This issue cannot be thrown to the so-called “assessors” as it must be kept in mind that they oftentimes think about this issue from the perspective of educational administration and management, valuing social demands over student development and focusing on consistent objectives rather than students’ individual needs and differences in terms of capacity and academic level. They often overstress learning outcomes but not learning process, and precise quantitative description of the learning outcomes and interpretation but not real quality of learning. Meanwhile, they emphasize standard and consistent form while ignoring diverse pluralistic assessment systems. That being said, we expect among the works on curriculum and instruction, there will be more theoretical exploration of assessment and brief appraisals of cases starting from the perspective of teaching and learning.

As the above description indicates, this book surpasses other works in the area concerned and is innovative. It also has high levels of theoretical, methodological, practical, and informational value. It is not only a good teaching reference book but also a landmark theoretical masterpiece in the area of curriculum and instruction in China.

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流动人口公共产品提供的公共政策研究：以流动儿童义务教育为例 [*Public policy analysis of the provision of public goods for migrant populations: An example of the compulsory education of migrant children*]. 李阳 [Li, Yang]. 北京, 中国: 北京理工大学出版社 [Beijing, China: Beijing Institute of Technology Press], 2015. 202pp. (paperback), ¥45, ISBN: 978-756-820-924-3.

From the perspective of the provision of public products, Li Yang’s book unravels varying policy constraints that rural-urban migrants face in receiving compulsory education. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative data from a study

conducted in 10 cities in China, Li brings in the concepts of “market” and “government” to delineate the dynamic and tension-laden negotiations between governments at all levels (central and local), public and migrant-run schools, migrant students, and their migrant-worker parents. This investigation enables a heated discussion on protecting rural-origin students’ educational rights in China’s cities to move beyond abstract ethics and equity discourses. Further, it unpacks a set of conundrums grounded in the public finance and taxation systems that obstruct the equal distribution of educational opportunities among urban and rural residential permit (*hukou*) holders, in the hope of coming up with policy implications for educational equality.

Throughout the book, Li echoes many others in accepting certain propositions and drawing familiar conclusions. Nevertheless, some insights she presents do aid us in understanding several key issues I articulate below. They are essential to deepening our understanding of the idealistic roles of government and market in providing public products for poor and low-income populations, in this case children of migrant workers.

Compulsory education—which Li refers to as a form of non-rival and non-excludable products that are distributed and consumed nationwide—is at the core of her main arguments in the book. Conceptualizing compulsory education of migrant populations as a national public products or “public products in motion” in her terms, Li supports others in suggesting that the central government should ease the financial burden shouldered by local governments in places of migration. By directly allocating educational funds compatible to the actual number of migrants each city receives, the central government ought to reform the urban-biased, neoliberal public finance and taxation policy. Going against the ideal of educational equality, many urban bureaucrats lack the motivation to safeguard compulsory education of migrants, under the guise of adapting national policies to particular local conditions. However, Li finds that some local governments have successfully improved conditions of migrant education within the purview of their administrative areas.

The stark contrast between conservative and progressive policies promulgated by local governments orients Li to examine impact factors involved. She attributes particular policy decisions, either improving conditions of migrants or leaving them unsettled, mainly to the political ambitions of individual bureaucrats. To be specific, if certain bureaucrats put their own political

achievements on the priority list, it is likely for these governments to allocate funds to safeguard compulsory education of migrants. Personal interests of bureaucrats tend to surpass resource scarcity so as to determine educational trajectories of rural-urban migrants in everyday life. Although this assertion sounds legitimate in the Chinese context, it should be considered with caution because bureaucrats are not “rational beings” in the strict sense. Rather, they resort to a bounded rationality in the process of decision-making, due to limited time, information and/or cognitive constraints. The same is true for rural families in making their relocation decisions.

As Li alludes to in her work, both market and governmental rationality (as the agent of the state) could be acting as mechanisms to offer public products. To continue the dialogue in greater depth, I find inspiration in James Scott’s book, *Seeing Like a State*,¹ in identifying an effective mechanism that could truly improve the welfare of migrants. Scott draws our attention to the apparent paradox underlying the logic of action for the state: the clash between the logic of control and the logic of improvement. In the case of China, the central government operates in line with the logic of improvement, through launching progressive policies to increase enrollment of migrant students in urban schools. By contrast, local governments are lured by parochial interests, striving to control their population size and protect educational resources from being “encroached” on by migrants. To nurture the logic of improvement among local governments, it is necessary to reassure the central government of its leading role in allocating funds for migrant education, and to devise incentive strategies for urban bureaucrats who are versatile in negative coping.

Finally, I agree with the author that without necessary guidance and intervention from governments at all levels, the market mechanism is not competent enough to improve the welfare of migrants. Social Darwinism best depicts its inevitable consequences. For instance, middle class families pay exorbitant fees to secure their children a place in high-quality private schools, while rural-urban migrants congregating in low-quality, migrant-run schools will be arbitrarily categorized as being of intellectual inferiority. Seen in this light, only when governments play key roles in safeguarding their compulsory education can the educational and life chances of migrant students in cities be

¹ J. C. Scott (1998). *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

effectively improved.

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Family strategies, guanxi, and school success in rural China. Ailei Xie. New York, NY: Routledge, 2016. 128 pp. (hardcover), £95.00, ISBN: 978-1-138-84106-2.

There are many ways in which parents can help their children succeed in school. Parents are aware that the more they are involved in their children's schooling, the better their children may do in school. However, parents' keenness to get involved is not officially channeled. Xie opens up the issue of how rural parents from different social backgrounds employ their interpersonal social network (*guanxi*) to produce and reproduce advantages for their children in the quest for school success. He describes in meticulous field notes how these rural parents are strategically involved in schooling as a social capital transference process in a rural region wedged in by national economic reforms. By the end of the book, the reader understands how the state legitimizes parents' role in schooling, and the relationship between parents and teachers in China. Social networks, that constitute effective family strategies for rural parents helping their children succeed in educational competition, are caught up in what in the West calls the "neoliberal project" in which some children are left behind.

Xie takes the impact of economic transformation on Zong county as the entry point to understand social stratification in rural society. Xie deftly employs narrative techniques interwoven with national and regional data. This is coupled with apt interpretations, mostly referring to international literature on family-based resource effects on children's educational outcomes in terms of social capital. With regard to research shedding light on children's success in rural schools in China, the readers might want to know more about how the impact of