

# **A Study of Reading Education for Migrant Children in private school for migrant workers' children**

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**Abstract:** Reading useful books has a profound influence on children's healthy growth; thus, reading education is important for children to establish a positive outlook on life and cultivate values and good qualities. In this study, a two-semester reading education program was carried out for four classes of migrant children from Y private school for migrant children in Beijing. First, books were selected and purchased for the children according to their cognitive characteristics and reading interests. Then, three forms of reading education, writing postreading responses, storytelling sessions and skit performances, were adopted to promote the migrant children's reading comprehension and improve their writing skills. Finally, this study assessed the effectiveness of reading education for migrant children through an open-ended questionnaire survey and interviews with the teachers and children who participated in the reading education program. The results showed that the reading education program for migrant children over one school year improved their reading comprehension and writing level in relation to extracurricular books, enhanced their emotional expression, improved their behavior and character traits, and cultivated good reading habits.

**Keywords:** migrant children, reading education, private schools for migrant workers' children

## **Introduction**

Reading plays an important role in the growth process of children and adolescents and has a

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profound impact on broadening their horizons, increasing knowledge, establishing a positive outlook on life and, and cultivating good values and moral qualities. Previous researchers have proposed certain interpretations and definitions of reading. In the broad sense, reading refers to reading about all the civilizational achievements of human creation, while in the narrow sense, it refers to reading literary and artistic works (L. Cai, 2010).

Past research on children's and adolescents' reading in China has mainly analyzed the problems in the current situation of adolescent reading. Previous studies have found that the average number of books read by minors aged 0-17 in China is 8.45 books (Xi, 2015), the per capita reading of 9-13-year-olds is 7.24 books, the per capita reading of 14-17-year-olds is 10.68 books (Zheng, 2014), and the reading of adolescents has improved to different degrees compared with previous years (Xi, 2015; S. Cai, 2014). Q. Liu (2015) and H. Li (2015) analyzed the reading status of Chinese adolescents in terms of their reading purpose, reading style, reading direction, reading consumption, and reading interests and pointed out the problems of adolescent reading in China. Although there is an increasing trend of book reading among adolescents, it is much lower than that among adolescents in Korea, France, Japan and other countries, and the problems include insufficient reading, lack of reading instruction, outstanding utilitarianism, fragmented reading and shallow reading.

Previous researchers have defined reading education; for example, S. Wang (1999) pointed out that reading education is not only the learning of reading skills and reading methods but also a combination of various activities such as reading ability training, reading knowledge teaching, and reading attitude cultivation. Peng (2012), on the other hand, suggested that reading education is an activity that develops students' reading skills, enables them to achieve proficiency in the understanding and application of language, and enables them to transfer this ability to the learning of other subjects. According to this study, reading education refers to the use of different methods and forms of instruction in reading for children and adolescents to develop their reading skills and bring them to a proficient level of the understanding and application of language.

Domestic research on reading education for young people includes three main areas. First, the reading methods of young people in China have been researched; however, these studies have focused mainly on the theoretical exploration and analysis of reading education methods for young people (Peng, 2012; Yang, 2010; Xu, 2005; Huang, 2012; Q. Wang, 2008), and some

studies have presented empirical summaries of teaching practices for children's reading (Yu, 2005; Kong, 2007; Sun, 2014; M. Wu, 2014). Second, the main introduction discusses the inspiration of foreign reading education programs for reading education in China. The United States is a country that attaches great importance to reading education. Children's reading education starts early and is supported by a large number of policies, and a series of reading education activities are carried out with the support of relevant policies. The RIF (Reading Is Fundamental) organization in the United States has been committed to serving disadvantaged groups of children, giving them the opportunity to choose books on their own, conducting reading promotion activities based on children's characteristics, and improving children's independence (Y. Liu, 2013). In addition, some researchers have elaborated on the inspiration of reading education programs in Korea, Japan, and Germany for China (Zhou & Zhuang, 2013; Gong & Tian, 2015; Shi, 2009). Third, the reading education ideas of famous educators in China have been discussed. Shang (1998) examined and interpreted Zhu Xi's reading education theory system, which provides a systematic reading education theoretical foundation and guidance for cultivating students' reading quality and imparting reading skills and methods. S. Wu and Y. Li (2004) expounded and interpreted a new concept of reading and discussed the relationship between it and Ye Shengtao's reading education ideas.

However, few previous researchers have investigated the reading status of migrant children. Among them, T. Wang (2006) compared the overall reading situation, reading interest and reading time of migrant children and local children in public schools and found that the reading interest of migrant children was slightly lower than that of local children, but the difference was not significant. M. Yang (2015) pointed out in her study of the reading deficits of migrant children that the economic conditions of the family, the living environment, the parents' attention to their children's reading, and the level of parental reading instruction all have an important impact on the reading of migrant children.

