55]

**Table 1 about here**

This is not unique to Hongkou district, as Table 1 above shows. Eight of Shanghai's nine urban districts base enrolment priority on RP points, as well as three of four suburban districts and two of four peri-urban districts. Five districts also have specific requirements for property ownership. The enrolment priority for children is thus: (Local A) children with Shanghai *hukou* and property registered in the school district > (are prior to) (Local B) children with Shanghai *hukou* but not registered in the school district > (Migrant A) migrant children with property ownership certificates or high RP points > (Migrant B) migrant children without property ownership certificates and low RP points (Migrant B).[56] Thus most local authorities in Shanghai allocate enrolment according to a set of highly selective criteria, including most prominently RP points, as well as other measures favouring wealthy migrants with money to invest. That is to say, education opportunities for migrant children in the city are determined almost entirely by the education level and the property ownership of their parents. Children from poorer and

[54] ibid
[55] Interview SHHK06, 01/05/2015
[56] ibid

less well-educated backgrounds will consistently be allocated to inferior schools.

Migrant families may not fully understand the workings of this system, but they feel its effects. For example, Han Manli (interviewed in Shanghai in 2015) had migrated to central Shanghai from rural north-west China to open a small noodle restaurant, bringing his 11-year-old son. Although he had only a few years' of primary education himself, he had done everything necessary to prepare his son's school application, even – unlike many other migrant restaurant operators – taking pains to obtain the relevant business certificates so that his son could be enrolled in state school. However, he was left puzzled and disappointed by his son's allocation to a faraway school attended almost exclusively by migrants:

> *"It's too strange. The local authorities never care about our inconvenience of going to such a distant school. I submitted all the required certificates, but my son was finally allocated to a distant state school instead of the near one."*[57]

Nor do the implications of this policy end when a child enrols. After finishing nine years of compulsory education, only those with more than 120 RP points can take local high school or university entrance examinations. Those with lower scores are funnelled into vocational schools, or must return to their place of origin to take the examinations.[58] This brings a much lower chance of success on account of the wide regional variations in curriculum. 2015 news reports claimed that only 170,000 of the 10 million migrants in Shanghai had reached the 120-point level, so it appears that the proportion of migrant children able to enter Shanghai high school (or take university entrance examinations) is extremely small.[59] Since many migrants are reluctant for their children to receive only vocational qualifications, a large number of 14-16 year olds are therefore sent out of the city. Data from interviews in state middle schools in Shanghai in 2016 confirm

[57] Interview SHCN06, 06/07/2015
[58] Shanghai Municipal Education Commission. Shanghai ge daqu
[59] Xinhua, Shizhang Yang Xiong: Yi you 17 wan ren dadao shanghai juzhuzheng banli biaozhun [Mayor Yang Xiong: 170,000 people reached the standard for obtaining long-term RPs]. 2015. Available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/local/2015-03/07/c_127553677.htm

this, with school staff suggesting that around 40% of migrant children in second and 60% in third grade drop out to return to their hometown schools[60].

**b) Shenzhen**

Shenzhen unveiled its RP points system later than Shanghai, in 2010, with a more flexible set of criteria. Points are given based on education, age, social insurance payment, property ownership, professional title, technical skill level and patented inventions, and migrants can apply for Shenzhen *hukou* once they reach 100 points.[61] Unlike in Shanghai, there is no number limit for transfer. Between 2010 and 2013, 94,000 migrants gained local *hukou*.[62] In 2016, this scheme was loosened further so that migrants who hold technical college degrees, intermediate certificates, or are senior workers in urgent need, can also apply for local *hukou*.[63]

In 2013, the Shenzhen government also released a points-based school enrolment regulation, to cover both *hukou*-holders and non-*hukou*-holders.[64] Points are assigned to each applicant according to their *hukou* registration, their property (whether owned or rented), parents' employment and accordance with family planning quotas. Those with local *hukou* or property in Shenzhen receive the highest scores.[65] From 2016, additional points are also given to single children. In different areas of the city, points are applied in slightly different ways, but Luohu district is fairly typical. Here children are divided into six different categories (A-F), and are given priority for enrolment in

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[60] Interview SHMH10, 04/06/2015

[61] Shenzhen Municipal Government, Shenzhen wailai wugong renyuan jifen ruhu zhiyin [Index of transferring hukou for migrant workers in Shenzhen]. Issued 29th September 2010. Available at: http://bsy.sz.bendibao.com/bsyDetail/1756.html

[62] Shenzhen News, 2016 Shenzhen ruhu xin zhengce zhengshi shishi shenzhen luohu bu she zhibiao shangxian [2016 new hukou transfer policy in Shenzhen: no limitation for hukou transfer]. 2016. Available at: http://city.shenchuang.com/szyw/20160902/382618.shtml

