

Investigation and Analysis of Vocational Education for Chinese Migrant Workers of New Generation—Reflection from a Special Investigation in F City

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Abstract

The research has chosen some migrant workers of new generation from different fields in F City to investigate their current situation of vocational education. The research reveals that their education is helpful, mainly in employment, work and the methods of mentorship and further study organized by employers. The research also reveals its problems: short in training time, high in out-of-pocket payments for training, theoretical in training and no support from leaders, etc. We find vocational development is influenced by the factors of the government, employers, training institutions and workers themselves. Based on the analysis, suggestions are put forward: making laws and regulations, establishing specialized management institutions, running school in alliance with enterprises, carrying out the general training, combining lecture with practice, perfecting training system.

Keywords: migrant workers of new generation, vocational education, current situation

1. Introduction

The author has been doing this investigation and research on vocational education of Chinese migrant workers of new generation from 2011 to 2012 and it has lasted for almost one and a half years, covering 7 different fields including manufacturing, electronic, service, clothing and other industries in F City, an important city in Guangdong Pearl River Delta. The author has gathered a mass of first-hand information and data by consulting relevant information and documents from departments such as human resources bureau, education bureau, vocational-technical schools and employing units. The collected information provides important data to support the further analysis on current situation of vocational education of migrant workers of new generation.

The investigation has been launched in three aspects:

Investigation objects: migrant workers of new generation in F City.

Investigation contents: Based on consulting literature and documents widely and interviewing lots of migrant workers of new generation, the questionnaires are designed on these aspects: training contents, training methods, training result and the training problems (W. Hu & J. Hu, 2010; Chen & Yang, 2009; Yu, 2007).

Data collection and statistics: Data collection has been carried out in the way of personal questionnaire and living interviewing. 7 fields have been chosen and 1050 questionnaires were given out and 902 were taken back; 848 were effective, the effective percentage is 80.76%. The software SPSS18.0 is adopted in statistics. Based on the statistics analysis, influential factors on career development of migrant workers of new generation and practical suggestions are put forward for the reference of the government policy.

2. The Current Situation of Vocational Education of Migrant Workers of New Generation in F City

2.1 The General Information of Migrant Workers of New Generation in Vocational Education

The result of the investigation shows that in 848 questionnaires, 483 workers in a percentage of 56.96% have received vocational education since they began to work. More than half of the migrant workers of new generation have participated in vocational training.

2.2 The Contents of Vocational Education of Migrant Workers of New Generation

Table 1. Training contents of the vocational training of the migrant workers of new generation

	Vocational skill	Health and safety knowledge	Legal knowledge	Diploma education	Cultural knowledge	Entrepreneurial knowledge	Urban living knowledge	Psychological guidance
Number	251	213	34	43	116	0	29	19
Percentage	52.0%	44.1%	7.0%	8.9%	24.0%	0	6.0%	3.9%

The contents of vocational education of migrant workers of new generation have been associated with their employment and jobs. In the vocational education, half of the workers have trained vocational skill; more than 2/5 of the workers have acquired safety and health knowledge; a quarter of workers have learned cultural knowledge such as computer, Mandarin, English and so on (Table 1).

2.3 The Methods of Vocational Education of Migrant Workers of New Generation

Table 2. Training methods of the vocational training of the migrant workers of new generation

	Mentorship	Unified learning by the employers	Training by the government	Taking all kinds of classes privately
Number	208	193	10	92
Percentage	43.1%	40.0%	2.1%	19.1%

About the methods of vocational education of the migrant workers of new generation (Table 2), 2/5 of the workers have studied in the mentorship and been trained by the employers; about 1/5 of them have taken part in all kinds of classes privately; only a few workers have participated in the courses organized by the government. It clearly represents that the government failed to play a proper role in the current vocational education of the migrant workers of new generation.

2.4 The Results of Vocational Education of Migrant Workers of New Generation

Table 3. Training results of the vocational training of the migrant workers of new generation

	Learn a lot	Learn some	Learn a little	Learn nothing	Difficult To decide
Number	72	261	135	10	5
Percentage	14.9%	54.0%	28.0%	2.1%	1.0%

According the investigation, most of the migrant workers of new generation think that the current vocational education is useful. 1/7 of the workers think they have learned a lot in the education and half of them have learned some (Table 3).

