

Special Session
Right to the City

Right to Education in China Through the
Lens of Migrant Children's Education in
Chengdu

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While China has enjoyed phenomenal economic success since the 1980s with rapid urbanization, it often comes at a price of perpetuating inequality, a predicament most acutely experienced by the migrant workers in the city. The Right to the City agenda as a clamor for social justice has not been addressed comprehensively in China. In this report, we focused on a specific aspect of the Right to the City agenda, inclusive citizenship, by shedding light on how the differentiated citizenship encountered by the Chinese migrant workers plays out in the challenges and issues their children face in gaining equal access to the right of education. A qualitative case study of migrant children's education in Chengdu was undertaken where interviews were conducted with migrant workers and social organizations to lend agency for the usually marginalized individuals to articulate their opinions. Beyond the specific locality, an overview of the national policies relating to migrant children's education is presented, as well as highlighting how the Chinese experience can be understood within the broader context of the right to the city and to tease out interesting and in-depth insights into the factors impacting migrant children's access to education in the cities. From examining the single case of migrant children's education in Chengdu, it is apparent that a collaborative/flexible state-society interaction model where the R2C agenda is emerging in China. This research has uncovered such a nascent model of cooperation where there is a dynamic development of policies, grassroots actions and reactions from the migrant workers themselves, that work in tandem to shape the outcome of allowing migrant children to claim their right to education in the Chinese cities. Importantly, this model of state compliant activism can still yield beneficial outcomes for the marginalized social groups and help them to exercise their right to the city as part of the fulfilment of inclusive citizenship, albeit in a more moderated and modest co-operative way in China.