

# Construction of Social Capital for Orderly Flow of Rural Migrant Workers

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## Abstract

As a result of the changes in the social structure and the system in China, rural migrant workers are active on the economic stage of China's reform and opening up as a particular group, and their flow process and the problem of flow order has aroused extensive attention of scholars. At present, the flow of rural migrant workers is still at a disorderly state, which has brought about a series of social problems. This article attempts to start out from the composition and characteristics of the social capital of rural migrant workers, go into deep analysis of the status quo of disorderly flow of rural migrant workers and further finds out approaches to construction of the social capital of rural migrant workers to ensure orderly flow of rural migrant workers.

**Keywords:** Rural migrant workers, Social capital, Flow, Construction

As a particular group which emerged during the institutional change and social transformation of China, rural migrant workers arouse great attention by the society in terms of their process from the rural area to the urban area. The large-scale flow of Chinese rural migrant workers started from the earlier 80s of last century and rapidly developed with a trend of increase by degrees. By the middle and late period of 90s of the last century, a magnificent situation had emerged and a surging "tide of rural migrant workers" appeared, which became a particular social phenomenon in China and had influences in multiple aspects on development of Chinese economy and society.

However, rural labor emigration of rural migrant workers depends too much on their own network capital and lacks guidance of formal institutions, which leads to blind and disorderly state of flow among rural migrant workers at present. Thus, the status quo of disorderly flow of rural migrant workers needs to be urgently changed. Yet, the construction of social capital of rural migrant workers is the primary issue to resolve the problem of flow of rural migrant workers.

## 1. Internal construction of the social capital of rural migrant workers

According to the survey, after successful flow through relations with relatives, regional contact or schoolmates, rural migrant workers still pay great attention to re-construction of their own social capital, which lays foundation for their second and third flow.

### 1.1 To positively integrate into local social network circle

To leave the former rural community means loss of social capital and fading of relationship network for rural migrant workers. By now, rural migrant workers need to positively construct new social relationship network. First of all, they may have new social relationship network through relations in business. Then, they may positively integrate into local social network circle. After rural migrant workers enter the urban area, low wages and estrangement with urban residents for quite a long time let rural migrant workers not only have no other choice but to rent the marginal area of the urban area, but also seldom communicate with urban residents. This is not only likely to form the situation in which rural migrant workers are concentrated in the same area, but is quite unfavorable for construction of the social capital of rural migrant workers. Whether the first flow of rural migrant workers depends on relationship of relatives, regional contact or schoolmates, if they do not pay attention to the re-construction of the social capital after they enter the urban area, then the limited social relationship network might be quite unfavorable for the re-flow in the future. As for rural migrant workers, the

first thing to do is to get themselves to be integrated into the local social relationship circle as soon as possible after they enter the urban community and to get themselves acquainted with more local people through relationships of business and interests.

### *1.2 To continue to maintain current social capital network*

As one form of capital, social capital will also be devaluated as time goes on. Thus, it is necessary to continuously maintain and make investment in social capital. Rural migrant workers have to keep frequent contact with their former relatives and schoolmates. They have to come to realization that their current investment in the newly established social relationship network is for more returns in the future, for which they may invite these new friends to have a dinner or play cards at ordinary times.

### *1.3 To enhance their own human capital so as to facilitate appreciation of social capital*

The human resource capital here mainly refers to work skills of rural migrant workers. An important reason why rural migrant workers are at a lower position in the urban area is that rural migrant workers have relatively low cultural background and are deficient of professional skills. In addition, from the perspective of social flow theory, the necessary prerequisite for rural migrant workers is to enhance their skills in order to flow from a lower position to a higher position.

## **2. External construction of social capital of rural migrant workers**

### *2.1 Intervention of the government in construction of the formal social support network*

#### *2.1.1 To improve the organizational degree of flow of rural migrant workers*

The government ought to attach great importance to flow of rural migrant workers and regard orderly flow of rural migrant workers as the obligation of the government. Flow without order is ultimately the fundamental reason for the situation of disorderly flow. Only if the government starts to pay attention to the flow of migrant workers and set about coordination, can flow of rural migrant workers finally walk towards an orderly track.

