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Early childhood education and care for Tibetan children in the People's Republic of China: Left behind or led from behind?

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Abstract
Early Childhood Education and Care provision has been expanded in the People's Republic of China over the last decades. For this expansion to harmonize with young children's rights, special measures should ensure that the system of provision guarantees the participation and inclusion of the most vulnerable citizens. With this as a focus, this article reviews and discusses the state of Early Childhood Education and Care provision for young children of Tibetan ethnicity in People's Republic of China. The available literature and ongoing measures and plans are explored around this topic in order to identify the main issues.

Keywords
Convention on the rights of the child, early childhood education and care, People's Republic of China, Tibet

Introduction

Comprehensive Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is a key to creating a world characterized by hope and change. It enables opportunities to avoid deprivation and despair and contributes to building countries that can thrive both socially and economically (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2001). Therefore, children everywhere should be entitled to quality ECEC provision. Research indicates that early childhood provision is particularly important for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, given their very poor status on low scores on indices of child well-being. The early years offer a special opportunity to enhance the learning potential of children since 80% of the brain's capacity is generated before the age of 3, when the gains are shown to be highest for those with maximum disadvantage. Nevertheless, the "poorest and most marginalized groups, and rural children are least likely to attend an early childhood programme in the years prior to their

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formal schooling" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2009: 26). Moreover, where provision occurs it is essential that local beliefs, values, and priorities are an integral part of program planning.

We live in a global age in which young children and their learning are increasingly monitored and characterized by scores in predetermined test outcomes. This has had profound implications for the provision of ECEC, since while it is recognized as the foundation of later forms of education, increasingly, "academic" curricula are characterizing early years' programs. With increasing inequality, hidden pockets of extremely vulnerable populations exist in every country, including children who are overlooked for services by Governments and donors because their presence is obscured by strong national averages. This is the case of border areas of the People's Republic of China (PRC) where people have been affected by forced displacement of individuals, cross border raids, and unpredictable dislocations. It has been evident in various ethnic groups located in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). And, it is important to note that the ethnic Tibetans who reside in neighboring provinces in the South-West of the PRC in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunan in significant numbers, are also similarly disadvantaged. The nature of the economic development in the PRC has created widening disparities in the quality and equity of ECEC provision. There are formal kindergartens in economically developed regions, and a variety of alternative forms of ECEC exist to meet the needs of local families. In these regions, no apparent armed conflict exists, but diversity is used as a source of bias and discrimination. In the case of Tibetan children, they may be subject to stigma because of their ethnic, religious, or other cultural inheritance. Within this context, this article reviews the state of the ECEC provision for young Tibetan children from a human rights perspective. It considers the principles of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in order to identify the challenges and issues that need to be addressed for the provision of effective and relevant ECEC. Thus, the first section of the article addresses the context of Tibet with the intention to locate the subject of its particularity. The second section considers the contemporary aspects of ECEC provision in PRC concerning the most disadvantaged groups. Finally, the current situation of the young Tibetan children in PRC in relation to their rights and welfare is explored and discussed.

Tibet

The case of Tibet is both unique and fascinating. It is a region displaying many of the challenges of "remote" parts of any country, but it has a distinctive mix of social, cultural, and political phenomena. Educational reforms in the PRC have been significant in the past two decades. Within today's China, "Tibet" is recognized as the geographic area called the TAR, the second-largest province-level division by area in the West side of the country. Yet, as stated above there are significant numbers of ethnic Tibetans in four other provinces in the South-West of the PRC. These regions were constituted as Tibet prior to annexation by China. The TAR has the largest concentration of Tibetan people. In the TAR, "urban areas, where non-Tibetans are often concentrated, economic activity is at the level of other PRC towns and thus regarded as being much more prosperous,"[1] than the rest of the territory where minority ethnic Tibetans inhabit. Moreover, the Chinese population migration to the region has had devastating effects on the indigenous population. Policies and practices indicate a lack of concern for indigenous people and their identity, and further the trans-Himalayan environment with its fragile ecology has been compromised (Xingu and Jianhua, 2000). Minority ethnic Tibetans have been pushed to the peripheries of the economy. In this way, Tibetan education and culture have been made invisible, and Tibetans have been "denied the status of full partner in social interactions, as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem" (Fraser, 2005: 247). In this analysis, Frazer regards disenfranchisement as assuming a variety of forms in today's complex

differentiated societies, as parity-impeding values are institutionalized at a plurality of institutional sites and qualitative different modes, so it can be associated with injustice. She stated,

> (F)or this recognition dimension, is misrecognition; while the corresponding injustice to the distributive dimension (of economic structures, property regimes or labour markets deprive actors of the resources needed for full participation) is misdistribution. Each dimension, finally, corresponds to an analytically distinct form of subordination … (Fraser, 2005: 249)