2.5 The Problems of Vocational Education of Migrant Workers of New Generation

Table 4. Training problems of the vocational training of the migrant workers of new generation

	Taking up much time of rest	High out-of-pocket payments	Training place far away	No supporting from leaders	Impractical contents	Theoretical training way
Number	63	97	63	72	53	82
Percentage	13.0%	20.0%	13.0%	14.9%	11.0%	17.0%
	Poor site and equipment	Bad management	Short training time	Low level of teachers	Unscientific evaluation	
Number	34	53	159	34	54	
Percentage	7.0%	11.0%	32.9%	7.0%	11.2%	

Migrant workers think that the problems in the current vocational education are mainly focused on the short training time, high out-of-pocket payments, theoretical training, no supporting from leaders and so on (Table 4).

2.6 The Life Planning of Migrant Workers of New Generation

Table 5. The life planning of the migrant workers of new generation

	Have developed carefully	Have thought but not developed	Have never thought
Number	153	534	161
Percentage	18.0%	63.0%	19.0%

The result of the investigation shows that in 848 questionnaires, nearly 1/5 of the migrant workers of new generation have designed their life planning seriously; most of the workers have thought of it but haven't designed their planning; and some have never thought of their life planning (Table 5). We can see that many migrant workers of new generation still lack of their clear life planning. Furthermore, according to the investigation, their attitude for the further vocational education is positive and 712 workers in a percentage of 83.96% hope to attend vocational training in the future.

3. Result and Analysis

Through widely consulting literature and documents, investigating and analyzing the current situation, we find that the vocational education of migrant workers of new generation is influenced by the factors of the government, employers, training institutions and the workers themselves.

3.1 The Government Factor

The Chinese government pays great attention to the vocational education of the migrant workers of new generation. A series of policy have been issued on the migrant workers' training by the government since 2003, with which the vocational education have been developed quickly and made great achievements in provinces, cities and regions. Migrant workers have been trained before they find jobs or transfer to other job, which effectively promotes the urbanization and makes a good foundation for the economic transition. We can say that the government plays a leading role in vocational education of migrant workers (Agriculture Ministry et al., 2003). However, on the functions of the government, there are still some shortcomings: not paying enough attention to the education, lacking of effective system, specifying mainly in five aspects (Huang, 2010):

3.1.1 Imperfect Laws and Regulations

The government lacked specific laws and regulations on the vocational training for migrant workers, especially the entrepreneurship policy.

3.1.2 No Unified Management Institutions

At present, China has no specialized institution to manage vocational education of migrant workers.

3.1.3 Insufficient Educational Investment

The training budget from the government is far from enough for the large number of migrant workers. In addition, the government often allocates funds without lasting policy and foresight planning. (Look at the Table 4)

3.1.4 Unbalanced Training Direction

Great attention is paid to the pre-employment training for the labor transferred from rural areas while the post-employment training in labor is neglected. (Look at the Table 2)

3.1.5 Poor Supervision and Evaluation

Certifications for training and vocational skills are of different standard all over the country; the government lacks effective supervision on the labor training provided by employers.

3.2 *The Employers Factor*

With the development of the vocational education of migrant workers, employers will be the main channel for training. The investigation reveals that training organized by enterprises plays a leading role in vocational education of migrant workers at present, with the contents of skill training, safety and health knowledge by means of mentorship (Look at the Tables 1, 2). Workers consider their trainings helpful (Look at the Table 3). The result proves that the enterprises training model is an effective one for continuing education. However, there are some weaknesses in the training model because of the lack of social responsibility and the long-term view from enterprises. It shows in four aspects:

3.2.1 Ignoring the Training of Migrant Workers

Many employers only focus on the present benefit and fail to recognize the increasing important role of human capital investment on productivity, so they are reluctant to spend money, time and energy on the training, fearing migrant workers might turn to other employers after they have been trained. Based on the investigation, the lack of the support from employers is one of the main problems of vocational education of the migrant workers of new generation. (Look at the Table 4)

3.2.2 Lacking Training Institutions

Education training institutions are only set up in very few large enterprises and there are even no sound training systems in small and medium enterprises.

3.2.3 No Comprehensive Training Contents

Limited to the needs of work, the training contents are generally associated with work, such as skills training, health and safety knowledge learning, the rules and discipline education in enterprises and so on, rarely involving the all-round development of migrant workers. If the overall quality of migrant workers of new generation is not improved, their career is very difficult to develop.

3.2.4 Single Training Method

Generally speaking, the training method is mentorship, which is more economical and practical. However, the knowledge learned through the old training method is fragmentary and needs to be combined with other training methods.

