A University Education For All?
A Study of Parental Educational Expectations
In China's Sichuan Province

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Abstract

This study explores the educational expectations held by two groups of parents in Sichuan Province of China in 2000. Ninety-two parents were surveyed by questionnaire. Participating parents were divided into two groups, 'workers' and 'intellectuals'. Intellectuals were defined as the parents who graduated from secondary schools and entered colleges or universities. Workers for the purpose of this study referred to the parents who had less than full secondary education.

Results from this research showed clearly that even after twenty-five years of wide-scale reforms, parental expectations for children's education continue to rise in all classes of society. It is also clear that elitist practices continue to favor the intellectuals and other privileged urban families. Furthermore, while great progress has been made in the education of girls, the evidence shows that traditional attitudes persist in many workers' families where concerns over income and employment are greater.

The thesis concludes that officials and leaders cannot ignore the pressure for a greater accessibility to all levels of education. It argues that educational reforms must be built on greater awareness of the diversity and circumstances found in China's families. To achieve this point, communications between parents and schools should be reinforced. With this awareness, policy makers, school leaders and officials must begin their work.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

At a post-secondary institute in Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan Province in China, the different attitudes held about education were striking. Some students in that institute studied very hard. They spent almost all of their spare time learning, besides the time spent in classes. They could be seen attending classes, doing their homework in the library, and asking questions after classes or in teachers' offices. It seemed that they were never satisfied with their studies. Even after getting high marks, they would continue putting their full energy and time into their studies. When asked why they worked so hard, they answered that their parents were expecting them to get the highest grades in all courses.

However, other students in the same institute held quite different attitudes about their studies. They stayed away from their classes, refused to finish their homework or ignored their teachers' requirements. They spent a lot of time on things that were not within the scope of their studies. In examinations, they answered questions without putting full energy into them. But they cared much about their scores. When one of those students was questioned about his lack of study, he said his parents would be pleased if he could simply pass all his courses.

There were also other students with attitudes about study lying between these two extreme points. These attitudes also reflected the various educational expectations their parents held for them. Dornbusch, Ritter, et al. (1987) have argued that cultural

institutions, such as a family, have a great influence on children's mental development and school achievement (Steinberg, Lamborn, et. al., 1992, pp. 1266-1281). This can be seen especially in today's families in China, whose main family structure has changed from grandparents living with parents and grandchildren to very small families, two parents and one child, sometimes two if they are twins. If both parents are working, grandparents would help them take care of the children. Therefore, a new family structure called "4+2=1" became common in the middle of the 1980s. In this structure, four referred to the four grandparents; two were the parents and one was the child in the family. By using this family system, four grandparents and two parents served one child. In such small child-centered families, with help from the older generation, parents commit more time and energy in caring and educating their child(ren) than in big families. As a result, better care from parents or/and grandparents resulted in their children's stronger physiques and less susceptibility to infectious diseases (Davin, 1991, p.53). This saved parents' time and money in sending their children to hospitals in contrast to the experience in bigger families. As a result, parents can spend more time on their children's education.

Therefore, in the long-run, a child's development more closely corresponded to the educational goal that the parents made for him/her. This is especially the case in China where rapid social change is having a huge impact on the educational expectations of parents.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the educational expectations of a selected group of Chinese parents living in Sichuan Province hold for their children. What impact has social change since 1976 had on their attitudes about education? What is/are the problem/s in China's educational system after more than twenty years of social, economic and political change? Is today's educational system satisfying parents? Are today's parental educational expectations realistic? Answers to all these questions will provide a base from which school officials and teachers can respond effectively to both parental concerns and to the needs of children.

The educational expectations parents hold for their children cannot be ignored. It has long been argued that parents' attitudes to their children's education have a very strong influence on their children's educational development. When children are born, parents become their first teachers and home becomes the primary learning center (Duggan, 1948; Good 1947; Nakosteen, 1965). In this home-based learning center, parents' attitudes and values play very important roles in their child-rearing styles (Xie, Seefeldt, & Tam, 1996). Parents nurture their children based on their own life-style or the style they choose for their children. Thus, children are influenced or taught from very young to do what their parents expect them to do. Children's reactions to their parents' expectations are reflected in their behaviors and performances at school. For example, when facing failure, children with high expectations for success are said to work harder and do better. However, with low expectations, they will be less likely to persist at a task

both following failure and following success (Janoff-Bulman, Ronnie, Brickman, & Philip, 1982, pp. 207-208).

Parental support especially through involvement and interest in the children's education is said to have a positive and lifelong effect on children's commitment to their own education (Epstein & Becker, 1982, pp. 103-113; Watkins, 1997, pp. 3-13; Ames, Tanaka, Khoju, & Watkins, 1993; Baker & Stevenson, 1986, pp. 156-166; Becker & Epstein, 1982, pp. 85-102; Coleman, 1987, pp. 32-38; Comer, 1986, pp. 442-444). It has also been argued that involvement allowed many parents to become interested and confident in their children's education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Epstein, 1990; Walkins, 1997, p. 3). In daily activities with their children, parents transferred and instilled their educational values into their child-rearing practices, which in turn influenced their children's behavior and language. And in daily life, children are believed to develop consciously and unconsciously by receiving, processing, and following this guidance. Stevenson and Stigler (1992) told a story about the educational expectations of one Chinese mother and its effects:

> Mother: "What grade did you make on your reading test today in school? 93? If you had studied harder you would have been able to make 94."
>
> The child returns after the next week's test.
>
> "You made 94. You can do better than 94." Suggested the mother, "Just spend a little more time at your studies."
>
> Finally, after weeks of study, the child proudly reports that her grade on this week's test was 100. (p. 123)

It can be seen in this story that the mother's involvement in her daughter's study was certainly a factor in her daughter's progress at her schoolwork.

When children grow up, even between the ages of 18 and 22, parental educational expectations are still influential in their study attitudes and academic achievements. As Brookhart (1998) stated, family background, expectations, and standards affect how hard students work and, in turn, all these factors affect students' ultimate levels of achievement in school (p. 202; Natriello & McDill, 1986, pp. 18-31). Students who were questioned at the institute in Chengdu as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter reflected their parents' educational attitudes very closely. Feather (1982) pointed out that "what a person does is seen to bear some relation to the expectations that the person holds" (p. ix, & p.1). Plucker (1998) also reached the same conclusion that student aspirations are related to their educational outcomes (p. 240; Darling & Steinberg, 1993, pp. 487-496). He explained further that students with high ambition scored higher than those students of low-ambition (pp. 240-246). Obviously, in some way, the interests and values of these children's parents in education influence these children's own educational motivations, ambitions, and inspirations. When they expected their children to get high marks, parents tended to set their academic aims high accordingly. Meanwhile, the orientation made by parents at the beginning also led to their children's good study habits later. Those with low educational expectations usually cannot form good habits in their study since they set their goal as only to pass their examinations. Findings proved as well that weak family connections with schools were associated with decreased educational commitment and an increased risk of absenteeism, substance use before and during school hours and the purchase of alcohol or drugs on campus (Machamer & Gruber, 1998, pp. 357-369). Evidently, the role of parental guidance on their young children is too important to be ignored.

Moreover, when parents' educational expectations take into account their children's academic ability, parents will not find as many problems in their children's schooling. It was believed that children with such parental expectations were more optimistic, active, and willing to learn, as well as to face and solve problems than those from whom too much or too little was expected. Raynor (1969, 1974) has taken into account the motivational impact of expectations concerning more distant future goals. He argued that the outstanding differences between the children with positive parental educational expectations and those who have negative expectations will determine which group of children can succeed in their future goals. It is also said that parental expectations built on their children's real knowledge acquiring ability can guide students or encourage them when they feel depressed (Zhao, 1989).

Relationship between Parental Educational Expectations and School Reforms

Parents' expectations have huge implications for leaders and officials in public education. Officials, schools and teachers have to be sensitive to parental attitudes and values. On one hand, parental expectations can be obstacles in school reforms. Because of the "one-child" family plan, parents in today's China are concerned more about how much better their own child is doing than those of others, rather than about how well school serves students (Green, 1980, p.25; Kohn, 1998, p.572). As a result, some parents try to influence the schools on behalf of their children (Fried, 1998, pp.265-271). Thus, although the goal of broad education is to meet the educational needs of all members in communities (Li, 1999), it seems to be inevitable that some parents have much more to

say than other parents in school performance. The reason is, in one way or another, schools have to be primarily a work-related service to meet the needs of well-educated and well-paid parents in their children's education (Liu & Yeung, 2000). In this sense, parental expectations drag the school reforms away from giving all students equal education. Sometimes those privileged parents even try to prevent any reforms that they think improper or not based on their considerations for their own children.

On the other hand, schools themselves still have problems in giving equal education today. It is true that there is a habit in school to secure preference and privilege of the children from well-educated parents (Useem, 1990, pp.17-18). Furthermore, when those who are advantaged by way of their membership in the dominant group collectively work to place restrictions on those who are disadvantaged, social equality is hard to achieve (Winterdyk, & King, 1999, p.8). In Sichuan Province, it was also true that inequality affects the local school reforms by ignoring their students' geography, ethnicity, and family background. In China, and certainly in Chengdu, some key-point schools appear to favor pupils in urban areas and children of economically better off and better educated parents everywhere at the expense of pupils in rural areas and children of less prosperous and less educated parents (CIPE, 1985, p. x). Even for the same misbehaviors, teachers could find different excuses to protect those children from so-called good background. This matches Hooper's description of the privilege enjoyed by the children from high official families:

> With the exception of a few members of the 'in set' –the privileged offspring of high officials – the closest most young Chinese ever get to these buildings is to have their photographs taken outside them. (1985, p.140)

But the expectations parents hold for their children in education can also be incentives for school reforms. At present, when further reforms are required by China's economy and society, China's schools also have to face these new challenges and take on the responsibility of managing, of linking up education and society as well as school and community (Li, 2000, pp.76-86). Usually parents express their will and hopes by praising, criticizing or complaining about the reasonable and unreasonable parts in schools. These, to some degree, give information to schools about which parts need to be changed. Based on parental expectations, schools in Sichuan Province similar to most schools in China at present are training their teachers to know more than the traditional teaching methods and school subjects (Perry, 2000, p.75). Some other schools also begin to bring out new training classes to meet the new knowledge and technology requirements for schoolteachers, since schools have to take responsibility of their survival in their own environment. Although it is very hard for administrators to conduct reforms according to each parent's educational expectations, they have to face these new challenges and try to meet the needs of as many children as possible. Therefore, before reform is possible, it is important for educators to know what community concerns are as related to curriculum and instruction. Given the new situation in China and the new requirements of the parents, some schools in China now try to carry out reforms in curriculum, school activity arrangements, teaching approaches, and textbooks by making reference to the parents' attitudes and values in their children's education. Thus at this moment, the critical part of education reform in China is to have educators become aware of what expectation parents hold for their children.

Since 1976, China overall has begun to "come alive" economically, socially and culturally (Hooper, 1985, p. 6) with changes. Educators are also able to assume a period of relative stability in educational policies (Schmidt, 1977, p. 40). As China's reform goes further and deeper, there must be more changes both within and outside the education system. Under these changes, what are parents' educational expectations? Will their expectations change to match or will the expectations be out of step with educational realities? Or will they meet the conditions provided by the state? How can schools meet the requirements from parents in order to solve students' school problems? This study focuses on these issues, in particular on the implications of rising expectations at this point in Sichuan Province.

In order to explain and answer the questions proposed in this research. The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the phenomenon that students' study attitudes at school have a close relationship with the expectations parents hold for them.

Chapter 2 discusses the methods used in conducting this research. In order to help western readers have a better understanding of this research, the categories of "workers" and "intellectuals" are explained. The terms are used in a distinctively Chinese way. Two surveys, the historical and the modern one, are briefly described because they are the main research tools in this study. Further, since the modern survey was more complicated than the historical one, the nature of the survey, such as how and why and to whom the copies of the questionnaire were sent out, how the two groups, the worker and the intellectual, were divided, and what answers were received, are described in detail in this chapter.

The literature review in Chapter 3 indicates what has been written (and not written) on parental expectations. This chapter focuses on five main topics: a) rising expectations; b) wealth as a determining factor of educational expectations; c) gender as a determining factor in parental educational expectations; d) the relationship between the individual and the state; and e) parents' participation in their children's school education. Since there were not many books or materials found on this topic, the literature review further proved that this research was worthwhile and important to do.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed historical survey. This survey deals with a long historical period of about 2000 years from the time before Confucius to 1990s. The relationships between parents' expectations and the social, economic and political changes are indicated through conclusions from the written documents in this long historical period. Chapter 4 is divided into four stages, the "primitive period to Qing Dynasty", "War Period (1911-1949)", "the People's Republic (1949-1966)" and "after 1976". Due to the complex effects of social factors on parental expectations, the exploration of this part was made about rich and poor families, as well as about male and female children. As a result, this historical survey provides a sound foundation for understanding modern expectations.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the survey conducted in Sichuan in 2000. Participating parents were divided into two groups, the workers and the intellectuals. The background information about their age, employment, education and the questions relating to their expectations, such as their family economy, their opinions concerning today's educational system, and their attitudes towards their children's gender were asked. Similarities and differences between the two groups are described. In this chapter,

some of the valuable suggestions were also listed because these suggestions gave guidance to the implications of the thesis.

Chapter 6 analyses the similarities and differences found in the results of the survey. The analysis in this chapter is closely tied in with China's economic reform after 1976. Parents are no longer satisfied with the old educational system. Reforms in education are needed badly.

Finally, Chapter 7 considers the implications of present parental attitudes for educational changes in China. What considerations should policy makers and school leaders take into account? Some suggestions are offered in this chapter.

Like most research, this study also has limitations. First, the number of participants was small. Only ninety-two participants sent back their copies of the questionnaire. To some extent, there were problems in representing the opinions from all parts of society. Second, most of the participants of the modern survey by questionnaire were urban dwellers. The rural parents who answered the questionnaire were only about one quarter of the total number of the parents. This caused limitations in doing this research, because even today, the majority of the population in China is still peasants. However, based on quite a number of books found and the parents interviewed, this research is still a valuable insight into China's educational needs at a time of immense change in China. Further, since this topic is still badly under-researched, this study also can be considered as an initial exploration to guide the work of scholars in the future.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

This study deals with a dynamic social phenomenon, the changing parental educational expectations in Sichuan, a province of China. China is a nation with a long history. In each historical period, different state policies were introduced and implemented to meet the perceived needs of its economic, social and political development. Under such circumstances, parental educational expectations changed to correspond with these changes. Now at a time when China's reforms are going further and deeper, when societal changes are widespread, parents can be expected to change their educational expectations again to match the new situation. Equally, their expectations will give strong signals for China's education reforms by telling which part of the current school system meets the needs of students and which part does not. Thus, this research is needed at present for it is crucial to know parental perspectives about today's school system and what changes they are looking forward to having.

Research Design

In this thesis, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used. But the main focus was on the exploration of modern educational expectations in year 2000. In exploring the new educational expectations, a qualitative research method -- open questionnaire surveys – was applied. Other qualitative methods were also used, such as coding, analyzing, and detailed descriptions. However, a survey was the most important

method in both parts of the research. Warwick and Lininger (1975) remarked that although every method of data collection, including the survey, is only an approximation to knowledge, each provides a different glimpse of reality (pp. 5-6). Thus, only by blending these two methodologies could a detailed and deep exploration about the parental educational expectations in Sichuan Province be done.

Definitions

In this study, three terms are used in a specific way. "Parental Educational Expectations" refers to the goals parents expect their children to reach in their formal education. In this thesis, parental educational expectations are the anticipations of school levels or score levels Chinese parents, especially the parents in Sichuan Province, hope for their children to achieve. Thus, "What are your educational expectations for your child(ren)" became one of the key questions on the questionnaire in this research.

Two other definitions, "intellectual" and "worker", are used in a specific Chinese way. According to *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1966), 3b (2), "intellectual" (p. 799) refers to people engaged in activities requiring preeminently the use of the intellect, especially those people engaged in creative literary, artistic, or scientific labor as distinguished from those who do not use their intellect or mental labor. In China, the meaning is similar, although it refers more specifically to those who graduated from secondary schools and entered colleges or universities or to post-secondary education in general. They usually engage themselves in computing, teaching, technical or other mental work. In this research, they were typically official clerks, engineers, managers, businessmen, and police officers.

"Workers" are defined, in contrast, as those with less than full secondary education. They generally work as physical or manual workers. Blue-collar employees, factory workers, farmers, private business owners, repairmen, cleaners, off-duty workers, and those who were unemployed were included in this group.

Based on the above two definitions, the participants were divided into two groups – "the intellectual group" and "the worker group". Their occupations covered a wide range. To what extent did their different class background shape their expectations? This is a major focus of this study. The examination of their different responses for each group revealed distinctive perspectives. In other words, those people's opinions reflected their class background. The findings have obvious significance for educational reform.

Historical Survey

Before the survey of parental educational expectations in the year 2000 was done, the previous situations of parental expectations in history had to be explored, because the results from history provide a basis of comparison to today's parental aspirations. This historical survey was about the expectations the ancestors of today's Chinese people held for their children. Obviously, nothing could be done in contacting historical parents directly. So conclusions were based on the work of scholars in education, politics, economy, and other fields. These findings provided an understanding of both the source and the nature of historical parental educational expectations.

In this part, the exploration starting from the Neolithic Cultural period (7000 BC – 3000 BC) to the Qing Dynasty (1837-1911) was conducted briefly to produce basic background information for comparison. Clearly, social changes were much slower in

this period than in any time in history. In the latter part, more details were given from the 1970s to the 1990s than that of the post-Qing Dynasty to the 1970s. From the 1970s to the 1990s, when China started its reforms, and as these reforms went deeper and further, numerous social changes happened from civil affairs to foreign policies, from dressing to people's ideology, as well as from textbooks to students' behaviors. China has developed beyond its "single belief system" (Hooper, 1985, p.163). These social changes affected today's parental educational expectations. What took place in these years has created the context in which beliefs about education take shape.

In this part, such questions as "Did parents from different social classes have different educational expectations for their children?" and "Did educational expectations reflect economic and political conditions?" were answered. Special attention was also paid to the different expectations for girls and boys. From exploring and answering these questions, the relationships between parental educational expectations and the social elements became evident (See Chapter 4).

Modern Survey

This is the major part of this research. A survey by a questionnaire, relating to children's age and sex, fathers' and mothers' educational and occupational backgrounds, and parental expectations for the children was sent to parents who lived in Sichuan Province. Through this questionnaire, many variables, such as the relationship between the family's economic situation and parental educational expectations, gender, and parental expectations for today's education system, were explored.

The survey results were comparatively far less predictable than the historical one because of the huge changes in China between 1976 and the 1990s. In these years, many people switched their occupations or changed their social status. There seemed to be no clear division between different occupations or economic backgrounds, or between people who lived in cities and countryside. The simple division between peasants and proletarians could no longer be applied. No matter what occupations or family economic background, there were factors overlapping in social or geographical positions. For example, the affluent farmers and commuters in the counties may have the same expectations as those who live in cities. For this reason, the educational level of the parents was used as the basis of comparison. Comparatively, this criterion was much more stable than any other social indicator.

