

Climbing the intergenerational ladder of education in urban, migrant and rural China

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Abstract:

This paper investigates trends in intergenerational patterns of educational attainment over time and space in China. Drawing on the Rural-Urban Migration in China and Indonesia (RUMiCI) Survey for 2008, which provides unique access to data on the educational attainments of up to three generations of people within the same household across China's rural, urban and migrant populations, we find that inter-generational "mobility", as reflected in low regression and correlation coefficients between child's and parent's education levels, is lower in rural and migrant populations than in urban ones. A closer look the sources of this correlation reveals that the low values observed in rural and migrant China stem from the fact that the vast majority of these children complete only junior high, with some children in the youngest cohorts actually moving down the education ladder relative to their parents. In contrast, for urban children, the only way is up, a combination of results that has clear and undesirable implications for China's rural-urban divide.

JEL Codes: I24 (Education and inequality), R00 (Urban, Rural, Regional, general), R20 (Household in ROO).

Key Words: Education attainment, inter-generational persistence and mobility, China urban, rural, migrant households, inequality.

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