

Chapter 2

Compulsory Education in a Rich District

Tongzhou in Beijing

2.1 Social and Economic Background

Tongzhou District lies about 20 km southeast of Beijing, at the northern end of the Grand Canal, and covers about 900 km². Farmland occupies about half the total land area. The District is well placed geographically to take advantage of the rapidly developing industrial and service sector economic activity and is now well served by transport infrastructure linking it to the capital and to the hinterland in Hebei. Tongzhou has become one of the satellite towns of Beijing and has benefitted from being identified as a special development zone.

Tongxian has been upgraded administratively to become Tongzhou. This signifies the transition of the district from being agriculturally based to being industrial and service sector focused, and peri-urban in character. The upgrading of Tongxian to Tongzhou has been accompanied by changes in administrative structure and rationalization in order to increase efficiency, and reduce duplication. Towns and townships have been amalgamated. Thus in 1990, under the raw material and agriculture-oriented county management structure, the county comprised 24 towns, townships and districts, and 473 villages. Today it comprises 10 towns, 1 township, 4 sub-district offices, 67 residential committees, and 480 villager committees. Xiji Town and Langfu Town, which we surveyed in 1990 have now been amalgamated together. The underdeveloped Dadushe Town has been integrated into Majuqiao Town. These changes also reflect urbanization and inward migration from more remote and poorer areas. This means that it is often difficult to compare, precisely, changes from 1990 and 2010.

Tongzhou has been physically transformed from a small town with a provincial character to a bustling city with wide boulevards and modern multistorey buildings along the main street. What was a poor rural village environment in Dadushe is now unrecognisable, as Majuqiao has developed its industrial zone with corporate headquarters and modern industrial buildings. Xiji was the richest xiang and

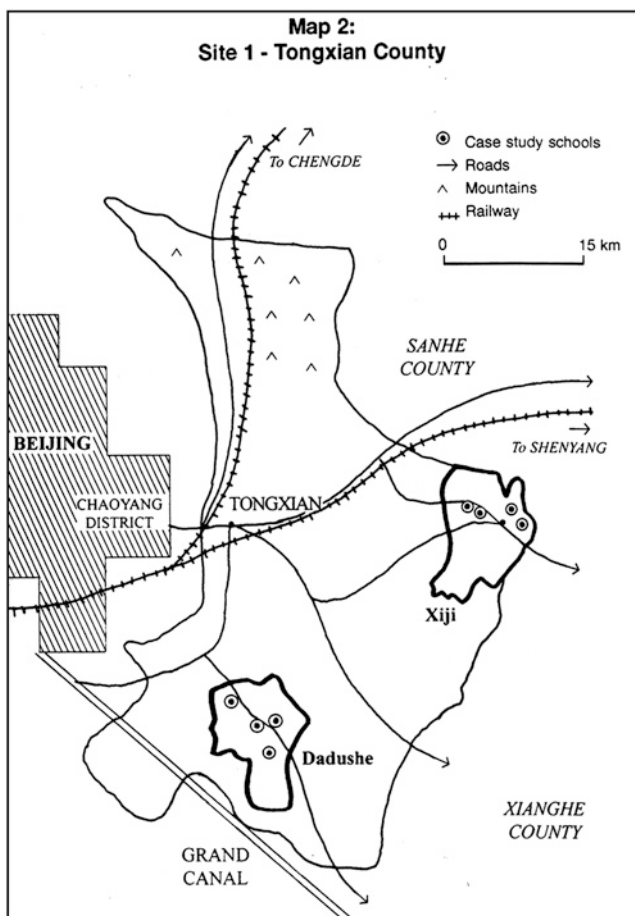
Dadushe the poorest in 1990. In 2009 the situation has reversed. Dadushe is now in Majuqiao which is the richest part of Tongzhou, and Xiji is now last but one in the ranking. Xiji has changed much less than Dadushe with much of the infrastructure remaining recognizable.

Most recently plans are underway to accelerate development further with five year planned investments to “wake up” the district and invigorate its commercial and cultural life. These plans include building a new town to accommodate an increasing number of migrants attracted to the area by its rapid development and buoyant labour market. Environment friendly town planning, shopping malls and cultural centres are included in efforts to make the city more attractive as a location for business and counterbalance the growing numbers who now commute daily to jobs in Beijing (MetroBeijing, March 14th, 2011). The number of migrants in the area has increased dramatically. In 1990 there were very few and now it is estimated that there are more than 500,000 migrants across Tongzhou, especially in Majuqiao where the Yizhuang development zone is located.

The economic growth which began in the 1990s in Tongzhou accelerated in the 2000s. The district remains amongst the richest group of administrative districts in China. Urban per capita income reached about 17,000 yuan, and rural income about 8300 yuan by 2010 and has continued to grow. This is much higher than in Ansai and Zhaojue. Two rural xiang were selected for study in 1990. In Xiji the richest the average per capita income was about 2000 yuan and in Dadushe, the poorest, it was only 1200 yuan. At that time Xiji generated most of its income from small scale industry, and Dadushe was predominantly agricultural. Whereas in 1990, 77 % of the total population were agriculturally dependent, this had fallen to only 55 % by 2006 and is now much less than 50 %. Industry and service sector activity now account for most of the economic output by value and will soon account for most employment. Increasing numbers now commute to Beijing and its suburbs using the multi-lane highway and high speed train which have been constructed.

In Tongzhou as a whole the resident population grew modestly from about 580,000 in 1990 to 637,000 by 2006, an increase of only 10 % (excluding migrants) over 16 years. Tongzhou has seen a sharp decline in the birth rate. In 1990 the rate was 15 ‰. By 2003 this had fallen as low as 4 ‰, though it recovered in 2006 to about 7 ‰. The birth rate amongst residents has tended to be greater than that of migrants, reflecting the circumstances of migrants amongst whom larger numbers are likely to be single.