#### *2.1.2 To establish employment training system among rural migrant workers and to vigorously improve the rural labor force quality*

Quality of rural labor force is an important element that restrains result and level of flow among rural migrant workers. For the time being, there are two situations in flow of rural migrant workers. The first situation is redundancy of physical labor force market employees, which is a typical buyer's market. The second situation is that the gap of supply of technical laborers is large and can not satisfy the demand, which is a typical seller's market. In order to change thoroughly this chaos situation, we need to take an initiative to conduct occupational education and training activities of multiple fields with multiple channels and multiple patterns. According to the situation of demand on labor force, we should hold all sorts of technical training classes on local labor force with a clear goal. The government has to strengthen organized and planned technical training on local labor force. However, training on labor force is exactly where the difficult and emphasis lie in the current export of labor service. Under the current circumstance, we have to adopt the multiple training method of jointly running a school by the government and the social power by positively collecting training funds, expand training skill and ensure the scale of labor service export and continue to improve the level of labor service export.

#### *2.1.3 To set up labor export legal assistance center to ensure legal rights of migrant workers*

In order to maintain legal economic interests and personal rights of rural migrant workers, it is necessary to establish legal assistance center for labor service export. One of the difficulties faced up by rural labor force to go to the market is how to maintain their own economic interests and personal rights through the national laws. On one hand, they are deficient of necessary knowledge in law. On the other hand, after they spread to all labor markets, they are also deficient of organized legal dependence. It has been discovered in survey that, quite a lot of rural migrant workers can not be guaranteed in their legal rights as a result of arrears of wage and reduction of wages. As a result, they are often fluttered with fear in their heart, which casts a shadow over labor export. Therefore, it is necessary to resort to legal assistance center to protect the legal rights of rural migrant workers.

#### *2.1.4 To implement urbanized strategy and to push forward rural population to transfer to urban area*

Urbanization is the socialized process in which rural population continuously flows from non-agricultural industries to urban areas, a necessary trend of industrialization and is also the fundamental approach to enhance labor productivity of peasants and diminish gap between urban and rural areas. Economically underdeveloped areas are slow in economic development and difficult in increasing farmers' income, an important restraining factor of which is that the urbanization level is too low, causing a large majority of farmers to be detained for a long time to limited farmland. Thus, we have to liberate our thought, upgrade our concept and continue to speed

up the step of urbanization development. It is necessary to combine establishment of market, establishment of housing and establishment of small urban area, further improve traffic, information and communication environment, make small urban area become a gathering area for township enterprises and personally owned economy, absorb more rural migrant workers to enter the urban area to undertake a career, push forward rural population to transfer to urban area, leave more land to be concentrated to specialized large-scale investors, increase the per capita hold of human resources who take part in agricultural labor, encourage agriculture to develop towards intensive management and improve agricultural labor productivity and motive farmers to increase income.

#### 2.1.5 To offer rural peasants “treatment of national citizens” and to broaden peasants’ employment space

At the time when we vigorously develop labor economy, lead rural surplus labor force to flow in a rational and ordered way and expand employment space of farmers, we should also set up the labor force market with urban and rural unification, gradually eliminate urban and rural barrier, push forward all sorts of reforms, including household registration system, employment system and social security system, get rid of those discriminatory policies that restrain mobile flow and employment of rural migrant workers, return the “national treatment” to rural migrant workers, reduce the threshold for farmers to enter the urban area and enlarge the channels for farmers to increase income. We have to accelerate implementation of urbanization strategy with the central content of “turning farmers to townspeople”, thoroughly reform the household registration system with the breakthrough of expanding employment, enable farmers to rationally flow to urban areas with order liberally and equally according to economic comparative advantage, cancel limitation to the discriminatory policies on employment of rural migrant workers and gradually realize integrated management of urban and rural registered permanent residence. We have to break down the social security system that separates urban and rural areas with the orientation of marketization and socialization, gradually bring those rural migrant workers who enter the urban area for seeking a job into the unified social security system, create fair competition environment for agricultural labor force flow and employment and continuously broaden the employment space and channels of increasing the income for rural migrant workers.

#### 2.1.6 To set up special funds for rural labor force export and to vigorously support establishment and improvement of all sorts of systems

Special fund for rural labor force export is mainly aimed to help the large quantity of farmers to conduct skill training, grasp production skills, improve labor quality and strengthen the ability of rural migrant workers to adapt to the employment requirements of employees. Furthermore, effective utilization of the special fund for rural labor force export can fully mobilize enthusiasm of all sorts of training institutions, and, at the time of enhancing the skills and quality of farmers, facilitate development of training institutions, realize close integration of training and export, generate benign mechanism of training facilitating export and export facilitating training and continue to improve the organization degree of rural labor force export.