[63] Shenzhen Municipal Government, Guanyu yinfa shenzhenshi huji qian ru ruogan guiding de tongzhi [Regulations on transfering Hukou in Shenzhen]. Issued 23rd August 2016. Available at: http://www.sz.gov.cn/zfgb/2016/gb968/201608/t20160823_4316503.htm

[64] Shenzhen Municipal Education Commission, Guanyu yiwu jiaoyu gongban xuexiao shixing jifen ruxue banfa de zhidao yijiin [Guiding Opinions on the Trial Implementation of Points Enrolment System for Compulsory Education in State Schools]. Issued 7th March 2013. Available at: http://szeb.sz.gov.cn/jyfw/fwxsjz/ywjy/zkzcwj/201303/t20130307_2794840.htm

[65] ibid

state primary schools according to the points of each category plus any bonus points. Table 2 (below) shows that children with local *hukou* and whose parents own property are in the top category 'A', while those without *hukou* or property are in the bottom category 'F'.

**Table 2 about here**

**Table 3 about here**

Table 3 shows the category and points needed to enrol in various state primary schools in Luohu district in 2015-17. The best schools, at the top of the table, enrolled only students above a high threshold, including exclusively property-owning local *hukou*-holders in some schools, whereas the lowest school in the table would admit migrant children living in rental accommodation (as long as they could provide the relevant certificates). In Shenzhen, then, as in Shanghai, the emerging pattern is an increase in the second type of educational inequity: increasing discrimination within the state system. Unlike in Shanghai, the first type of inequity – that is, access to state schools – remains unchanged.

While favouring local children over migrants in access to education is nothing new, there are two interesting features of the current Shenzhen points system. The first is that the system covers local *hukou*-holders as well as migrants, such that educational discrimination in the city is heavily based on wealth (through the proxy of property ownership) as well as migration status. Indeed, some property-owning migrants (category Dii) even outrank local *hukou*-holders who cannot afford an apartment in the school catchment area (category Ei). This is therefore a more complex system that Shanghai's Local A>Local B>Migrant A>Migrant B ranking. The second is that, as in Shanghai, there now exist different strata within the group of "migrants" as well as between locals and outsiders, yet the strata are somewhat different from those in Shanghai, which privileges high parental education and technical skill over simple wealth. Nonetheless, the overall effect in both cities is an education system that is

increasingly segmented: wealthy local pupils go to the very best schools, with the most privileged migrants and less well-off locals in the next two tiers, and poorer migrants in the worst performing schools.

Of course, the poorest migrants – predominantly from rural areas – continue to be excluded from this table altogether, since they lack the "5+1" certificates needed for state school entry, and must therefore attend private migrant school. Shenzhen has seen no state upgrading of private migrant schools, unlike Shanghai, but does provide subsidies to those migrant schools which attract children with RP documents who choose to attend that school rather than state school. Through this scheme, Shenzhen had paid 900 million RMB to private schools by the end of 2015, and an increasing number of private schools had been established.[66] By the end of 2015, according to an official in the Shenzhen Education Bureau, there were 238 private migrant schools in Shenzhen as well as 347 state schools, and these migrant schools could provide students with official student identity registration.[67]

Although it is unclear to what extent their quality has been improved, by comparison with Shanghai where those without documents are excluded from education altogether, Shenzhen displays a more tolerant attitude to the schooling of migrant children. Similarly, since 2014 the Shenzhen government has allowed migrants to take high school entrance examinations, if they have studied in the city for three years, on submission of a number of documents including parents' RPs. Unlike in Shanghai, there is no points threshold for examination entry, allowing many more migrant children to take part. Nonetheless, most state high schools in Shenzhen operate a points system similar to that set out for primary schools above, requiring much higher admission scores for migrants than locals.

Chialan, interviewed in Shenzhen in 2016, is a good example of the impact of this

[66] Shenzhen News, Shenzhen wei minban xuexiao songchu 9 yi yuan dali [Shenzhen donates 900 million to private schools] (2016) Available at: http://city.shenchuang.com/city/20151002/248876.shtml
[67] Interview SZLH01, 20/07/2016

system. Having migrated from rural Guangdong in 2007 at the age of 10, she had attended high quality state primary and middle schools, and had been able to take the high school entrance examination in 2014. However, Shenzhen's RP points system for enrolment was by this time in operation, such that Chialan's high score in the examination was insufficient for a continued high-quality education: according to the high school entry criteria, she was registered as a low category student, whose parents possessed neither local *hukou* nor "special talent residence permit" nor "high-level professionals certificate", and assigned to a badly-performing high school far from her home. As she described it,