Thus, comparatively, the division between parents based on their own educational backgrounds is much clearer and less overlapping than other elements in the society. And it was proved by the research that these two groups, the intellectuals and the workers, are easily distinguished.

Distribution of the Questionnaire

Although the copies of the questionnaires were distributed randomly, the cities where the questionnaires were allocated were chosen carefully. From ten large or middle-sized cities, Chengdu and Chongqing were selected by comparing their population, economy, location, and their modern development. Chengdu is the capital city of Sichuan Province, while Chongqing is one of the four municipalities that are directly under the control of the central government. During the two decades of reform, both cities stood in

the front lines in testing new social, economic, political and education policies. In turn, they got the fastest and most advanced development. Parents in these two pilot cities experienced the greatest and most radical changes. These cannot be matched by parents from any other cities in the same province. The educational expectations of parents in Chengdu and Chongqing for their children reflect the far-reaching reforms now being experienced in Sichuan Province.

To avoid an unbalanced comparison, and based on the living custom that Chinese people from different occupations seldom live in the same neighborhood, questionnaires were distributed intentionally in various areas. But in each area, copies of the questionnaires were allocated randomly. For example, ten copies were given in the university regions. Ten teacher families selected randomly filled in the questionnaire and returned their answers. In a downtown area, another ten copies were distributed to ten different business families. Ten copies were given out in the public service buildings. Twenty were distributed in the outskirts as well as another twenty in suburbs to provide chances for peasants. These random distributions resulted in the numbers of the two groups, workers and intellectuals, being almost equal.

In this survey, fifty copies of the research questionnaire were sent out to families who lived in Sichuan Province in each chosen place. All participating parents were given the explanations about the purpose of the study and the design of the questionnaire. They were also asked to fill out Consent Forms as well as given the right to answer or waive any questions or the right of refusing to answer the whole questionnaire. Without knowing who the researcher was, the participating parents supplied more accurate and objective information than they would have if they knew who the researcher was. Hooper

(1985) stated this phenomenon in her study that even when anonymous questionnaires were used, many people tended to say what they thought the researcher wanted them to say (p.159). Thus, by sending questionnaires to them, which offered anonymity and avoided interviewer bias (Neuman, 2000, 4th Ed., p. 272), there was a greater likelihood of getting honest answers.

Survey Questions

In the questionnaire, ten open-ended questions were asked. Some were about the basic information of families, such as children's age, sex, present grades, and parents' age, occupations, education background. These questions provided the basic information in understanding the roots of specific educational expectations parents held for their children. There were also questions connected closely to the title of the thesis: What educational expectations do you have for your child(ren)? Do you change your educational expectations with the advancement of your child(ren)'s grades? What is the relationship between your educational expectations and the change of your family's income? It was beneficial to use these direct questions (Kvale, 1996, pp.133-135) to explore the key research topic. Based on the answers of these questions, not only were the educational expectations learned, but also the conditions under which the expectations arose were known. In this part, the relationships between education and social circumstances were explored as well. Also, one question was about gender: Would your educational expectations be different if your child was of the opposite sex? This question was asked to see the changes parents made in their attitudes to their children of different sexes. In China, traditionally, boys were treated as superior to girls (Zhao, 2000). Does

this belief still remain, or is it dying away? It is important to gauge parents' beliefs about gender.

Two other questions were about the parents' attitudes to today's educational system: Can today's education system match your educational expectations for your child(ren)? This was used to explore whether today's educational system was satisfactory to most of the parents. If it was not, what should be done in the new school reforms? And the last question was about parental expectations for schools: if today's educational system cannot satisfy your educational expectations, what reform(s) do you think should be made? This question was asked to gain information about parents aspirations in today's educational system.

Survey Results

Of the 50 copies distributed, 46 families which included 92 mothers and fathers, responded. The father and mother in one family answered one copy. Based on the information received from the questionnaire, there was not a family with more than one child. Nor was there any single-parent family. The ages, education, and occupations of parents who answered the questionnaires were different. Fathers were aged from 28 to 52, and mothers' between 28 and 47. Their education was diverse. The fathers' education was from primary school to junior technology training school, up to the undergraduate and graduate. There was no father holding a doctoral degree. The mothers' educational backgrounds were the same as those of the fathers', also without any doctoral degree.

Their children's ages were from 2 to 19 years old. Twenty-four were female children and 22 male. This ratio was useful for the later examination of parental attitudes towards gender differences.

Since some families had unequal education between father and mother, the division of the groups was made based on the parent who had higher level of education in their family.

Within 'workers' and 'intellectuals' groups, girl's parents were further separated from boys' parents in order to see if there were any differences in their educational expectations between female and male children in each group.

As a result, answers to the total of ten questions were compared. Similarities and differences between these two groups were compared and analyzed (See Chapter 5 and 6). Since the first four questions were all about the specific information of the children and of the parents, they were combined and analyzed together. The last six questions were illustrated one by one based on the information given by each group and each of its subgroups. Tables were used to give clearer and more direct comparisons than using literal tools. Borrowing the results from the comparison, suggestions were given and listed at the end of the research (Chapter 7). However, since the limitation of the numbers of parents who participated in Chengdu and Chongqing, comparisons between parents in these two cities were not made in this research. But from the findings of this research, such questions as: "Which group has the higher educational expectations for their children?" "Is there any relationship between expectations and family economies?" as well as "Is there any parental gender discriminations in their children's education?" were answered.

In short, the data collected came from a representative cross-section of mainly urban society. The educational views of the parents most affected by rapid social and economic change have been surveyed.

CHAPTER 3

Literature Review

Much has been written about education in China. But little has been found directly on the educational expectations of today's parents. Those studies focused on the educational expectations that parents in China's Sichuan Province held for their children are even fewer in number.

But parental expectations in education can still be traced from centuries ago using documents in the fields of history, psychology, sociology and education. The literature from these multidisciplinary fields revealed that the educational expectations of China's parents varied considerably throughout the country's long history.

It is clear that parental educational expectations did not remain unchanged in China's long history. Through the written documents and materials in the Literature Review, five tendencies in parental expectations can be discerned.

Rising Expectations

China's civilization can be dated back to the period of Neolithic Culture (7000 BC - 3000 BC). Because no written records were found in the archeological discoveries about this period, there was no mention of parental educational expectations that could be studied at all. However, in the Shang Dynasty (1766 BC – 1122 BC), China entered a significant new phase of development. Written language was discovered on the Shang oracle bones and tortoise shells (Schirokauer, 1989, p. 10). But it was still impossible to find any connections between these characters with any formal educational expectations.

The reasons for this were that the language on the bones was not used for education, but to "address questions to the spirits", to "ask about the proper timing of military expeditions, hunts, and journeys", to "inquire about ceremonials and omens", and to "ask about the weather, the course of an illness, or the sex of an unborn child" (Schirokauer, 1989, pp. 12-13).

At this time, the peasantry still used stone tools. Little change was made in agricultural methods. Peasants still hoped that their boys would learn hunting and farming skills from older males and that their girls would know how to pick up fruit and how to manage household from their female seniors in practice (Wang, 1975, p. 25; Zhuang, 1997, p. 10).

In Confucius's time, parents' expectations were much more complicated. Rich parents in this period held high expectations for their boys (Bailey, 1990, p. 35; Cleverley, 1985, p. 2; Seeberg, 2000, pp.57-60; Spence, 1990, p. 10; Taylor, 1981, p. 1). Llasera concluded that to those parents "study is a permanent occupation" (1987, pp. 24-25). She said parents who could afford the education expenses in Imperial China tried hard to provide their children all possible study conditions to support them. Her study was based on comparing education in Confucian times with western missionary cultural influence in the 1600s in China. Although she did not separate expectations based on parents' social and economic status, nor did she illustrate parents' expectations directly, she summarized parents' expectations in her article *Confucian Education Through European Eyes* (1987, p. 26):

> If he (the child) passed the test of the imperial examinations, the mandarinate provided central authority with a loyal civil service which was supposed to be unaffected by political change, since it obeyed principles of a moral philosophy which were themselves unchanging.

But most of the parents in this time held low expectations for their children. Even in rich families not much was expected of girls in their education. Cleverley (1985, pp. 7, 26) stated that although learning was considered important for upper class women, their study was focused only on music, literature and formal speaking. Poor parents both in cities and in the countryside in this period held even lower educational expectations for their sons than those parents of the upper class for their daughters. These parents could not afford their children's study expenses (Spence, 1990, pp. 46-47). They had only to hope that their male children would learn some basic reading and writing skills that were needed in their daily life. These skills were different from the knowledge of the "Five Classics" that the rich boys studied. Woodside (1992, p. 37) supported this point in his study. He found that the books that boys of this sort learned made no attempt to introduce them to higher social positions no matter how hard they worked, since these books had no relationship with passing the imperial examinations. Undoubtedly, if a girl from a poor family could recognize the characters of her name, she would be considered distinguished (Cleverley, 1985, p. 28).

It was not surprising that no records were found related to how much girls of poor feudal or traditional families were expected to learn in their education in this time. But definitely, both female and poor male children's parents held low or no expectations for them.

Parental expectations rose with the development of society. Traditional China had no concept of common people's literacy. Those who were educated were only a small

group of males who competed for examination degree (Rawski, 1979, p. 1). However, in the late Qing Dynasty, while the majority of the rich boys were still paid by their parents to be taught in the traditional Chinese way with traditional textbooks, some rich ones were expected to study abroad to catch up on the new social fashions. At the same time, although the expectations for poor boys rose slowly, educational expectations for girls of both poor and rich families rose dramatically. "Before the twentieth century, formal education for women was neither approved nor systematically provided for in Chinese society" (Rawski, 1979, p. 6). Based on Buck's survey (1937), only about two percent of the entire female population over age seven in the rural areas had ever attended school, of which only half were considered literate. But this situation changed enormously. Hayhoe (1996, p. 42) conducted research on the number of the female students in 1907 in China. She concluded that in the year when the regulations that girls could be openly accepted into schools separated from boys' were made (Cleverley, 1985, p. 40; Shu, 1979, pp. 800-18), there were estimated to be 428 schools for girls throughout the country, with 15,496 students enrolled. Kozuko (1989) also proved the rising of the parental educational expectations for girls by claiming that in 1910, when 3,180 Chinese students were in Japan, 118 were women (Chen & Tian, 1991). Breaking down the barriers settled by the Confucian ideology, parental educational expectations for female children rose considerably. Girls not only went to schools, but also studied abroad. Thus, as a result, at this time, 30-40 percent of men and from 2 to 10 percent of women in China knew how to read and write (Rawski, 1979, p. 140).

Parental educational expectations were more diverse in the post-Qing Dynasty or the Republic Period (1911-1949). Poor male and female students won more educational

rights at this time. Boys from well-off families still enjoyed their privilege in education (Seeberg, 2000; Spence, 1990; Taylor, 1981). With more training schools being set up, more girls from both poor and rich families could go into schools to be trained as workers or clerks (Bailey, 1990). Especially after 1919, when coeducational schools were built up, female children got more opportunities in their education than before (Spence, 1990).

Seeberg (2000) argued that "Republican and Nationalist educational efforts can be characterized as experimentation co-existing within a strong continuity of traditional forms and philosophy of education" (p. 62). Therefore, although there were no detailed documents found in describing parental educational expectations during the Civil War, the expectations still could be revealed indirectly from the increasing number of schools both for the poor and for girls. Even in the anti-Japanese War (1937-1945), the Communists continued their teachings of reading, writing and politics to meet the most urgent need in educating illiterate troops and cadres (Tsai, 1994, p. 41). The Nationalists went on developing the educational policies they made before.

After 1949, parental expectations kept rising. First, a law made in the 1950s stated that girls had the same rights as boys in education (Zhuang, 1997). This provided chances for more parents of girls to send their daughters to schools. Second, parents of a worker and peasant background were encouraged to expect their children to learn at schools (Pepper, 1991; Taylor, 1981). The state carried out different policies in adjusting the enrolment rate and financing the students from worker and peasant families. To those parents, these policies were the greatest incentives in sending their children to schools. Thus, parental educational expectations rose enormously in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Although the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was intended to transform the old educational system and get rid of the old principles and methods of teaching (Chen, 1981, p. 88), its consequences of sending teachers down to farms and closing schools to emphasize workers' and peasants' social roles influenced parental expectations greatly. When educational professionalism was regarded as a mark of being notorious (Cleverley, 1985, p. 176), parental expectations were reduced to the lowest point in China's history.

But after the Cultural Revolution, parents' expectations rose uncontrollably. When the tertiary entrance examinations were restored in 1977, 5.7 million people participated (Smerling, 1977, p. 92). However, only one in twenty was successful (Cleverley, 1985, p. 233). Although it was very difficult for students to pass the entrance examination to higher education, parents did not lower their goals for their children. Later on, higher education became so popular that in 1982 *Chinese Youth* published an official article that proclaimed that "China does not need only university graduates. Even young people who failed to qualify for university and participate directly in socialist construction have a bright future" (p. 28). By saying so, the official intended to reduce expectations parents held for their children's education.

In late 1970s, China's "one-child" policy changed family structure fundamentally. Families were reduced to only core members -- father, mother and one child, if twins, two. In these small-sized families, parents could stay with their children longer than those families with three or more children before. Parents could spend more time on their children's education. Not surprisingly, they expected more than before for their son or daughter.

After 1980, when the first children born under the family plan grew old enough to receive their education, parental educational expectations seemed to have no limits. Zhao (1989) illustrated that some parents gathered all the hopes of their family members (sometimes from grandparents to the relatives) for the child and expected him/her to realize all these dreams. Meng (2000, p. 22) analyzed and explained the reason. She said many parents today still view their children as their own property (Stevenson, Chen, & Lee, 1992). They set up their expectations for their children and then controll or strongly guide their children's daily life, marriage, education, and future occupation. *Chengdu Evening* (Jan. 29, 2000, p. 7) printed a survey conducted about what today's children were afraid of in Nanjing. In this investigation, more than 300 students in Grade Four, Five and Six took part. Most of the participants answered that they were afraid of examinations, because if they could not get as high marks as their parents expected, as punishment, they would not be allowed to watch TV. Xie, Seefeldt, & Tam (1996) concluded that those parents following a patriarchal child-nurturing style usually held very high expectations for their children in education (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p. 93).

With such high educational expectations, some students had trouble withstanding the pressure from their parents. Meng (2000) proved this through a story:

> One student killed himself after being accepted by a college in Tian Jing because he did not achieve the expectation his strict middle school headmaster father set for him. His father said strongly and frankly to him that if he could not go into Beijing University or Qinghua University, there was to be no mention of university at all (p. 16).

There are a lot of such sad stories reflecting the damage both to children's psychological and physical health due to the high educational expectations parents hold

for their children. Stevenson and Stigler (1992) said that parents always remind their indolent child that failure to do well in school will bring shame on the family (p. 90).

Although parental expectations have reached a very high degree, the results from the study reported on in this thesis indicated that these expectations keep going up. In this research, parents not only expected their children to learn textbook knowledge, they but also started to pay attention to their children's personal abilities. They hoped that their children could learn every skill needed in the society through their schooling (Cleverley, 1985, p. 195). Some parents in cities even expected that their sons and daughters could pursue study abroad (Hayhoe, 1996; Zhao, 1989).

When parental expectations keep rising, the sum of money parents invest in their children's education becomes larger. In China studying in the "key point school" means a much better chance of entering higher education. So parents who held high expectations had to pay expensive tuition fees for their children's "key point kindergarten", "key point primary school", "key point secondary school" and "key point universities". Those parents who could not afford such high fees had to lower their educational expectations. In this sense, wealth became a determining factor of educational expectations.

Wealth as a Determining Factor

Foster (1986) pointed out that parents' educational expectations corresponded to the needs of their family's economic situation. Theoretically, the highest positions in officialdom could be reached by every man or woman whatever his or her social origin is. But practically, economic circumstances precluded such social mobility. Take poor peasants as an example. They were unable to afford the long period and high expenses of

study required (Taylor, 1981, p.2). The poor family condition made those parents hold lower expectations in education than rich parents.

From Western Jin (AD 265-316) to the end of the Qing Dynasty, Confucian educational ideology was approved by the government (Bailey, 1990, p. 18; Elman, 1984, p. 163). Especially in the Tang Dynasty, examinations first came to play important role in selecting men for office (Ebrey, 1981, p. 58). Because Confucius's final education purpose was to keep the old order, and to reject reforms and rebellions by the people against their rulers (Chou, 1974), his teachings defended the status quo (Cleverley, 1985). Tuition fees were high in Confucian schools. Therefore, Confucius's thoughts favored education of boys from wealthy families (Bailey, 1990, p. 35; Bary, Chan, & Watson, 1960; Cleverley, 1985, p. 2; Seeberg, 2000, pp.57-60; Spence, 1990, p. 10; Taylor, 1981, p. 1).

Cleverley (1985, pp. 2, 16) did thorough research on parental educational expectations. He claimed that when a boy was born in a rich family, he was expected to learn Confucian doctrines and to take charge of public affairs in order to enlarge the family and to glorify the ancestors. Thus, when he grew old enough, he was taught the "Five Classics" by hired tutors at home (Spence, 1990, p. 10). As soon as he started his learning, he was prepared to go into official positions materially and morally. It was believed that in this way, the rich boy could pass the imperial examinations (Bailey, 1990, p. 31). Hence, he could take up public office, then inherit and manage his family's estate, and finally fulfill his parents' expectations for him.

Poor parents in both cities and the countryside at this time held lower educational expectations for their sons than those parents of the upper class. On one hand, they could

not afford their children's study expenses (Spence, 1990, pp. 46-47). On the other hand, poverty blinded those parents to see the benefits of education for their children. Wang's story about Zhong Yong, a son of a farmer in the eleventh century, is a case in point. Zhong Yong started to write poetry at five with his given poetic talent, which made him famous in the locale. His father took this advantage and exhibited him for money. As a result, his father made money from him rather than spend for his education. However, at the age of thirteen, he lost all his talents as a poet (Cleverley, 1985, p. 26; Wang, 1959; Wang, 2000, p. 128). Evidently, Zhong Yong's father did not have any educational expectations for his son. That is why Riitsu was surprised in 1979 (p. 188) when he heard that ten years or so after liberation, when a peasant went to college, a 70-year-old neighbor commented: "From the Guang Xu Period (Qing Dynasty) till today, I have never heard of a peasant going to college". Zhou En-lai (1956) proved this point by giving the report that "In 1949, ...of the working-age population in rural areas, the illiterate figure is estimated at 95%" (p. 168). All these indicated that before liberation, the educational expectations poor parents held were at an unbelievably low level.

In Imperial China, although women had no rights in receiving formal education, wealth still played an important role in their informal education. Girls from poor families were expected to learn everything connected with techniques in weaving, making clothes, embroidering, and other woman's arts (Cleverley, 1985; Hayhoe, 1991; Seeberg, 2000). So if one of them was able to recognize the characters of her name, she would be regarded as different (Cleverley, 1985, p. 28). However, although learning was considered important for upper class women, they were only expected to learn music, literature and formal social behaviors besides the women's arts that poor girls had to

learn (Cleverley, 1985). Therefore, it was obvious that female children from poor families were restricted to the basic survival skills. Only the well-to-do-families could afford their daughters' education in other fields of life.