*Previous foreign researchers have conducted more empirical studies on reading education. Two main areas are included: the first is the exploration and study of reading methods for students of different ages. Kelly and Farman (1990) and Martin (2002) explored college students' approaches to reading, writing, and comprehension in comprehending textbooks. Clary (1991) studied reading education strategies for*

*adolescents, including using students' interests, books for students to read, and space for reading. Angeletti (1991) adopted questioning techniques to encourage second and fifth graders to think about the literature they read in class discussions and write about it. Linda (1992) introduced the use of dramatic performances, reader-written plays (readers' theater), oral communication, and drawing to promote students' reading comprehension. In particular, dramatic acting is a way for students themselves to draw on point-of-view ideas from their reading, apply environmental and background knowledge, fictionalize dialogue and actions, and perform with their voices and bodies.*

Reader-written scripts are where readers write a script to tell a story they have read. Oral communication involves sharing and discussing what has been read as a group. Drawing, meaning the use of pictures to describe a story, is especially useful for students who struggle with writing and oral expression (Linda, 1992). Second, in research on reading education for children with special needs, Madden (1988) discussed how cooperative reading groups can be used to improve reading attitudes and provide reading experiences for poor readers.

In summary, although researchers have carried out many discussions on reading education, the following limitations still exist: first, past researchers in China have mainly described the reading status and characteristics of children and adolescents, and few have conducted empirical studies on reading education; second, researchers in China and abroad have mainly conducted theoretical analysis and discourse on reading education strategies as well as introducing reading education ideas. Third, foreign researchers have mainly explored and studied the reading education methods of general college, university and primary school students and have conducted relatively little research on reading education for special students. Third, foreign researchers have conducted discussions and studies mainly on reading education methods for students in primary and secondary schools and universities, and there have been relatively few studies on reading education for students with special needs.

A large number of migrant children follow their parents to the cities. On the one hand, due to the requirements in some cities, such as Beijing's "five certificates," and other stringent conditions for entering public schools, migrant children are unable to enjoy the same quality of compulsory education as urban children. On the other hand, migrant children move with their parents year-round, and the learning conditions and teacher quality in private schools for migrant

children are low, making it difficult for these children to receive reading education. Additionally, due to the restrictions of the household registration system and education policy, migrant children are not able to continue their education in their home cities and enter society to work after graduation. One of the educational concepts of this study is that even if migrant children cannot receive good compulsory education and higher education, as urban children can, and become pillars of the country, they can still become upright, honest and contributing members of society by reading meaningful books and learning principles and virtues so that they will not harm society and others, will develop good moral character, and will become readers.

This study carried out reading education activities for migrant children in four classes, including one class in Grade 3, one class in Grade 5 and two classes in Grade 6, in Y private school for migrant workers' children in Haidian District, Beijing, from September 2015 to June 2016. This study first referred to a list of books suitable for children of different age groups and then used an open-ended questionnaire to determine what books the migrant children in the four classes liked to read. Then, the books were distributed to the teachers of these four classrooms, and the four teachers in the private school for migrant workers' children organized the borrowing and writing about the books for the children, as well as the book club and short play performances in class. Finally, an open-ended questionnaire was used again in June 2016 to investigate the amount of extracurricular books read by migrant children in these four classrooms in the second semester as well as their favorite form of reading education and the impact of reading education on them. We added interviews with the class teachers of these four classes to understand the changes in and gains of the migrant children in the reading education process.

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Subject of the Study***

This study conducted two semesters of reading education for migrant children in four classes in Y private school for migrant workers' children, and the number of migrant children in these four classes changed due to the frequent mobility of migrant children. Prior to the start of the reading education program, these four classes consisted of a third grade class of 20 students, 7 and 13 girls, with an average age of 9.00 years; a fifth grade class of 33 students, 18 boys and 15 girls, with an average age of 11.12 years; a sixth grade class of 33 students, 17 boys and 16

girls, with an average age of 11.97 years; and a sixth grade class of 35 students, 19 boys and 16 girls, with an average age of 11.71 years. In the second semester of reading education, the size of these four classes was as follows: in the third grade, the number of students remained the same, 20 in total, 7 boys and 13 girls, with an average age of 9.30 years; in the fifth grade, there were 28 students in the class, 10 boys and 18 girls, with an average age of 11.50 years; in one sixth grade class, there were 29 students, 18 boys and 11 girls, with an average age of 12.69 years; and in the other sixth grade class, there were 24 students, 10 boys and 14 girls, with an average age of 12.46 years.

