

How Rural Labors in Less Developing Areas of Northwest China Migrate? ----- Evidence from Pingliang, Gansu Province

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of local context on the effectiveness of overall employment strategy in reducing rural labor forces through non-agricultural rural employment. Compared to other regions in China, rural labor migration in Pingliang city, Gansu has owned unique characteristics. In the light of rural labor resource status, local government adjusts measures to particular conditions and seeks after the way for its rural labor migrations that is propitious to current situation. As a result, rural income has been improved, and local economy has been stable. My aim is to highlight the impact of overall employment strategy on less developing regions in Northwest of China. Based on my fieldworks on Pingliang in 2008 I present six migration patterns investigated in which local labor migrants succeed and its extension to other regions to tackle employment problems.

Keywords: Rural labor migration, Pingliang city, Migration patterns

1. Introduction

Migration, which can be considered a significant feature of livelihoods in developing regions, is pursuit of better living standards. Ever since the seminal work of Ravenstein (Ravenstein, E., 1899) numerous studies have explored various aspects of this pervasive phenomenon. Issues covered by the literature include the rational for migrating (Sjaastad, L.A., 1962 & Todaro, M., 1969), migration patterns (Ravenstein, E., 1899 & Lee E.S., 1966) and the welfare impacts of these population movements (Mimura, Y., and T. Mauldin, 2005; Kerichel, T., and P. Levine., 1999). The enormous research interest in migration is a reflection of the prevalence of this livelihood activity. (Boakye-Yiadom, L., and A. Mckay, 2007)

The massive population migration from rural to urban in the post-reform china is the result of both institutional change and structural changes caused by economic growth (Cai and Wang 1999). This change has been preconditioned by reforms in a wider sphere. As a result, the allocation of labor across sectors and among regions becomes increasingly based in market force. The characteristics of migration in transitional China reflect the characteristics of marketisation as a whole. In the year of 2005, with fully implementation of overall employment around the country, china's overall employment has undergone significant change. During this process, each region has adopted effective measures to reducing rural-urban employment gap. big or coastal regions like Guangdong and Beijing, using economic and resource advantages and rely on industrialization and urbanization development, have driven local labor migration and citizenship, absorbing million of inter-regional migrants. However, in less developing regions like outlying Gansu and Qinghai, plays a role of resource of migration outflow. Fortunately, pingliang, an inland city in Gansu performed differently in this regard. Compared to other regions in Northwest China, rural labor migration in Pingliang city, has owned unique characteristics. Therefore, experience is worth to be discussed for expansion.

The purpose of this paper is to present rural labor migration patterns in less developing regions in Northwest China and of ongoing Overall Employment Strategy in Gansu province, initiated by the "Five Overall Development". And by means of the on-going changes process to ask what is the impact of overall employment strategy on Gansu, especially on the inland pingliang? My hypothesis is that although overall employment strategy has generated employment growth, and costal regions play a leading role in this regard, however less developing regions have also created unique migration patterns which could be spreaded to other less developing regions in Northwest China, is that so? In this paper my aim is to present Pingling rural labor migration patterns and the main characteristics to support my claim: It is essential to introduce experiences to reach sustainable

development in the province—to benefit all.

2. Data and Collection

Data: Gansu Statistic Yearbook and provincial labor report are the major source of secondary data on migration. But it does not provide the socio-economic characteristics of the migrant's households and their earnings. Consequently identifying of overall situation and consequences of migration requires more information, which is feasible via primary data. Then it is necessary to generate such primary data directly by contacting the migrants. Basically the sample unit of the study is migrant who has migrated to urban area between 2007-2008, the migrant should have at least one year of experiences working in urban. As a result, a total number of 500 sample migrant's households were interviewed so as to make a in-deep study of all the migrants. The actual process of selecting the migrant was carried out stage by stage by following the method of random sampling.

Sampling design: There was no ready-made list of migrant households from secondary sources. So it was decided to go ahead first personally for identifying the migrant household and then selecting a few of them for interview at a later stage. Migrant's households are to be founded in almost of the city.

Collecting of data (interview schedule): With the help of the pre-tested interview schedule, a filed survey was conducted and the primary data were collected. The interviews were carried out with a semi-structured, open-minded questionnaire. The interviewees were asked to answer questions on why they came to city and what were the most important factors to migrant with respect to ranking of other factors, how they found job, job-change history, change of earning and income, education and training, and living conditions. In order to collect correct pre-migration particulars and present the details accurately, great care was taken and cross questions were put across to the respondents. The interview was conducted from January to May of 2008. The interviewers were generally informed of the goal and approach of this study. Brief information on the goal of the study was given to the interviewees as well. Normally the information was collected from the head of the household, who had taken the decision to migrant, but in very few cases, due to non-availability of the head the man next in position in the household was interviewed.