> *"The quality of education was not good… the students were all like me: no Shenzhen hukou-holders, and none who had scored extremely highly on the exam. Their home places were mostly in the counties, a few even from the villages… their learning foundations were not good, and our learning achievements were also not good, because the teachers had to teach slowly and were often not patient. My grades declined a lot."*[68]

**C) Beijing**

Beijing has been much slower to introduce a RP system, and the educational implications of the current policies are not yet fully clear. Although this makes it difficult to make direct comparisons with the impacts of Shanghai and Shenzhen's established systems, it is nonetheless useful to examine the direction of policy and understand the reasons for Beijing's differences in approach. It was not until 2016 that the city released its interpretation of the *Interim Regulations*, at last beginning to replace old TRPs with RPs and finally introducing a points system for *hukou* transfer in 2018 – the last megacity in China to do so.[69] The points system in Beijing is optional and

[68] Interview SZXS04 09/08/16

[69] Beijing Municipal Government, Beijingshi shishi "juzhuzheng zhanxing tiaoli" banfa [Beijing implementation of the "Interim Regulations on Residence Permits"] Issued 17th May 2016. Available at:

follows a "4+2+7" model, in which migrants must meet four conditions for enrolment: holding the RP, being under the legal retirement age, having paid into the city's social insurance fund for at least seven years, and having no criminal record. Then, they must fulfil two requirements: stable employment and stable residence in the city. Finally, points are to be earned for seven "directive indicators": educational background, work and living area, innovation ability, tax payment, age, honours and record of law-abiding behaviour. In October 2018, the Beijing government announced that 6,019 of 120,000 applicants had successfully converted RPs into local *hukou* in the first year, by accumulating sufficient RP points. An annual limit of around 6,000 *hukou* transfers was also declared.[70] The new RP system came into force in January 2017 and will remain in "trial phase" until 2020.

In 2014 Beijing had regulated that migrant children who could provide five certificates (including TRP, work permit, proof of lack of guardianship in the home village, proof of residence in Beijing and *hukou* booklet) could be enrolled in state schools. However, even though all school fees were formally abolished nationwide in 2008, non-local children in Beijing continued to be charged 3000-5000 RMB as a donation to public education resources.[71] Furthermore, at this time, state schools enrolled students according to catchment area, so the attraction of high-quality schools in the city centre for local *hukou*-holding parents meant that house prices in these areas were very high. Therefore, few migrant children could attend city centre schools. If the family had the correct certificates, attending a licensed private school – typically a high-ranking private school – was an option for those who could afford it. For the majority of migrants, however, without certificates and without the resources to afford top-level tuition fees, the only remaining educational option was unlicensed private migrant schools located in suburban areas.

Enrolment procedures were considerably tightened in April 2017. First, non-locals must submit the new RP rather than TRP, which is more difficult to obtain, as applicants have

http://zhengce.beijing.gov.cn/library/192/33/50/438650/79486/index.html; Xinhua (2017) Juzhuzheng zhidu

70 Xinhua News, (2018) 'Beijing government announced the list of the first batch of migrants who were eligible for getting Beijing Hukou': 6,019 applicants and the lowest points score 90.75. Available at: http://www.xinhuanet.com/2018-10/15/c_1123562052.htm

71 Interviews BJFT14 18/08/15; BJHD01 10/05/16

to provide their work permit, proof of income and continuous residence certificate.[72] In fact, at least three of the "five certificates" can only be obtained through preparation of several prior documents: for example, to obtain the official proof of residence in Beijing it is now necessary to provide not only a property rental contract but also the certificate of property ownership, identity card of the property owner, and proof of at least six months' tax payments on the rented property.[73] Up to 17 documents in total may therefore be required for enrolment. Second, rigorous authentication of all documents has been introduced to weed out forgeries.[74] Third, children without the "five certificates" studying in private migrant schools are ineligible for an official student identity registered in the national student system. Such students were advised instead to return to their place of origin for schooling with an official student identity.[75] Thus, although children without the appropriate documents are not formally excluded from all schooling as in Shanghai, the option of unlicensed private schooling has been made much less attractive and the emphasis is strongly on these children returning to their birthplaces for education.