In the period from late Qing Dynasty to the Republican, parental expectations depended on the wealth parents had. Because women won certain rights in their education at this time, some rich parents sent both their sons and daughters abroad in order to catch up on the new social fashions. However, the majority of the rich boys and girls were still taught with traditional textbooks domestically and paid by their parents. Both male and female children from poor families were still excluded from schools for their parents could not pay their education fees. The expectations for them still remained low.

During both the Civil War and the Anti-Japanese War, although it was no longer the determinant in children's education, wealth was still the watershed between the education rich and poor children received. In the Nationalist controlled areas, the main educational patterns for young Chinese men still remained focused on the traditional Confucian ideology (Spence, 1990, p. 224). Schools still charged expensive tuition fees (Taylor, 1981, p.4). Young men and women from wealthy families were the main participants of the schools at this time. Poor parents in these areas still had low expectations for their children because of the high fees.

From 1949 to 1976, China went into a politics dominated era. Wealth lost its determinant function in schooling. Instead, political factors became critical in determining who attended school (Gao, 1995; Taylor, 1985; Tsai, 1994).

After 1976, with the development of the free-market economic reforms, wealth returned as a factor in determining education. Differences in expectations appeared between parents who lived in the cities and parents who lived in countryside. In cities, parents hold higher educational expectations than that of parents in the countryside. Seeberg (2000, p. 46) found that basic educational attainment was gained by a greater proportion of the urban than the rural populations. As the economy developed in the 1980s, most families became richer than before, especially in cities. Hooper (1985) stated that with a better financial situation, parents in cities could create better home study conditions than those parents in the countryside. At the same time with the increasing of the GDP, more parents could afford their children's long-term studies as well as expensive study equipment, such as tape-recorders or computers. Parental educational expectations of the rich city dwellers rose to a higher stage.

However, the low educational expectations in the rural areas caused China problems. Ross (1991) looked at these problems through analyzing those of China's rural secondary schooling. Since China is an agricultural country, its large population lives in the countryside. So even in 1956, there were only about 1,600 scientific researchers and research associates, only 164,000 engineering and technical personnel, and only 191,000 students in universities and colleges (TGT, 1956, p. 30; 1959, p. 170). But today, the desperately short-supplied rural schools established the attitudes in peasants' mind that formal schooling was useless (Ross, 1991, p. 81). Taylor (1981, p. 44) thought the reason for this problem was that in spite of the provision of financial aid, payment of tuition fees and the general cost of keeping a child at middle school placed a heavy burden on poor

rural families and those of factory workers. These elements would affect the educational expectations rural peasants and the worker peasants held for their children.

Only a few scholars conducted research on China's education for this time. Each of them illustrated a different aspect based on their research emphasis. While Seeberg studied the expectations for boys in both rich and poor families, she did not mention any education or educational expectations for girls, no matter whether rich or poor. Hayhoe studied girls' problems in their education in this period but excluded boys' problems. Ross did research based on school situations in rural areas. Her work provided better understandings of schools in the countryside. Their works are all worthwhile reading in supporting this study and researches related to this topic.

Gender Issue

Besides the differences in parental expectations held by rich and poor parents, equally important have been the different attitudes attached to the education of boys and girls.

The unequal treatment of boys and girls in education has existed for a very long time. Seeberg (2000, pp. 54-55) and Creel (1953, p. 15) found that when Confucian philosophy that favored males in their schooling controlled the education in Imperial China, this doctrine not only affected Chinese scholars, but also formed the character of Chinese farmers. It had such a strong influence that it became the controlling tool of the ruling class and unified Chinese society (Hookham, 1969, p. 90). Under this educational ideological control, Seeberg (2000) observed that the educational expectations that parents held for their children were to send their sons into the ranks of nobility and then

"propel the entire clan into the circles of the local ruling gentry" (Yang, 1959). At this time, no schools allowed women to attend (Bailey, 1990, p. 35; Spence, 1990, p. 10). Affected by this, parents' educational expectations were shaped according to their children's gender and to their own social class status (Seeberg, 2000, p. 57; Spring, 1976).

In Imperial China, much less was expected of girls, even in rich families in their education. Cleverley (1985, pp. 7, 26) thought the reasons were that in the traditional society, females had no rights in their own property and public affairs. Nor could they enjoy the same rights in taking the Imperial Examinations as men did (Hayhoe, 1991). Female children's education was regarded as useless. Thus, women even from upper class families were restricted in their learning (Cleverley, 1985).

The educational situation of girls from poor families at this time was worse than those from well-to-do families. Poor parents of girls, regardless where they were living, had the lowest educational expectations for their daughters. Cleverley (1985, p. 7) argued the reason for this was parents knew that their girls could not be depended on after they married out of the family (Jenner, 1992, p. 105).

Thus, girls were absolutely excluded from schooling. From very young, they were prepared to be good wives and skillful housework dealers in their future. Under this circumstance, they had to learn techniques needed in doing housework, such as weaving, making clothes, embroidering, and other woman's arts at home (Cleverley, 1985; Hayhoe, 1991; Seeberg, 2000).

However, in the late Qing Dynasty, under the changes of domestic and international situation, girls' education for the first time was paid attention to by the

public. Bailey (1990) described in detail the arguments made by the scholars and officials in the 1890s about whether women should be educated. Undoubtedly, girls' school education was refused at the beginning. But some of the debates built the possible foundation for the success of women attending school later on. Bailey quoted the argument Zheng Guanying (1842-1923), one of the debaters, made in 1894:

> Although women need not necessarily be as highly educated or learned as men, an education that made them morally upright, literate, numerate and competent in 'handling everyday matters' (e.g. embroidery, cooking, accountancy) would greatly assist their husbands and bring virtue to the household (p. 75).

Although at the turn of the twentieth century there was still little provision for women's education (Bailey, 1990, p. 30), change had begun. In 1907, to meet the needs from the well-to-do parents, two sets of regulations were passed for the establishment of separate primary schools for girls and separate normal schools to educate female teachers (Hayhoe, 1992, p. 53; Shu, 1979, pp. 800-818). Since then females started to be able to go to schools officially. Especially when schools of different types were set up to meet the needs of the development of industry and businesses, more female children had chances to go to formal schools (Bailey, 1990). After the May 4th Movement in 1919, the set-up of the coeducational schools provided girls more opportunities in society than before (Spence, 1990, p. 311). Parental educational expectations for female children rose accordingly.

Several scholars discussed changes in education in the late Qing Dynasty. Cleverley, Hayhoe and Bailey all did research on female education in this period. But no author wrote about educational expectations directly.

Women continued gaining their rights in education during the war period. Spence (1990) argued that during this time, well-to-do parents did not give their daughters as many restrictions as they had before. Female students were also sent into formal Nationalist schools or abroad to study. In Communist regions, both parents and their children, boys and girls, were expected to learn Chinese characters and knowledge about revolution (Lindsay, 1992, p. 38). Thus, although parents supported different political sides, in both Nationalist and Communist areas, female children enjoyed the same rights as male children in education (Hayhoe, 1996).

After Liberation, the situation of female children became even better. Taylor (1981) and Hooper (1991) proved the advancement of female education in their research by presenting the following statistics. In 1949, the percentage of women in tertiary education nation-wide was 19.8%, while in 1979, it was 24.1% and in 1988, 33.3%. Girls enrolled in primary and secondary education also increased enormously. In primary education, it went up from 28.0% in 1951 to 45.6% in 1988, and in secondary education, from 25.6% to 41.0% (CEYB, CSYB). However, when scholars illustrated that girls got more rights in their formal education, some other authors indicated that female students in the rural areas were still in the inferior position compared with their city peers (Hayhoe, 1996; Hooper, 1991).

Contrasting wealthy parents in cities who expected their children could study abroad (Hayhoe, 1996; Zhao, 1989), parents in the countryside held low educational expectations for their boys and girls. Worse, in the rural areas, parents of girls held even lower educational expectations than countryside parents of boys. While some parents expected that their male children could have chances to go into big cities through their

successful schooling, some other parents would like their children to grasp opportunities to earn money. Most of the latter ones were the parents of girls. Cleverley (1991, p. 303) said that those parents regarded their female children's education as an unnecessary expenditure. That was why a group of girls in a southern village in China went on strike. They refused to do housework, tend the fields or take care of siblings, unless their parents let them attend schools (Cleverley, 1991, p. 304). This reflected the fact that in the rural areas, gender problems still need to be addressed.

Although some problems in female children's education continue, great achievements were obtained in this field compared with the situation before. These owed to the contributions both from individual's work and from state policies. Therefore, what scholars and writers have learned about the relationships between individuals and the state was also important to this study.

The Individual and the State

The educational expectations individual parents held have a close relationship to the development of society and changes of the state policies. In Imperial China, since Confucian philosophy was favored by the government, parents focused their expectations on the syllabus required by the government. However, relations between individuals and the state were better revealed in the literature from the war period to the 1990s.

During the Civil War, rich parents who believed in the Nationalists expected their children, both male and female, to maintain the old social system in order to carry on their own positions and inherit their benefits from the position (Bailey, 1990). Schools in the Nationalist region focused on Confucius's doctrines in accordance with parental

expectations. Education in the Communist areas contrasted with those in the Nationalist regions (Liu, 1992, p. 175). Most of the members in Communist areas were poor city dwellers or peasants. They themselves did not have much education. Both parents and their children there were expected to learn Chinese characters and knowledge about revolution (Lindsay, 1992, p. 38). Parents who believed in Communism held lower educational expectations for their children than parents of the Nationalists.

During the anti-Japanese War (1937-1945), most parents from both the Nationalists and the Communists expected their children to be patriots and to learn enough to defeat Japanese invaders (Zhuang, 1997). Compared to the period before, Chinese parents, at first, held quite similar educational expectations concerning their children regardless of their children's gender or their own family background.

After 1949, parents of a worker and peasant background held higher educational expectations than those they had in any time in history because of the encouragement they received from state policies. Given the low literacy rate at the time of liberation, China's central government drew up several regulations to encourage peasants to enroll into schools (Pepper, 1991, p. 21). Taylor (1981, p. 43) also reiterated that China's Communist Party increased the number of worker and peasant children in middle schools through institutional adjustment and financial aid to meet the needs of both the country and their parents. In the 1950s, the central government even turned all responsibilities for local schools over to the agencies of local government in order to have all people receive great benefit from education (Henderson, 1977, p. 15; Pepper, 1991, p. 26). Some special schools were also opened for children who had a worker or peasant background. In such

schools, if they were the best graduates, students could enter university directly without writing examinations.

Liu Shaoqi, the vice-chairman of China in the 1950s, also said that it was necessary to add an extra fifty points for workers and peasants who took enrolment examinations (Pedagogical Critique, 1967; Taylor, 1981, p. 37). Furthermore, to encourage the enrollment of the poor background students into schools, in 1955, a nationwide system for assigning graduates to jobs was set in place (Hayhoe, 1996, p. 84). Under these favorable policies, parental educational expectations rose. More students were sent to schools. The students' enrollment number increased from 400,000 in 1956 to 962,000 in 1960 (Taylor, 1981).

Hayhoe illustrated this relationship indirectly in her study *The Tapestry of Chinese Higher Education* (1991). She said "since the state paid different attention to different majors in the tertiary education system after liberation, the percentages of parents sending their children to these majors were floating":

> Enrolments in political science and law dropped from 24.4% in 1947 to 1.0% in 1950, 0.3% in 1959 and back to 0.8% in 1965. In finance and economics, they dropped from 15.4% in 1949 to 1.2% in 1958, then back to 3.5% in 1965.
> (*Achievement of Education in China Statistics: 1949-1983*, pp. 54-55).

There were also parents engaged in agriculture or factory work who expected much for their children when the Chinese government provided employment to school graduates (Staff Reporter, Oct. 1978, p. 31). Hooper (1985) found that the assignment of the posts to graduates according to their training and the national plan was a sort of stimulation to parents to send their children to school when there were a lot of young people waiting for jobs (Cleverley, 1985, p. 131). Simultaneously, parents had more

enthusiasm for supporting their children to go to university when they knew that there was a relationship between education and income. One typical instance at that time was a survey of peasants in Sichuan Province. It revealed that farmers with senior middle school education had per capita incomes 24% above those with junior middle who were in turn ahead of those with primary schooling (Cleverley, 1985, p. 257). Boissiere, Knight, and Sabot (1985) also found that in cities, workers who had proficiency in reading and writing and were primary graduates earned more than workers who were less proficient but were secondary school graduates. Hooper (1985, p. 68) said the policy that graduates would be assigned jobs regardless of their family background made the rural or worker class parents push hard in their children's education. Haberman (1993, p.4) analyzed the reason as:

> If those low-income families of peasants' or workers' did not see their goal of getting out of poverty as realizable for themselves in their own lifetimes, they were generally confident their children would have better lives.

The heavy demand for tertiary education created pressure on the state. To meet this demand from parents, "key point schools", which have excellent facilities, better-trained teachers, new curricular forms, and better access to brighter students (Montaperto, 1977, p. 27; Smerling, 1977, p. 99), were reinforced. Taylor (1981, p. 62) found that at this point the policy makers had to change the "once forever" examination regulation. Students were allowed to repeat an academic year's work so that they could take the examinations again.

But as Deng Xiaoping's "market economic policy" was carried out, China's economy improved greatly. More job opportunities were created. The job assignment policy could no longer meet the needs of the individuals. Cleverley found that in the late 1980s, graduate students became more difficult to recruit. Worse, the dropout rate of the graduates increased. He wrote:

> In Shanghai Municipality the number taking the examination for postgraduates in 1988 was 844 fewer than 1987, and 4,400 less than 1986. Talented young people found better opportunities outside universities, and many postgraduates feared assignment to university teaching, with its low salaries and restricted promotion opportunities (p. 271).

Facing this situation, CPC had to change the rules of assigning graduates to specific jobs to meet the parental education expectations again. In the late 1980s, institutions gave their graduates choice in employment from among agencies seeking labor, which was subject to the guidelines of the State Education Commission. Cleverley (1991, p. 272) supported this point. He said only those who were unable to find jobs were assigned. It is obvious that parental educational expectations influenced education policy in this instance.

Evidently, parental educational expectations have had a great effect on school reforms and policy-making. In this sense, what parents expected and said would play important roles in further educational reforms. Thus, communication between parents and teachers, between parents and school leaders would be very important.

Communication between Parents and School

Unfortunately, there is a gap in research because no books or materials either written by Chinese or foreign scholars were found on this point.

Even today, the communication between parents and school still remains informal and is treated as private conversations. The reason for this is that China's education system has been strictly controlled or guided by the central educational committees since the Liberation. Anything from outside this committee is regarded as worthless. Therefore, even the valuable communications between parents and teachers or school leaders were ignored. The views of parents, however, reflect what they want in the reformed educational system. They also reflect the problems the school system is having now. By hearing what parents said, some of the school problems could be prevented or solved without spending much energy and effort.

However, in communications with parents, selections should be made because parents' words also could cause problems for schools. On the one hand, parents want more opportunities for their own children than for others'. Green (1980, p.25) stated that what parents want is not that their children have equal opportunity, but that they get the best that is possible. On the other hand, well-educated parents could communicate better than those with less education. The well-educated parents could provide their children a much better home study environment than those who are not. The former do not need to worry about the high educational tuition they have to pay for their children as well as the fees needed for them to find jobs. These advantages give them confidence in communicating with schools. These provide chances for communication between

children and parents about schools. In turn, those parents could understand their children and school better and support their children better in their schoolwork.

Thus, communication between parents and school is both important and difficult to do. Hopefully, there will be more scholars studying on this topic.

Parental expectations are more critical nowadays than before. Parents now believe that it mattered less in a big family with more children if one child's education was unsuccessful. But in the one-child family, the failure would be 100% (Zhao, 2000, p.2). So parents pay much more attention than before to how well the school serves their daughters or sons. To schools, it is harder than before to meet their students' requirements, which combine the needs of both students and their parents. Although scholars like Cleverley, Hayhoe, Hooper, Pepper, Seeberg, and Taylor conducted research about China's education system, they all completed their studies in the 1990s. How much has the "Free Market Economic Reform" changed parents' attitudes about education? To answer this question, schools need to know parents' latest opinions on education and their expectations for their children. In this sense, the research on parental expectations in education done in this thesis is needed. It is needed for planning school reforms and teacher training in Sichuan Province.

CHAPTER 4

A Historical Survey

This historical survey describes the aspirations the ancestors of today's Chinese parents held for their children. It will serve as a basis of comparison with the expectations of parents in the 1990s. The documentation of this part was mainly based on historical sources since direct survey about people and events obviously could not be done. Results from the overviews of this historical survey revealed that (i) Parental educational expectations have been rising enormously since the late Qing Dynasty. (ii) Wealth has been a determining factor since the beginning of formal education. (iii) Gender remains as a problem even to today's education. (iv) There is a close relationship between parents and their children's schooling. (v) Parental participation in their children's education contributes to the progress of education.

In different social, economic and political circumstances, parents held different educational expectations for their children and their expectations changed according to social variables. Thus, it was necessary to do such a historical survey before the modern one was conducted.

Educational Expectations from Neolithic Cultural Period to Qing Dynasty

The educational expectations Chinese parents held for their children can be traced back to earlier than 3000 BC. However, no written records were found about the parental educational expectations in this period. At the beginning of society, in a matriarchal society, the main task of the male was hunting animals to provide food for the whole

commune, while females were picking fruits and raising children (Zhuang, 1997, p. 10). All people in the commune were equal. Both male and female children were asked to learn from the experiences of their fathers and mothers. As far as expectations were concerned, children were expected to develop skills in survival.

Even in the Imperial Period, recorded documentation about parental expectations is still very rare. But some idea of parental educational expectations Chinese ancestors held can be found in the literature.

In the relatively stable feudal society (or traditional society), which lasted about 2000 years, the ethic of Confucius (551-479 BC) was the moral basis on which both human relationships and the conduct of government rested in Imperial China (Cleverley, 1985, p. 13; Pepper, 1991, p. 5; Taylor, 1981, p. 1). The rituals introduced by Confucius and his disciples were beneficial to the ruling class. This function led the Confucian ideology to being taken by the feudal Emperors as the standard in selecting officials. All people who wanted to be chosen had to take the civil service examinations based on the Confucian ideology. The main principles were enshrined in the "Five Classics", referring to the *Book of Odes*, *Book of History*, *Book of Rites*, *Book of Changes*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Zhu, 1992, p. 19). The mastery of these books was the mark of the educated man (Bailey, 1990, p. 2; Cleverley, 1985, p. 7; Pepper, 1991, p. 5). And passing the examinations was the glorious sign of climbing "ladders of success" (Hayhoe, 1996, p. 10). However, according to the regulations of the examination, women from both rich and poor families were excluded from taking part in the test, because the notion of a woman becoming a scholar-officer was simply unthinkable (Hayhoe, 1996, p. 34). Therefore, parents did not expect their girls to learn much in their formal or literary

education. Based on this ideology and selection method, parents in the feudal society held different educational expectations for boys and girls.

