

Case Study on the Migrant Children with Good School Adaptation in China

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Abstract

This study examines school performance of migrant children with good school adaptation, deeply analyzes the influencing factors, and tries to obtain enlightenment, in order to find the strategy to improve the school adaptation of early-grade migrant children. This study chooses 4 migrant children as examples, by evaluation, observation and interview to get data. These children have good interpersonal skills, can finish study task with high efficiency, and have certain capability of self evaluation and emotion and behavior control. Their own positive qualities are the key of good school adaptation, a more suitable home environment laid a foundation for their school adaptation, and relatively reasonable school characteristics promote their school adaptation. Based on positive perspective, migrant children need better social support and mental environment, including: focus on the individual differences within migrant children group, make sure the comprehensiveness and balance of education content, improve the construction of inclusive schools, encourage the cultures integration of different groups, and perfect the social support system of migrant family.

Keywords: migrant children, case study, good school adaptation

1. Introduction

The large-scale population migration is the most significant population phenomenon in the process of industrialization and urbanization in China. The movement of population tends to take family as the unit. More and more children come to cities from countryside with their parents who work in cities. According to statistics, the migrants had reached 221 million, among which, the children aged 0 to 14 years had reached 35.81 million (Duan Chengrong, et. al., 2013). The growth and education of the migrant children have become unavoidable problems of social development in China. School is an important place for children to study and live. Adapting to the school life is not only the significant task of urbanization but also the important indicator to evaluate their mental health (Li Xiaowei, et. al., 2009). When adapting to the school life, the migrant children grasp certain behavior norms and interpersonal skills to form the initial characteristic and sociality which can predict the individual development of the whole life. Maladjustment will not also affect the study and life at school and mental health, but also impact their social adaptation after they become an adult (Ma Jing, et. al., 2012; Xu Chuanxin, et. al., 2012). As a social vulnerable group, school adaptation of migrant children has attracted widely attention and has been highly valued. Most of Chinese researches focus on the adaptation of the children from higher grade of primary school to junior middle school, and have ignored their adaptation level in the early and middle grade which lay a foundation for the later adaptation; the existing studies always conform to the thinking logic of "unfavorable situation--pressure--maladjustment" with the underlying assumption of maladjustment of migrant children, and ignored the positive qualities and mental flexibility of adaptation.

Taking migrant children with good school adaptation as examples, this study examines their school performance, deeply analyzes the influencing factors, and tries to obtain enlightenment from them, in order to find the strategy to improve the school adaptation of early-grade migrant children.

2. Research Design

This research adopted the teacher-student rating scale of school adaptation. The scale was revised according to Teacher-Child Rating Scale 2.1(T-CRS2.1) by Hightower et. al.. The scale applied five-tiered points-based to evaluate the four levels of children on the four aspects, namely task orientation, behavior control, self-evaluation ability, and peer social skills. Jiang Guangrong et. al. (2013) revised the Chinese version and proved the applicability of the scale to this study with statistical tests when using it. The objects of the study are 180 children, half men half women, of the first grade from 6 primary schools in the three districts of N city of Jiangsu. Head teachers were invited to evaluate the school adaptation of familiar migrant children in their classes. After the invalid surveys were eliminated, 165 surveys were effective which were input to SPSS 13.0. The children with the scores ranking at the top of 27% were regarded to have good adaptation, and the children with the scores ranking at the bottom of 27% were regarded to have maladjustment. On the basis of the results of the rating results, four cases were selected from the children with the scores ranking at the top of 27%. There were 2 boys and 2 girls, namely Lele, Changchang, Huihui, and Dandan, from primary school Z and B. They are from Shangdong, Anhui, Guangxi and Henan. Their parents are workers, warehouse keepers or individual households. The average monthly income of their parents ranged from 2000 to 4000 RMB. The researcher adopted the method of non-participating observation, recorded the activity environment and the behaviors of children with pencil for 4 days, and obtained 72 cases; the teachers (especially the head teachers) and the parents of the children were interviewed, and the useful interviewing records were chose and extracted to apply in this paper.

3. Research Results

As Table 1 shows, the migrant children with good adaptation gained higher points at the four investigated dimensions than the migrant children and obviously higher than the children with maladjustment. Among the 72 cases (see Table 2), the cases with good performance account for 80.56%, and the cases with bad performance account for 19.44%. Generally, they have good peer social skills, can finish study tasks with high efficiency, and have certain capability of self evaluation and emotion and behavior control ability.