It seems then, that the first form of educational inequity (restricted access to schooling) has been strengthened, albeit not on the same scale or through the same mechanism as in Shanghai. Beijing's new trial policy has also institutionally entrenched the second form of inequity (that within the state school system), although the key distinction remains that between local and migrant, and it does not yet use a points-based system to structure migrant access. This may be because of the newness of Beijing's point system, as well as because of the pressure on school places, at least in central districts, such that even local *hukou*-holders may struggle to enrol in their local state schools. In Haidian district in 2018, for example, there were 8,000 more qualified primary school applicants and 3,000 more middle school applicants than there were state school

[72] Beijing Municipal Education Committee, Guanyu 2017 nian yiwu jiaoyu jieduan ruxue gongzuo de yijian 2017 [Opinions on Compulsory Education Enrolment in 2017]. Issued 16th April 2017.. Available at: http://zhengwu.beijing.gov.cn/sy/tzgg/t1474667.htm

[73] Sohu News, 2018. Dongchengqu feijingji 2018 yousheng xiao shenhe cailiao you naxie, hai bukuai kan? [Required documents for non-local's state school enrolment application in Beijing Dongcheng district 2018], 13th May 2018. Available at: http://www.sohu.com/a/231464391_113249

[74] Beijing Municipal Education Committee, Guanyu 2017 nian yiwu jiaoyu

[75] ibid

places.[76] Most centrally-located schools have therefore set the enrolment priority based on ranking of first, applicants' *hukou* status; second, property ownership; and in some cases, third, length of possession of local *hukou* and property.

Similar to in Shanghai and Shenzhen, then, Beijing's new system typically structures enrolment priority to privilege wealthier migrants over poorer ones, though in Beijing the distinction between local and migrant is important above all else. Although the exact criteria vary by district, there are many common features across central and suburban Beijing. Taking Changping district as an example, children are provided with school places in the order: (Local A) children and parents with Beijing *hukou* registered in the district and parents own property in the district > (are prior to) (Local B) children and parents with Beijing *hukou* registered in another district and parents own property in the district > (Local C) children and grandparents with Beijing *hukou* registered in the district, and grandparents own property in the district > (Local D) children and parents with Beijing *hukou* registered in another district but grandparents own property and have *hukou* registered in the district > (Local E) both children and parents with Beijing collective (i.e. workplace-based) *hukou* registered in the district and parents own property in the district > (Migrant A) seven specific types of migrant children to be treated the same as locals (for example, children of serving military personnel and of former rusticated youths) whose parents own property in the district > (Migrant B) all other children (with at least the five certificates, including RP).[77]

It is also highlighted in Changping and five other central and suburban districts that applicants are to be ranked not only by possession or lack of local *hukou* and property ownership certificate, but also according to the length of time for which they have held these documents, giving priority to those who have owned property and held *hukou*

76 Ifeng News, (2018), The enrolment battle for middle class families. 14th August 2018. Available at: http://news.ifeng.com/a/20180814/59814755_0.shtml

77 Changping District Government (2018). 2019 Nian youshengxiao changping qu ruxue shunwei yaoqiu [Ranking order of primary schools' enrolment in Changping District 2018]. Issued 6th August 2018. Available at: http://www.ysxiao.cn/c/201808/21858.html

longest.[78] Migrants who have recently converted their *hukou* and purchased a property are thus at the lower end of the enrolment ranking system, assigned to less-well performing schools out of catchment area, while those with only RP and who rent their home may fail to secure any in-district place, instead being allocated to distant, inferior primary schools. Interviews with district educational officials in 2019 confirmed that among those registered within the district, length of *hukou*-holding was treated as the most important criterion, with five years of local *hukou* status better than four, which is better than three, and so on.[79]

The determining factor for entry into a well-regarded state school is therefore clearly non-migrant status, with even those who have recently acquired a Beijing *hukou* penalised in at least six districts. Owning local real estate is a second priority in the admission ranking, such that schools are segregated first by migration and then by wealth. This is very far from Guo and Liang's vision of future equal citizenship.[80] At high-school level, policies are even more restrictive than in Shanghai or Shenzhen, with only nine narrow categories of non-local children given permission to take part in the high school entrance examination.[81] Others – the vast majority – have no option to further their education in the city in any way. A 2016 interview with Wang Xuyin, a migrant mother who sent her 14-year-old daughter and 10-year-old son back to Anhui the previous year, illustrates the impact this has on parents' aspirations for their children:

> *There was no choice but to send them home… Of course I want them to go to a good school, but they could only enter a school with a bad environment here; even if I could get the TRP and then the other certificates, they couldn't go to a good high school here, couldn't take the university entrance examination. The school at*

[78] Beijing government, 2018. Beijing dongchegnqu shiling ertong ruxue jieshou shunxu ji ruxue banfa. [Beijing dongcheng district school-age children Enrolment order and procedures for school-aged children 2018]. 19th June 2018. Available at: http://www.ysxiao.cn/c/201806/20828.html; Changping District Government (2018). 2019 Nian youshengxiao changping qu ruxue shunwei yaoqiu [Ranking order of primary schools' enrolment in Changping District 2018]. 6th August 2018. Available at: http://www.ysxiao.cn/c/201808/21858.html

[79] Interviews ; BJXC03, 08/04/2019; BJXC04 11/04/2019.