The examination system centered on Confucius's ideology favored wealthy boys' education in China's Imperial Society (Bary, Chan, & Watson, 1960; Hayhoe, 1996; Seeberg, 2000; Taylor, 1981). This led to the different expectations that parents from poor and rich families held for their male children. Upper class parents usually held higher educational expectations for their sons than did parents of a lower social class. There were two reasons for the upper class parents holding higher educational expectations for their children. One was the better home study environment they could provide for their children. Another was the fact that male children inherited their fathers' professions when they grew up. This provided a chance for the boys from high official families to take over their fathers' positions and to become members of the upper class. Thus, from the time when a son was born, such families started to expect the male child to be something and provided him with the best education they could afford.

However, the situations were different for sons from most feudal families. Before the seventeenth century, state rules restricted male children of prostitutes and entertainers from learning the "Five Classics". After the seventeenth century, the sons of merchants and artisans could not compete in the examination for selecting state officials. Under these circumstances, sons of higher-level officials tended to achieve better results on the examinations and in the subsequent competition for actual appointment (Pepper, 1991, p. 6). In contrast, poorer parents held low or no educational expectations for their male children. These parents took it for granted that their sons could not rise to a higher social class (Pepper, 1991, p. 6) no matter what they learned. The reason for the different fates

of the sons from different family backgrounds was that in ancient China literary achievement and official appointment were clearly dependent upon and facilitated by wealth (Pepper, 1991, p. 6).

For girls, the expectations were not so clearly distinguished, although their parents provided them with different living conditions. In feudal China, women were not allowed to participate in management, politics, or other state affairs. They also had no title to enjoy property. Nor could they compete in the Empire examinations. Parents of both poor and rich had low educational expectations for their girls. Girls from affluent families were usually taught at home by a family member or a tutor, which was virtually the only way that young girls might receive instruction (Pepper, 1991, p. 7). Tsao (1958 & 1989, p. 24) mentioned the same in his novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* that the four girls in the Jia family all studied under a private tutor and were well versed in the classics. But there were strict social rules that caused their parents to expect that they would do better in other fields rather than in literary education. The model of girls in the feudal society was written in a lyric, *the Wife of Jiao Zhongqin*, as:

> At thirteen, she was able to weave;
> At fourteen, she was able to tailor clothes;
> At fifteen, she was able to play musical instruments;
> At sixteen, she was able to read books and poems;
> And at seventeen, she was married to a husband. (Xu, 1995, p. 66)

Thus, girls from upper class families were expected not only to learn female arts, like weaving and tailoring, but they also hoped to learn music, literature and formal conversation (Cleverley, 1985, p. 26) to meet their social needs. Even less was expected of girls in lower class females. Normally, they merely needed to know how to do

housework, how to nurture their children, and how to weave, and tailor clothes (Cleverley, 1985, p. 2).

But in the nineteenth century, the feudal examination rules and examination texts began to lose their importance. Foreign invasions, building of missionary schools, trading with foreign countries and cultural exchanges overseas introduced new ideas into China through a variety of channels. More people realized that the pathway to official position through the examination system, the so-called way of "proving one's superiority and becoming an official", was the narrowest and most difficult (Zhu, 1992, p. 12). In addition, a growing demand in the treaty ports for foreign languages helped well-to-do families in preparing their children, both male and female, for study abroad (Cleverley, 1985, p. 32). Their educational expectations were obviously divergent from the Confucian "Five Classics" for both boys and girls. These influences were so strong that in 1905, the Imperial Examination was abolished (Paine, 1992, p. 200; Pepper, 1991, p. 10) followed soon by the overthrow of the feudal society in 1911.

Although no literature was found about the education of boys from poor families, the education of girls both from wealthy and poor families in this transition period advanced significantly in China's education history. In the 1900s, when missionary schools were set up in cities that were listed on the treaties to open to the world, girls were accepted as students. This started the history that girls could go out of home to receive their education. As a result, although in 1902-03 legislation, the expectation that women would continue to be taught within family was explicitly stated (Hayhoe, 1992, p. 34), certain textbooks for girls educated at home were recommended (Hayhoe, 1992, p. 53). Meanwhile, the educational expectations urban parents held for their girls were so

high that not any state policy could prevent female children from learning. To meet the needs of female education, in 1907, a new policy marked the start of female education at school:

> In 1907, girls were openly accepted into schools that were separated from boys' school, although their training was a year less in elementary schools, being taught ethics, Chinese language, mathematics, sewing, physical exercise, music, and drawing. In 1909, the percentage of girls in Chinese schools was approximately 2.5 per cent of the total enrolment (Cleverley, 1985, p. 40; Shu, 1979, pp. 800-818).

Well-to-do parents in this period also expected their daughters to be taught overseas. Under this situation, in 1917, new legislation mandated both general secondary schools and vocational schools for girls. In 1919, women gained entrance to government universities (Chen, 1936, pp. 686-687).

Women's educational situation thus received an enormous advance over their experience in traditional times. But women's literacy rate was still very low. Early nineteenth century estimates placed that female literacy rate was at one to ten percent (Rawski, 1979, p. 6). In the late 1800s, the figure rose. But only two to ten percent of women knew how to read and write, including the fully literate members of the elite and those knowing only a few hundred characters (Woodside, 1992, p. 26). Even after 1949, the registered female students in the schools at each level nationwide were merely a fifth or a quarter of the male registration. See Taylor's table (1981) (p. 101):

Table 1: Percentage of Female Students to Total Number of Students in China

	Higher Education	Vocational Middle Schools	Middle Schools	Primary Schools
Pre-Liberation	17.8	21.1	20.0	25.5
1949	19.8	----	----	----
1952	23.4	24.9	23.5	32.9
1957	23.3	26.5	30.8	34.5

Source: *Chinese Educational Yearbook 1949-1981.*

It could be concluded safely that with the strong Confucian influence of more than 2000 years, many parents of both rich and poor groups still did not accept women's education as normal. They still could not hold high educational expectations for their female children.

Educational Expectations in War Period (1911-1949)

In this period, China experienced continuous turbulence from fighting between warlords, between Chinese and Japanese as well as between Nationalists and Communists. Parental educational expectations cannot be divided on the basis of male or female, rich or poor, but more so according to which political side, the Nationalist or the Communist, they served.

From the 1920s-1949, under Nationalist rule, policies and legislation for education put a strong emphasis on practical knowledge and skills, as well as setting in place the patterns of Sun Yat-sen's "Three People's Principles" (Hayhoe, 1996, p. 52). These three principles, written in 1905, referred to a military campaign to crush the warlords; a period during which the masses would be educated to exercise democracy; and the eventual establishment of a democratic state based on local government

(Cleverley, 1985, p.55). Under the new government control, three cardinal principles governed Nationalist educational policy: (i) stress on higher education at the expense of other sectors; (ii) official concentration on science and technology rather than the humanities; and (iii) increasing use of foreign materials in the curriculum (Taylor, 1981, p. 4). These educational strategies were very similar to those of the People's Republic of China in the 1980s.

Since science and technology were emphasized by the Nationalist government, parental educational expectations could no longer be based on Confucius's ideology. The government of the Republic stressed higher education, which made parents still hold very high educational expectations for their children, especially those from rich families. Generally, rich families who believed in the doctrines and policies of Nationalists expected their children to learn and maintain the old social system in order to carry on their own positions and inherit their benefits from the position. The urban poor still held as low an educational expectation for their children as before, because in spite of scholarship assistance, education was expensive under Nationalist control and, in practice, restricted to a small number of wealthy city dwellers (Taylor, 1981, p. 4).

In the Communist controlled regions, most people were illiterate. Parents themselves were also expected to learn more. Since the 1920s, adult education was paid special attention in order to promote desired changes in political ideology, socio-economic relations, and human productive capabilities (Wang & Colletta, 1991, p. 145). In 1932, there were at least twenty-seven different literacy primers aimed at peasants, women, shopkeepers, soldiers and others (Woodside, 1992, p. 31). Under such social circumstances, both the poor and the rich enjoyed the same educational rights. From their

own educational experience, parents in the Communist areas expected their children, no matter whether they were male or female, to receive as much education as possible. This was different from what parents in Nationalist areas expected. In common, proletariat and peasant parents who believed in Communism hoped that their children could learn enough to build a new government for themselves. Thus, they could change their social and economic situations and be the owners of the land.

During the Anti-Japanese War, when terrible conditions prevailed, on both sides, Nationalist and Communist, parents held the same educational expectations for their children. Most parents, no matter whether they were rich or poor, expected their children to be patriots. The Nationalists added military and physical training in their schools to meet the needs of the Nationalist parents. Education in the liberated areas was in strong contrast to that in the Nationalist controlled regions (Liu, 1977, p.175). The village community itself determined what should be taught exactly as it was wanted locally (Lindsay, 1977, p.37). Thus, in different places different curricula were used. For example, in the Shansi-Chahar-Hopei, one of the liberated areas, textbooks were filled with anti-Japanese sentences and contents. One special example about ants moving mountains was used to teach students the motto that if ants co-operated to help their community, why should not men and women co-operate to defeat Japanese invaders? (Lindsay, 1977, p.37). However, some rather conservative villages wanted to carry on the traditional Confucian education (Lindsay, 1977, p.38) to meet parents' needs. Since people enjoyed their rights in choosing the curricula for education, parents, both those supporting political sides or being free from any side, had already instilled their educational expectations into these curricula. It was obvious that the parents in those

villages where the ant example was used expected their children to fight with invaders and to protect the country. And the parents in other villages were quite conservative, they still hoped their children could be educated as their ancestors, because education reflects the needs and preferences of the dominant class in that certain place at a certain time (Montaperto, 1977, p.2).

Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the government was preoccupied with dealing with political challenges. Little attention was devoted to public education. All curricula were specific and were addressed to the solution of local wartime problems (Montaperto, 1977, p.10). The Civil War kept parents' expectations different for their children based on the political side they chose. Parents who believed in Marxism, Engelism, Leninism, as well as Maoism, reflected both a commitment to universal norms and goals derived from Marxism (Montaperto, 1977, p.1). They regarded these theories as scientific ways of winning the war and building a new country in which all people were treated equally. They taught their children to be hard working, to be patriots, and to learn more from practice, while the expectations of the parents on the Nationalist side were different. The rich parents still expected their children to learn from Confucius's ideology. But the urban poor and rural poor parents had little to hope for their children other than that they would remain alive.

Educational Expectations in the People's Republic (1949-1976)

Politics also played a very heavy role in China's education system after its liberation. Between 1949 and 1957, China reorganized its higher education based on Russian patterns (Taylor, 1981, p. 11). A two-track educational pattern was set up. One

led from elementary school to middle school, and to college and graduate school. The other went from elementary school to vocational or higher elementary school to middle school to vocational high school, or from elementary school to middle high school to higher school (Reiitsu, 1979, pp.190-210). Within this pattern, workers' and peasants' education was given the highest priority due to their responsibilities in social construction and their high illiteracy rate at the beginning of the People's Republic of China. The quantity rather than the quality of education was emphasized. This aimed to expand the base of the educational pyramid with mass education at the expense of the elite and tertiary education (Pepper, p. 2). In this educational system, candidates for higher institutions must acquire political approval. They must be recommended at local levels by poor and lower middle peasants (Taylor, 1981, pp. 24 & 87). Under this push-hard political orientation, parents, especially those from worker and peasants background increased their educational expectations for their children. This could be figured out from the table Taylor (1981) made based on the school numbers and students numbers in the Worker-Peasant Rapid Middle School from 1950 to 1954 in China (p. 36). The Worker-Peasant Rapid Middle Schools were built for children from worker and peasant families. In these middle schools students only needed to spend three years, rather than six years, to finish their middle school schooling before entering their higher education.

Table 2: Student Numbers and School Numbers of Worker–Peasant Rapid Middle Schools in 1950-1954 in China:

Year	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954
School Number	24	41	51	58	87
Student Number	5,000	13,000	19,000	28,000	51,000

Source: *Chinese Educational Yearbook 1949-1981.*

In 1950, there were 24 Worker-Peasant Rapid Middle Schools with only 5,000 students as illustrated in the table. But in 1952, both school numbers and students numbers were more than doubled. In 1954, the number of schools was more than three times higher than that of 1950 with the number of students being more than ten times higher. This dramatic growth in both of the numbers of schools and of the students represented the increase of educational opportunity for children from worker and peasant families. Furthermore, according to official statistics, during the 1956-1957 academic year, 34.29 per cent of all undergraduates in tertiary institutions were of worker-peasant origin (SSB, 1960, p. 200) in contrast to 20.46 percent in 1952-53 (Taylor, 1981, p. 105).

Between 1958 and 1965, national economic self-sufficiency was stressed in education (Taylor, 1981, p. 11). Students could not spend time only on their study. They had to spend more time in productive labor than previously (Montaperto, 1977, p. 23), because the self-sufficiency highlighted both labor and study. At the same period, workers and peasants were re-educated in the classrooms or on the spot. Students were sent to engage in labor in order to erase the distinction between mental and manual labor (Montaperto, 1977, p. 25). Parents also needed to learn from workers or peasants or had to study in the classrooms about their own production activity. Property was distributed on the basis of need (Cleverley, 1985, p. 142). No personal ambitions were encouraged. Nor did struggles for personal development exist. Parents neither had time to think about their children's education nor did they connect education with their children's future life. Younger children cut grass, and older children drove tractors and maintained pump engines and electrical generators (Cleverley, 1985, p. 146). They themselves did not have

time for study. Therefore, the educational expectations were sharply reduced for all parents, including workers, peasants, intellectuals, officials and bourgeoisie. This was reflected in Table 3 (Taylor, 1981, p. 138):

Table 3: Enrolment in Institutions of Higher Education, 1959-60 to 1963-64

Academic Year	1959-60	1960-61	1961-62	1962-63	1963-64
Enrolment (Thousand)	810	955	819	820	680

Source: *Chinese Educational Yearbook 1949-1981.*

After the 1960-61 Academic Year, parental educational expectations were again strongly affected by politics. In 1962, Mao Zedong, the chairman of CCP between 1949 and 1976 called on the country to "Never forget class struggle". This changed the orientation of education from school to the class struggle and led to an extensive socialist education campaign between 1963-66 (Hoiman, 1992, p. 87). In 1963, the total numbers of institutions were reduced to two thirds of those in 1960 (Taylor, 1981, p. 138).

The lowest educational expectations in history that parents held for their children were during the Cultural Revolution in 1966-1976. The Cultural Revolution attempted to eliminate the old educational system by reforming its old principles and teaching methods (Chen, 1981, p. 88). However, it turned out to be a political struggle in which the working class seized power in technology and education (Reiitsu, 1979, p. 220; Cleverley, 1985, p. 162). To emphasize workers' and peasants' social roles, during the revolution, education was reorganised around production (Reiitsu, 1979, p.220). A great deal of emphasis was put on the study of the works of Mao Zedong and other classics of Marxism-Leninism. Political and moral education was linked to direct participation in

productive labour (Montaperto, 1977, p.31). Meanwhile, local relevance and practical learning were emphasized in order to eliminate some characteristics of elitist education (Pepper, 1991, p. 26). Thus, instead of professional teachers and professors, workers and peasants were invited to give lectures temporarily or full-time after 1971 (Beijing Shuho, 1971, pp.6-8). Students were required first to "undergo tempering" on farms or in factories for at least three years before they were able to be admitted into colleges or universities after their middle school education (Montaperto, 1977, p.33).

Teachers were isolated and often under physical threat. Their professionalism, instead of being a source of pride, was a mark of ill repute (Cleverley, 1985, p. 176). Examinations were banned because it was believed that the enrolment by examination had the effect of excluding children from worker, peasant and revolutionary ranks. All candidates for post-elementary and higher education had to be recommended and selected based on their class origin and political attitudes. For instance, in 1970, when 2,670 students enrolled in Beijing University, most of them coming from the ranks of the PLA (Cleverley, 1985, p. 184). During the revolution, curricula were determined by the Revolutionary committee. As a result, when pupils entered the classroom they took the works of Mao Zedong, the hoe and the piece for protecting the shoulder (Cleverley, 1985, p. 182). Zhang Tiesheng, who handed in a blank answer sheet, was taken as the symbol of the struggle and a model youth. Therefore, he was elevated into the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (Taylor, 1981, p. 157). In this era, the educational expectations parents in the Cultural Revolution held could be the learning of Mao Zedong's words.

However, in 1949-1976, no matter whether it was class struggle or cultural revolution, women's education was put on the same level as men's. This built a sound foundation for today's women to enjoy equal rights in their education. This influenced parents to expect their girls to achieve as high or higher than their boys in their education.

Educational Expectations after 1976

In 1976, the most powerful of Communist China's leaders, Mao Zedong, died. Deng Xiaoping was elected as the Chairman of the military forces as well as the chairman of the country. New policies for all aspects of national life including education were introduced. In the late 1970s, as the economic situation started to recover, the rigidities of the preceding era were broken down and new dimensions of choice were introduced (Gamble, 1997, p.181). People passed beyond the stage of "eating, sleeping, getting married, establishing a household and having children" (Rensheng, Xinyang, Qiantu, 1980). They started to be aware of the distance between China and foreign countries. They realized the importance of the international connection among countries. Since the end of the 1970s, China has established trade relations with over 150 countries and regions and signed governmental trade agreements or protocols with more than 50 (Li, 1974). The realities of the nation's poor condition developed the policy-makers' full awareness of the challenges faced by China, too. The general task for all the Chinese people in this period changed from revolution to the struggle for production and scientific experiment. To make China a great and powerful socialist country with its "four modernizations", the modernization of industry, agriculture, science and technology, and national defense, were written into China's new constitution (Chang, 1978, pp.30-33).

Efforts also were put into the improvement of educational conditions. In the 1970s, China had frequently exchanged study groups and technical delegations with the industrial and scientific circles of other countries in a wide variety of technical fields (Li, 1974).

Domestically, changes could be found in all aspects of people's lives. Politically, the overwhelming stress on ideology and class struggle gave way to an emphasis on "modernising the nation" (Hooper, 1985, p. 6). New policies were introduced to speed up the development of the national economy. State-controlled economy and market were replaced by a three-part economic structure, state, collective and private. Private employment and making private profits were allowed. More employment opportunities were produced. The establishment of the Special Economic Zones along the coastal areas showed the examples of the possibilities of dramatic economic development to China's inner regions. The looser control by the Hukou system (household registration system), which regulates population distribution (Chan & Zhang, 1999, pp.818-855) and prevents people from changing places, as well as restricts students to go to schools which are not in their neighborhood, provided people more mobility than before. Hooper observed that in China until the 1980s, people had little or no choice of where they lived or worked; it was impossible simply to move from one part of the country to another or just from a small town to a nearby city. (1985, p.8; Gamble, 1997, p.183; Jenner, 1992, p. 54). During the early 1980s, millions upon millions of Chinese peasants migrated to cities (Chen, 1998, p.80). In cities, many people switched their occupations or changed their social status. Reforms were also conducted further in the rural areas to meet societal changes. The first rural reforms were implemented in Sichuan, the most populous of Chinese provinces (Fan, 1999). Policies adjusted the implementation of the HRS policy

(Household Responsibility System), which created a competitive atmosphere that emphasised "productivity, the market, commodity production, and commercialisation" (Chen, 1998, p.79). Sichuan Province gained its benefits from this rural reform.