3. Pingliang city

Pingliang is situated at the junction of Shanxi Province, Gansu Province and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, it is an important area at the eastern end of the northern branch of the ancient Silk Road and has long been known as the land port of Gansu province, with one district (Kongtong) and six counties (Jingchuan, Lingtai, Chongxin, Huating, Zhuanglang, Jingning) under its jurisdiction. Pingliang covers an area of 11,000 square kilometers and has a total population of 2.4 million in 2008, of which rural population was 1.9 million, accounting for 85.9% of the total. The rural surplus labor forces was almost half million. The average cultivated land in rural was 2.9 are, and farmer's average net income in 2008 was only 2812 Yuan.

4. Basic rural labor resource situations

4.1 Gross status

The total amount of rural labor force in Pingliang shows an increasingly trend. This figure from 960.3 thousands in 2000 reaches 1.03 million in 2008 with a slower growth rates per annum: the average growth rate 4.6% to 0.11% during the same period. Meanwhile, the new-added labors present decreasing trend, it reduces from 86 thousands in 2002 to 10.6 thousands in 2008 with a growth rate from -51.9% to -40.9%.

4.2 Rural labor force structure

4.2.1 Gender analysis

Investigations display that male labor force takes large proportion than that of female. Taking Zhuanglang county as one example, total rural labor force in 2007 was 220.8 thousands, of which male labor workers were 118.4 thousands, accounting for 54% of the total: female labor workers were 102.4 thousands, accounting for 46% of the total.

4.2.2 Age analysis

In 2007, the youth labor force below the age of 35 was 513 thousands in Pingliang, accounting for 49.5% of the total labor forces. The older labor force over the age of 36 was 523 thousands, taking up 52.3 %. It is clear that the age distribution of rural labor force in Pingliang was comparatively equal as a whole, and those age from 30 to 40 take a little more proportion.

4.2.3 Educational analysis

From educational perspectives, rural labor force with junior middle school education level and below was 849.1 thousands, accounting for 81.95% out of total rural labor forces 1.04 million, and that with senior high school and junior college education level 175.2 thousands, 16.9%, and above senior college 11.8 thousands, 1.15%. Employed labor in rural only received around five years education. It is sufficient to say that rural labor in pingliang was quite poor in education and culture. Amount of rural labor with senior high school and above was low, and that of junior high school, elementary school, illiteracy and semi-illiteracy was high.

4.2.4 County distribution analysis

The rural labor force in each county takes almost 40%-50% of the total population of the county. In Jingchuang it reaches 60.3%. However, if one compares to rural labor force in Pingliang, the proportion display significantly discrepancy, from Chongxin, 4.1%, to Jingning 23.4% with great difference of 19.3 %.

4.2.5 Technical skill analysis

As far as technical skill is concerned, let's take example of Zhuanglang investigated in December 2007, there were 202771 persons involved in investigation, of which 6004 persons hold technical skill, accounting for 29.6%. Among those people, male (4603 persons) takes 76.7%. Youth with technical skills (below the age of 35) was 3689 persons, taking up 61.4%. Labor without technical skills was 14278 persons, of which male 6236 persons and female 8037 persons.

5. The main patterns of rural labor migration in pingliang

The municipal government of Pingliang launches the strategy that advances rural Surplus-labor transfer to maintain the social stability and increase the peasant's income and boost the local economy development, which can speed up the pace of casting off poverty and setting out on a road to prosperity. According to the investigation and study, the rural population in Pingliang mainly shifts in terms of the patterns below.

Pattern one: developing labor base, realizing rural labor force shift by "Chinese chess strategy" of labor services exporting.

In recent years, all levels of labor organizations in Pingliang have expanded the job-seeking channel efficiently, and initiatively have established the cooperated relation with the economically developed area. Thus, the relative stable labor services exporting base has been established. The strategy conducted is that technology service transferring could be a key point, which can enlarge labor base along southeast coast; while transferring physical labor is main practice that expands labor in northwestern region.

In 2008, there were 1319 labor bases built, which included 561 in the province, 758 outside the province, eleven service organization stationed abroad. Through the implementation of labor services exporting "the Chinese chess strategy", "the Chinese chess" strategy implies that each step taken means base constructions. It is assured that a group of people working outside gets employed stably. That is to say, the long-term mechanism with sustainable cooperation and development can be formed.

Pattern two: Transferring based on agricultural product characteristic planting and the industrial production management.