[80] Guo and Liang. "Differentiating citizenship".

[81] These include, for example, children of former rusticated youth and of members of the armed forces (Beijing Gov, 2017)

*home is no better – actually it's bad, and the Beijing grades couldn't be transferred – but it's much less expensive… Frankly speaking I don't dare to think about my children's future.*[82]

## 6. Discussion

The above analysis shows that each of the three cities has implemented a RP and related points system, and applied it to the process of state school enrolments in different ways, depending on local conditions, as suggested in the 2014 *hukou* reform policy. In Shanghai, the stringent points system and the exclusion of migrants without the necessary documents from all types of education, stem from a desire to control the city's migrant population tightly. With limited social resources and a population density as high as 3809/km$^2$, the city has set a long-term limit of 25 million people.[83] With the population already over 24 million, restricting the numbers of migrants settling in Shanghai is now urgent. Nevertheless, the city – in which a third of locals are aged over 60 – also needs to attract investment, pay off social insurance deficits and support continued urban development.[84] Local authorities therefore need to exercise a high degree of selectivity in choosing the quality of the migrant population as well as limiting their number. The points system and the lack of educational provision for those with low points scores is a useful tool through which to control in-migration, attracting educated and highly-skilled migrants while preventing the long-term settlement of the poor and low-skilled.

Because of its history, compared to other mega-cities in China, Shenzhen has a unique phenomenon of 'population inversion' (*renkou daogua* 人口倒挂), with far more non-local residents than locals. Therefore, it has much looser requirements for *hukou* transfer,

[82] Interview BJHD03 15/05/16
[83] CCP Shanghai Municipal Party Committee, Zhonggong shanghai shiwei guanyu zhiding shanghaishi guomin jingji he shehui fazhan dishisan ge wu nian guihua de jianyi [Suggestions on Implementing Shanghai's Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development]. Issued 24 December 2015. Available at: ttp://www.shanghai.gov.cn/nw2/nw2314/nw2315/nw38613/u21aw1091092.html
[84] Interview SHHP02, 04/08/2015

in which migrants with only a high-school education can gain local *hukou*, and less local-privilege: its school enrolment points system tends to prioritise wealth even over migration status, so as to attract better-off migrants more effectively. While strict documentary criteria prevent the entry of many rural migrants to Shenzhen state schools, those without the necessary certificates can still enrol in licensed private migrant schools, which benefit from a certain degree of state subsidies. This is very different from Shanghai, where all licensed migrant schools have been co-opted into the state system and no schooling options remain to migrants without documents, and Beijing, where many migrant schools are unlicensed and unable to register students formally into the national student register.

Compared with Shanghai and Shenzhen, Beijing has been late in introducing its RP points system. This slow adoption of major policy changes is typical of China's capital. However, based on its trial points system and its school enrolment policies, it appears that the Beijing government applies RPs and enrolment as separate tools to control the size of the migrant population. Like Shanghai, Beijing has strict population limits, with a target of 23 million by 2020.[85] Although Beijing has a larger area and lower population density than Shanghai, the city faces a serious water shortage: it is claimed that Beijing has previously based its population control policy on the imbalance between population and water supply in the city.[86] A shortage of schools might also be an issue, with the number of state primary schools in the capital having dropped to 1093 in 2013 from 2867 in 1995.[87] With the relaxation of family planning regulations as well as surge in migrant children, urban educational resources cannot meet the increasing demand. Therefore, for Beijing limiting the number of in-migrants is of great importance – even more so than attracting wealthy and talented incomers. This explains the stringent school enrolment system which in many districts discriminates against

[85] Xinhua, Beijing changzhu renkou guimo jiang kongzhi zai 2300 wan yinei [Resident population of Beijing to be controlled within 23 million]. 2017. Available at: http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-09/27/c_1121733737.htm

[86] Xiaoying Feng. "Chengshi renkou"

[87] Sohu News Beijing yousheng xiaorenshu zengjia, xuexiao quejianshao, xiaoxue qu na'erle? [Beijing's increasing number of school-aged applicants and decreasing number of schools; where are the primary schools?] 2015. Available at: http://learning.sohu.com/20150618/n415245548.shtml

even those who have been able to convert their *hukou* and purchase local property.