These new policies brought expansion to the economy. The state had to alter the way in which it allocated food, clothing, accommodation, schooling, job assignments, and salary for all people under one pattern (Gamble, 1997, p.183). The reason for this was when people had more money, they started to be dissatisfied with the single life style they had. They were looking for new and diverse things in their lives. In the middle of the 1980s, entertainment such as pop concerts, bars or discos as well as private parties that were completely prohibited in China's 70s and early 80s started to come back (Hooper, 1985, p. 23). In late 1983 a local party official in Jiangxi Province informed the Party's Central Committee of the current wishes expressed by peasants in one county. He said:

> They want a richer and more varied cultural life. Some peasants said that black and white TV sets were not good enough. They now want color ones...They want to buy high quality ready-made clothes. They want good quality sweets and pastries (BR, 1983, p. 7).

Thus, culturally, in this new social situation, people asked for a significant change (TEWYB, 1999, p. 923).

People could no longer be managed in the traditional state planning way. In order to encourage workers' initiation, participation, and activity, various incentives and punishments were developed to establish a link between work and reward (Chen, 1998, p. 79). People started to change their behavior. They stopped pretending illness, doing careless work, and leaving without asking permission and staying away for days on end (Staff Reporter, 1978, p.7). More time was spent on civil construction and family

development. Parents had more time in nurturing their children both physically and educationally.

Educational changes should be considered carefully in this period. Since 1976, professional educators had regained leadership over education (Pepper, 1991, p. 28). Teachers and researchers were able to go back to their positions again. At the end of 1977, higher education entrance examinations were restored and graduates were directed to employment through state allocation (Taylor, 1981, pp. 178-179). Under Deng Xiaoping's words "the key to modernisation lay in science and technology and the key to these lay in education" (Deng, 1983). The tertiary level of education was therefore again the favored sector. To meet educational expectations, in 1978, the State Council approved an education ministry report recommending that the number of institutions of higher education be increased by fifty-five (Taylor, 1981, p. 172). The children of intellectuals and officials now could enjoy improved access to the restored key point schools (Pepper, 1991, p. 30). Under this favorable educational atmosphere, student enrolment numbers increased continuously to meet the expectations of both parents and students. The student enrolment number in higher education was 2,082,100, 1989; in 1994, 2,798,600, and in 1998, 3,408,700 (CESYB).

However, under the new social circumstances, more educational reforms were still required. For example, in the 1990s, many labour migrants working in the coastal area in southern China did not plan to return home. Based on a survey, out of 180 interviewees (migrants from inland or countryside who were interviewed), only 51 (28.3%) said that they would go back (Woon, 1999, p.497). New demands were created by the combined culture of immigrants and the local people.

With all of these changes, people's opinions shifted, too. Parents no longer expected all their children to be educated or socialized in the same way. Instead, parental educational expectations embodied the new national policy stated by Mao Zedong in 1950s that "Let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend" (Chang, 1978, p.30). In the 1980s and early 1990s, when parents viewed that education was no longer an effective means of guaranteeing upward social mobility (Epstein, 1991, p. xviii), poor families in both cities and countryside expected their children to leave school earlier in order to earn money to support the families. Rural parents, who admired the fast development of their nearby towns and villages or big cities, preferred their children to drop out of the low-return schools and enter new, low skill, comparatively high income jobs there (Pepper, 1990; Zhang, 1992). For girls in the countryside, parents usually had no higher expectations than hoping for them to marry husbands from cities or from wealthy families in the countryside, because they still believed that daughters would marry away and would not help much in their old age (Parish, Zhe, & Li, 1995, pp.697-730). Although the situation changed gradually, it was still sons rather than daughters who were expected to have more education and thus gain more chances for better paying work (Greenhalgh, 1985, pp. 265-314). But educational expectations for boys in wealthy families were different in the countryside. Most of those parents hoped that the boys could finish their higher education and find jobs in cities since they know that their own economic security in old age depends on economically successful sons (Parish, Zhe, & Li, 1995, pp.697-730). This is because, on the one hand, education sharply increased one's chances of getting most kinds of non-farm work. On the other hand, once in non-farm work, education with accumulated work experience continued to increase one's

income (Parish, Zhe, & Li, 1995, p. 710). Parents in cities with the influence from western countries gave their children more freedom compared with those parents in the countryside in their children's school attendance and career choice. With the influence of the programs of educational exchange with western countries, it became more and more evident in Chinese society that experience abroad and the acquisition of a foreign degree was highly regarded and might open up new career possibilities (Hayhoe, 1991, p. 133-34). Some well-off urban parents expected their children to go and study abroad.

Although the paternalism, which was typical of the feudal system of the past still existed, parents did show some acceptance of their children's choices. Parents knew that although state and collective jobs were secured primarily through formal, administrative channels, private jobs, mostly self-employment, were secured through entering the market on one's own abilities (Parish, Zhe, & Li, 1995, p. 710).

After more than twenty years of reform, today's China in most aspects is a different place from the China before 1976. Parental attitudes to education and their expectations for their children have also dramatically changed with the advancement of society. After all these changes, what educational expectations do parents hold for their children in the year 2000? In Chapter 5, this issue will be explored through a description of the survey results collected in Sichuan in 2000.

CHAPTER 5

A Survey of Modern Parental Educational Expectations

In the last chapter, a historical survey was conducted and the educational expectations that Chinese parents in the past held for their children were briefly outlined. This chapter, the major part of the thesis, was accomplished by sending out copies of a questionnaire, focused specifically on the educational expectations of parents in China's Sichuan Province in 2000. The questions asked on the questionnaire were related to children's and parents' age, gender, and family economic background, as well as parental educational expectations for their children and suggestions for school reforms.

Based on the historical survey, the conclusion was drawn that, before the year 2000, educational expectations Chinese parents held for their children had gone through four distinct stages, the Imperial period (551BC-1911), War period (1911-1949), 1949-1976, and 1976-1990s. In each stage, under different social and political circumstances, parents changed their expectations. In Imperial China, parental educational expectations were determined by social class and gender. In the War period, they were largely determined by which side, the Nationalist or the Communist, the parents supported. In the 1949-1976 period, revolutionary politics directly determined educational expectations. And in 1976-1990s, Deng Xiaoping's market economy reforms have been influential. Each of these stages had its corresponding expectations. The huge changes that happened in China from the 1970s to 1990s (See Chapter 4) played an enormous role in generating new educational expectations. These changes broke down all traditional standards in

forming new parental educational expectations. Rapid social change has also created a problem in comparing educational expectations between people who took responsibilities in different occupations or with different economic backgrounds. This was because a great number of people quit or switched their jobs due to the social changes. It was also hard to compare people who lived in cities or in the countryside because many people moved back and forth between the city and countryside due to favorable policy changes. However, parents' educational backgrounds are relatively stable compared to other standards in the society. Even today a gap between those who received their higher education and those who did not obviously exists. Thus, the division by regarding parental educational background as a standard was clearer than any other criterion. Therefore, in this research, based on the information given by fathers and mothers relating to their educational background, participating parents were divided into two groups, intellectuals and workers.

'Intellectual' refers to people who engaged in activities that require preeminently the use of the intellect (See Definitions in Chapter 2). Parents who had less than full secondary education and usually engaged in physical or manual work belong to the 'Worker' category (See definitions in Chapter 2). Because some parents in each family had different education levels, problems appeared in dividing people based on the fathers' education or the mothers'. To avoid confusion, participating parents were classified on the basis of the parent in one family who had received a higher level of education than the other. In this research, the intellectuals' group included twenty-five families, while twenty-one families were in the Workers Group.

Background Information on Group I and Group II

The parents of the twenty-five families placed in Group I, the intellectuals group, were mainly the graduates from the senior technology training schools, and colleges or universities (See Table 1). In this group, the ages of fathers were between 35 and 51, and mothers' between 30 and 47. Fourteen female and eleven male children were contained in this group. These 25 children were from 6 to 19 years old.

Table 4: Educational Background of Intellectual Parents (Level of Completion)

Degree/ Certificate N(umber)	Primary School	Middle School	Junior Training	Senior Training	Under-graduate (Bachelor)	Graduate (Master)
Father	0	2	1	5	14	3
Mother	1	3	4	6	9	2

Number of fathers (N) = 25;
Number of mothers (N) = 25

Table 5: Educational Background of Worker Parents (Level of Completion)

Degree/ Certificate N	Primary School	Middle School	Junior Training	Senior Training	Under-graduate (Bachelor)	Graduate (Master)
Father	4	13	3	1	0	0
Mother	2	18	0	1	0	0

Number of fathers (N) =21;
Number of mothers (N) = 21

Twenty-one families made up Group II, the workers group. The limits of formal education of parents in this group were mainly middle school, although their schooling was various from primary schooling to the highest senior technology training school (See Table 2). In this group, the fathers' ages were between 28 and 52, and mothers' between

28 and 47 with one mother not answering the question about her age. Twenty-one children, 10 female and 11 male children from 2 to 19 years old were included in this group.

Were the expectations that the two groups of parents held for their children similar or different? That is the focus of this chapter. Comparisons between these two groups are necessary in order to provide a better understanding of parental expectations in the year 2000.

Similarities

Information gained about parental educational expectations is summarized in Table 6 and other related information is found in Tables 7 to 10. Similarities between Group I, the intellectuals, and Group II, the workers, were found in several aspects. First, the educational expectations of both Group I and Group II were very high (See Table 3). The majority of parents in both groups expected their children to receive post-secondary education, including even graduate degrees and study abroad. In Group I, 58% (14 out of 24) parents expected their children to achieve the educational level above bachelor's degree. In Group II, this percentage even went higher to 62% (13 out of 21). In both groups, the biggest attraction for parents was the undergraduate degree. Especially to Group II parents, 48% of them focused their educational expectations on enrolling their children in universities or colleges, compared to 29% of the parents in Group I. Both groups treated studying abroad as their highest expectation for their children's education, with four parents out of 24 (17%) in Group I expecting their children to study abroad.

Even in Group II, there was one parent who expected his/her child to have an overseas study experience.

Table 6: Educational Expectations Intellectual & Worker Parents

Degree/ Certificate N	Study Abroad	Doctoral Degree	Master's Degree	Under-graduate Degree	Senior Vocational School	Other Answers
Group I	4	2	1	7	0	10
Group II	1	0	2	10	3	5

Group I: N = 24 parents (Of totally 25 parents, one parent did not answer this question.)
Group II: N = 21 parents

For their children's education, most parents still hoped for them study inside the country for higher educational level. In Group I, the intellectuals, two parents expected their children to study for their doctoral degree, although there were no parents in Group II who hoped that their children would pursue their Ph.D degree. Two other parents expected their children to reach masters' level. This percentage was higher than Group I parents. Only one family expected this degree for their children. Although in Group I, ten parents (42%) indicated their personal expectations were not focused only on the educational levels, they still hoped their children could learn more from education. For example, one father expected his male child to meet the needs of the society through his schooling. Also parents expected their children to have good behavior or survival ability or to learn as much as possible. These illustrated indirectly that all these parents expected their children to enjoy educational advantage because at present those graduating from higher education (equal or higher than college or university degree) can survive better in this competitive society than those who do not have the equal education. Finally, the ten

parents, who did not give direct answers relating to their children's educational levels, still held high educational expectations for their children.

In Group II, the workers, the situation was similar to the first group. Five parents, as in the "Other" column, indicated that their expectations were also focused on their children's general welfare rather than totally concentrated on education. For instance, without explaining what expectation he held for his daughter, one parent simply said that he held quite high educational expectation for her. Two other parents mentioned that they expected their daughters to learn as much as possible in order to find good jobs. One parent hoped his son could grow up healthy and be able to do anything he wants to do. All these answers illustrated indirectly the high educational expectations parents held for their children in the new era.

Second, the majority of the parents in both groups increased their educational expectations for their children with the advancement of their children's schooling. More than half of the parents, 52% in Group I and 57% in Group II, raised their educational expectations step by step corresponding to the school levels their children accomplished. The tendencies were illustrated in the following table:

Table 7: Relationship between Parental Educational Expectations and the Advancement of Their Children's Schooling

Tendency	No Change	Changing with Children's Schooling	
N		Either Increasing or Decreasing	Increasing
Group I	6	6	13
Group II	2	7	12

Group I, N = 25 parents;
Group II, N = 21 parents

The results illustrated in the above table (Table 4) indicated that parents in both groups raised their educational expectations with the advancement of their children's schooling. In Group I, the intellectuals, 19 out of a total of 25 parents adjusted their expectations. In Group II, the workers, this figure was even higher, reaching 19 of 21 parents. Thirteen out of twenty-five (52%) in Group I increased their educational expectations for their children as their children climbed to higher levels of schooling, while twelve out of twenty-one (57%) of Group II parents did the same. Besides, out of six (24%) parents in Group I and seven (33%) in Group II who adjusted their expectations according to their children's individual development, most of them also held higher educational expectations for their children than before. In Group II, one parent at first hoped that his daughter would go into a Junior technical training school. But later he changed his mind to expect her to go into a university when he found she was a good student. Another parent changed his expectation for his child from a bachelor's degree to a master's degree. Even in the indirect answers, the increasing tendency of parental educational expectations to rise in accordance with the advancement of the children's schooling could be found. Among all parents who were questioned, one parent expected his son to be able to know more about the society through his schooling. Another parent hoped his daughter would become a more fully developed woman through education. Thus it could be concluded that in both groups, more than half of the parents increased their educational expectations for their children with the advancement in school levels their children achieved. These ever rising expectations correspond with the deepening of China's reforms in recent years.

Third, parents in both groups showed little discrimination in their female children's education. Although in Group I, the intellectuals, six parents (25%) thought they would hold different expectations for their children, and seven (33%) indicated in Group II, the workers, that they would change their expectations, the majority of the parents would treat their children equally as far as children's sexes were concerned (See Table 5).

Table 8: Parental Attitudes towards Their Children's Gender

N	Group I		Group II	
Attitudes	Male	Female	Male	Female
Different	3	3	2	5
Same	8	10	9	5
No Idea	0	1	0	0

Group I, N = 25 parents;
Group II, N = 21 parents

When parents were asked whether they would change their educational expectations for their child when the child was of the opposite sex, eighteen out of twenty-four (75%) parents in Group I said they would hold the same educational expectations for their child no matter what sex the child was. The percentage was slightly lower in Group II parents. Fourteen out of twenty-one (67%) parents in this group stated that their educational expectations for their children would not be influenced by their children's sex (See Table 5).

The strongest similarity between the two groups was their deep dissatisfaction with today's educational system. In Group I, ten parents out of 25 parents (40%) were not satisfied at all. In Group II, 10 out of 21 parents were not satisfied at all (See Table 6).

Among them, six parents (24%) from Group I and two parents were dissatisfied with the education system. Thus more than half of the parents were not satisfied with today's educational system.

Table 9: The Degree of Parents' Satisfaction with the Education System

Degree	Group I's Satisfaction				Group II's Satisfaction			
N	Not at all	Dissatis -fied	OK	Satisfied	Not at all	Dissatis -fied	OK	Satisfied
Male	6	0	3	2	8	1	0	2
Female	4	6	2	2	2	1	1	6

Group I, N = 25 parents;
Group II, N = 21 parents

In this part, parents' dissatisfaction was based on whether today's school system could match the educational expectations they set for their children. Some parents put their hope on the other channels to meet their expectations. For example, one father said only some popular private schools could meet his educational expectations for his child. Some others also said the reasons for their dissatisfaction were today's teaching methods and current curricula. They expected their children to learn more practical and survival skills through their school education, rather than the pure basic knowledge from textbooks.

In summary, the evidence obtained from this research indicated that although parents came from different educational and occupational backgrounds, they shared common attitudes in their educational expectations for their children. Their attitudes could be regarded as the guidelines for China's further educational reforms. Parental expectations surveyed in the Sichuan Province exactly reflect the new changes and

opportunities in China. Specifically, their understandings of these changes were embodied by the high educational expectations they held for their children in both groups. Meanwhile, they also adjusted their expectation with most of them raising their expectations with the advancement of both their children's schooling and the achievement of the reforms. With all these, the most significant similarity was that the parents to a very large degree in both groups were not satisfied with today's educational system. Their dissatisfaction led them to make suggestions for China's further educational reforms. They are also sending a message to educational policymakers to take their concerns seriously.

Differences

The strong similarities between Intellectuals and Workers do not mean that there were not apparent differences between them. First, although both Group I and II parents, the intellectuals and the workers, held very high educational expectations, the educational expectations of Group I were higher than those of Group II (See Table 3). Comparing four parents out of 24 (17%) in Group I, only one parent in Group II expected his/her child to study abroad. Two parents in Group I expected their children to study for a doctoral degree, none in Group II. In the same respect, three parents in Group II hoped that their children would go to senior vocational schools -- the lowest level in finding a job with comparatively high salary, while none in Group I shared this goal. In Group I, ten parents (42%) indicated indirectly that they held high educational expectations for their children by saying that they hoped their children could learn as much as possible from their schooling, while in Group II, only 5 parents (24%) had the same thought.

Obviously, Group II parents were more practical in their expectations. The purpose of their expectations was to help their children find good jobs and to lead a high quality life, while Group I parents were focusing greater attention on their children's enjoyment of learning.

Second, a family's economic situation clearly affected parental educational expectations. In Group I, the Intellectual Group, twelve parents believed that there was no relationship between family economy and their educational expectations for their children. They said no matter how much their family income changed, they would always hold the same educational expectations for their children. In Group II, the workers, only six parents expressed this view. With high incomes, Group I parents did not have to think about the payment of their children's education fees. However, Group II parents had greater concerns if their incomes were reduced. Those parents in Group II had to think and calculate whether they could afford their children's tuition.

In Group I, exactly 50% of the parents said that their expectations would not be affected by the changing of their family economy. And the other 50% of parents believed that the more prosperous the family was, the better study conditions they could provide to their children. For instance, several parents believed that with the improvement of their salaries, they could invest more money in their children's school education as well as their home study environment. Based on these outside conditions, their children could achieve a higher level of education. In turn, they could expect more for their children in their studies. However, there were no parents in this group even thinking about the effects on their expectations if their financial situation became worse (See Table 10).

Table 10: The Changing Relationship between Family Economy and Parental Educational Expectations

N		No Change	Changing	
			Better Economy, higher expectations	Worse Economy, lower expectations
Group I	Male	7	3	0
	Female	5	9	0
Group II	Male	3	5	3
	Female	3	5	2

Group I, N = 24 parents;
Group II, N = 21 parents

In Group II, the situation was different. Although there were also six parents (29%) who believed that there was no relationship between their educational expectations and their family's incomes, 71% of parents believed that there was a close relationship between them. For example, two of the girls' parents said that since their family had experienced financial problems, they had to lower their educational expectations for they were not able to provide their children the high tuition fees to learn further. Three boys' parents said the same, and added that they hoped that their children could go work earlier than they had expected because of their family money shortage problem. Furthermore, another five of the girls' and three of the boys' parents said strongly that to some degree their educational expectations were determined by the cost of their children's education. The better the family economic situation was, the higher the educational expectation they had.