Pingliang adjusts the agricultural structure vigorously and advances agriculture industrial production management; initially establishes the brand of "the Pingliang gold fruit", which can impel the fruits and vegetables industry to promote the quality in the expansion scale, to speed up the development. Kongtong and 4 counties (area) are listed as by the country "the superior special economic forest demonstration county", Jingning, Jingchuan two counties are awarded "township of separately the Chinese apple" and "township of the Chinese red Fuji". Pingliang is defined as famous apple production area by national Ministry of Agriculture. At present, the area of the whole city fruit tree economic forest has developed to 1,250,000 Chinese acres, as "the Pingliang gold fruit, fruits production primarily amounted to 1,870,000 tons during 2002-2006. In 2006 fruit production reached 500,000 tons. Pingliang develops the Pingliang gold fruit industrial production management and has achieved the rural labor force shift.

Pattern three: Building the brand for labor and service, enlarge the scales of exporting

In order to realize the labor services exporting by the physical labor to the skill type, by the quantity type to the quality, by the physical strength to the intelligence, by self-done to the scale organization, by making money through the pure work to business setting up, Pingliang needs to take the labor force input as the key point and to consider popular specialty that get more employed and big labor force capacity as a content. Pingliang government strives to build the service brand, vigorously develops the different job positions with characteristic and strength. 9 service brand trademark, which include "the terraced field person" separately, "jing water children", "Pingliang mechanic", "Kongtong household service" and so on, have been registered. The service brand underlined the Pingliang peasant laborer image that is simple and honorable. Due to their hard work and endurance, Pingliang peasant labours who can sharpen the competitive ability are welcomed by many organizations.

Pattern four: developing employment in foreign countries and the rural labor force shift depending on the pattern "foreign countries shift",

In recent years, while developing domestic service market, Pingliang also enlarges the overseas service market positively. Leaving our own country and working abroad become a new focus of the rural labor force shift. Through the support of government and talents, Zhuanglang County contracted two brick-making factories in Kazakhstan and an architectural engineering project in Burundi, South African. In Vietnamese a golf course construction project was contracted. There were 650 people sent to the four sites in all directions and the average income per person surpasses 30,000 Yuan. At present, they are planning to send 20 welders who are doing skill

training in Shanghai Langshuo company to Kuwait.

Pattern five: speeding up the labor services exporting to realize the shift

While organized the training of peasant laborer, Pingliang widespread collects labor information outside by using all ways and the methods and signs the labor service cooperation agreement with labor unit outside of Pingliang. "The goal training", "order form training" are launched to achieve the goal, which is "train one batch, shift one batch". Eventually, the whole set of service system, which is "order form sign" to "skill training" to "organization output" to "the rights and interests maintenance" are formed. Therefore, services structure gradually, the service has lost the scale of labor transferring are expanding unceasingly and the level of organizational ability are enhancing. Zhuanglang County made the labor service cooperation agreement, and with large scale enterprises in Fujian. After the training, Zhuanglang transported 604 people to Fujian, 370 people to the Guangzhou. The Kongtong area service launched the training with Changqing oil field, sending 100 economical police to Changqing oil field. Meanwhile, 53 people from Jingchuan County were sent to the Guangdong after training. In the recent three years, the 200,000 local peasant laborers were trained. The overall quality and the skill level of the workers who go out for work has been enhanced largely and the average salary also has been greatly increased.

Pattern six: the resources advantage can be changed into the favorable economic conditions by developing the local resources

Aimed to construct the green livestock base in Gansu, Pingliang city establishes the brand named "Pingliang Red Bull", fully used local lawn resources. Therefore, the development patterns that planting, raising, manufacturing and trading is formed. At present, the grass area of the whole city reach over 1,000,000 Chinese acres and the total revenue of the cow industry amounts to 1,000,000,000 Yuan. The development of cow industry leads to the shape-taking of agricultural industrial production. The four big characteristic industries are expanding rapidly, which consist of beef product, leather product, bone product and biochemistry and so on, the animal husbandry that is mainly from "the cow industry" increased to 720,000,000 Yuan, promoted the rural labor force shift enormously.

6. Conclusion and implications

The study has explored the main patterns of rural labor migration in pingliang city, using primary data from pingliang yearbook (2002-2008) and data from interview. The finding underscores the essential features of rural labor migrations in less-developing areas in Northwest of China, particularly in Gansu province, which is characterized by less-developed agricultural regions with more than 70% of rural populations, and heavy pressures on rural labor migration. Therefore, successful patterns of rural labor migration and application in pertinence to provincial level will be significant to boost the economic development as a whole. It is clear to say that the practice in pingliang city relevant to rural labor migration can make sense to solve employment in Gansu province.

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