Despite the variations in aims and implementation between the three cities, and the consequent differences in which group of migrants gains access to the best education, the broad societal impacts of the changes are similar in all three, as are the implications for those migrants deemed undesirable. The restrictions on migrant access to education have a strongly negative effect on poorer, less educated, rural migrants and their children. Sequestered in private migrant schools, or – as in Shanghai since 2014 – excluded from urban education altogether, these children are unable to gain anything like the decent education enjoyed by their urban peers. Even in the absence of a model of ideal resource allocation, following Sen's work it is clear that this "first type" of educational inequity is a social injustice.[88] It is likely to lead to problems for the migrant children affected, ranging from poor academic performance to loneliness and mental ill-health and behavioural issues.[89] However, with the exception of the co-optation of Shanghai's migrant schools into the state enrolment system, this situation is hardly new. What has changed since the 2014-15 is the introduction of points systems for migrants and their use to determine school enrolments, introducing a formal mechanism for the "second type" of inequity within the state system. This leads to a situation in which not only is there a division between locals and migrants in terms of the education they receive, but there is now also a division between superior and inferior migrants. While some may argue that this is not much different from previous attempts by city governments to select migrants based on wealth and education – for example, the infamous "blue-chop" *hukou* of the 1990s – the new scheme is far more widespread, affecting all migrants to a city and intended to be implemented in all Chinese cities with a population of over 5 million. The social impacts therefore go far beyond the individual migrants affected.

[88] Sen Idea of Justice.

[89] Yao Lu and Hao Zhou. "Academic achievement and loneliness of migrant children in China: School segregation and segmented assimilation." Comparative Education Review 57(1) 2012: 85-116; Zhenghong Mao and Xudong Zhao, "The effects of social connections on self-rated physical and mental health among internal migrant and local adolescents in Shanghai, China." BMC Public Health 12(1) 2012: 97.

The segregation of students into different schools based on wealth and migration status has important implications for educational and social inequality, cohesion, and intergenerational mobility. Richer and more highly-educated parents are facilitated to gain access to better schools for their children, from which poorer children are excluded, thus compounding existing divisions between migrant/non-migrant. Long-lasting friendships and peer groups are developed during young people's time in school, and increased school segregation is likely to lead to increased isolation between social groups, with children from different social backgrounds prevented from interacting, thus increasing social polarisation.[90] Community effects mean that having a high proportion of disadvantaged students as one's classmates has a negative impact not only on academic performance, but on aspirations, leading to reduced social mobility.[91]

On account of these serious consequences of educational segregation, educational policymakers across the world have paid a great deal of attention to the uneven distribution of students from different social classes across schools. Many countries have thus introduced policies attempting to widen school choice for parents, to increase competition between schools and to narrow the gaps between the richest and poorest pupils. Many of these attempts have not been successful in reducing school segregation, in part as a result of failure to tackle directly residential segregation, key to channelling different socio-economic classes into different schools.[92] However, what is clear is that such segregation is a source of concern and the subject of targeted government policies. By contrast, in the Chinese case, segregation does not arise incidentally because of residential separation or parental school-choice practices, but is the direct result of central state policies which explicitly permit the separation of local urban children and the richest of their migrant peers from poorer, often rural, migrants. That this should be a deliberate strategy of city- and district-level governments, aimed at discouraging the

[90] Gewirtz. "Conceptualizing social justice"
[91] Scott South, Eric Baumer, and Amy Lutz, "Interpreting community effects on youth educational attainment", Youth & Society 35(1), 2003: 3-36.
[92] Gabriel Gutiérrez, John Jerrim and Rodrigo Torres. "School segregation across the world: has any progress been made in reducing the separation of the rich from the poor?." Working paper 2017. Available at: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0c3b/26b483360b3659ca64ac68cc4628338b92fa.pdf

settlement of the latter group, and condoned by national-level government, is startling, and suggests that – despite the claims that *hukou* reform will equalise services provided to locals and to migrants – all levels of the Chinese state give a greater priority to population control than to social equality and cohesion.

## 7. Conclusion:

All Chinese children are entitled to a free state education, but they do not all receive one. For many years, non-local access to urban state schools has been heavily restricted, and migrant children confined to low quality private schools, but over the last decade the situation has appeared to be gradually improving in most cities, as national authorities softened their stance on migration and encouraged cities to provide this basic service for all children who live within their boundaries. However, since 2014, the instruction that all megacities establish RP systems and points schemes for *hukou* transfer has provided cities with a way of reversing this trend, in favour of further segmenting schooling and limiting decent quality education to those migrants the city governments deem desirable. Even though migrants who can meet the strict documentary criteria are now usually granted access to state schooling, by means of points and ranking systems poorer and less well-educated newcomers can be confined to lower quality schools in suburban areas, educated almost exclusively with other migrants, and shut out of genuine communication and exchange with local children.