Thus, the differences between Group I parents, the Intellectuals Group, and Group II parents, the Workers Group, cannot be ignored. Parents in Group I had comparatively higher educational hopes for their children than those parents in Group II. More parents in Group II were concerned about the relationship between their family financial ability

and their educational expectations. Some of them had to adjust their expectations according to the level at which they could enable their children to study.

The differences of parental expectations also existed between parents of male children and those of female children within each group. Although the conclusion was drawn that most parents in each group treated their children equally, there were still some clear distinctions between how Group I and II parents treat boys and girls in education. For example, in Group II, parents held higher educational expectations for boys than for girls. One mother expected her son to study abroad, while two other sons were expected to have their master's degree. However, for girls, the highest level of educational expectations was bachelor's degree. In this group, twenty percent of girls' parents expected their daughters to go into senior vocational school, while only 9% expected this level for their sons.

Although the separation between the expectations for girls and for boys was not as apparent as those in Group II, some of Group I parents also held different attitudes towards girls' and boys' education. For instance, six parents in Group I would change their expectations if their children were of the opposite gender. Three female children's parents said they would hold higher educational expectations for their male children if they had one. Three male children's parents indicated that they would expect their daughter to do more in female art work than schoolwork.

Furthermore, more boys' parents than girls' in Group II, the workers, expressed the opinion that today's educational system in China could not meet their educational expectations for their sons at all. The percentage of the boys' parents at the not-satisfied-

at-all level reached to 73%, while the girls' only to 20% (See Table 6). This indicated that with higher expectations for boys, parents of boys were more critical to school systems than those of girls.

In one word, the differences between the two groups, the Intellectuals and the Workers, not only existed in their specific expectations, but also in the way family circumstances influenced expectations. One of the most influential factors was the family economy, which some parents thought was the determining factor in their expectations for their children. Based on these expectations, the parents in each group gave different suggestions for school reforms.

Suggestions Made by Parents

The suggestions from Group I, the intellectuals, covered broader issues, while suggestions from Group II, the workers, were narrower. Group I parents suggested that educational reform be carried out on all aspects in the educational system, including students, schools, teachers, and school leaders. However, Group II parents mainly focused on the reforms related to schools and how schools could help students find jobs. Even the suggestions on school reforms showed obvious differences between the two groups. Group I's suggestions were more related to the adjustment of current test models than Group II's. They wanted schools to reduce the numbers of their tests and increase educational quality in order to help students build their lifelong educational abilities. Group I parents also expected that schools could introduce more competitive mechanisms, such as encouraging the development of private schools. Through

competitions, schools could compare themselves clearly with other schools. These would be the incentives for schools to progress by introducing new policies, textbooks, and teaching methods, as well as providing more modern facilities.

In Group II, most parents expected that the importance of tests should be enhanced in the future education rather than gradually be cancelled since it was a way for students to go into colleges or universities after a fair competition. Besides, they also hoped that the number of students admitted into college or university should be enlarged in order to have more students enjoy the right of higher education. They also expected that more subjects would be added in schools, which could help students learn more. At the same time, schools should enhance the ways that could help their students be more practical or instrumental by applying textbook knowledge into their lives. But the most distinctive point of the difference between these two groups was that some parents in Group II mentioned that they hoped schools could reduce their tuition fees. They said the high tuition fees of college and university forced them to reduce their educational expectations for their children. If the fees could be reduced, they would have had higher expectations. However, none of the parents in Group I mentioned that.

The differences were also indicated by the suggestions parents in each group gave concerning the way schools treat students. The parents of Group I held stronger views on this point. They suggested that schools needed to respect students' interests and potential in education. They also wanted schools to cultivate students based on their individual abilities and to pay attention to students' hobbies. They also expected that besides textbook knowledge, schools could help students to build up their social abilities. While the parents in Group II had much less to say, they only gave one suggestion that schools

should treat all students equally and give extra help to those who need help in their study. Also in Group II, parents mentioned that school should provide a chance for parents to give suggestions to schools.

Only Group I parents said that schools needed to change to meet the needs of teachers. They suggested that these reforms could be carried in two ways. One was to increase teachers' incomes, such as salary, bonus, and subsidy, because they thought with higher benefits, teachers could work harder and have more peaceful minds in teaching students. Another was to prepare teachers with better knowledge and better teaching approaches. With these, they thought, teachers could help students more efficiently and more effectively.

The similarities and differences found in this study indicate how those parents thought about today's educational system, especially the schooling situations in Sichuan Province. The suggestions they gave reflected the need parents in both groups had and the problems they saw in their children's education. Thus, educational policymakers and school leaders may refer to these suggestions to ensure that new educational policies will meet today's parental expectations.

CHAPTER 6

Analysis

The historical review in Chapter 4 outlined the tendencies of parental educational expectations and the social and economic reasons for these tendencies. That chapter pointed out that parents' expectations were relatively static for the past 2000 years, but have changed enormously in the past twenty years. These changes influenced people strongly from their daily behaviors to their ideology towards policies, the country's development and their children's education. People clearly have started to expect more in all aspects in their lives.

The research carried out in 2000 on parental expectations demonstrated that although parents in the two groups, the Workers Group and the Intellectuals Group, had different educational backgrounds and family economic situations, they did share some common views regarding their children's education. It is clear from the results of this research that parental expectations in the year 2000 were continuing to rise. But the results were by no means even or uniform.

In this chapter, the similarities and differences between Group I, the intellectuals, and II, the workers, as well as their social and economic roots are analyzed and explored.

First, more than half of the parents in both Group I, the intellectuals, and Group II, the workers, held very high educational expectations for their children. Fifty-eight per cent of the parents in Group I and sixty-two per cent parents in Group II expected their children to achieve the educational levels that were equal to or higher than the bachelor's

degree. Traditionally, Chinese upper-class parents were used to holding high expectations for their male children's education, and after the post-Qing Dynasty, for their female children, too (See Chapter 4). Benewick and Donald (1999, p. 107) found that intellectual and professional families had long taken the education of their daughters very seriously. These parents often conveyed the message that they considered studying to be important to their children. But the study conducted for this thesis revealed the fact that even peasants and urban workers also expected their children to have post-secondary education. This has never been a widespread expectation in China's history before.

There were several reasons for the change of parents' expectations. Taylor (1981, p. 3) argued that educational change was necessarily influenced by the tide of political events. After Mao's death in 1976, the primary aim of education shifted from purely emphasizing the needs of politics (Su, 1991, p. 376) to stressing the importance of both politics and knowledge to students. China's government introduced measures to improve the output of qualified manpower and the overall education profile of the country's population (CIPE, 1985, p. ix). Education regained its importance. Especially in 1977, when the tertiary education entrance examinations were restored (Hayhoe, 1991, p. 130), strict political and background conditions for students to receive their higher education were banned. The new policy stated that children, no matter whether poor or rich, male or female, at this time had the same right to take the entrance examinations. This encouraged parents to expect their children to learn more. Further the regulation that one's employment assignment and job promotions were linked with one's academic level was undoubtedly becoming a factor in high parental expectations (Wang & Colletta, 1991, p. 152; Taylor, 1981, pp. 178-79). As a result, in 1996, the number of the students

enrolled in more than 1000 colleges and universities reached three million (Benewick & Donald, 1999, p. 68).

Parents' high educational expectations also resulted from the country's fast economic development. In 1978 when the major economic reforms were still new, there were 270 million Chinese people living in poverty. People had to struggle for their livelihood. Education was not an option for poor families. In 1990 China's average per capita GNP (Gross National Product) reached US$ 190.00 (Long, 1999), while in 1996, according to estimates by the World Bank, China's GDP, measured at average 1994-96 prices was equivalent to US$ 750 per head (TEWYB, 1999, p.931). In the same year, the World Bank reported that poverty had been reduced to 90 million (Benewick & Donald, 1999, p. 25). More parents became rich and more families could afford their children's education than before. Parents who were formally restricted by lack of money to send their children on to higher education at the beginning of China's reforms were now able to pay for their children's education. Especially in 1997, when pension, unemployment, medical, injury and maternity programs were set up in China (EWYB, 1999, p. 932), parents no longer worried about their old age. It was reported that urban parents spent from 25% - 50% of their joint incomes directly on their single child (Davin, 1991, p. 46). In the rural regions, economic development advanced as fast as that in the urban areas. In 1980, the per capita income in Sichuan's richest communes was US$160 a year and the average for the province as a whole was US$55 (Spence, 1990, p. 679), while in 1996 the national average rural households net income per person was US$232 (Benewick & Donald, 1999, p. 28). Parents in both cities and in the countryside could and were willing to provide every possible study opportunity for their children. Most of the urban children

and some of the rural students had their own study desks, chair and lamp at home, which gave them a suitable homework environment (Davin, 1991, p. 59; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p.55).

Not only did the parents support their children financially, but they also provided their children with a lot more study time at home. Stevenson and Stigler (1992, p.60) discovered that students in China spent little time on chores, but as much time as possible on their studies. One story from the staff reporter of *China Reconstructs* (Dec., 1978) was quite impressive that only when a guest came to dinner, the mother could let her 19-year-old daughter help with things like the washing and preparing ingredients. Otherwise the daughter would spend most of her time at her studies (p. 13).

Second, when better family study conditions were provided and when more time was given the children, parents' educational expectations for their children increased among all those parents who could afford these luxuries in their children's schooling. It was typical in this research that parents in both groups, 52% in Group I and 57% in Group II, raised their educational expectations step by step responding to the school levels their children accomplished. For instance, in Group II, one parent at first hoped his daughter would go into a Junior technical training school, but later he changed his mind to expect her to go into a university when he found she studied well under the circumstances he provided for her. Another parent changed his expectation for his child from a bachelor's degree to a master's degree. Mr. Li's answer could be a representative of these parents:

> With the growing up of our child, our educational expectations for her changed to higher and higher levels accordingly. Of course, we managed from every aspect to create the most favorable conditions for her study. And she has always tried very hard to meet our expectations. Now she is a university student. But we still expect her to gain more degrees or diplomas at that level.

Parents' expectations continued to rise as their children advanced through school and as their family finances improved. Now parents seemed willing to pay more tuition fees to send their children to some private schools where they thought their children would be well educated. In order to have their children do well in a competitive society, home tutoring was one of the solutions for their children to learn by paying high fees to tutors (Benewick & Donald, 1999, p. 119). When parents saw that their arrangements for their children worked in the children's schooling, they would spend more money to support their children's study. At the same time, their expectations for their children rose to higher levels as children's education progressed. The evidence collected in this Sichuan study confirms this tendency.

Generally, in the 1980s and 1990s parents still regarded education as an essential component of their children's lives. Wealthy parents both in cities and in the countryside still hoped that their children would enter tertiary education. Rural parents and poor city dwellers still viewed education as a way out of rural life and urban poverty and as a means of achieving a higher standard of living (CIPE, 1985, p. x). This was the reason that the majority of parents in both Group I, the intellectuals, and Group II, the workers, answered that the older their children were, the higher the educational expectations they held for them. All those parents were satisfied with the achievements their children made in reaching the education goals they set for them.

However, while parents held high educational expectations for their children, some ignored their children's real ability in study. This was more likely to happen in Group II parents. Those parents could not afford high expenses in their children's home study environment. Even though they could not provide the same advantages, those parents expected even more for their children than Group I parents. Under such circumstances, there were often some problems or tragedies between parents and children. Xu Li, a teenage murderer of her mother from a worker' family, was interviewed by some journalists about the reasons of her killing her mother. She said,

> I was only permitted to watch TV in every Saturday evening and Sunday noon for a while. I could not stop studying very hard until 10 p.m. daily. And if there was an examination, I would have to stay even later... Every day, I did nothing but study my textbooks and doing my homework... I was really longing to play. But my mother did not agree. I felt depressed and angry. I could not communicate all my feelings with my mother because I had to study and study... (Zhou, Wan & Jiang, 2000, p.9).

Xu Li's mother was a worker. Her intentions in forcing her daughter to work hard were good. However, to achieve her high expectations, she forbid her daughter to have some enjoying time except Saturday and Sunday. She created high pressure on her daughter. Her death was caused by her over-high expectations for her daughter.

Third, when comparing the situation female students had before China's liberation, there was far less gender discrimination in the education of girls than before. Parents in both groups indicated that they had similar expectations for their girls as for their boys. In Group I, 75% of parents, and in Group II, 67% of parents said they would treat their children equally as far as the children's sex was concerned (See Table 7).

Among the other 25% of parents in Group I and 33% parents in Group II, most of them increased their expectations for their girls. On the one hand, this is an advancement in the way parents treat their children of either sex. On the other hand, it also indicates that Confucian idea that "women are inferior" is weakening in today's life and education.

This improvement in women's education came from the gradual development of female schooling. When education was controlled by Confucianism (100BC-1905), cultural expectations centered on the sons (Seeberg, 2000, p. 54). The fact that the elevation of the son into the ranks of nobility would propel the entire clan into the circles of the local ruling gentry (Yang, 1959) put women's education into the category of no use. It was believed that "A woman without talent is virtuous"; "an educated woman is bound to cause trouble"; and "Women should not meddle in politics" (Hooper, 1985, p. 96). Girls were victims of low expectations. This remained for a very long time. In the 1902-1903 legislation, women were still expected to be educated within the family (Hayhoe, 1996, p. 34). But the turning point of women's education in China was in 1907 when regulations were passed which gave directions in establishing primary schools for girls and normal schools for female teachers (Shu, 1979). Female students started to enjoy their rights of education in schools. In 1912, schooling for girls and boys was put on a basis of equality (Cleverley, 1985, p.42). In 1911-1927, women made important progress by greater participation in higher education (Hayhoe, 1996, p. 47). The public attitudes towards female children's education changed. After China's liberation, constitutionally, male and female students were given an equal right to formal education. When all students were assigned jobs by the government under the central government plan regardless of students' gender, parents were encouraged to send their daughters into

schools. Daughters were treated better and better in terms of educational opportunity. In the present study, more than half of the parents from both Group I and Group II regarded their male and female children equally. Most of the others even paid more attention to their girls' education.

Another possible reason for parents' treating their male and female children equally was the improved family economy, employment as well as the better working conditions. With enlarged GNP (Gross National Products), in 1999 the national GDP per capita reached as high as US$ 3,800, a quadrupling of GDP since 1978 (TWFB, 2000, p. 6). Parents' salaries increased, too. Thus, besides basic living expenses, they could spend more money on their house, food, insurance, and their medical care. With higher wages, their retirement pensions also rose. Parents did not have as many concerns about their retirement as before. The tradition that, when they became old, parents would depend on their sons was discarded. Sons and daughters played the same role in their parents' old age, especially in cities, where both male children and female children would marry away from their parents. Although Group II parents showed more concerns about a stable income, their attitudes in treating their daughters were still better.

Since Liberation, women have been given the same working rights as men. The government also laid down many specific regulations to take care of women (Mu, 1978, pp.29-31). Most women held jobs themselves. According to the 1982 census, almost 228 million, or 43.69% of those employed, were women (PCC, 1985, pp. 404-23). Data from the 1% population sample survey of 1987 showed women making up an estimated 44.5% of the labor force (Rosen, 1992, p. 261). When more and more women started to make money and took working positions, women stepped up the social status ladder. Not only

were women involved in public life locally, but also they went into very high official ranks. According to *The State of China Atlas*, the number of female deputies in the National People's Congress increased from 147 in 1954 to 626 in 1993. And also in 1993, there were 308 women mayors in the cities (Benewick & Donald, 1999, p. 106). Those figures proved that women had equal capabilities to men. Parents, especially in cities, began to believe their girls were able to do whatever boys could do. Educational expectations of the single-child parents for girls kept rising. A survey in Fujian Province asked 3,570 parents about their attitudes toward educating their sons and daughters. The large majority of 81.42% of parents claimed that they would treat their children equally as far as gender was concerned (Wang, 1989, p. 3). The study conducted for this thesis reinforced this significant change.

In cities, parents of girls treasured their children and focused their hopes on their girls' education through which they hoped to gain opportunities and material advantages. That was why many urban Chinese were rearing highly-educated girl children (Benewick & Donald, 1999, p. 18). For many villagers and urban poor dwellers, schooling functioned as a ladder to their children' life success (Seeberg, 2000, p. 84). Even the poorest and most disadvantaged female children in the most backward rural areas also enjoy an enhanced education. This was because the migrant workers sent money back to their home villages to change their female offspring's future intentionally when they saw the advantages of educating girls in cities (Benewick & Donald, 1999, 107). All these appear to be factors in explaining why parents in both groups held so little discriminations to their sons' and daughters' education.

Fourth, a large percentage of parents (40% in Group I and 48% in group II) were dissatisfied with today's education system in China. With better education, a stronger economy and more time in parenting, parents started to realize the importance of school education in their children's development. They could no longer just sit back and watch what would happen in their children's education. They have begun to measure schools with their own rulers.

Evidently, parents in both groups wanted schools to do more in teaching their children. In Group II, 48% of parents expected their children to go to colleges or universities and half of them gave the reason that they hoped their children would be able to find good jobs after graduation. In this group, it was obvious that parents were practical. They took their children' s education as a tool of getting jobs instead of acquiring knowledge. Ms. Qi from Group II gave strong reasons for her expecting her five-year-old daughter to go to a college or a university. She said,

> I want my daughter to have more knowledge than I did. We find life is very hard when we are hired to do some work in cities, because both her father and I have not much education. We have to do very hard manual work without any skill requirements. We expect our daughter to have her higher education and to find an easy job.

It is obvious that the motivations of Group II parents were not based simply on the knowledge the school taught, but on the jobs schooling could bring to their children.

In Group I, 42% of parents indicated that their personal expectations for their children were not focused entirely on the educational levels but also on what their children could learn from education. The higher their children's educational level, the more their children should learn. As Ms. Yang said about her 10-year-old boy's

education, "I will be satisfied if he can adapt himself to society, no matter what educational level he can reach."

But it would be not easy for her son to adapt himself to this modern society if he did not have much education. Thus, although she did not make it clear to which level she hoped her son would reach, she still proposed very high educational expectations for her child as well as for school.

Therefore, besides serving as a means of passing on knowledge, schools were also expected to instill the skills needed by students when they wanted to find jobs, or to cultivate students capable of doing well in the new society. However, at present, most of China's state-run schools still use the traditional teacher-centered teaching methods, in which teachers are responsible for teaching and students for learning. To carry out a comparatively fair examination system, each school grade countrywide uses the same textbooks. Terms in each school level start in the same week, no matter south or north. Parents' responses suggest that greater decentralization of educational authority may be desirable.

Parents' dissatisfactions were from all directions around school and the education system. Some parents complained about the "teach to the middle" teaching methods. This is the practice of teaching in which teachers teach based on the reactions of the students in the middle level of the class. Ms. Lou, a mother of a 10-year-old daughter, said, "Some teachers' teaching methods need changing." Classes in China are usually large with forty to sixty students. Teachers often use this method to have all children benefit from a common educational experience. Under the condition of students taking the same entrance examination, it was claimed that providing different experiences to different

children could lead to inequities in their education. It would later make it difficult for some children to compete for jobs (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p.134). Parents thought their children could not develop their aptitudes completely in this way, because each child has different learning abilities. So they believed that uniformity would prevent their children from making their educational dreams come true.