### ***Research Methodology.***

(1) **Open-ended questionnaire:** This study first used an open-ended questionnaire to understand the initial reading skills of students in the four classes of Y private school for migrant workers' children and the books that the children in these four classes liked to read to determine the list and number of books to be purchased for these four classes. In the first semester, 21 books were purchased for Grade 3 Class 1, 19 books for Grade 5 Class 2, 21 books for Grade 6 Class 1, and 21 books for Grade 6 Class 2. In the second semester, 26 books were purchased for Grade 3, 41 books for Grade 5, 49 books for Grade 6 Class 1, and 54 books for Grade 6 Class 2.

At the end of the second semester, an open-ended questionnaire was used to survey the migrant children in the four classes about their reading, their favorite form of reading education, and their gains in reading education.

(2) **Interviews:** The four classroom teachers who participated in the reading education of migrant children were interviewed at the end of the first and second semesters in order to understand the methods of and approaches to reading education for migrant children as well as the changes in and gains of the migrant children in reading education.

### **Results of the Study**

This study was conducted from September 22, 2015, to June 30, 2016, at Y private school for migrant workers' children in Haidian District, Beijing, to provide reading education to children in four classes for one school year. An open-ended questionnaire was used to determine the initial reading level of the migrant children before they started the reading education program; then, based on an open-ended questionnaire to determine what books the children in these four

classes liked to read and a list of books for different age groups, books were purchased for the migrant children in these four classes. Finally, during the school year, reading education was provided to the migrant children in these four classes through writing postreading responses, storytelling sessions and short dramatic performances. An open-ended questionnaire was used to survey the reading volume and gains of the migrant children in the second semester.

***Initial reading quantity of migrant children and number of books purchased by parents***

This study found that 20 migrant children in Grade 3 of Y private school had an initial average reading level of 2.75 books, having read at least one book and at most 10 books; 33 migrant children in Grade 5 had an initial average reading level of 6.61 books, having read at least one book and at most 23 books; 33 migrant children in Grade 6 Class 1 had an initial average reading level of 6.64 books, having read at least 3 books and at most 27 books; and 35 migrant children in Grade 6 Class 2 had an initial average reading level of 4.74 books, having read at least 2 books and at most 16 books. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Initial reading quantity in the four classes of Y private school for migrant workers' children

| Classes            | Number of students |       | Initial reading quantity |     |          |           |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------|--------------------------|-----|----------|-----------|
|                    | Boys               | Girls | Max                      | Min | Standard | Deviation |
| Grade 3            | 7                  | 13    | 10                       | 1   | 2.75     | 0.512     |
| Grade 5            | 18                 | 15    | 23                       | 0   | 6.61     | 5.27      |
| Grade 6<br>Class 1 | 17                 | 16    | 27                       | 3   | 6.64     | 4.38      |
| Grade 6<br>Class 2 | 19                 | 16    | 16                       | 2   | 4.74     | 2.91      |

Since the families of migrant children are relatively poor, and the parents pay little attention to their children's extracurricular reading, they rarely buy extracurricular books for their children.

The questionnaire survey of the migrant children in the four classes in this study showed that the average number of books purchased for the 20 migrant children in Grade 3 was 2.75, less than three books: four parents had bought one book, one parent had bought 13 books, and the other 15 parents had bought two to three books for their children. The average number of books purchased for the 28 migrant children in Grade 5 was 6.96, with 19 parents buying 10 or fewer books for their children and two parents never buying a book for their children. The average number of books purchased for the 29 migrant children in Grade 6 Class 1 was 6.66, but five parents had never bought a book for their children, six parents had each bought two or three books, and eight parents had bought five books. The average number of books bought by parents for the 24 migrant children in Grade 6 Class 2 was 9.88, but only 5 parents had bought more than 10 books for their children, 19 parents had bought less than 10 books, and 5 parents had bought only 2 books. This shows that most of the parents of migrant children in Y private school for migrant workers' children had paid little attention to their children's extracurricular reading and invested very little in it. This is also a direct cause of the disparity between the reading levels of migrant children and their peers (S. Cai, 2014; H. Li, 2015).

### ***Forms of reading education for migrant children***

In this study, age-appropriate books were purchased for one class in the third grade, one class in the fifth grade, and two classes in the sixth grade and then lent by the four classroom teachers to the students in their classes to educate them about reading according to their circumstances. Three main forms of reading education were used in this study: writing postreading responses, storytelling and short dramatic performances. The third grade students and fifth grade students used mainly writing postreading responses, recording good words and sentences, and conducting storytelling sessions. The two sixth grade classes used three forms of reading education: writing postreading responses, storytelling, and performing short plays.

The study did not require each class to adopt a uniform form of reading education; rather, different forms of reading education were arranged according to the age and situation of the students in each class and the class time of each teacher. Out of the three forms of reading education—storytelling, skit performance, and writing postreading responses—20 migrant children in the third grade wrote postreading responses and conducted storytelling sessions, of

whom 7 liked the storytelling sessions best and 13 liked writing the postreading responses. Six of the 28 migrant children in the fifth grade class liked the storytelling format best, five liked the short play performance best, and 17 liked writing the postreading responses best. One of the 29 migrant children in the first sixth grade class liked the storytelling session best, 23 liked the short play performance best, and 5 liked writing the postreading responses best. Five of the 24 migrant children in Grade 6 Class 2 liked the storytelling best, six liked the dramatic performances best, and 13 liked writing postreading responses best.