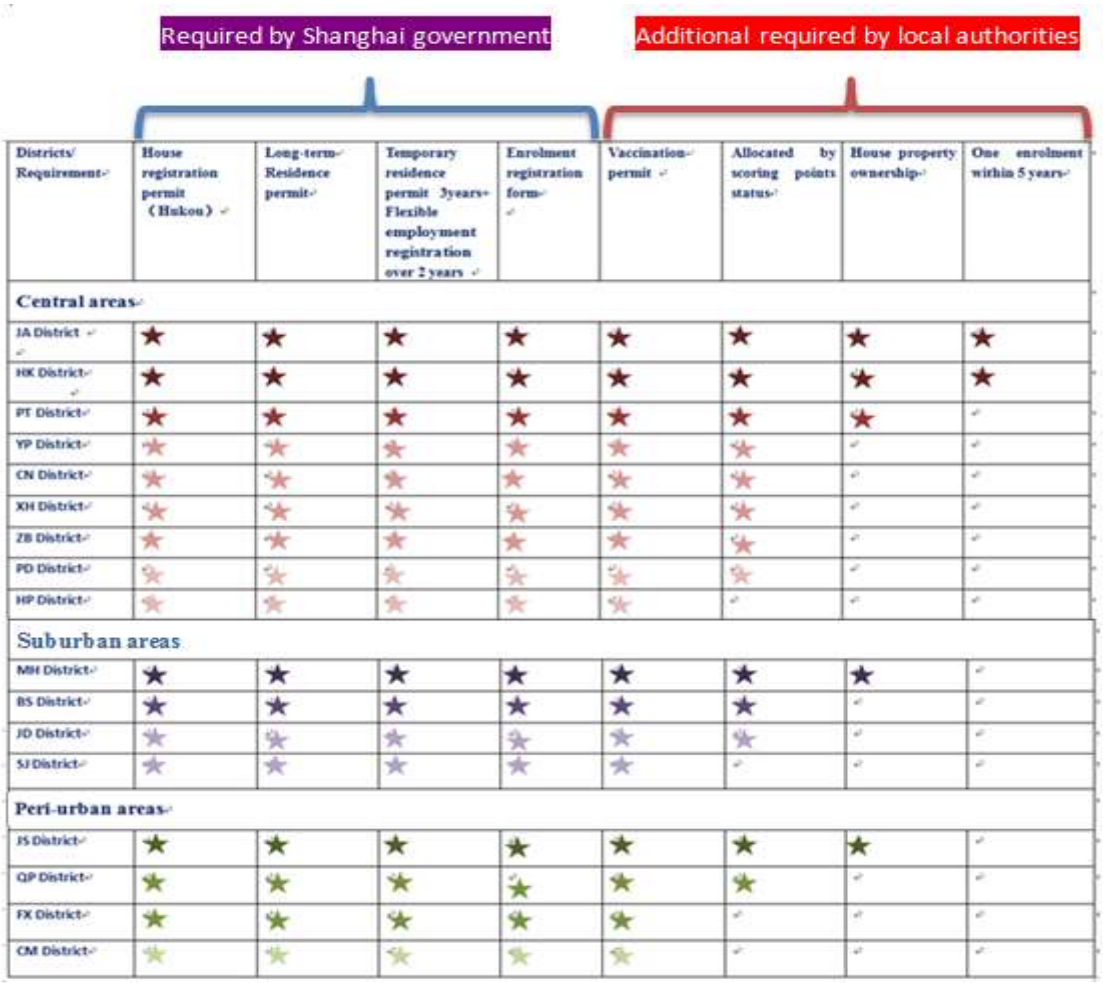
Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing have each created a points system, as recommended by the 2014 *hukou* reform, on the basis of their own situation, applying the RP scheme as a tool to allow a high degree of selectivity in controlling in-migration. While Shenzhen is still in need of migrants, including less-highly-skilled labour, and thus has the least restrictive educational enrolment policies, Shanghai controls the migrant population in the strictest possible manner, providing no school place at all to those who cannot fulfil its criteria, and establishing high points thresholds for entry into well-performing schools, so as to exclude all but the wealthiest and most educated. Beijing,

slow to reform, has less clear criteria than either Shenzhen or Shanghai, but appears to prioritise locals to the greatest degree, for example through preventing almost any migrants at all from entering local high schools, and penalising even those who have recently converted their *hukou*.