3.3 *The Training Institutions Factor*

Training institutions play a major role in the vocational education of migrant workers because they have advantages of systematic education, class teaching, basic, theoretical and systematic training knowledge, regular training time, guaranteed training places and facilities and high training efficiency. However the migrant workers consider that the current training effect is not ideal because of the old education model in institutions and a disjunction between theory and practice (Look at the Table 4). There are six problems:

3.3.1 Unclear Training Purpose

Some training institutions do the trainings for the purpose of political task arranged by the superior and obtaining higher funding, not for the interests of the migrant workers.

3.3.2 Training Contents Separated from Practice

Many migrant workers think that teachers in training institutions focus on theoretical knowledge and they can't

understand for their poor level. They can hardly use the knowledge learned in training course in their work. This is the key problem in training institutions.

3.3.3 Theoretical Training Methods

The teachers in training institutions only pay more attention on lectures and ignore practice. Migrant workers think that they can't learn knowledge in this way, but would rather to learn from masters on their jobs.

3.3.4 The Poor Training Facilities

Limited by funding, many facilities and equipment in the training institutions are so poor that it is hard to carry out practical training.

3.3.5 Short Training Time

It usually take 3~5 months or longer for the migrant workers to master a skill, but the teachers in training institutions often finish the courses in several days for various reasons. Nearly a third of the migrant workers of new generation in this investigation are disappointed for failing to master skills.

3.3.6 High Training Expenses

The training expenses in vocational education of migrant workers shall be shared by the government, employers, individuals and the government should be largely responsible for that. However, it is quite difficult for the low-income migrant workers to pay for some of the costs, which limits their career development to some extent.

In addition, some problems become prominent, such as poor management in training organizations, low degree of teachers' qualification, unscientific evaluation, distant training place and conflicts between work and study.

3.4 *The Individuals Factor*

Migrant workers of new generation have their own characteristics. They are individualized, motivated and good at accepting new things. The investigation shows that the majority wish to be trained in order to better survive and develop in cities. However, growing up in favorable conditions, the new generation has fear of hardship and some of them lack life goal. They are short-sighted and keep outdated training concepts (All-China Federation of Trade Unions New Generation of Migrant Workers Task Group, 2010; Wei & Han, 2006). All these are reflected in five aspects:

3.4.1 Lacking of Life Planning

According to the survey, only a small number of migrant workers of new generation have carefully developed their life planning. (Look at the Table 5)

3.4.2 Outdated Training Concepts

Influenced by the rural natural economy concept, the migrant workers of new generation from farmers lack a long-term planning and only pay attention to the short-term interests of training. They generally believe that they would put their energy into work for money rather than into the training if the training does not help to get a job or a raise.

3.4.3 Negative Training Attitude

Except the compulsory training organized by the government and employers, they seldom take the initiative to train. (Look at the Table 2)

3.4.4 One-Sided Learning Contents

The migrant workers of new generation only focus on learning contents about their jobs, such as vocational knowledge and job skills and ignore trainings for diploma, psychological and legal knowledge. (Look at the Table 1)

3.4.5 Limited Cost and Time

With low income, many of migrant workers of new generation can't pay high training costs and with long-hour working, they are tired and can't put more effort in training. (Look at the Table 4)

4. **Suggestions on the Vocational Education of the Migrant Workers of New Generation**

4.1 *Making Corresponding Laws and Regulations*

Our country should make corresponding laws and regulations on the vocational training of migrant workers to make clear the rights, responsibilities, obligations and illegal punishment among government, employers, training institutions and individuals. In the personnel system, government may have certificate system, which

demands that only employees with skill license are employed, otherwise employers be punished. Government may encourage employers to sign a contract about the service years with migrant workers to guarantee the interests of employers as to solve the problem that some employers are afraid that the migrant workers may turn to other employers after having been trained.

4.2 Setting up Special Training Management Institution to Strengthen the Evaluation Regulation

At present, our government should set up a special training management institution and corresponding department to plan and control the vocational education of migrant workers in the city, because the management institutions are composed of many departments and they tend to manage on their own ways with detached planning and low efficiency of training. In addition, employers should establish a special department responsible for staff training to learn from foreign companies.

As for the evaluation regulation, government should establish a supervision group and a unified evaluation mechanism to strengthen the evaluation of training institutions and of employers. For training institutions, government should assess not only the hardware like studying places, equipments, teachers and so on, but also the software such as the teaching planning, lesson preparation, classes, examination and other teaching phases. For employers, government should inspect their support for migrant workers to participate in vocational training, the implementation of the post-holding certificate system, the training funds system and the training of migrant workers, etc.