Interviews with the class teachers and an open-ended questionnaire survey of the children indicated that Grade 6 Class 1 had the best short play performance. This class was divided into four groups, each with approximately seven or eight students and a leader, and the children in each group, under the leadership of the leader, chose a story from a book, adapted it into a script, and then prepared props and rehearsed according to the script, thus fully mobilizing their interest in storytelling. Participation was active and was generally liked by the students, with good results. Of the 29 migrant children in the 6th grade class, 23 enjoyed the short play performance format the most. For students in the fifth and sixth grades of primary school, the ability to comprehend, imagine, summarize and act out the stories told in books is relatively strong, and short plays can give full play to their initiative and participation. Of course, writing after reading can also improve children's writing, thinking and generalization skills, and storytelling can train their oral expression skills. Moreover, since both skits and storytelling require children to appear on stage and give speeches, some of the children mentioned that these two activities had made them cheerful, braver and more active in speaking in class.

### ***Changes in and gains of migrant children in reading education***

Since both parents and schools of migrant children provide them with very limited extracurricular books, previous questionnaire surveys conducted through the four classes of migrant children in this study also indicated that their initial reading levels were low.

The present study conducted reading education from September 2015 to June 2016 for four classes of migrant children in Y private school for migrant workers' children, and all four classes of migrant children showed significant improvement in their reading levels. The average reading level of the third grade migrant children was 6.90 books by the second semester from an initial level of 2.75 books; the average reading level of the fifth grade migrant children was 8.79 books

by the second semester from an initial level of 6.61 books; the average reading level of Grade 6 Class 1 migrant children was 7.83 books by the second semester from an initial level of 6.64 books; and the average reading level of the Grade 6 Class 2 migrant children was 6.08 books by the second semester from an initial level of 4.74 books. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Reading quantity and postreading impression of migrant children in the second semester of Y private school for migrant workers' children

| Classes         | Number of students |       | Reading quantity |     |          |           | Postreading impression (article) |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------|------------------|-----|----------|-----------|----------------------------------|
|                 | Boys               | Girls | Max              | Min | Standard | Deviation |                                  |
| Grade 3         | 7                  | 13    | 10               | 3   | 6.90     | 1.94      | 7.70                             |
| Grade 5         | 10                 | 18    | 30               | 3   | 8.79     | 6.12      | 6.96                             |
| Grade 6 Class 1 | 18                 | 11    | 17               | 1   | 7.83     | 4.49      | 6.66                             |
| Grade 6 Class 2 | 10                 | 14    | 16               | 4   | 6.08     | 2.84      | 9.88                             |

In this study, four classes of migrant children in Y private school for migrant workers' children were given reading education for one school year, which not only led to a significant increase in their reading but also led to many improvements and gains in their writing, comprehension, language expression and behavior. Through interviews with the teachers of the four classes that participated in the reading education program, this study focused on what forms of reading education were conducted and the changes, gains and impacts that the reading education program brought to the migrant children. The most important gains in reading education for migrant children in Y private school for migrant workers' children in this study were in the following areas.

**First, writing skills and vocabulary.** All four class teachers mentioned that the children's parents and the school provided them with very limited books for extracurricular reading, and previous questionnaires from the four classes of migrant children in this study indicated that their initial reading was relatively low; therefore, their vocabulary and writing were very poor, and their writing skills were not strong. However, in the present study, reading education was carried out for one school year by purchasing extracurricular books for the children, and all four teachers agreed that reading these extracurricular books enriched the students' vocabulary and significantly improved their writing skills.

**Grade 3 class teacher:** The extracurricular books have a real impact on the children. There is an improvement in the writing as well. At first, they didn't know how to use words, and as soon as they were asked to write an essay, they wrote one sentence, like, what's my favorite person, what's my favorite teacher, what's our teacher like, and then it was gone. The first time they read the book, they will be able to write about it because there are two other books there. It is completely different.

**Grade 6, Class 1 teacher:** I think the students are actually quite rewarded because the students in a school like ours have a hard time writing their essays, but this semester by doing the activity "Drifting House," the final reward is that their writing became easy, (they) have a lot of words to use, and then there are a lot of words to write, so it's not the past essays or even the teacher gives you a certain amount of time to write words. In fact, when I was doing it, some teachers might think that we have to put in extra effort, I can't finish my essay, but I was actually very dedicated when I was doing it, I hope my students can grow in their ability from the skit or the storytelling. What I was surprised by was the improvement in their writing. One is the richness of words, and then there is their comprehension, I have become very relaxed in language class when I am talking about a text, who will summarize. The children can obviously summarize, unlike in the past, just like the duck and dunk they do not understand. It's quite surprising that their comprehension skills have become so good now.