Some parents were angry about the knowledge taught in the textbooks. They thought what was taught in the class today was outdated. With these materials their children could learn nothing important and useful in today's competitive society. Those parents were eager to have their children catch up with the development of high technology to see the benefits from basic education. Mr. Zhao, a father of a 19-year-old son, said, "Schools should offer courses that can provide students with applicable skills. With technology, students can do the work needed by the society." Also some other parents in this study expected that schools could pay more attention to their children's individual interests and abilities. They hoped that schoolwork could be taken out based on individual interests or abilities of their children. They said only by this way could the children's potential abilities get fully discovered and developed.

This similarity of views between Group I and II indicate which aspects of China's education system could not meet the majority of parents perceived. These concerns give some directions for China's further education reforms.

Besides the similarities, there are also differences between Group I and Group II parents' expectations. First, Group I parents held higher educational expectations than those of Group II parents. Historically, parents with more education expected more in

their children's education than those parents who did not have much education. The story of Mao Zedong is case in point. Mao's father was a rich-peasant with little education. When Mao was young, his father expected nothing of his son's education except to be able to read books about farming (Cleverley, 1985, p.71).

Another possible reason for Group I parents having higher educational expectations was that those parents themselves enjoyed the days when they were in college or university. Their educational experiences encouraged them to emphasize their children's education because "A person's willingness to expend effort depends on whether he or she believes the effort is worthwhile (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p. 222)." Therefore, those parents tried hard to have their children have the same pleasure as they had had. At home, with more education than Group II parents, Group I parents could give their children more guidance in their study and solve their children's study problems more effectively. In conducive conditions, children would feel comfortable and be willing to spend time on their learning. It was helpful in the advancement of children's educational levels. Mr. Liu from Group I supported this point from his own child-cultivation practices on his 9-year-old daughter:

> With my daughter's growing up, based on the educational expectations we held for her, we adjusted our child rearing style and her home study environment. We want to give her chances to get full development in herself according to her own interests.

Therefore, the above possible reasons could be used to explain why Group I parents held higher educational expectations for their children than Group II parents. In fact, Group I parents' higher educational expectations than Group II parents follow the

pattern of China's tradition. Further, with the better economic and study environment that Group I parents provide to their children, Group I students continue to have more favorable study conditions than students of Group II. This in turn has influenced parental educational expectations, too. Besides these outside conditions, parents' educational background was also one of the determining elements in their educational expectations for their children. The higher the parental educational level, the better help they could offer in their children's education.

Second, Group II parents' (the workers') educational expectations were affected more by the change of their family economic situations than Group I parents' (the intellectuals'). In this research, parents who were worse off economically held lower educational expectations for their children than parents who lived in better financial conditions. The expectations poor parents held were closely related to their incomes. Those expectations were easier to change with their family finances, because those parents usually focused on their children's survival. In Group I, exactly one half of the parents said that there was no relationship between the changing of their incomes and their educational expectations. They enjoyed the family's economic privilege and never worried about their ability in financing their children's education. The other half of the parents in Group I believed that the better their family economic situation, the better study conditions they could provide to their children to fulfil their educational expectations, and the higher educational expectations they held for their children. Mr. Liu, the father of a 9-year-old daughter in Group I said, "With better family economic conditions and other family elements, we increased our educational expectations for our

daughter because we could provide better family education environment." Ms. Pang from Group I, the mother of a 7-year-old daughter said, "With more money, we can provide our daughter more study time, relaxing study environment and a great number of books. Then she can study at home comfortably."

Group I parents can guarantee better family economic conditions to their children in fulfillment of their educational expectations than Group II parents can. With higher education, Group I parents are usually employed in the higher paid jobs. This gives them chances to support their children financially in education. Thus, in this research, there were no parents in Group I thinking about whether they would lower their educational expectations for their children if their family economic situation became worse at all (See Table 4).

This contrasts with what happened in the research in Group II parents. Although twenty-nine percent of parents in this Group believed that there was no relationship between their expectations and their money earning abilities, the majority of the parents in Group II held the thought that their expectations were affected greatly. Several parents believed that with the improvement of their families' economic situation, they could invest more money into their children's education. They could offer their children good home study conditions. Also, they could buy more books for their children than before. But most of the parents were prepared to lower their expectations for their children in education at any time if necessary. Mr. Shang was a typical father in this respect. He said, "both of us are out of a job now. Our family economy goes into a real bad condition. We cannot hold high educational expectations for our child any more because we cannot pay for her."

This was because the jobs Group II parents took were usually low-income ones. These jobs are also not stable. Usually, children in those families could not attend school when their family commitments required their labor, or when family finances could not stretch to the cost of fees and books (Benewick & Donald, 1999, p. 119). This was because parents in this group did not have much extra money in the family. If something occurred to threaten their daily life, they would first cut down the expenses on their children's schooling. Mr. Zhang, a father of a 2-year-old boy said:

> We will devote all ourselves in supporting our son to finish his education. If our family economy could not meet the needs of the tuition fee, we will save all possible money from our clothes and food to help him. But if we still cannot make up, we will have to give up.

Therefore, it is predictable that to some degree, Group II parents' educational expectations were determined by their ability to pay for their children's education.

Other parents in Group II also expressed the view that if they had a better economic situation in their families, they would have had higher educational expectations for their children, instead of saving money from their children's tuition fees and spending it on something important to the whole family. Ms. Jiang said, "If our family economic condition permitted, we would have held much higher educational expectations for our daughter."

These parents also expected their children could go work rather than pursue their further education. Mr. Cheng, the father of a 14-year-old boy, said, "We have a bad economic condition in our family now. And our son did not study well in the school. We expected him to go to work earlier than we had expected before."

With the difficulties of paying their children's tuition, some parents would rather to stop their children's schooling. Thus, financial problems were believed to be one of the reasons for the high dropout rate of the poor urban and rural children (CIPE, 1985, p. ix). Ms. Cheng, the mother of a 19-year-old son said, "With the poor family economy, our son had to stop going to school."

The family economy was one of the determining elements in the forming of parental educational expectations. Group I parents, the intellectuals, did not have as many problems in financing their children to reach high educational levels as Group II parents, the workers, did. Neither did Group I parents worry about their daily life. So they could spend more time with their children and to guide them to achieve their goals. Under such circumstances, children from Group I did not have as many distractions as children in Group II. They could study more peacefully and devote themselves more to their learning. Therefore, fewer parents in Group I changed their educational expectations based on their family economy. In Group II, some parents had to lower their educational expectations to match their ability to finance their children's education. Therefore, family economic situation not only limited parental educational expectations for children, but also determined the changes in their expectations. That was why in Group II, only one parent expected his child to study abroad. None of them expected their child to have his/her Ph.D. degree. And three parents expected their children to have the lowest education level in finding jobs.

Third, intellectuals and workers viewed the education of their boys and girls differently. In this research, although most parents in each group treated their children equally, there were still some differences within the group concerning their children's sex, especially in Group II, the Work Group. It was evident in this group that parents of boys held higher educational expectations than parents of girls.

Traditionally, cultural expectations in relation to education were centered on sons (Seeberg, 2000, p. 88). A belief in "female inferiority" existed persistently in social attitudes and patterns (Hooper, 1991, p. 356). The ideology it reflected cannot be wiped out in a few decades (ACWF, 1983). Since Group II parents had less education than Group I parents, they were affected more than parents in Group I by the traditional belief that girls would marry away and boys would have to be depended on. This accounts for why parents in Group II held lower educational expectations for their girls than for their boys. Thus, when there was any change in their family finances, Group II parents would have their daughter drop out of school first. Those parents took advantage of getting "rich" through cutting down their daughter's tuition or through their daughter's labor (Rosen, 1992, p. 270, Cleverley, 1985, p. 257). At home, parents gave less support to their girls than to boys in the continuation with their education, especially during the preparation for the university entrance examination (Hooper, 1991, p. 360). Girls could not enjoy as much study time as was granted to boys who were preparing for examinations. In fact, before reaching the entrance examination preparation stage, many girls in this group had already dropped out due to different reasons (Mosher, 1983, pp. 195-99). Benewick and Donald (1999, p. 119) supported this point in their research: "Consequently, resulting from housework burdens and little support at home, far fewer

girls actually enrolled in high school, even if they scored as well as or better than boys at the high school entrance examinations."

New opportunities for employment can also have the effect on lowering the educational expectations parents in Group II held for their girls. Most parents were practical. In the first half of the 1980s, when the state assigned jobs for all graduates, there was no unemployment among college or university students in China (Hooper, 1985). Parents regarded tertiary education as the only way for their male or female children to have a bright future. Most of them expected their children to go to university (See Chapter 4). Education of girls' was regarded equally as important as boys'. However, with reforms becoming more extensive, more job opportunities were created. People without much education also could find higher paid jobs than before. In rural areas, when land was distributed into each family more laborers were required than before at home. Undoubtedly, parents in the situation of Group II started to measure which one was better between keeping their children in school and having them work for money. Thus, when those parents found that the job market was not favorable to female university graduates, they lowered their expectations for their girls.

When Group II parents, the workers, lowered their expectations for their daughters, they raised their aspirations for their sons at the same time. Those parents believed that their male children were the most dependable ones. They relied greatly on their sons' school education to achieve their family dreams. This explained why 73% of boys' parents in Group II were not satisfied with today's educational system in China at all, while only 20% of the girls' parents in this group felt this way.

Parents in both groups made suggestions for educational reforms. The suggestions from Group I, the intellectuals, covered a much broader range than those from Group II, the workers. Group I's suggestions dealt with students, schools, teachers, and school leaders, while Group II's mainly focused on how school reform could help students find jobs. This was because with different educational experiences, parents in both groups treated different school issues as the most important ones in school reforms. Group I parents understood that only with a favorable environment could schools produce well-educated students. Thus, their suggestions related to school, test models, school policies, curricula, teaching approaches, and school facilities. With better education, parents in Group I understood the society around them better than those parents in Group II. They wanted schools to cultivate students who could win in the competitions with their real ability. At the same time, since money was not the major problem in their families, Group I parents were not anxious that their children go to work and earn money to support their family. So they hoped that schools could really function better in their children's learning. Their children could get the greatest benefits from school, teachers, and curricula no matter what the cost.

In contrast, with a lower occupational position, most Group II parents expected that the importance of tests should be enhanced in future education reforms. They thought examinations judged students primarily by academic skills, not by class background (Henderson, 1977, p. viii). It would be the only way for students to go into colleges or universities fairly by taking the entrance examinations equally. Since in China, college and university students would find their jobs easier and better, Group II parents also hoped that the number of students admitted into college or university officially should be

increased in order to have more students enjoy the right of higher education. They also suggested that more subjects be taught and more practical courses be held, besides the learning of the textbooks to help students have the ability of finding jobs. Obviously, the focus that Group II parents had for their children's education was not on the process of learning, but on the results after their children complete their higher education. Hooper (1985) argued that the major, even the only, pathway to achieving high personal aspirations was seen as being through tertiary education. This educational level was the division between having the chance of a good job and being doomed to a boring job (pp. 41-42). Therefore, about half of the Group II parents expected their children to have higher education in order to find good jobs. Mr. Shang, the father of a 14-year-old daughter said: "We expected our child to receive as much education as possible in order to find a good job." Mr. Zhao had quite similar reasons for expecting his 19-year-old son to go to a college or a university.

> Before reforms went deeper and wider, I had no educational expectations for him (my son) and I gave him all the freedom to have him develop by himself. Now I found it was very difficult to find a good job without higher education. I changed my regular way in raising him. I required him to study hard and expected him to go into a college or a university. And then he could find a satisfactory job.

Clearly, parents' different suggestions reflected their various motivations in their children's education. Those motivations were mainly based on their own educational and family economic situations.

Parents in two groups also gave different suggestions when students were concerned. Group I parents expected students' study interests and potential to be

respected. Students' individual abilities both in school and outside school should be respected. However, Group II parents suggested that schools should treat all students equally and gave extra help to those who needed it. Schools should give parents in both groups the chance to give suggestions to schools. Obviously, parents' suggestions were from their opinions about their children's schooling and their children's situations in schools. With more attention and a better economic situation at home, Group I students did not have as many difficulties as Group II students in school study. Group I parents seldom worried about their children's positions in schools. But they worried about their children's real abilities that school could cultivate. Therefore, their suggestions were not limited within the scope of formal study. However, the situation was diverse in Group II students. With a poorer economic family situation, their parents could not offer them as much and as expensive things as Group I students had. It caused problems in their social positions within school. From families with less income, students of Group II also had problems in the relationship with teachers and with other students. Thus, Group II parents worried much more about their children's situations in schools. They suggested "treating all students equally at school".

It was also evident that with fewer books and worse study conditions at home, Group II students had more problems in their studies at school than Group I students did. So Group II parents wanted schools to give extra help to those who needed in their study. Group II parents themselves were also affected by their educational and economic situation. They found it would be hard for them to communicate with schools. So some of the Group II parents suggested that schools should give parents a chance to communicate with teachers or school leaders.

It was not a surprise that only Group I parents suggested that schools need reforms to meet the needs of teachers. In China, although philosophers like Confucius and politicians like Mao Zedong have been considered great teachers and were highly regarded, the social status of teachers has not been high (CIPE, 1985, p. 43). From their own background and their own experience, Group I parents thought that with higher respect and benefits, teachers could concentrate more on their work and teach students more devotedly than before. Therefore, their teaching would be more efficient and more effective to their students. Thus, based on parental experiences of the two groups, parents expected schools to carry out policies or to make reforms from their own perspectives.

In summary, there were reasons parents in both groups had quite high educational expectations for their children. They may be based on their own educational and economic situations, or may be influenced or even determined by the community they were living in. Sometimes, parental expectations were also affected by their family's economic situation. Sometimes, they were influenced by parents' understandings towards the school systems. Although most parents said there would be no different expectations if their children were of the opposite gender, there were still some parents who treated their boys and girls differently in each group. It was especially obvious in Group II that parents of male children held higher educational expectations than those of female children (See Table 4). Among them, three parents expected their sons to achieve an education level higher than a bachelor's degree, while no girls' parents expected that level. On the contrary, twenty percent of girls' parents expected their daughters to go into senior vocational school but only 9% of boys. It indicated that on the one hand, parents in

Group II were still heavily influenced by China's traditional belief that boys were superior to girls. On the other hand, since parents in Group II were all manual workers, more parents in this group than in Group I believed that girls would be married away. Only boys could take the responsibilities of caring for them when they were old people. Furthermore, only the boys could change their current family situation. So compared with the expectations they held for their girls, they expected more in their boys' education. They believed that if their sons got benefits from their education, they could be benefited, too. Thus, with higher educational expectations, more boys' parents than girls' in Group II expressed the opinion that today's educational system in China could not meet their educational expectations for their sons at all. However, Group I parents did not have such a clear distinction between their sons' and their daughters' education.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

The results described in Chapter 5 and analyzed in Chapter 6 have great significance for China's further education reforms. The views of parents (and indirectly of their children) on the education system should be considered carefully by policymakers. Then the reformed educational policies would offer more students the chance to receive higher educational training.

Most of all, the core questions asked in this study, such as children's age, sex, present grades, and parents' age, occupations, education background; questions of "What educational expectations do you have for your child(ren)?" "Do you change your educational expectations with the advancement of your child(ren)'s grades?" "What is the relationship between your educational expectations and the change of your family's income?"; also the question "Would your educational expectations be different if your child was of the opposite sex?" as well as questions like "Can today's education system match your educational expectations for your child(ren)?" and "If today's educational system cannot satisfy your educational expectations, what reform(s) do you think should be made?" led to the result that similarities existed in the educational expectations of parents from different social and educational background. These similarities indicated in which areas China's education system can meet parents' needs as a whole and in which areas the system still needs reforming. In this research, five points are very clear.

Based on the conclusion made in this study, parents in both groups held high educational expectations for their children. This contrasts with today's reality where education is still treated as a privilege for certain people. The access to higher education is still limited (Pepper, 1991, p. 15). Under this circumstance, parents may feel disappointed. If this educational system is not changed, it will be very hard for schools to face the latest challenges from all parts of society. The pressures coming from inside schools and from outside will become larger (Cleverley, 1991, p. xi).

Implications and Policy Considerations Arising

When parents' expectations rise, the old education system comes under pressure, especially from parents. Reforms must start with this in mind. First, the current elite education is under pressure to become more democratic. China's college and university education tends to be elitist, accessible only to a tiny minority of the population (Hayhoe, 1996, p. 251). Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, formal education was enjoyed only by a small number of children from wealthy families. Even in 1999, after enlarged enrolment, the tertiary entrance admission rate was still as low as 10.5% (Chen, 2001, p. 39-40). The low rate blocks the progress of the majority of students who entered middle schools. Even some of those who can afford the high education fees are not able to receive their tertiary education, not to mention those poor students who cannot pay their tuition fees. The low post-secondary intake also leads to a high dropout percentage in middle school. Parents compare their children's marks with others in the same class. When they see that their children are not able to achieve high marks at school, they usually withdraw them from school and send them to work. These

tendencies cause a lot of talented students to lose their chance to learn. Thus, the government should consider this problem seriously in order to meet the educational needs of the majority of people. The present study has shown that there is a lot of pressure to make higher secondary and tertiary education more accessible.

Several things can be done to set up the alternatives to the old pattern. For example, the government can increase the number of students officially permitted into college or university in order to have more students enjoy the right to higher education. In this sense, education could be changed to open the door to more students who want to and are interested in learning.

Further, to achieve a more democratic or accessible education, reformers could also think about the abolition of key-point schools at each level. Key-point schools receive priority in funding, teaching staff, laboratory equipment, and library facilities. Each year, after the entrance examination at each level, key-point-schools pick up those students who have the highest total marks (Taylor, 1981, p. 175). In fact, similar to the tertiary education entrance examination, a lot of students are refused entry at different study levels. In 1995, the percentage of graduates of junior secondary school (aged about 15) who go to senior secondary school was 48.8% (CRE, 1996). This figure indicated that in China there were more than half of the graduates of lower middle school who were not able to study in higher middle school. Although there are junior and senior technical schools at this level absorbing students, the entrance rates are also limited.

Therefore, the government may want to reconsider the role of the national entrance examinations. Should they be abolished, for example? If they could be done away with in part, students could be enrolled in schools according to their interests. More

importantly, the abolition of entrance examinations would provide a break from the old style in which both teachers and students concentrate on the textbooks within the four walls of the classroom (Cleverley, 1985, p. 272). When they graduate, students would not find difficulties in doing their work. This would also address the varying expectations of both worker and intellectual parents.

Second, current teaching methods could be re-considered. If the national examinations were abolished and education took multiple forms, teaching approaches would need reform, too. The old teaching style in which the teacher is responsible for teaching and students are responsible for learning (Jackson, 1986, p. 117) would no longer meet the new needs as seen by parents and their children. In the new education atmosphere, teaching would be regarded both as a learning and an adjusting process. In this process, students need to co-operate with teachers. In this way, students would not feel that knowledge was being poured into them. Teachers also can adjust their teaching at anytime when a problem is foreseen.