4.3 Establish School-Enterprise Cooperation Training Mechanism

In the past, the pre-employment training for the labor transferred from rural areas was the main target in the training of migrant workers and it was dominated by the public vocational training led by the government. Nowadays, the training has gradually transferred to on-the-job training (Zhang, 2011). The training mechanism should be reformed, which is led by the government, regards the combination of production and education, gives full play to the role of the enterprises and establishes the school-enterprise cooperation model. The government should coordinate the interests of training institutions and enterprises, theoretical knowledge can be learned in the training institutions and vocational skills can be learned in the enterprises. We can establish night schools in the factories, development zones and communities where the migrant workers gather to deliver teaching to their doors or encourage the workers in the medium and small-sized enterprises to train in the nearby large enterprises. They can train in rotation in the production off-season. In the training form, we should consider sufficiently their various needs, allowing them to choose the training institution, the training contents and the training time. Credit system is a kind of suitable system. If the student finishes a course, he will get the credit; if he gets all the credits within the stipulated time, he will finish the training task and get the certificate of vocational training. The credits can be transferred. If a worker switches to other employer or works in other city, the credits he has got are still in effect. The "people oriented" concept increases the efficiency in training (Peng & Lu, 2010).

4.4 Carrying out the General Training, Combining Theory and Practice, Giving Priority to Practical Training

In order to promote the comprehensive growth of the migrant workers of new generation, the vocational education should aim at improving their overall quality and consider the training on knowledge, ability, vocational skill, psychology, emotion, etc. On the training content, we should advocate the general training and divide all courses into four types: public courses, professional courses, elective courses and corporate courses. In the public courses, we should design the training contents good for their survival and development for urban living, such as career planning, legal knowledge, psychological guidance, new ideas and so on. The professional courses, which closely relate to the jobs of the migrant workers of new generation and mainly rely on the vocational knowledge and skills, should be designed according to different industries and different types of jobs. Considering their different levels and needs, we should divide each professional course into primary, intermediate and advanced classes for learners to choose. Professional courses can appropriately make class hours longer and be divided into theory and practice parts. Elective courses fully embody the characteristics of diversity and practicality. In order to expand workers' knowledge on culture and city life, some courses should be offered, such as computer knowledge, writing, spoken English, Mandarin, Cantonese, social etiquette, costuming, and so on. In the meantime, some courses are suitable for the primary, intermediate and advanced classes. Corporate courses focus on corporate culture, corporate spirit, corporate rules and regulations, corporate behavior, team spirit and work style, etc.

Teachers should teach theories concisely, enhance practice, reduce difficulty and carry out courses step by step to match with the level of the migrant workers of new generation. In professional courses, teachers should pay more attention to practice besides basic knowledge and principles, explaining and giving demonstrations with students imitating and practicing. That is the most effective training accepted by migrant workers to master

vocational skills.

4.5 Perfecting Training System

In terms of finance, the fund of vocational training of the migrant workers of new generation should be born by the government, the employers and the individuals. The training is the government's behavior, so the government should take main responsibility for the training. The government should make laws and regulations on the proportion of annual training expenses in the fiscal expenditure. Furthermore, the education vouchers are good for the training of migrant workers. The government can give the training fees to the migrant workers in the form of education vouchers, with which the migrant workers can choose any training institution to learn appropriate contents. The rest of the fees shall be borne by the employers and the individuals. As employers get the benefit from the vocational training of migrant workers, the government should stipulate that the fund for the training of migrant workers should be paid from the staff education fund from employers. Employers should set aside a certain proportion of sales revenue as the training funds, or draw a certain percentage of the employees' actual wages for training. The fund can serve as the cost and pay at a pre-tax expenses. Migrant workers should undertake some training cost as the ultimate beneficiaries of the vocational training.

In terms of teacher, we should expand the team for the vocational training of the migrant workers of new generation. Besides the teachers in the training institutions, we can hire professionals from other industries and skill superiors as guest teachers. Theoretical and basic knowledge should be taught by teachers in training institutions and skills should be trained by guest teachers. Only in this way workers will acquire not only the basic theory but also elementary vocational techniques.

In terms of the equipment and field, we should increase the government investment to speed up the construction of demonstration base for training. At the same time we may choose well-equipped workshops as training bases and have a contract with them on the fees. In this way, original resources of manufactures can be effectively used, the cost of training be reduced and most of all, training with the front-line production be closely combined.

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