**Grade 6, class 2 teacher:** Reading and writing skills have improved. In the final exam this semester, it was obvious that the number of words in the essay had increased, and they wrote two pages, whereas before they only wrote one page or even less than half a page.

**Grade 5 class teacher:** SY greatly improved on the writing, really improved, and the other students' writing skills also improved, copying the good words and sentences to be able to say, to be able to use, prove that they will be able to absorb.

**Second, human morality.** Teachers reported that by reading the truths taught in these extracurricular books, the itinerant children gained a deep appreciation for how to act as a (kind) human.

**Grade 3 class teacher:** A child just told me, "Teacher, I've learned a lot from reading this, and I know how I should behave in the future." I said, "Tell me how you should behave," and he said, "I have to respect others, and then others will respect me." That's what they learn from reading this thing. They also said to me, "Teacher, you are right, you must treat others with care, then they will treat you with care. Don't be proud of what you do."

**Grade 6 Class 1 teacher** "Shiloh's Web" is a story about a spider that goes to help people and save them. The spider builds a friendship with them, and then there is bad news that breaks the peace of these animals. There is a little piggy whose family wants to turn it into a ham and eat it, and the spider's name is Shiloh, so he gets the news and weaves a web to save it. In the end, the little piggy was saved, but Shiloh's life came to an end. When they were talking about it, the students were quite sad when they were listening to it, and I was quite sad in the end. Although this is not a real story, what it actually wants to tell the children is a kind of friendship, that is, to help each other, to know how to care for others.

### **Third, comprehension, expression and creativity.**

This study focused on reading education for migrant children in the form of getting them write postreading responses and participate in storytelling sessions and short dramatic performances, which teachers mentioned in their interviews had improved the students' comprehension, expression and creativity to varying degrees.

**Grade 5 class teacher:** The children who read well can grasp the essence of the book, and it has a little influence on their human behavior. There were two times when I asked them to write true feelings in their essays. They can now use words that they've read before, and their thinking also has changed; they can have their own point of view, and they can come up with their own way of looking at things. Reading the book has definitely helped their thinking skills. Some of them couldn't use the words in the model language books before, and now they can use them; isn't that proof of improvement? Their language used to be quite stiff, and they did not know how to organize the language, but now they have the point of view; isn't that an improvement? After reading the book, their reading comprehension improves, and their improvement of analytical skills follows.

**Grade 6, Class 1 teacher:** The story will be aimed at a certain person, and a certain person gets the opportunity to share. The child will get some exercise, exercise his language expression, including his comprehension, and then the following children will understand; they can discuss and then extend it. (And then they can go back and read it too.) Yes, the story I heard you tell is quite fascinating to me, so next time I'll borrow the book. Each time (in the storytelling session) for each student, after the story is shared, we find the deficiencies for him, and then we tell him how he should do it, either from the students or from me. I'm just down there as a listener every time, and then I'm nodding my head the whole time they're telling it, which means okay, that's fine. But when he's actually telling it down, they'll also

share with him, telling him how to improve himself. So the story will improve his personal expression, comprehension and ability to grasp the main points. Short plays can (improve) students' creativity and expressiveness as well as language and teamwork.

#### **Fourth, emotional expression.**

Due to the limited number of extracurricular books and poor vocabulary, migrant children lack basic language to express their emotions to their parents and teachers and do not know how to express their love and inner feelings for their parents and teachers in rich words. However, through the reading education program for migrant children, their vocabulary was enriched, and they were more able to express love and emotions for their parents and teachers in appropriate language.

**Grade 6, Class 1 teacher:** The title of the essay is "My Most Unforgettable Teacher," and the students used a lot of words that I didn't expect them to use and a reflection of their true feelings in the essay.

Some children just say to me, "Teacher, how good you are to us, spending New Year's Day with us," and then say, "I only have one wish: I hope you will have a little baby soon, a little brother or little sister; we will all love him, and you will love him as much as you love us." This is real, in language that comes from life, but a little higher than life. This is what I didn't expect. At that time, I wanted to cry because I wasn't the one who judged the papers, and other teachers said, "Look at what your students wrote for you. In the past, children really would not say this." I don't expect they would have said it.