There have been dramatic changes in attitudes towards the one-child policy since 1990, especially in the rural villagers in Tongzhou. In 1990 family planning was being promoted and meetings and mobile loudspeakers were being used to persuade families to have only one child, because the policy was only partly successful. The Birth Control Office showed that there were 264 newborn infants six years before and there should have been 264 children of school age in school by 1989. In fact the school age population was 504, and the actual enrolment was 607. Clearly extra births were taking place and not being reported. In 2009 the situation had changed. The attitude of rural people in Tongzhou appears to have become closer to that of urban residents and most appear to have only one child.



Map 2.1 Site 1—Tongxian county (Now Tongzhou District)

Several reasons were given by those interviewed for changing attitudes. First, there were rising costs of education, and increasing social competition, which were thought to intensify the risks of success in raising children and finding them jobs. Second, more young couples of child-bearing age were making the choice to pursue their own development goals and a higher quality life and were placing a lower priority on raising a family. Third, several informants indicated that the traditional concept of “bringing up sons to support parents in their old age” was outmoded since it had become very uncertain where children would go to work or study in the future, and it was unrealistic to depend on them. Interviewees in Xiji also argued that discrimination against girls at birth had ceased to be a problem and enrolment patterns seemed to confirm this (Map 2.1).

2.2 Change and Transformation in Xiji and Dadushe

To understand the educational transformations in the case study districts it is necessary to elaborate on the more general changes that have taken place. This provides a reminder that change is often not linear and may be subject to the influence of many different factors, only some of which are under the control of local planners, and that changes are often interconnected.

Xiji is southeast of Tongzhou, and located at a communication junction between Beijing, Tianjin and the Hebei and northeast hinterland and was historically a gateway to Beijing. Now the Jingjin expressway, Tongxiang highway and Jingshen expressway all run through the township, with local access points. Twenty five years ago Xiji had jurisdiction over 36 villages. After the amalgamation in 2002 with Langfu Town, it now presides over 57 administrative villages, with a population of 46,000 or about 1.8 times as much as in 1990. Development zones have been identified and new businesses have been attracted into the area, including some with multinational ownership. The agricultural economy has been reformed and is centred on the Grand Canal fruit production belt and Chaobai River vegetables production belt with newly developed greenhouse facilities and a developing riverside ecotourism and sightseeing area.

Despite these and other developments Xiji itself has not changed very dramatically. There is little difference in the appearance of downtown businesses, local roads, and residents' housing from the past. Now the main sources of income are grain crops and market gardening for fruits and vegetables, and for some, jobs in Beijing or in other parts of Tongzhou District. The residents' per capita income appeared to be between 5000 and 6000 yuan in 2010, much lower than the average for Tongzhou city. Local revenue is argued to be only sufficient to cover payroll finance, with little left for investment in infrastructure and educational development. Structural changes have resulted in a decline in relative prosperity. Though incomes have risen, they have done so more slowly than in Dadushe. Formerly, most of the output value came from synthesized processing, spinning and other manufacturing industries, and agricultural labour now only accounts for 10 % of all employment. The shift back to agriculture has occurred as Xiji's rural industry has relocated to areas with lower costs.

In 2001 Dadushe Township of 16 villages amalgamated with the 34 villages of Majuqiao Township which is located in the southeastern suburbs of Beijing, southwest of Tongzhou District. It is also a communication hub strategically located between Tongzhou, Daxing and Hebei-Beijing-Tianjin corridor. Close to the Liangshui River. The 6th Beijing ring road crosses the district and the Jingjintang Expressway passing through it. The present administrative region of the town covers 57 administrative villages. In 2007, the per capita income of Majuqiao for local residents was about 10,000 yuan. The population had reached about 43,000 or about 2.5 times that in 1990. As noted above there is now a very substantial migrant population. In this area there are over 100,000 migrants which is more than twice the resident population.

Nearly half of the land in Majuqiao has been allocated to high and new technology industrial development zones, and it is one of the 33 suburban prioritized centre towns designated by Beijing Municipal Government. These enjoy preferential policies on income tax, import and export tax, depreciation of fixed assets, land utilization, and qualify for performance-based grants, and financing. Technology intensive environment industries and the headquarters of logistic enterprises have become the two largest industries in the town. Majuqiao is also an important production base for vegetables, grain and subsidiary foodstuff. Over two thirds of the workforce is employed in industry and a quarter in the service sector, compared to nearly 90 % in agriculture in 1990. Over 60 large scale industrial enterprises are operating and the number continues to grow. Majuqiao is also the site of large scale developments in real estate which will generate more housing and jobs related to construction. Revenues have been rising fast as a result of the rapid economic development and it has been possible to invest in infrastructure and educational quality to a greater extent than in Xiji.

Xiji's relative decline compared to Majuqiao can be put down to a variety of factors. First, when the market economy replaced the doubletrack pricing system in the 1990s the phasing out of the subsidies meant that the clothing industry based in Xiji ceased to be competitive. Second, metal fabrication industries in Xiji only undertook early stage processing which added little value compared to producing finished products. Third, the location is less favourable for changing patterns of commerce and real estate development than Majuqiao. Lastly, Xiji has suffered from serious brain drain. Its relatively slow development has meant that aspirant parents and professionals have moved to Tongzhou City and Beijing. Even primary teachers prefer to live in Tongzhou City and commute. This is in strong contrast to Majuqiao which is growing and attracting large numbers of migrants.

2.3 The Evolution of Compulsory Education in Tongzhou, Xiji and Majuqiao

In Tongzhou as a whole primary level enrolments have been falling and schools have been consolidated and merged to reflect changing numbers of school age children, and changes where the population is located as urbanization occurs. The number of primary schools in Tongzhou declined from over 300 to just over 100 between the case study periods. During this time all 130 incomplete village primary schools were closed and amalgamated with complete schools.