Table 1. Migrant Children's School Adaptation Scoring Statistics (M±SD)

Children types Dimension	Migrant children with good adaptation	All of the migrant children	Migrant children with maladaptation
task orientation	36.67±2.62	27.31±10.34	17.96±5.40
behavior control	35.04±2.29	29.19±6.94	23.33±4.65
self-evaluation capability	35.54±2.67	28.71±7.61	21.88±3.71
peer social skills	37.25±2.79	30.00±7.99	22.75±3.60
Total Score	144.52±2.59	115.20±8.22	85.92±9.31

Table 2. The School Adaptation of the Case Children at Each Dimension

Dimension	Performance Type	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
task orientation	Good	21	91.3
	Bad	2	8.7
behavior control	Good	11	68.7
	Bad	5	31.3
self-evaluation ability	Good	5	62.5
	Bad	3	37.5
peer social skills	Good	21	84
	Bad	4	16
Total	Good	58	80.6
	Bad	14	19.4

According to Table 1 and Table 2, the development level of the migrant children with good adaptation at the dimension of task orientation is higher than other children. Among them, the good cases account for 91.3%. When receiving tasks, they can respond rapidly, form clear idea to solve problems, and finish the task by planning and cooperating. [Case 1] In the knock-out game of "listening number to embrace to be a group", Lele was always able to form a group with other persons with the fastest speed and direct the persons of other groups. When listening to the number 5, the group of Lele lacked one person, while the adjacent group had two more persons. Then Lele called one of the two persons to come to her group. As a result, both of the two persons ran here. In order to prevent exceeding the number of people of the group, Lele decided to choose one of them immediately. When listening to the number 3, 5 people of the group of Lele embraced together and nobody wanted to leave. Lele found that the group at the edge of the playground lacked one person, so Lele ran there alone and 3 people came together. (April 11, 2016, primary school Z). Table 1 shows that the migrant children with good school adaptation have good peer social skills. The cases with good interpersonal performance account for 84%, as shown in Table 2. When interacting with friends, they always adopted equal, friendly, and cooperating model to carry out activities. When conflicting with friends, they always chose to solve the problems with placid methods like compromise and conversation. [Case 2] During breaks at 9:40 am, Changchang began to paint and many friends watched. Suddenly, a girl overturned the color box that Changchang just bought and the color pens spilled over the floor. That girl anxiously looked at Changchang, but Changchang smiled to the girl and said: "it doesn't matter. You didn't do it on purpose. Let us pick up the color pens together". Then Changchang and the girl picked up and put away the color pens one by one and began to paint intently. (April 18, 2016, primary school B) When it comes to the emotional processing, the grandma of Changchang said: "she never lose her temper. Sometimes other children went to play in her home and broke her toys, she just let the child be careful next time". (April 18, 2016, home of Changchang)

Table 1 shows the behavior control of the migrant children with good school adaptation is better than other migrant children. Although they were easy to be distracted by the external environment when they were studying, their behavior control was good. This kind of cases accounts for 68.75% (see Table 2). They had a higher consciousness and stronger self-discipline, and they can complete their plans independently and continuously. [Case 3] At 8:50 am, class was over. Most of the students played ping-pong or elastic. Huihui did not play with friends, but took out a drawing book from her bag and began to paint quietly. Firstly, she seriously sketches the contours and modified it with eraser continuously; then she selected the color pen she liked and colored it little by little; finally, she decorated the painting in the blank place. The color of the overall painting was harmonious, and the painting was clean and tidy. Gradually, more and more students watched her painting, and she still painted intently without being disturbed by the noisy surroundings. (April 11, 2016, primary school Z). Table 1 shows the migrant children with good school adaptation have certain ability of self recognition and self confidence. As shown in Table 2, the cases with the above two good abilities account for 62.5%. [Case 3] The morning Chinese class taught the article, that was Mother's Kindness, and teacher J let children think how to repay their mothers at present and afterwards. Lele answered: "now we must listen to our mothers and study hard. So we can go to university with good performance and find a good job. Later, I think as long as I am serious and make great efforts, I can earn lots of money and let my mother live a good life. I think I can personally repay my mother's love through my endeavor." (April 11, 2016, primary school Z) Compared with other dimensions, the self-evaluation of these children was the worst. They still adopted the attitude of disavowal and neutrality to evaluate them. They refused the positive evaluation and even felt anxious and shrank back, which should be valued by educators.

4. Analysis

It can be seen from the above that the school adaptation of the children samples is good and better than the general migrant children. The reasons are investigated as follows.