I prepared a card for them at Thanksgiving and wrote a message to their parents, and they wrote it all themselves. It's not like in the past, when I had to give them guidance, which wasn't even necessary. Then, some of the kids will spontaneously buy their parents a pair of gloves. (What do you think that has to do with his reading?) I think it's an expression of their emotions, and they even took this little card and read it in front of their parents. These written words have to do with reading, which is the education of love. (Have you ever read what they wrote?) (What does it say?) Some of them were written about a father's love, and I don't know where they chose the words from, but they were all very affectionate passages. Not before; he wouldn't have written that before. Wouldn't even do that before. I prepared the card on Thanksgiving before. But they only wrote, "I love you, Mom and Dad." We don't ask the kids to buy something for their parents for fear that the parents will complain and say, "Why do you ask my kids to do something?"

This year I didn't say, and I'm sending greeting cards as usual, but I said, "You're in the sixth grade; you have to write a paragraph to your parents. You can write it yourself, or you can use whatever

paragraph you think is good. So now the word count is not a problem at all. They used to use three words, two words to write the card, and I think they were just getting by, but now it's all in one paragraph.

**Fifth, behavior.** In the past, the migrant children did not have extracurricular books to read, so they would usually play with their mobile phones, go to Internet cafes or play in the classroom during leisure time, but in this study, we purchased books for the migrant children to provide them with reading education during a school year. In addition, they did not have time to play with their mobile phones or go to Internet cafes. Therefore, the extracurricular reading allowed the migrant children to develop good reading habits and behaviors.

**Grade 6 Class 1 teacher:** The class has a strong atmosphere of books, and relatively speaking, there is less chasing and joking. There was a survey of migrant children before, what are the characteristics of migrant children; it is that they don't use verbal expressions, unlike a lot of public school children. The children are pushing and hugging each other, using body language to express themselves. It's because they can't use (verbal language) to express themselves. But it's different now, and I'm intent on getting them to communicate because the pushing process makes them vulnerable. This situation did not happen once in this semester, not once were they crazy to run, broken things or knocked themselves out, not once.

**Grade 5 class teacher:** To some extent, they grasped a feeling of comprehension, and external behavior has also changed; our class did not fight and scold, quite civilized. In the past, after handing over the homework, the students just thought it was time to play; now, they read the book immediately after handing over the homework.

**Sixth, good reading habits.**

**Grade 6 Class 1 teacher:** The children have made progress, especially the lunch break. For a while, I said, you take a break. In winter, there is usually no break, just everyone quietly reading, unlike before when there was nothing to do, quietly talking. Now, as long as there is spare time, you do not need to say; you can develop such habits. First, there is an improvement in writing; second, more and more children are reading, originally a part of the good students, now driven by the medium, and the results are that they also almost like to read. Through the book club in this form, you can induce them to go home and play. Let them solve homework in school, give them a session of time to write homework, and then the school takes two sessions of time to hold a book club, or effectively let them perform, speak. If they can't stand up for anything, they will be embarrassed, so they will go back to read the book sent to them, go home with this task, and then I ask them to bring it back. The book, the pages they read, must be read aloud, read aloud well to the parents, and I give them a task sheet to sign.

This study also used an open-ended questionnaire to investigate the gains and growth of migrant children in Y private school for migrant workers' children in storytelling and skit performances. In particular, the short play performance required the students to adapt the stories from the books they read into a script beforehand, write their own lines and prepare props. The teachers of Grade 6 Class 1 divided the students into four groups, initially with teacher guidance but later guided mainly by the groups themselves to discuss and exchange ideas and then write the script, prepare props and rehearse. In the open-ended questionnaire, the migrant children pointed out that the main changes and gains brought to them by the short play performance were that it trained them in acting skills; improved their imagination, hands-on skills, and writing and thinking skills; made them braver, bolder, and more confident; and helped them overcome their fears. Some students also believed that the short plays made them feel the emotions of the characters more deeply and remember the stories more clearly.

**LJ:** I like skits. The first thing that reflects is the literary talent of my classmates. Of course, in a short play, props are also very important; without props, who knows what you are doing. In the performance, eloquence, calmness, and a strong mental state, courage, are indispensable. After the performance, you can listen to the teacher's judgment and make up for your shortcomings.

**ZX:** I like skits. I think it has helped me learn things I never learned before. I used to be a shy person, but after performing skits, I started to become more cheerful.

**MS:** I really like skits. Our class teacher made us perform skits and let us choose our own programs, and what we were going to say in the program was all written by ourselves. We were divided into several groups, and each group worked very hard. Of course our group worked very hard too. We were very nervous during the rehearsal, but we had to work hard in order to perform the skit. During the rehearsal, the face was a little nervous. I wasn't nervous at all when the skit was being performed, and I was a little more comfortable with it. Performing the skit will improve not only my writing but also my imagination and help me to be brave and not be nervous about what I do.

The migrant children from Y private school for migrant workers' children believed that the storytelling sessions had brought them gains and changes: they could practice their expression and eloquence, be more active in class, and improve their comprehension and reading skills. In addition, when they heard about the books that their classmates talked

about in the storytelling sessions, they were eager to read them and would then borrow them.