In Xiji the 24 schools fell to only 7 despite the incorporation of Langfu schools, and all 8 village schools closed. One central primary school now oversees 6 complete primary schools. Of the 13 primary schools in Dadushe Township only 3 remain after the merger with Majuqiao. After a period of mergers there is now only one central primary school and two complete primary schools.

The distance that children need to travel to get to school has increased for those who live in the villages, as a result of school mergers. Majuqiao Township government has invested 200,000 yuan a year to hire 11 buses to commute between schools and home. The bussing system now covers about 750 primary school children living in 25 administrative villages. In Dadushe primary school 500 children take school buses between home and schools. The costs are shared with households and amount to 50 yuan per student each term. The scheme is welcomed by parents. In contrast in Xiji there is no organised bussing. Some of the students in the complete schools have to walk large distances between school and home. In Xiaolin primary school children walk to school together and many have to walk for 40 min or more. The school has a regulation that children below 12 cannot use a bicycle for safety reasons. Some parents carry younger children to school by bicycle. The Xiji Township government does not have the resources to hire school buses as in Majuqiao.

The picture is different at secondary level and the numbers have changed little. Overall there were 45 secondary schools in 1990, including 9 complete secondary schools, 1 senior secondary school, and 35 junior secondary schools. The total number now is 46. However, the structure has changed as participation at this level has increased. There are now 9 senior secondary schools, 7 complete secondary schools, 24 junior secondary schools, and 6 nine year schools. The demand for senior secondary places has been increasing as more pupils graduate from grade 9.

Along with these changes schools run by non-government organizations have appeared which did not exist before. These operate at all levels and the number of kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools, and colleges increased from 11 in 2001 to the present level of 31. These predominantly cater for wealthy students and include high quality private schools, some with international partners. Collectively these may enrol about 10 % of students.

Patterns of enrolment at primary level have been changing and numbers falling. The number of students in Tongzhou in primary schools in 2005 was 28,700 compared to 65,100 in 1990. This represents a fall of 36,400 or a 56 % decline. In Xiji, primary schools enrolled 2920 children in 1990 and only 1150 in 2008. Enrolments fell continuously through the 2000s as shown in Fig. 2.1. This illustrates that grade 1 is consistently smaller than grade 6, and entry numbers in grade 1 have been falling year on year.

This is in contrast to Majuqiao where enrolments appear to have increased. In Dadushe in 1990, 1870 were enrolled. In 2008 the number was 2240 representing about a 40 % increase. However, if migrants are excluded, local children only numbered 1520, or nearly 20 % less. As in Xiji enrolments overall are falling and in the 2000s grade 1 was always less than grade 6 (Fig. 2.2). The number of classes fell in both places at about the same rate (Fig. 2.3).

The number of classes has been falling and diminished by about 40 % over a five year period in the early 2000. Class sizes have generally fallen since the 1990s but have been stable from 2005 in Tongzhou. They have risen where migration has been highest. In Xiji class size was around 32 in 1990 and in the 2000s has averaged about 21. In Dadushe there were 25 per class in 1990 and there are now

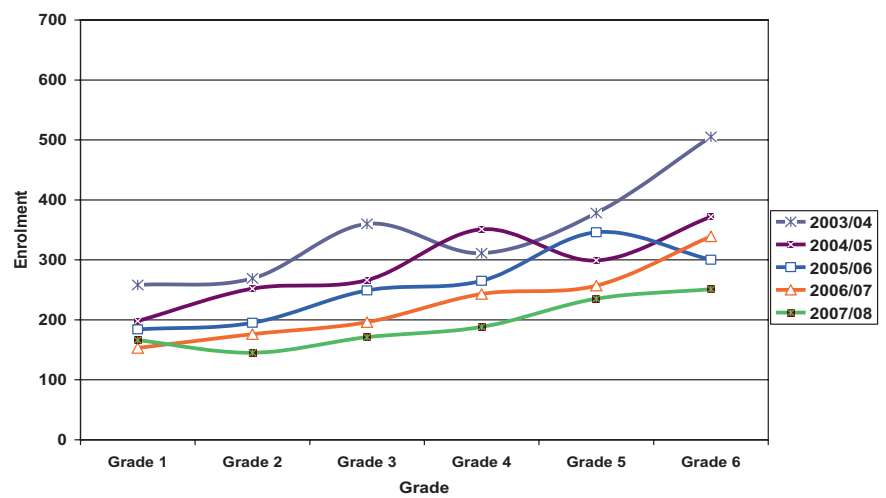


Fig. 2.1 Enrolment by grade Xiji

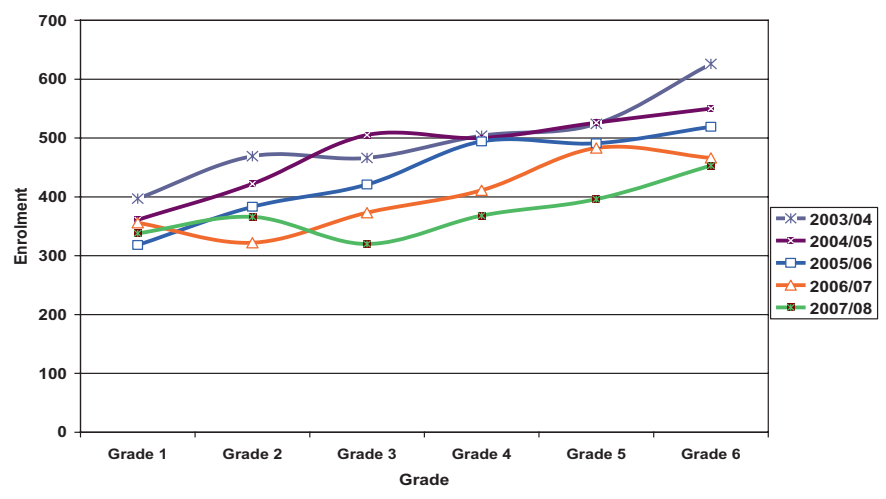


Fig. 2.2 Enrolments by grade Majuqiao—all children

about 34, partly as a result of the influx of migrants. Class sizes tend to be larger in the central primary schools as there is excess demand for entrance. There is not much variation in class size between grades 1 and 6.