4.1 The positive qualities of the migrant children are the key of good school adaptation

Stronger achievement motivation. Ma Jing et.al.(2012) found that the contribution of achievement motivation of migrant children to school adaptation was significant, among which, the avoidance of failure had positive predictive effect on school adaptation. We find that these children have strong learning motivation, leading to positive self-efficacy and self-approval during obtaining success, and forming positive self-evaluation capability. Teacher mentioned that "for example, in our class, Huihui is not very clever but diligent and self-conscious. She is learning while others are playing after class. She is still learning while others are playing after school.

She is never distracted in classes. She thinks learning is happy and is happy and getting good performance is happy. So she must be willing to study and her school adaptation is good naturally.” (April 11, 2016, primary school Z). Higher level of school Readiness. Lv Zhengxin (2008) proposed that the academic performance of the children with higher level of school readiness was better. They always positively associated with others and were more popular with lower rate of being rejected. We also find that the children samples had received standard preschool education. They had certain learning ability, good emotional processing capability, and basic peer social skills, which laid a foundation for them to successfully adapt to the school life Good capability of regulating emotion. Qin Jian (2009) found that the level of regulating emotion had close relation with school adaptation. The child who had higher scores on strategy and capability of positive emotion regulation had higher scores on school adaptation. Good emotion regulation can help migrant children with self-suggestion and self-resolve in learning trouble and communication dilemma, in order to promote the development of school adaptation. In the interview, the teacher mentioned that" the children with good school adaptation can control themselves. At the beginning of learning abacus, many children can not learn how to calculate with abacus. They felt angry and stuck the abacus disorderly and even threw the abacus away directly; as for the good children, like Dandan, even if they can not learn well at the beginning, they can adjust the negative emotion until they had thoroughly learned”. (April 11, 2016, primary school B)

4.2 A more suitable home environment laid a foundation for migrant children's school adaptation

Higher family income. The family income is the premise and material basis of the living level and education expenses of the children. It has been mentioned that 27% of the children samples had good school adaptation. 77.27% of their family incomes had reached the general level of the city. This can effectively increase the education investment, and guarantee enough education time in order to let children cultivate good behavior quality in high-quality family education and promote the development of school adaptation by applying the qualities to learning and communicating activities.

More reasonable education method. There were always a special guardian, who paid attention to the cultivation of behavior habits and peer social skills of the children and adopted appreciative education, to take care of the children in this families; when the children encountered difficulties, 62.5% of the parents would like to encourage the children to explore and resolve, and 25% of the parents were willing to help children resolve the problems together; when the children made mistakes, 75% of the parents would like to persuade and educate the children. If the parents try to encourage or help children, children will obtain positive emotions and self-efficacy.

4.3 The relatively reasonable school characteristics promote the school adaptation of migrant children

Most of the schools are mixed schools. Table 3 shows the adaptation levels of the migrant children from different types of schools are different; the adaptation of the migrant children from the school having less migrant children was better than that of the migrant children from the school having more migrant children, and much more better than that of the migrant children from the school whose students were all migrant children. Zeng Shouchui et.al. (2007) pointed out that different education resettlement forms maybe mean different culture, value and social support. The school with less migrant children is always public school whose education resource is sufficient and the infrastructure level and teaching level of teachers are higher, and the psychological and social support environment are more positive, which make the children form reasonable self-cognition and peer social skills in an environment with equal acceptance when they accepting good education.

Table 3. Migrant Children with Different Adaptation Types Come From Different School Types

Children types School Types	Number of migrant children with good adaptation(n)	Number of migrant children with maladaptation (n)	Total(n)
The school whose students are all migrant children	3	14	17
The school with less migrant children	13	3	16
The school with more migrant children	6	5	11
Total	22	22	44

School manages the teachers with more reasonable forms. School management primarily affects the school adaptation of children through division of teachers and arrangement of workload, because the difference of division of teachers and arrangement of workload decides the different attention rate of teachers to the interior development of students. 90% of the teachers of primary school Z had the ability of multi-task. The teacher told us "many teachers are not professional in our school. For example, I learned the major of music, but now I am teaching Chinese of grade 2. Our physical education teacher is professional, but the physical classes of the whole school are taught by him and he is very tired". Cross division of work and heavy workload lead to the teachers have no time to take care of the school adaptation of the children. When it comes to the good school adaptation of the children from school B, the teacher said "our teachers were all graduated from professional normal colleges. We have special analysis table for cases record and can longitudinally compare various performances of the children. For example, some children are sluggish and aggressive. We will focus on them and help them correct. The social skill and control ability of the children could not be bad". (April 11, 2016, primary school Z)

5. Revelation and Suggestion

5.1 Focus on the individual differences within migrant children group

The level of school adaptation of migrant children is divided into good, average and bad, which demands educators to pay more attention on the individual differences within the group on the basis of focusing on the special group of migrant children.