**ZCY:** I like storytelling very much. It can improve our writing skills and build up a good vocabulary and also help me to learn more about books I haven't read before.

**ZJ:** I like storytelling; it makes me learn more about books, I have the urge to read other books, I have more knowledge, it increases my comprehension, and it strengthens my reading and writing skills.

**YJW:** I like the storytelling sessions. They can teach us about life, and they also help me learn some things I can't learn from books. After listening to my classmates talk about some of the stories in the book, I learned about the contents of the book, and I hope I can borrow it next time.

**ZYC:** I liked the storytelling session. Through the storytelling session and the classmates' stories, I knew whether the book was good or not, and it strengthened my desire to borrow the book.

**WTS:** I like the storytelling session, when others tell stories, I will know more about the works, and although I haven't read any of those books, I will definitely find a way to borrow them.

**LJP:** I like storytelling. I didn't want to read the book after reading the title, but after listening to the stories told by my classmates, I thought the book was very good, and I wish I could borrow it.

**LB:** I liked the storytelling session because I was fascinated listening to my classmates' stories even though I hadn't read that book before, and I would love to borrow that wonderful book.

**YJJ:** I like the storytelling. It improves my language skills and makes me become brave enough to answer questions in class instead of being inactive in class.

**XBB:** I like storytelling very much; it has helped me a lot. It gives me the courage to explain the books I read to my teacher and classmates and also gives me the courage to speak actively in class.

## Discussion

### *Current reading situation of migrant children in migrant workers' children's schools*

In this study, an open-ended questionnaire indicated that the initial reading level of migrant children in one class each in the third and fifth grades and two classes in the sixth grade of Y private school for migrant workers' children was very low. The 33 migrant children in Grade 6 Class 1 had an average initial reading of 6.64 books and had read at least 3 books; the 35 migrant children in Grade 6 Class 2 had an average initial reading of 4.74 books and had read at least 2 books. Previous studies have found that the average reading per capita of children aged 9 to 13 in China is 7.24 books (Zheng, 2014), which shows that the amount of reading for migrant children aged 9 to 12 in Y private school for migrant workers' children investigated in this study is much lower than the amount for other children of the same age in China. The reasons for the low reading level of migrant children are the neglect and inattention of school education and family education to the reading education of migrant children.

**School education.** Some foundations or individuals have donated books to schools for children of migrant workers, but there are problems in the management and lending of books. First, the management and lending of books requires the deployment of relevant personnel, which may involve costs that the managers of schools for migrant workers' children are not willing to incur. Children's books are lost, and schools are reluctant to allocate more funds to buy books for migrant children because the schools are in danger of being demolished or closed. For these reasons, the reading rooms in migrant schools are often useless, with books locked in cupboards and used only for the inspection of school facilities by the Education Commission. As a result, many migrant children rarely have the opportunity to read a large number of extracurricular books at school.

**Family education.** The present study found through an open-ended questionnaire administered to migrant children that the average number of books bought by the parents of 20 migrant children in Grade 3 was 2.75: four parents had bought one book, one parent had bought 13 books, and the other 15 parents had basically bought only two to three books for their children. The average number of books purchased by the parents of the 28 migrant children in Grade 5 was 6.96: 19 parents had actually bought 10 or fewer books for their children, and two had never bought a book for their children. The average number of books purchased by the parents of the

29 migrant children in Grade 6 Class 1 was 6.66: five parents had never bought a book for their child, and six parents had bought only two to three books. The average number of books purchased by parents of the 24 migrant children in Grade 6 Class 2 was 9.88: 5 parents had bought more than 10 books for their children, 19 parents had bought less than 10 books, and 5 parents had bought only 2 books for their children. Thus, parents of migrant children invest little in extracurricular book reading for their children.

Parents of migrant children usually work hard and earn low incomes, and their families are in financial difficulties, so it is difficult for them to bear the living expenses of the whole family as well as the necessary expenses for their children's studies in big cities. On the one hand, they cannot afford to buy extracurricular books for their children; on the other hand, although some parents of migrant children earn more money, they do not realize the importance of reading extracurricular books. They believe that it is enough to pay school fees for their children and are not willing to invest in extracurricular book reading for their children. Therefore, parents' low investment in reading books is also a direct cause of the low level of reading of extracurricular books among migrant children.