As far as we could establish drop out in 1990 in Xiji and Dadushe primary schools was minimal, though it appeared to be significant at secondary level in Dadushe. In 2009 enrolments by grade suggested that there was very little attrition. Thus enrolment in grade 1 in 2003 in Xiji was 258, in 2008 251 were

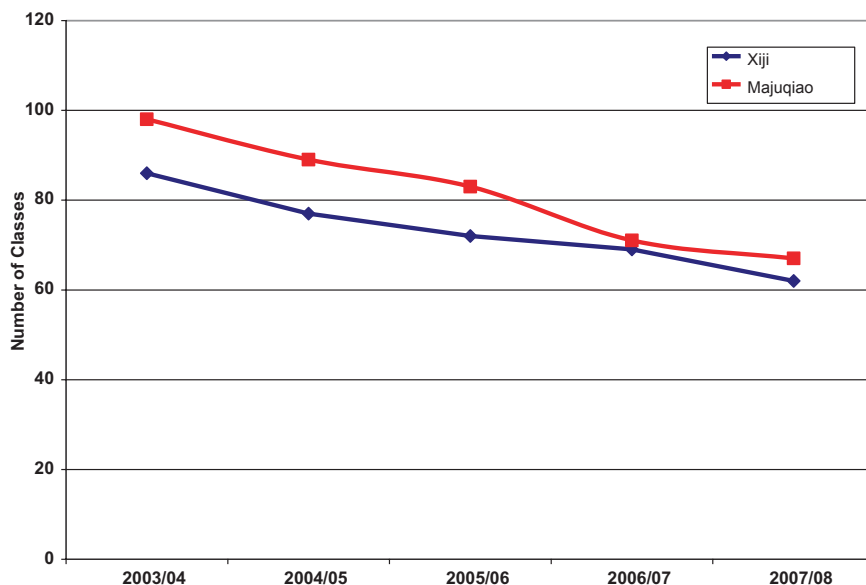


Fig. 2.3 Number of classes in Majuqiao primary schools

enrolled in grade 6. In Majuqiao the numbers were 279 in grade 1 and 280 in grade 6 six years later. Though we do not know if these were all the same children almost certainly most were. There are some transfers in and out of the schools but these are a small number each year, generally less than 5 % of staff. Necessarily migrant children sometimes transfer as a result of changes in the employment of their parents and numbers of migrant children in particular schools can fluctuate quite widely. It seems that some do return to their home areas in grade 5 and 6 to gain admittance to local junior secondary schools. There is also some transfer related to parental aspirations to send their children to schools with a better reputation.

Repetition is not formally permitted, however the research identified a small number of children who had repeated. Data from Majuqiao indicate that the numbers of overage children (by one year or more) had fallen from as many as 23 % in the early 2000s to about 6 % by 2008. Most (90 %) were overage by only a year indicating that over age enrolment was not a serious issue. It should be noted that in 1990 the age of entry to school was typically seven years not six. In 2000 local authorities have encouraged and required enrolment at age six.

Enrolments at junior secondary level are falling as the numbers graduating from primary fall. Though numbers increased from 1990 when 20,000 were in junior secondary, to 31,400 by 2001, they have subsequently declined to 24,100. All primary school graduates seeking a place a junior secondary can locate one so transition rates are close to 100 % and this has been made easier by the falling enrolment. Average class size at junior secondary is about 35 and this has fallen

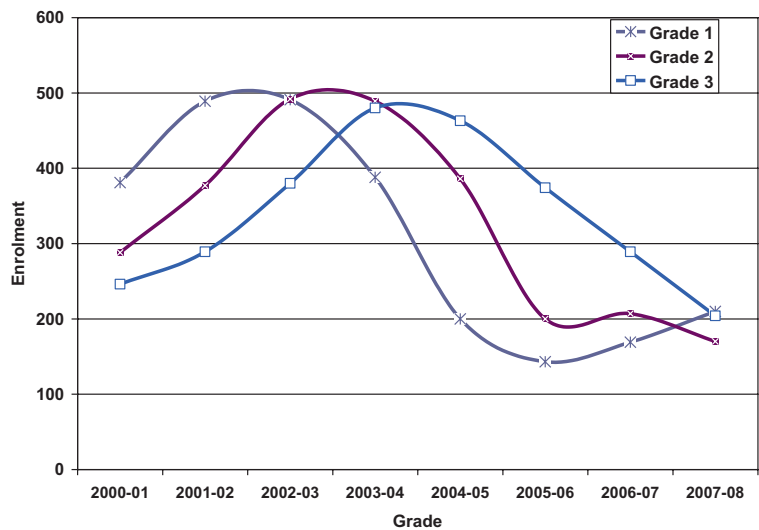


Fig. 2.4 Junior secondary enrolments—Xiji town school

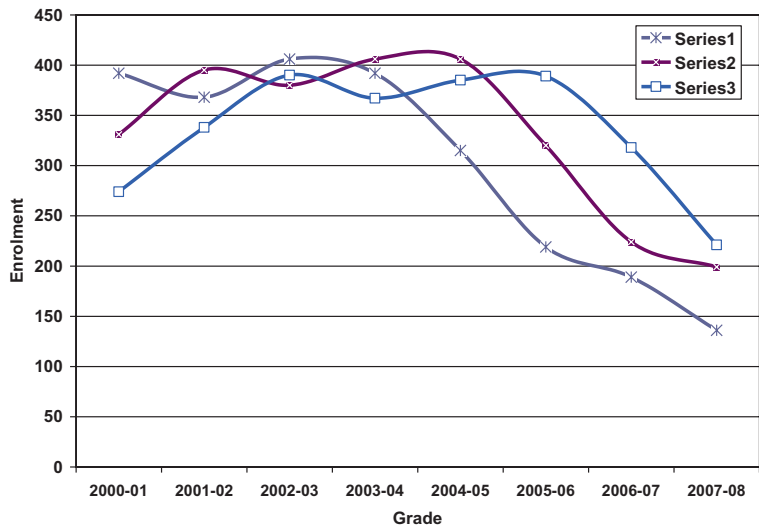


Fig. 2.5 Junior secondary enrolments—Dadushe secondary school, Majuqiao

from over 40 in both Xiji and Majuqiao as enrolments have shrunk. Figures 2.4 and 2.5 show how enrolments in grade 7, 8 and 9 have been falling.