### 2.2 *Intervention of social work to assist the government in improving condition of flow among rural migrant workers*

Social work is a kind of discipline and professional method which “helps people help themselves”. Its essence is to help people, its characteristics is to provide service and its principle is to promote coordinated development of human being and the society. Social work can mainly intervene in problems of rural migrant workers from the following several aspects:

#### 2.2.1 Administrative intervention of social work in construction of the system

From the perspective of macro policy environment, social work should employ administrative means of social work to intervene. That is to say, we have to study and stimulate implementation of social policies that are helpful to resolve employment of rural migrant workers, social security and education of their children, and get rid of current irrational policies that obstruct work and life of rural migrant workers in urban area. Thus, social workers not only have to offer assistance to those subjects who are in need of help, but also have to encourage those subjects to come to understand their own surroundings, create conditions to facilitate social harmony, push forward the government to carry out positive social policies and improve social system and structure.

#### 2.2.2 Offer of social service by the community, trade union and NGO (Non-governmental Organization)

For the time being, in addition to those rural migrant workers involved in the construction industry who reside in the construction site, most rural migrant workers are scattered in various communities. Nevertheless, as a result of differences in language, living pattern, habits and values, these rural migrant workers become the non-mainstream group of the communities, together with the habitual mind set of urban residents, which

aggravates contradiction between the urban and the rural people and enables it difficult for rural migrant workers to be integrated into cities in a real sense. Thus, community working personnel should make use of their prestige in the community, their resources and work function to speed up integration of urban and rural areas. Firstly, they may hold activities of cultural propaganda and let community residents come to know about the living condition of the group of rural migrant workers and their contributions to the city by the means of words, pictures or films. They should change urban people's "stereotype image" on rural migrant workers in their subjective consciousness and call for them to show respect and concern in this group. Secondly, they may conduct some voluntary activities and artistic activities to invite rural migrant workers to actively take part, which will provide face-to-face communication opportunities for urban and rural residents and strengthen mutual exchange and understanding. Thirdly, community working personnel should make full use of their resources in the community to help rural migrant workers in their employment information, skill training and education of their children, to settle down as soon as possible in the city and improve their capacity of adaptation to urban life. Fourthly, community working personnel should take advantages of the intermediate role in the government and residents in that they may take an initiative to reflect the current difficulty situation of the group of rural migrant workers and strive for some policy aids and assistance of social power. Trade union is part of the social work of an enterprise, the autonomous organization of the public and is the outcome of social and economic relationship, especially outcome of labor relations. The property of community working staff determines that they have to maintain legal rights of rural migrant workers, especially their labor and economic rights. The specific rights maintenance content includes the following four aspects. Firstly is to maintain their labor rights and economic rights with regards to the prominent issues of employment discrimination, arrears of wage and social security, etc. Secondly is to maintain their democratic rights with regards to the lack of a channel to report their opinions. Thirdly is to maintain their life security rights with regards to the aspects of hard working environment and bad conditions. Fourthly is to maintain their training rights with regards to the problems of weak legal consciousness and cultural skill level. The so-called NGO of rural migrant workers refers to the non-governmental organizations that are non-governmental, non-profit making, autonomous administrative, voluntary and dedicated to resolving all sorts of issues among rural migrant workers. Most of the non-governmental organizations are launched by some social elites, and are constituted by some professional talents and volunteers in law, sociology, psychology and so on. At present, this kind of organizational pattern is at its initial stage in China. However, from the perspective of social development, this kind of organization will be continuously increased and will manifest its strength in terms of resolving daily living, alleviating social conflicts, utilizing social resources and reducing social costs. In the meanwhile, NGO can strive for some local resources and oversea resources (support of all kinds of foundations and oversea donation), so it also has certain resource advantages. What is most important, its work principle of "human orientation and helping people help themselves" and professional work method as well as flexible voluntary activities have played its role in helping rural migrant workers in terms of information consultation, skill training, psychological debugging, interest protection and cultivation of the adaptation capacity, and have improved their life. For example, there are the following several non-governmental organizations, Working Girls in Beijing, Home of Migrant Workers in Hainan, Culture and Communication Center for Facilitators in Beijing and Xinnongmen Corporation, etc. In one word, the major content conducted by these service institutions includes information consultation, skill training, spare-time cultural activity, capacity establishment, rights protection, assistance activity and social appeal, etc.

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