Despite their differences, what these systems have in common is that they allow urban governments to privilege not only locals, but also the top strata of migrants, by providing state services such as education in a newly hierarchical manner, rewarding those with defined levels of wealth, skills and education, while penalising the poor and less well-educated. This aim is not new. Indeed, in the international context, points systems for selective immigration and citizenship have been operating effectively for several decades. Nonetheless, the explicitly stratified nature of China's new RP system, its reach across almost all provinces and cities, and the fact that it is aimed at supposedly equal citizens of one nation, make this a highly unusual case – and one with important implications for understanding how the *hukou* system continues to be used to segment Chinese society despite the historic reforms.

## TABLES

### Table 1 School allocation policy of Shanghai's compulsory enrolment[93]




| Districts/ Requirement | House registration permit (Hukou) | Long-term Residence permit | Temporary residence permit 3years+ Flexible employment registration over 2 years | Enrolment registration form | Vaccination permit | Allocated by scoring points status | House property ownership | One enrolment within 5 years |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Central areas** | | | | | | | | |
| JA District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| HK District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| PT District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | |
| YP District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | |
| CN District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | |
| XH District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | |
| ZB District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | |
| PD District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | |
| HP District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | | |
| **Suburban areas** | | | | | | | | |
| MH District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | |
| BS District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | |
| JD District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | |
| SJ District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | | |
| **Peri-urban areas** | | | | | | | | |
| JS District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | |
| QP District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | |
| FX District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | | |
| CM District | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | | |

[93] Shanghai Municipal Education Commission. Shanghai ge daqu xian yiwu jiaoyu zhaosheng ruxue shishi yijian huizong [Summary of enrollment criteria for compulsory education of major districts and counties in Shanghai]. Issued 2nd April 2015. Available at: http://www.shmec.gov.cn/html/article/201502/78755.html

**Table 2. Points scheme for applying to primary schools in Luohu District, 2016-17**[94]

| Category | Points |
|---|---|
| **A:** i) Child has Shenzhen *hukou* in school catchment + parents own property in catchment; OR<br>ii) Parents live in catchment + parents are international/national talents or active duty soldiers. | 100 |
| **B:** Child has Shenzhen *hukou* outside school catchment + parents own property in catchment | 90 |
| **C:** Child has Shenzhen *hukou* in catchment + parents live in special property in catchment (includes military property/self-built property/ non-residential apartments and so on) | 80 |
| **D:** i) Child has Shenzhen *hukou* in catchment + parents live in rented property in catchment; OR<br>ii) Child has no Shenzhen *hukou* + parents own property in catchment. | 70 |
| **E**: i) Child has Shenzhen *hukou* outside catchment + parents live in rented property in catchment; OR<br>ii) Child has no Shenzhen *hukou* + parents live in special property in school district | 65 |
| **F:** Child has no Shenzhen *hukou* + parents live in rented property in school catchment area | 60 |
| **Bonus points as follows**<br>◆ Shenzhen *hukou*-holders: 3 points per month after purchase date of property in catchment; or 2 points per month for rental property**.**<br>◆ Non-*hukou*-holders: 1 point per month from date parents purchase social security.<br>◆ Family planning: Single children gain 60 points; those with one sibling 40 points; those born out of birth quotas but reported and registered 10 points. | |

[94] Source: Shenzhen Municipal Education Commission, Luohuqu 2017 nian xiaoxue yi nianji xuewei shenqing zhinan, [2017 Application guideline for first grade primary school places in Luohu District]. Issued 14 April 2017. Available at: http://www.sz.gov.cn/jyj/home/zdyw/xwsq/xwsq_jfrx/201704/t20170414_6149953.htm

**Table 3. Minimum entry thresholds of selected Luohu primary schools, 2015-17**[95]

| School | Enrolment threshold | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** |
| **Liannan School** | A over 90 points | A over 135 points | D over 201 points |
| **Luoling Foreign Language School** | C over 80 | C over 90 | C over 120 |
| **Cuizhu Foreign Language School** | D over 114 | D over 104 | D over 110 |
| **Fengguang School** | F over 93 | F over 129 | F over 147 |
| **Binghe School** | F over 70 | F over 73 | F over 147 |
| **Guiyuan School** | F over 60 | F over 62 | F over 129 |
| **Hongling School** | F over 60 | F over 60 | F over 96 |

[95] Shenzhen Municipal Education Commission, Luohuqu xiaoxue jifen ruxue luqu fenshuxian huizong [Summary of points enrolment criteria of primary schools in Luohu]. Issued 13th March 2018. Available at: http://bsy.sz.bendibao.com/bsyDetail/618293.html; 2016 Luohuqu ge xuexiao xiaoyi ruxue jifen yilanbiao [2016 Luohu primary school grade one admission scores list]. Available at: http://m.bendibao.com/show774299.html