In 1990 attrition was an issue at junior secondary. About 14 % appeared to drop out before completion. This problem seems to be resolved with almost all those who enrol completing the cycle in both districts. The number of overage students

has been reduce dramatically such that by 2007 almost all students were of the correct age for their grade compared to half or more overage in 2001.

There was some evidence that the education of disabled children had improved since 1990. Then intellectually and physically disabled children didn't have a chance of going to normal schools at all. In Xiji Town we located 7 mentally disabled children between the ages of 7 and 12 who have been placed in normal school classes and have been brought into the regular education system. There are no statistics on children with different types of disability, and it remains unclear as to what specialist support is available at school level. In 1990 there was only one special school aimed mainly at mentally disabled children for the whole district. By 2006 this school had 10 classes and about 100 students, and had two primary schools with affiliated classes, and more than 500 children with disability were learning in normal classes across the district. The situation in Majuqiao also seems to have improved but there is no systematic data available to confirm this.

2.4 Teachers and Teacher Deployment

Tongzhou has about 3600 primary teachers and 2350 at secondary level. Pupil teacher ratios have fallen since the 1990s. The ratios at primary and secondary in Xiji were 21:1 and 14:1, and in Dadushe 14:1 and 14:1. In 2008 the ratios had fallen to 9.2:1 and 6.6 in Xiji and 13.5:1 and 8.6:1 in Majuqiao. These very low ratios arise for two reasons. First, the number of children in school has been falling but the overall number of teachers has not fallen as fast. Second, substantial numbers of those employed on teaching faculties do not teach. Thus, for example, about 35 % of the faculty in some secondary schools are in administrative and support roles. The proportion of administrative staff as a proportion of the total staff has been increasing and is now about 23 % at primary and over 30 % at secondary level in Xiji. As the system has developed the proportion of administrative non-teaching staff has remained high, not least because the central primary school has retained its administrative infrastructure despite the reduction in the number of complete primary schools under its responsibility.

Xiji and Majuqiao have not recruited many new teachers since the early 2000s and some schools have had no new appointments for more than eight years. There have been more transfers out than transfers in, and as a result in these two districts it appears that teacher numbers have fallen by 15–20 % since 2003. Staff turnover is modest across the districts averaging around 5 %. Some teachers have retired and a growing number of the younger teachers have succeeded in being transferred to urban schools in Tongzhou city or elsewhere where conditions and subsidies are better. Reasons given for transferring out revolve around better educational opportunities for teachers' own children and career advancement, and the relatively poor living conditions in and around Xiji. This slow exit of teachers is potentially of concern since it is typically the best and most motivated young teachers who succeed in being transferred out. In Xiji problems of attracting new

teachers have been so difficult that local government has explored the possibility of “purchasing” teachers from Qinghai in Inner Mongolia where conditions are generally thought to be less attractive than Xiji.

There are persistent problems in the efficient utilization of teachers in the two districts. Though the pupil teacher ratio is very low the class sizes remain at about 20 in Xiji and over 30 in Majuqiao. With pupil teacher ratios of 10:1 or less it is clear that many teachers cannot have a full teaching load, and that efficient utilization of teachers has yet to be achieved. The case studies indicated that some of the teachers who were teaching were reasonably loaded with as many as 24 periods a week or about 5 a day. But others taught little. There were also mismatches between teachers’ qualifications and the subjects they taught. Only 40 % of teachers in Xiji secondary school were teaching the subject for which they had been trained. Shortages persist in English, Chinese, maths and science, and surpluses in physical education.

Levels of teacher qualification have improved. In Xiji 90 % of primary teachers were graduates of secondary normal schools. By 2008 30 % were Bachelors level graduates and 48 % three year college trained. At secondary level over 80 % had Bachelor degrees. Majuqiao lags behind but nevertheless Bachelors graduates are 22 and 54 % of all teachers at primary and secondary level. Twenty years ago only 70 % of teachers at primary level were qualified and many had professional qualifications from secondary level training schools. Now over 70 % have degrees or three year College qualifications. At secondary level almost all teachers are now Bachelors or three year College graduates. It is clear that from 2003 there has been a major effort to increase the proportion of qualified teachers and this has succeeded in eliminating almost all the under qualified.

A substantial change in Tongzhou has been that substitute teachers have been replaced by government teachers. Whereas in 1990 between 20 % (Xiji) and 30 % (Dadushe) of all teachers were minban, now there are none left in Tongzhou. In the early 2000s minban were either retired or offered the chance to retrain and become qualified.

There have been changes in the age structure of the teaching force. In 1990 most primary school teachers were young and about 45 % were under 35 years old. There were few older teachers in primary schools. By 2008 in both Xiji and Dadushe there were still large numbers of young teachers, but there was also a bulge of older teachers approaching retirement. Conspicuously there were few teachers in the 35–45 year old age range (Figs. 2.6 and 2.7).

Though the average age of teachers in Xiji was 35 years old about 60 % were below this age and relatively inexperienced, and most of the rest were over 45 years old. There was a very similar pattern in Majuqiao. In both Xiji and Majuqiao secondary schools over 70 % of all teachers were below the age of 35, and there were relatively few between the ages of 35 and 45 years. These distributions reflect previous waves of teacher recruitment which seems to have been uneven and to have peaked in particular years. They may also indicate that young teachers teach for five to ten years and then find ways of transferring or moving on to other jobs outside schools.