### ***Gains and changes in reading education of migrant children in migrant workers' children's schools***

Through interviews with four teachers at Y private school for migrant workers' children and an open-ended questionnaire survey of the migrant children, this study found that the reading education provided to the children in four classes at the school over one school year led to many gains and meaningful changes for them. First, by reading these extracurricular books, the migrant children's reading volume increased significantly, their vocabulary became much richer, and their reading and thinking skills improved, all of which contributed to a significant improvement in their writing skills. Second, through the three forms of reading education in this study, i.e., writing postreading responses, storytelling sessions and skit performances, on the one hand, the writing and thinking abilities of the migrant children further improved, and on the other hand, the personal skills and behavioral performance of the migrant children also improved. Writing postreading responses can improve children's comprehension, generalization ability and writing skills. Through short plays, they not only practice their expression skills but also adapt stories from books they have read into scripts, prepare props, rehearse and perform on stage through

group discussions, thus cultivating a cooperative spirit and giving full play to initiative and participation. The storytelling sessions give the children the opportunity to appear on stage and share stories from books they have read, which can also develop their verbal skills and courage, and their interest in these books and desire to read them will be stimulated by other students hearing the stories from the books they have shared. As a result of reading the extracurricular books that they were interested in, writing postreading responses, participating in storytelling sessions and preparing skits for performances, these migrant children did not have time to play with their mobile phones, chase each other and play; thus, their behavior improved. Third, this study developed good reading habits among migrant children in four classes of Y private school for migrant workers' children by providing them with reading education. The parents of migrant children pay little attention to extracurricular books for their children, and the extracurricular books they buy for their children are very limited. Through reading education for migrant children over one school year, this study not only improved the amount of extracurricular books that they read but also enabled them to develop a strong interest in reading and good reading habits.

#### ***Problems of reading education for children in migrant workers' children's schools***

In this study, four classes of migrant children from third to sixth grade were taught reading in Y private school for migrant children, and their writing, thinking, personal skills, and behavior were positively affected. However, some problems and confusion have been encountered in the process of implementing reading education for migrant children in private schools for migrant workers' children.

**First, the selection of teachers for reading education.** The concept of reading education for migrant children in this study is that even though migrant children cannot enjoy normal compulsory education and higher education and become pillars of society due to their academic performance and the limitations of further education, they can develop good reading habits and become upright, honest and kind people by reading meaningful books. Reading education in private schools for migrant workers' children is organized and carried out mainly by the class teachers, and these teachers must be able to understand the concept of reading education in this study, recognize the importance and value of reading education for migrant children, and be able to proactively and positively carry out reading education, guiding the children's reading,

storytelling and skit performances in the process. However, choosing such teachers in private schools for migrant children is difficult. First, teachers in private schools for migrant children must teach a large number of lessons, usually 25 or 26 per week, and must correct a large number of assignments, so it is difficult for them to have the time to review and correct postreading responses in reading education for migrant children. Second, many teachers recruited by private schools for migrant children do not have teaching certificates, and many of them are not serious and responsible for their students and seldom take the initiative to tutor students in class. Therefore, it is necessary for the teachers to understand the concept of reading education and to have professional ethics and responsibility in order to devote themselves to reading education for migrant children, to cultivate good reading habits, to improve writing skills, to broaden the children's horizons through reading good books, and to enable the children to be influenced by meaningful books in their moral qualities and behaviors. However, it is difficult to find teachers who have the enthusiasm and energy to conduct reading education for migrant children in private schools for migrant children.

**Second, the form of reading education.**

The reading education for migrant children in this study took three main forms: writing postreading responses, storytelling and short skit performances. These three forms are also commonly used in children's and adolescents' reading education, with writing after reading being used to ask migrant children to write their feelings and thoughts about a book after reading it as well as to extract good words and phrases from the book and storytelling being used to ask migrant children to tell stories from books they have read in class, which requires them to comprehend, compile and summarize the stories they have read and then stand and tell about them at the podium. Short plays require migrant children to adapt stories from books they have read into plays and play the roles of the characters in the stories. This form of reading education is very helpful in developing their imagination, acting ability and courage. However, the classroom hours in private schools for migrant children are quite tight, and teachers are overburdened with a large number of lessons and assignments to be corrected every week. In addition, the storytelling and skit performances conducted in private schools for migrant children in this study were usually conducted during composition class time, but the class time was also limited; thus, the number of storytelling and skit performances that could be conducted was also limited. As a result, the effectiveness of reading education for migrant children is restricted.

**Third, the mobility of migrant children.**

Each semester, an open-ended questionnaire was used to investigate what books migrant children liked to read, and then, in combination with book lists suitable for different grades of primary school, books were purchased for the four classes of migrant children in the school. The migrant children's reading level was low because their previous home and school education had not paid attention to their extracurricular book reading. After one school year of reading education, the reading and writing levels of the migrant children in the four classes of Y private school for migrant workers' children had improved. However, the long-term effectiveness of reading education for migrant children is compromised by the fact that migrant children change schools multiple times as they move with their parents, attending one school for a semester and then possibly moving on to another school, thus making it impossible to sustain reading education. Moreover, most migrant children are not very good at oral expression and have difficulty conducting storytelling and skits, as they have had few opportunities to do so before.

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