Teachers may also be encouraged to use diverse teaching approaches. For example, they could provide more discussions, workshops or conferences as the alternatives for merely talking in the classroom. This would give their students more free time in the class to digest what the teacher taught in the class or take the step of students help students in learning.

Third, the current teachers' working and living conditions are a related issue. Teachers always stand in the front line of education. When school and teaching methods

get reformed, changes also need to happen around teachers. Since China's Cultural Revolution, teachers have been under unfavorable conditions financially, socially and politically (Paine, 1992, p. 202). These conditions discouraged a lot of young and capable teachers from making teaching their life career. Paine (1992, p. 183) found in her research in the 1990s that fewer than 30% of the practising secondary school teachers were qualified for their jobs. Thus, if China cannot find enough qualified teachers, China's education will face trouble. Certainly, this is the case if teachers are going to be sensitive to the views of parents. Therefore, teachers should be treated better than before.

Fourth, to meet the rising expectations of parents, current textbooks must also be reformed. In this research, parents in both Group I and Group II expected that their children could learn more than the knowledge from textbooks. Tang, the researcher of the Senior High School Chinese Textbook, reinforced the urgent requirement in today's textbook reforms. He summarized three points of today's textbooks as outdated, uninteresting and restrictive for both teachers and students (Zhu, 2000). These shortcomings severely affected students in both learning interests and catching up with the development of the world. If this situation continues, more parents and students will be dissatisfied with today's school system.

Wealth as a Determining Factor: Some Considerations

China is a big country. Science and technology education is unequal from one region to another. The national entrance tests sometimes are either too easy or too

difficult in various regions throughout the country. Thus, the government might cancel the national examination by yielding control over examinations to each province or even each city. The new tests would be more suitable in measuring students based on the local teaching level. At the same time, since urban school settings varied considerably from rural settings, it is also reasonable to assume that policy would be made based on the consideration of the needs of the city and countryside separately (Seeberg, 2000, p. 23). For instance, most of the key-point schools are located in the cities. With better teaching facilities and higher qualified teachers, city schools were reinforced by the key-point-school system. As a result of these, the number of the refused rural students at each examination level is bigger than that of cities. Thus, the continuity of this situation would widen the quality and access gap between rural and urban areas (CIPE, 1985, p. 15). Therefore, even in the same province, rural and urban schools have to be considered differently in adjusting schools into their communities. The research conducted in this thesis has demonstrated the great range of expectations in even the local setting.

Meanwhile, if the national entrance examinations were abolished, there would be no need for all schools throughout the country to start and end on the same day. Given the specific conditions in the North and the South, schools in the North can start on a later date than those in South based on the change of seasons and weather. This will reduce the absentee rate of the students from rural areas when more employment support is needed in the agricultural seasons. Thus, schools can offer terms on the basis of full-time, half-time, spare-time, in the slack season or at other times (CIPE, 1985, p. 16). At the same time, distance, correspondence and Internet education also could be developed. In this way, not only do human resources become more fully developed, but also students from

rural areas could receive the greatest benefit from their study. For instance, some rural students can work in the daytime and study at night through access to the Internet or by taking correspondence courses.

With respect to school problems caused by unequal wealth, schools may also take some measures to change teachers' situation and their teaching attitudes. On one hand, schools could increase teachers' salaries. Although teachers' salaries have been raised three times since 1977, teachers who teach in the rural schools continue to have low salaries, sometimes only half the salary of the state school teachers (CIPE, 1985, p. 43). This is related to the low passing rate in the national entrance examinations. To attract well qualified teachers to rural areas, salaries could be set as high as or even higher than those of the urban teachers (CIPE, 1985, p. 45). Schools could also offer some training programs to their teachers. In these programs, teachers' personal attitudes may also be paid attention to, because a school's unfair treatment is usually caused by teachers' unconscious language or behavior. Teachers sometimes look down upon children from poor families in their teaching (See Chapter 6). This concern has been experienced by Group II parents in this study. Thus, teachers could be prepared with not only knowledge, skills and techniques in teaching, but also with high personal qualities, such as sympathy, kindness, and friendliness in education. Schools need to check teachers at this point when they recruit new teachers.

Schools could also help Group II parents based on their financial needs. In this sense, schools may increase financing sources for education, including more scholarship and education funds. Parents from Group II lose confidence in their children's learning capabilities when they worry about their children's high tuition fees. At present, with the

fast development of China's economy, China has the ability to invest more money in education. But it is still impossible for all schools to cancel tuition fees. So reliable financial support is one of the ways to guarantee the maintenance of rural and urban poor students at school (Pepper, 1991, p. 31). Loans and funds should be increased and extended to more students who need them to finance their education. Sichuan Province has led the way in this respect. On March 20, 2001, it was reported that all graduate and MBA students were eligible to borrow loans as high as RMB 36,600 from Sichuan Agriculture Bank to finance their study (HLCE, 2001). At the same time, scholarships should cover a wider range of students in order to encourage more students to study harder. With loans and financial aid more widely available, Group II parents will feel free economically to hold higher educational expectations for their children. Their expectations should no longer be limited by how much they are able to pay for their children's education. If children of Group II parents could achieve high marks, schools should be able to grant scholarships to them. They would cover major school expenses. For average students from poor families, loans should be available to support their studies. By helping students in these two ways, the major financial problem could be alleviated in the education system. Wealth as an educational determinant would be reduced in importance.

Loans and scholarships are still not enough for financing all students of Group II parents. Schools could create more job opportunities for students. Today, most of the school-run factories, cafeterias, bookstores, and dining halls in China are run and managed by school employees. Schools have to set a great sum of money aside in their budgets to keep these parts running. But if schools could hire students as part-time

employees to do such serving jobs, in one part, it would cut down school expenses. Students would have a chance to earn money for their study and gain some experience for their life in their spare time. In fact, Shenzhen University started this model when it was set up at the beginning of the 1980s. Students earn money by working for the university or off-campus with the information provided by the university (Cleverley, 1985, p. 274). It has proven quite successful. So if colleges and universities can follow Shenzhen University as an example, fewer Group II parents would have their children drop out of school.

With financial support from within and outside the educational system, parents in the Workers Group (Group II) would raise their educational expectations. More would also expect their children to study abroad, or to have a Ph.D. degree. At least, they would not expect their children to achieve only the lowest education level that is required for finding jobs (See Chapter 5).

Gender: What Remains to be Done?

In China, girl students are still at a disadvantage in education. This is clear from the different responses from Groups I and II. Parents of Group II would like their girls to stop their education and give help in the family money making affairs. Some girls are withdrawn from junior high school and even primary school to assist with their family chores (Hooper, 1991, p. 360). To solve this problem, schools must pay special attention to the education of girls. For instance, schools might set up more or higher financial support for female students. This would stimulate parents to send their girls into schools, if they are good students. The other problem female students face today is the low school

enrolment, especially in the rural areas (Benewick & Donald, 1999, p. 107). So schools may set up some special majors for girls or may look for some positive measures to help girl students. For example, schools can set up training classes on how to take care of households or start other courses that are beneficial to the countryside parents, such as how to use their limited money wisely. In this way, even if some girls drop out of the school, more would remain in the classroom. This would reduce the tendency of fewer girls attending schools. At the same time, female graduates could be given priority in employment, instead of the discrimination that now exists. Schools could write stronger recommendation letters for their female graduates. When parents, especially those in Group II see girl graduates get good jobs, they would be more likely to send their daughters into schools rather than keep them at home.

Parents and Their Children's Schools

In this study, it stood out that parents in both groups were dissatisfied with today's school system. To meet the needs of parents at this point, educational institutes and leaders must review their relations with parents. For example, since parents in both groups mentioned that children's individual personalities and capacities should be taken into account, big classes could be divided into small ones or even small classes be separated into groups based on students' interests and the difficulties of the courses. New policies may also be made to encourage teachers to teach based on students' individual interests. "Large classes can only be managed effectively by lightening teachers' overloaded teaching schedule" (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p. 68). Thus, when large classes with more than sixty students are divided into smaller ones with only about thirty

students or fewer, teachers can spend some time on each student. In such small classes students will not feel anonymous and distant from both school and their parental educational expectations (Corson, 1998, p.4).

Fair incentive systems in stimulating teachers to devote themselves into their work could also be set up. The old system has already been an obstacle in educational development. Instead, qualified teachers, regardless their age and how many years they have been working, should be considered first for praise, promotion, bonuses and adequate accommodation. Only in this way are teachers willing to spend more time and energy with their students rather than to do something else to increase their incomes. At this point, the state may enlarge the proportion of GDP investment in education. In China, the education investment is very low. In 1985, education spending occupied to the total GDP of 2.9%, while in 1995, the percentage lowered to only 2.3%. This is abnormal. When the national productivity increases, the money spent on education should increase, too, rather than decrease. Thus, in a new national budget, more money should be considered for education. This would not only keep qualified teachers in their position, but also retain more students in schools.

Under the suggested proposed reforms, schools might allow the departure of those who want to quit their jobs. Before schools were afraid of teachers' leaving based on the small number of people who were interested in teaching. Worse, the most intellectually able or most promising students tended not to choose teaching as their profession. Those who entered teaching were the students who were often weak academically and were attracted by the special stipends given to teacher education (Paine, 1992, p. 222). But

now with improved conditions provided for teachers, there would be more students who were willing to become teachers. When some older teachers shift to other fields, there will be more positions for newcomers. This would provide schools with better opportunities for selecting teachers. With the good circulation of teachers, it would be easier for schools to adjust their subjects to meet the needs of the parents if necessary.

To meet the individual needs of parents, students, and teachers, the central education committee may have to decentralize the textbook compiling rights. When textbooks are composed of the topics related to the local situation, children would be more curious and eager to learn. Curriculum also could be written regarding the needs of local development. Current textbooks are focused greatly on theoretical knowledge. Not only are these theories out of date, but also they cannot provide students with the skills they need in their future work. Knowledge instead could be taught through laboratory or actual labor activities in companies, factories or farms. Textbooks should provide students with the chance to get out of the "Ivory Tower". Hence, students will have a better understanding about the world and people. That is why several parents both from Group I and II in this study expected the reforms to happen in their children's textbooks.

As reforms in China deepen and become more extensive, schools will also need to take responsibility to strengthen linkages with their communities (Perry, 2000). Schools may combine all strengths from both inside and outside schools. Only in this way can schools stay harmoniously in contact with their communities and catch up with the development of the society.

Towards Greater Parental Participation in Education

Educational institutions need to make efforts to convince parents that education benefits students from both low-income and high-income families. Strongly influenced by China's traditional culture, Group II parents who lived in poor conditions held lower educational expectations for their children due to such reasons as high tuition fees, their own unhappy education experience, and their beliefs about education. As it has been argued before, parental educational attitudes affect parental child-rearing styles (Xie, Seefeldt, & Tam, 1996). Children are influenced by and echo their parents' attitudes and beliefs consciously and unconsciously (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992, p. 28). Schools can provide support for parents who are under the situation of Group II parents in this study from a psychological point of view.

Schools might try to build up the confidence and pride of poor parents in order to convince them that their high educational expectations for their children are worthwhile. At this point, schools can send teachers to visit Group II parents, instead of waiting for those parents to come and see teachers and school leaders. Group II parents are usually shy in discussing their children's education with other people. They often look down upon themselves from an educational point of view. So, when they find problems in their children's education, even if the problems are not serious, they would rather ignore them than go to school to discuss them with school leaders or teachers. Sometimes, this can cause bigger problems, because all the minor problems become severe problems when they accumulate to a certain degree. Hence, schools should send teachers to learn Group

II parents' opinions before all minor problems become big issues, which is also a beneficial way for school leaders to run schools in an efficient way.

Schools may provide more chances for parents to communicate with school leaders and teachers. In this research, it was obvious that the Group I parents enjoy more privilege in communicating with their children's schools than Group II parents do. As a result, Group I parents held higher educational expectations than Group II parents. Only Group II parents expected that schools could create more chances for parents to communicate with schools, because with more education, at parent-teacher meetings, Group I parents were used to having much to say about their children and about the school. Parents in Group II would not be so open in commenting or making suggestions concerning school development and students' education. Due to their own unhappy school experience and their vocabulary or spelling mistakes, Group II parents are reluctant to visit the schools. Nor are they willing to give true and positive day-to-day feedback about their children's study situations at home. Thus, schools need to provide more chance to dialogue with the parents of peasants and the urban poor.

Improved home and school communications could be achieved through school organizations, such as meetings or gatherings. At each time, parents could be offered more speaking chances. At present, most of the parent-teacher conferences are about two hours. At the beginning, teachers always take a long time to introduce school plans and to say what has been and should be done. Then time left is for parents to talk. For one 50-student class (average), the time is not enough. Some of the active parents, usually the

Group I parents, would have chances to speak, while Group II parents would likely remain silent. So the meeting should be lengthened to about four hours and divided into two sections, the section of teachers' introduction and the section of parents discussion. In this way, with more time, even Group II may want to say something about their children's education. It is useful for teachers to collect parents' opinions on school education.

In their meetings, parents also might be clearly informed about their children's school achievement. Without knowing their children's schooi life, parents could hold either unreasonable or low educational expectations for their children. In this research, parents in both Intellectual and Worker Groups held very high expectations for their children. Some of them definitely expected too much from their children's education. This would potentially cause problems both to their children and to the school. Information on their children's progress will allow parents to be proud of their children, especially the Group II parents. Those parents may start to expect their children to remain in school or to climb to a higher educational level. Meanwhile, when parents become well informed about their children's school achievement, they can also have a general idea about their son or daughter's mental health. Sufferings, killings, and suicides can be reduced. Children can enjoy studying and living more.

Schools should encourage students to talk with their parents about both their achievement at school, their teachers, their school leaders and the school work. Through these daily conversations, parents can acquire general information about their children's

school and their children's school work. The daily accumulated information is useful in parent-teacher discussions. Students also should be encouraged to ask their parents' opinions at home. Then teachers can get the information by asking students, having surveys, or giving students writing assignments about their parents' ideas on education. In this way, parents' dissatisfactions and satisfactions about the school system will be learned naturally and more quickly.

Therefore, if schools could provide further chances for parents from both groups to speak and hear the words, praises, complaints, or suggestions, schools could be much more interesting places for students from both sides. Then, no matter from which group the children come, they would enjoy their study and have greater respect for the school and its teachers, and leaders as well as for their parental educational expectations. The old Chinese saying that "dragons' sons are dragons; phoenixes' daughters are phoenixes; and mice children can always dig holes" will be nowhere to be proved true.

In Sichuan Province, there are a great number of minorities. Each of them has its own culture and tradition. The previous system of management in which only the central government made the school policies and controlled schools at each level tightly by ignoring the specific characteristics of the schools and their environments cannot meet the needs of the country, the communities, the parents, and the students anymore. Schools need to take the voices from their communities into consideration. Parental expectations are the loudest voice in this sense and must be heard in order to guide reforms. But only to listen to the opinions that parents have is far from enough. Schools also need to

analyze and pick up the ideas that are useful and beneficial to both schools and students. To meet the needs of the community, schools also need to take the responsibility for giving guidance to parents in their expectations for both their children and the school system. Once parents realize what the specific problems are that schools and their children have, they will devote their time and opinions in helping schools deal with such problems, instead of merely complaining about them.

School reforms are not easy. They include all aspects of education, including education patterns, teachers and students, as well as teaching methods and curricula. But the most difficult part is the implementation of new policies. It requires educational policymakers, school leaders and schoolteachers to pay attention to students' backgrounds. Also they have to take the worries and expectations of parents into consideration. Only when all of these are put together can an effective school system be produced.

In this thesis, parents' expectations about their children's education in 2000 were collected, summarised, and analysed. These results make it clear that China's education system now faces some difficult choices. They need to be considered carefully. The suggestions made here are based on this research. It is clear from this study that educational reform must be built on greater awareness of the diversity and circumstances found in China's families. It is with this increased awareness that policymakers, school leaders and officials must begin their work.

Parental educational expectation is a very broad topic. Since it is still under-researched, this topic has its great potential in the research field. In the future, scholars may focus on different aspects, such as gender, wealth, or the communication between parents and school. Based on the conclusions made from these research, scholars could give more specific suggestions in each aspect. It can provide better understandings and helps to the future policy makers.

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* Translations from Chinese to English based on meanings.

Appendix I

Questionnaire on the Parental Expectations in Education

1. The sex of your child(ren) _____.
2. The age of your child(ren) and his or her (their) school grade(s) _____.
3. Father's age and occupation _____.
   Mother's age and occupation _____.
4. Father's education _____.
   Mother's education _____ .
5. What educational expectations have you been holding for your children?

6. What changes have you made in the educational expectations you held for your child(ren) with growing of him/her/ them?

7. What is the relationship between your educational expectations for your child(ren) and the change of family economy or other family elements?

8. What educational expectations did you have if your one-child were on the opposite sex?

9. Are you satisfied with today's education system based on the educational expectations you held for your child(ren)?

10.If today's education system cannot meet your educational expectations for your child(ren), what reform(s) do you think should be done?

Appendix II

Informed Consent Form

This study is being conducted by Rui Niu in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the M.Ed. (Leadership and School Development) degree in the School of Education, under the supervision of Drs. George D. Perry and David MacKinnon.

The purpose of this study is to collect a relative amount of information and generalize what educational expectations Chinese parents in Sichuan Province hold for their children.

To be eligible to participate in this study, you will be required to complete the Questionnaire on the Parental Expectations in Education to express your current expectations both for your children and for schools. Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you have the right of refusing to answer any questions or the whole questionnaire. And your individual data are completely anonymous and confidential since all information you provide will become one part of the research.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the results once they are available, please leave your name and address in the space provided at the bottom. If you have additional questions, concerns or comments, please contact Rui Niu (ruiniu@hotmail.com) if you speak Chinese; either Rui Niu, Dr. George D. Perry (george.perry@acadiau.ca or Dr. David MacKinnon (david.mackinnon@acadiau.ca) if you speak English. I appreciate your co-operation.

I, _____ (please print) bereby acknowledge that I have read the above protocol and consent to participate in this study. I have been informed about the nature and procedure of this study and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time that I wish to do so.

_____ Date: _____

(Signature of participant)

_____ Date: _____

(Signature of participant)

Address for results and information to be sent to:

_____.

Appendix III

Consent Form

For the purpose of conducting research for the graduate thesis "A University Education For All? : A Case Study of Educational Expectations Held by Parents In China's Sichuan Province" by Rui Niu, the following conditions are mutually agreed upon by the researcher and participant:

As Researcher I agree to the following:

* Ensure that every participant is supplied with enough time to read and understand all questions presented on the Questionnaire.

* Provide every participant the opportunities to answer all questions on the Questionnaire freely.

* Information obtained from every participant will be keep confidential.

As Participant, I consent to the following:

* Answer questions on the Questionnaire carefully and truely. And all information will be destroyed upon successful completion of the final document.

* That information will be read only by me or thr researcher.

* That the information given by me be used for the purpose of the above named thesis and any subsequent journals.

* That each participant's name is replaced by a pseudonym.

I have read and understand the conditions outlined above and agree to proceed with this graduate thesis in accordance to these conditions.

_____ Date: _____

(Signature of participant)

_____ Date: _____