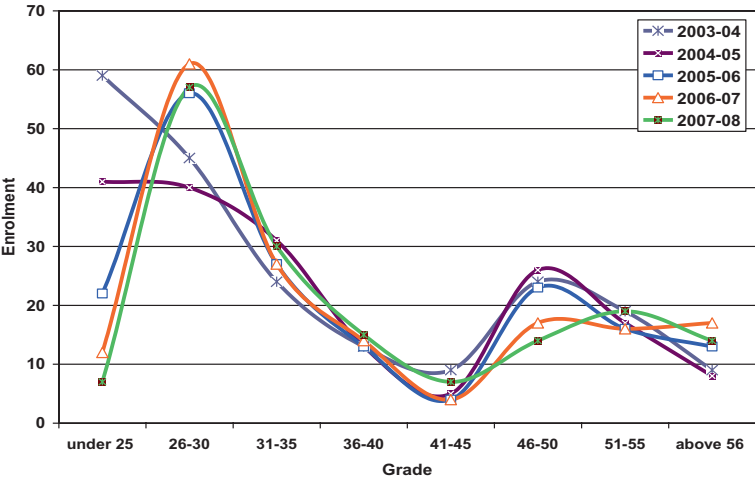


Fig. 2.6 Age distribution of primary teachers Xiji

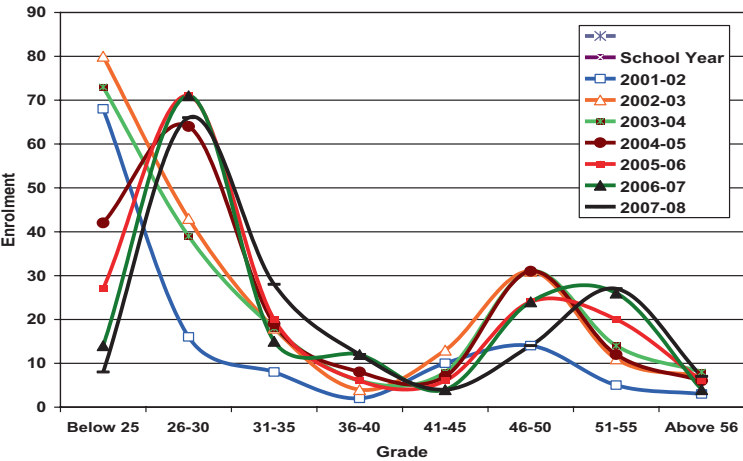


Fig. 2.7 Age distribution of primary teachers in Dadushe

The gender balance in the teaching cadre is skewed in favour of females. At primary level in both districts females constitute between 55 and 60 % of all primary school faculty members including administrators. They represent a higher proportion of teaching faculty in Majuqiao rising to over 70 %. Women are under represented in administrative non-teaching positions where most places are occupied by men. Thus, in Majuqiao in most years 80 % of administrative staff were men.

Teachers' salaries have improved considerable over the last twenty years. The average monthly income of primary and secondary school teachers was 180 yuan

and 200 yuan respectively and the average monthly income of substitute teachers ranged between 70 and 80 yuan. There used to be delays in payment of salaries which caused dissatisfaction. By 2008 all substitute teachers have been replaced and new arrangements mean that salaries are paid direct to bank accounts and are generally on time. Government teachers have a guarantee of salary and some basic benefits and welfare, such as medical treatment, pension, housing allowance. Incomes have been rising and the range of monthly wages is between 1500 and 3000 yuan depending on age, grade and experience, with an average of about 2000 yuan at primary level. Secondary teachers can earn about 500 yuan more on average. These incomes relate only to state supported salaries. Other income can be generated from school resources, though this is only likely to be substantial in urban schools.

There are many issues around salaries. In 1989, China implemented the teachers' structural wage system which took the place of the single fixed wage system. This provided rewards related to teachers' performance. However, these were largely funded from local income generation. In most rural areas teachers' income remained the basic salary. Rewards were very modest e.g. teachers' additional class fee was only 1.1 yuan per class, the home class teacher fee was 0.3 yuan per month for each student. These reward levels were held static for nearly 20 years.

Conditions have improved. In addition to the government salary since 2010 schools have been receiving about 115 yuan a month per teacher to distribute related to teaching loads. Payments per class range from between 2.8 and 3.5 yuan for each class, and an additional 3.5 yuan per class for major subject teachers. However, head teachers receive little benefit to compensate for their additional work and payments are between 60 and 150 yuan a month extra. As a result teachers are often unwilling to be a head teacher, and the morale of teachers can be low. Though there are some other special payments e.g. the town government gives each teacher a subsidy of 100–200 yuan on Teachers' Day; teachers receive subsidized meals at school—these are not judged sufficient to solve problems of low morale. Several of the teachers interviewed indicated they were trying to leave the area and to gain urban residence qualifications so their own children could attend better schools.

Whereas in 1990 most teachers lived locally near the schools in which they taught the pattern has changed. Many now commute to rural schools and live in Tongzhou city. The Tongzhou District government has had to provide regular buses for teachers. However, the fuel and pay for drivers has to be paid by schools. Initially teachers were charged 60 yuan a month for transport but since 2007 this charge has been waived. Of the 33 teachers in the central primary school in Xiji, more than 20 take the bus to commute between the urban district and the school. Over 60 % of teachers in Dadushe secondary school commute one hour each way each day on school buses. Some single teachers do lodge in the school but are in a minority. This pattern of commuting by bus or by bicycle is now common across the district.