As for the migrant children with bad adaptation, educators should change education strategy and select reasonable educating method on the basis of fully understanding the children in order to help them transform in the process of improvement. As for the migrant children with average adaptation level, educators should propose the gap and set up the aim to ensure the adaptation quality of all of the dimensions and reach the level of good adaptation. As for the migrant children with good adaptation, educators should pay close attention to their developing trend and the detailed performances of various aspects to ensure the balance of adaptation and promote improvement of the adaptation level again.

5.2 Make sure the comprehensiveness and balance of education content

It is found that the education content of schools is not balanced and the education key points are not comprehensive. Teachers pay most of the attentions on learning ability and interpersonal skill throughout everyday activities, and continuously remind and educate. For example, if you encounter difficulties, you should find a way to solve; you can plan after finishing the homework; you should friendly get along with your friends.

Relatively, teachers have ignored to cultivate the good qualities like self-control and self-evaluation. In addition to the insufficient persistence of self-control ability and behavior of junior grade children, this must lead to the one-sidedness of the development of school adaptation of migrant children. Therefore, school education should insist on comprehensiveness and attach importance to the consistency of internal psychological quality and external behavior quality, which can promote the balanced development of school adaptation of various dimensions.

5.3 Improve the construction of inclusive schools

It is found that there is difference between the migrant children from different types of schools. In future, China shall enhance the construction of inclusive schools to realize the balance of education resources. First, the relevant education policy shall be published. The entrance of migrant children should be included to the local education plan through the government intervention in order to guarantee the children to have the right to accept good education, enhance the self-identity of migrant children and their equal interpersonal skill with urban children. Moreover, the support of policy and finance of inclusive schools should be enhanced. The infrastructure construction of the schools should be perfected. The teaching staff should be expanded. Therefore, the education quality of schools can be optimized to help the migrant children better adapt to school.

5.4 Encourage the cultures integration of different groups

The good school adaptation of migrant children depends on the acceptance, open and supports of the inflow areas. Only the mutual influence and penetration can complete the cultural integration. First, the integration of different groups can be realized by good interpersonal adaptation. In terms of the relationship between teacher and student, the teacher-student interaction should be emphasized in order to increase the friendliness between teachers and the migrant children and reduce the psychological distance through close and supportive relations. In terms of peer relations, the contact and communication between the migrant and non-migrant children are encouraged in order to shape good self-evaluation and peer social skills through harmonious peer social skills.

Second, the active role of schools should be fully played. The cultural integration of migrant children is always the result of "being educated" and "being socialized". School education should take the initiative to integrate the content of cultural integration into the curriculum system to reduce the differences caused by cultures, and should promote the cultural adaptation and integration of migrant children through integrating the urban and rural culture.

5.5 Perfect the social support system of migrant family

Family is the main living place for migrant children. Family education plays an indispensable role in the development of school adaptation of migrant children. The family condition of the migrant population was not good (Wang Xiaofen, 2012), and problems did exist in their family education, for example, insufficient education time, bad education environment, disconnected with school education (Cang Cui, 2010), which must be solved by positive social support. First, the migrant families should be included to the community management and service system. Taking the actual requirements of the migrant families as the foothold, the "helping each other" system should be enhanced, and the poor migrant families should be helped. The education quality of the migrant children can be improved by improving the living quality in order to let the children to approve and develop themselves in high-quality living environment. Second, the migrant family should be included to the community education system. First, the transformation of family educational concept and the improvement of education method and skill can be promoted by establishing parents school of migrant population. Besides, early education service shall be provided for migrant children and the early education consciousness of parents shall be enhanced to optimize educational idea. Finally, parents are encouraged to accept continuing education in order to improve the degree, humanistic quality and education level of migrant population. The imperceptible influence of family education can help the migrant children cultivate good behavior quality and habit and promote the development of their behavior control and social skill.

6. Conclusions

A large number of domestic researches or reports have focused on the problems of migrant children. Most of the researches thought the school adaptation of migrant children lagged behind non-migrant children. However, as a large group, great heterogeneity exists in the migrant children, and the processes and results of their development are different. This research also finds that the school adaptation of part of the migrant children is good, which strongly responds to the previous empirical and biased judgment on migrant children, and reminds us to transform and correct the concept of treating migrant children and be objective to their adaptation level; on the basis of positive perspective, it is necessary to provide good social support and psychological environment for the migrant children with the attitude of equality and acceptance.

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