Although the qualification rate is very high for secondary schools, there are still issues about the quality of the teachers. The principal of Xiji Secondary School

identified three problems. First, though almost all are qualified they are not all teaching the subjects in which they qualified. What they were trained in did not match what they are teaching. In main subjects such as Chinese, mathematics, foreign languages, physics and chemistry, 40 % of the teachers teaching these subjects are not trained in them as their major. Thus only two English teachers were graduates of three year colleges specialising in English. The rest acquired English through self study. There are 10 teachers who have graduated with physical education as a major subject but only two are actually teaching physical education. The rest are encouraged by the school to learn a second subject to meet the needs of the school. Second, amongst 55 teaching staff, 20 were transferred from primary schools. They take time to adapt to the teaching methods and materials of the junior secondary schools. Third, though overall there are enough teachers, there is a drain of experienced “backbone teachers” because some transfer out to more desirable schools in urban areas around Beijing. Typically between 5 and 10 % of teachers a year leave the school. This principal noted wryly that the training colleges produced and fostered new teachers but that rural secondary schools like his really trained the young teachers who then left for better schools.

The story of one teacher in Xiji Junior Secondary schools illustrates how careers can develop. Mr Xu graduated from secondary normal (teacher training) school and his major was in fine arts. Then he went to Langfu Primary School to teach across all subjects when he was 19 years old. Whilst he taught he was doing part time courses in geography in a three year college and he qualified and was upgraded in 1999. At the same time he was also attending a bachelors degree programme in fine arts as this is his real interest. He is now teaching information technology and computers, and geography in the primary school, and fine arts in Xiji Secondary School.

2.5 Educational Funding and Infrastructure

Educational expenditure in Tongzhou has increased substantially over the last twenty years. Direct comparisons are difficult to make but key changes can be identified. First, compulsory education is now very largely financed directly by the Tongzhou District government and Beijing municipal government. The local taxes for education and contributions from enterprises that existed in 1990 and which accounted for as much as 40 % of expenditure, have been replaced by a single centralized funding system. The inequalities that arose from the differing capacities of rich and poor districts to raise revenue, which resulted in almost twice as much being available per child in Xiji than Dadushe in 1990, have therefore been greatly reduced.

Second, school management has now been concentrated at the county level, rather than shared across several levels. Lower administrative levels are no longer obliged to make contributions to expenditure though some do. Central funding

should be adequate to run effective schools assuming it reaches its intended destinations.

The township level still plays an important role in the development of basic education in terms of funding and improvement of infrastructure. However, Majuqiao is much more advantaged than Xiji and has a much larger financial income. This allows higher levels of investment. Xiji relies on Beijing municipal and Tongzhou District government's financial allocation after meeting basic costs, whereas Majuqiao has the capacity to pay for many additional inputs. This has enabled it to finance an Experimental Secondary School for over 65 million yuan, to refurbish all its schools extensively, and acquire a fleet of school buses.

Third, some additional income is generated from migrants in areas where there are significant numbers of workers from other regions. In Tonzhou typically 200 yuan a term is charged to each non-resident student. This adds up to a considerable sum since it is much more than the capitation paid of less than 100 yuan a month paid for resident students. There are also sporadic donations from enterprises.

Fourth, cost per pupil has risen to about ten times the level in 1990. Primary cost per child in 2010 appear to be about 2500–3000 yuan a year, and at secondary level about 3500–4000 yuan. Non salary expenditure per capita is now pegged at around 800 yuan and primary and 900 yuan at secondary. In 1990 costs per pupil were around 230 yuan at primary and about 400 yuan at secondary.

Fifth, tuition fees and textbook fees have been abolished. Subsidies are now available for poor children to continue to attend school. These changes have made it easier to maintain high levels of enrolment and have reduced some inequalities present in 1990.

Increased funding has been accompanied by greatly improved infrastructure. New buildings have been constructed, especially in Majuqiao which has been physically transformed compared to the past. Information technology is widely available in schools and a ratio of one networked computer to every ten students appears to have been achieved, allowing individual access during IT lessons in secondary schools and central primary schools. Libraries have been restocked. However, some evidence indicated that library use by students was infrequent and that often only teachers could borrow books.

In general school environment and sanitation has improved, though issues remain and it is recognised that standards still need to improve. There are no medical facilities in most of the schools, though some allocate a room for first aid. Schools are obliged to arrange regular medical examinations for staff and students.

In rural parts of Xiji and Majuqiao much of the infrastructure remains recognizable from 1990 and changes have been incremental rather than radical. Greater changes have taken place in infrastructure at secondary school level rather than primary where investment has clearly been on a larger scale. New secondary schools have been built to an impressively high standard and are spacious and well equipped with facilities.

2.6 Migrant Children

Migrant children have become an important feature of changing patterns of enrolment. In 2003, 8580 of the 42,300 enrolled in primary were migrant students who accounted for about 20 % of the total. By 2006 more than 30 % of all students were migrants. In Majuqiao Central Primary School the overall proportion exceeded 45 % in 2008 and was more than 55 % in grade 1 indicating the trend to increased numbers of migrants was continuing. Yizhuang Development Zone in Majuqiao is home to dozens of modern high-tech industries which employ a large number of migrant workers. Across the district as a whole the number of resident students is declining and the number of immigrant children is increasing.

In Xiji migrants constitute about 20 % of primary enrolment and this proportion has also been growing, but not as fast as in Majuqiao. Migrant children are found even in remote rural schools since migrant labour is used in agriculture. Compared with Majuqiao, the pressure on enrolments from migrant students is less. Migrant children also supplement the local resources for schools through contributions they make.

At junior secondary level the numbers of migrant children are smaller than at primary. Overall in the district they have increased from about 5 % in 2003 to about 13 % in 2005. The proportions are smaller than at primary because migrant children have no access to the public senior high school in Tongzhou. Thus many primary graduates return to their domicile junior high school to ensure a smooth entrance into senior high school. Migrant students can enter local secondary professional or technical schools and if they do then the tuition fee for them is the same as for local students. However, these institutions have lower status than senior secondary schools and do not generally lead to university level courses.

Admission to schools above junior secondary level is a problem for migrant students. Since they have no registered Hukou in the locality, they cannot get the admission into an ordinary senior secondary school even if they take the Beijing senior high school entrance exam. If they finish their junior high school education in Beijing and return to their place of domicile to take the local senior high school entrance exam they may have less chance of admission to a highly ranked college than if they had been schooled locally because of variations in the curriculum. As a result some parents of migrant students plan their children's further schooling well in advance and send their children back to their area of domicile after primary education. This can lead to long periods of separation from their parents.

Migrant children are divided into two types by municipal authorities. Those who have a rural household registration are called children of peasant workers. The rule has been if they can present six certificates (temporary residence permit card, household register, singleton female card, agreement/contract/license of parents working in Beijing, no guardian certificate issued by relevant sector in the registered permanent address locus, agreement of housing/certificate of buying a house), they fall within the same policy umbrella as local students. Thus they qualify for the two exemptions (tuition and textbook fees) and one compensation

Table 2.1 Retention of migrant children in Majuqiao primary schools (2003/04–2007/08)

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Grade 1	118	116	112	98	138
Grade 2	128	138	136	115	114
Grade 3	128	166	138	128	114
Grade 4	97	160	154	129	123
Grade 5	80	127	150	145	116
Grade 6	88	105	117	124	114
Total	639	812	807	739	719

(poverty related subsidy). Obtaining all six certificates can be demanding and many may not be able to satisfy this requirement. Those who have an urban household registration have to pay for temporary study fees of 200 yuan per term as noted above (500 yuan per term in secondary school). If the first category of migrant children becomes too large it creates a problem of how to finance the two exemptions and one compensation and this is seen as likely in the future.

The research indicated that not only was migration a new phenomena but that also there were issues of adjustment and balance. Though most of the migrant students were thought able to adapt themselves quickly to local environment and integrate into their new classes and with their new classmates, some migrant students could not keep up with the teaching and had difficulties in their learning, especially foreign languages. There were thought to be gaps in standards and teaching methods between Tongxian and the areas from which migrants came, and issues about levels of parental motivation and commitment. Some students repeated grades partly as a result.

There is a problem of retention for migrant children in Majuqiao that is much more serious than for resident students. Table 2.1 (above) shows that there has been a considerable drop out from grade 5 to grade 6. In 2006/7 there were 145 children in grade 5 but the following year only 114 enrolled in grade 6. For the 2005/6 cohort the number dropped from 150 to 124 between grades 5 and 6. The major reason given for this apparent drop out was that these children were sent back to their home areas to ensure they would get access to a good junior secondary school. Going back for grade 6 allows the children to readjust to the local curriculum and take the examination locally to qualify for secondary school. It is also possible that there is some drop out but there is no data on this.

2.7 Concluding Comments

It is clear from this account that both Xiji and Majuqiao have made substantial progress in implementing nine year compulsory education over the last twenty years. They started with several advantages over other districts, not least being located in one of the richest 300 counties. As Tongxian has developed to become

Tongzhou high enrolment rates have been maintained, drop out, repetition and over age children in the system have become minimal, and facilities and infrastructure have improved greatly. In part this is due to the changes in funding and administrative responsibilities which have been implemented across China. In part it reflects the achievements of many different stakeholders at local level.

Several old issues remains relevant from the 1990 study and some new ones have become prominent. First, though enrolment rates are high, these come at a cost. The pupil teacher ratios are low and have been becoming lower at 10:1 or less. This is well below what is found in most countries with high enrolments. It may be affordable since teachers' salaries remain relatively low in relation to GDP. But it may reflect inefficiencies that need to be addressed if class sizes are to fall to increase teacher contact time with students and improve quality, and if teachers' salaries are to be increased enough to motivate good students to become teachers.

Second, schools have been rationalized as enrolments have fallen and small schools have been merged with larger schools. This concentration should have increased efficiency and reduced administrative overheads but this does not seem to have happened on a significant scale. The non-teaching workforce remains large.

Third, large scale migration has affected enrolment patterns and introduced new dynamics into classroom management, pedagogic challenges, and school financing. The numbers of migrants in Majuqiao are particularly large and in some areas migrant children are in a majority. It may be time to take more special measures to address this reality and the challenges it poses. This may require more systematic integration of new migrants to ensure they settle into schools successfully, with some thought given to bridging programmes that may be required related to language and levels of achievement. The issues around additional costs to migrant households, especially if they pay similar taxes to residents, and access to high school, are likely to become more rather than less important as migration continues.

Fourth, many teachers no longer live close to the schools in which they teach and commute substantial distances. This has costs and may also have an impact on school quality. It also reflects issues surrounding working conditions and quality of life that need addressing if teachers are to be attracted and retained in schools in Xiji and Majuqiao in competition with rapidly developing districts around Beijing. The age distribution of teachers is also a cause for concern, since it appears to be unbalanced with a shortage of experienced middle aged teachers, and increasing numbers approaching retirement. The reasons for this need to be understood and addressed.

Fifth, information systems appear to have improved and key data is available on all schools which generally appear well administered. It is not clear to what extent data is collected and used to monitor children's progress diagnostically and this may be a development that should be considered. It is also unclear to what extent disability is systematically diagnosed and addressed though special provision or managed integration into the mainstream.

Sixth, investment in improving quality remains a priority since physical access is not a problem in Tongzhou. This requires more than improvements in infrastructure, though these remain important. Teaching and learning remains similar to that twenty years ago with a predominance of whole class teaching, passive learning, and undifferentiated learning tasks. It may be that future progress depends on more attention being given to different pedagogies and to a broader range of learning outcomes than those inherited from the past.

Seventh, despite the overall improvement, disparities remain at township and school level. At the township level, Majuqiao has much better financial income and has invested much more in the development of basic education. Xiji is disadvantaged as it has few resources of its own unlike in 1990. At the school level the gaps in school infrastructure have narrowed a lot but are still present. There remain problems with the distribution of teachers and their motivation, and with variations in their subject training and teaching quality.

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