Under the Chinese system, national minorities have the right to exercise regional autonomy acceding to the constitution, which represents the wish to guarantee and respect the rights of minority nationalities to internal autonomy, and to ensure common progress and prosperity for all based upon equalized unity of nationalities. Notwithstanding this, since 1989, a policy in the TAR, of restriction of all aspects of Tibetan cultural and political autonomy, that had nationalist implications, was instituted. According to Smith (2008), this meant almost all aspects of autonomy, and hence the education policies, showed no regard for diversity or recognition of the unique features of being Tibetan. For Bass (1998), the narrative of modern schooling in TAR centered around the need for economic development and national integration. While modern education has been the gateway to modernity and development policies in PRC, Chinese authorities in Tibet have shown little interest in Tibetan education. As a result, the "Patriotic Education Campaign in Tibet had as its goal, to transform Tibetan national identity into the Chinese identity and loyalty to motherland" (Smith, 2008: 170). According to Carney (2008), this established political discourse is linking education and school reform to the country's modernization efforts. A focus on the emerging global economy is evident, yet the statements around learner-centered pedagogy were in the main rhetorical. There is no recognition of diversity and the promotion of national identity dominates. Thus, while there seemed to be a national shift to more learner-focused schooling it was explained primarily in economic terms rather than the language of rights. Missing was the strong sense by which both were connected to the currents of international educational policy.

Additionally, it seemed as if the government define minority areas as "backward" and thus do not incorporate any traditional aspects of Tibetan culture in curricula. Rather, they facilitated schemes to train the most promising young Tibetans at "key-schools" in inland cities, where "Tibetan identity and pride are not purposefully encouraged (or) fostered in either curricular or extracurricular activities" (Wang and Zhou, 2003: 101). Actually, when policies were challenged to embed Tibetan children even more deeply in Chinese educational systems and processes, it was in fact counterproductive and contrary to the logic of the curriculum reforms, as "the notion of Tibet's 'backwardness' drew upon as the key impediment to change" (Carney, 2008: 50). More recently, the Chinese government has initiated reforms across the educational sector, all of which include western "best practice" as an essential point of reference. Western notions of lifelong learning and the "learning society" have been taken up with enthusiasm (Xu et al., 2010). Nevertheless, such "programmes or solutions may be largely misplaced and can lead to even greater problems" (Apple, 2011: ix)

ECEC in PRC: Context and challenges

The PRC has a large population of children who are 8 years old and younger whose education has been identified as the responsibility of government. Despite the rapid progress of the economy in PRC over recent years, the provision of ECEC in the nation remains a major challenge due to inconsistent process regarding what level of government is responsible for implementations (Zhu, 2010). Because of China's vast territory, its uneven regional economic development, and wide range of cultures, there is regional imbalance because of the different emphasis given to local

economic expansion and the role of early childhood education (Feng, 2010). Likewise, "service provision for young children crosses several sectors, complicating fluency and regular coordination between stakeholders at the national and local level" (Wu and Young, 2012: 37). Essentially, under this system, the central government sometimes passes its responsibilities to local governments and in other cases, does not. Even when it cedes control, the local authority may not be able to follow through the actual implementation of policies (Pang, 2012) for various reasons. In addition, a tremendous gap has been and still exists in ECEC provision in urban and rural areas (Li, 2000; Zhao and Hu, 2008). This factor is compounded as fluctuating enrollment rates complicate location disparities and the impact on the unequal level of quality facilities (Zhou, 2011). For a long time, rural children and children from poor families, including migrant children, attended family-based, private care facilities, which offered minimum resources and staff with no formal ECEC training (Hu and Szente, 2009; Jiang and Deng, 2008). Actually, disparity continued to grow between rural and urban preschools (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2009), even though over two-thirds of the preschools were located in rural areas. Urban public kindergartens were the recipients of the majority of ECEC funding,[2] owing to China's unique *hukou*[3] policy.

The Chinese government has recognized the negative impact of "scarce rural children's quality education for the development of economy" on rural children (Chinese National Center for Education Development Research and Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, 2008). To close the gap, the Central People's Government of the PRC (2010) declared in the Compendium for China's Mid- and Long-Term Education Development, a 10-year plan for equalizing educational opportunities for all children. Thus, they made a commitment to universalizing quality ECEC for all children. Specifically, the government set goals to ensure that all Chinese children, in both urban and rural areas, receive 1 year of ECEC by 2020. Their aim was to increase overall student achievement (Hu et al., 2014). After the release of the Plan, in November 2010, in order to improve the implementation, the China State Council (2010) issued Document 41#, entitled "Issues Regarding Current Development of Early Childhood Education." This document outlined a complete system design for ECEC and was accompanied with a series of important strategies. It required every county in the nation to develop an initiative plan for ECEC. The document highlighted that:

- The central government had started the promotion of early childhood education programs in rural areas, with the provision of special funding in rural areas in the west part of China, where the government invested 500 million RMB in 10 provinces to support 61 counties in building.
- The central government would provide special funding for the west and undeveloped areas, for the education of minority children and education for bilingual language education.

Although this document supported progress of the Chinese ECEC system, the follow up implementation of the initiatives in the context of the overall plan will determine its success. Hence, the first challenge is to increase the provision for early childhood education provision in rural areas in PRC, especially in the west part of the country. Second, the central and provincial governments are to provide special funding for the education of disadvantaged children, as a new policy, but implementation of the policy will be a challenge for the system (Zhou, 2011). It remains to be seen if local authorities will use the funding as stated. Furthermore, such rapid expansion means that issues of quality are more challenging. All provinces have proposed measures to strengthen provision, but often no concrete strategies are fully stated in their plans (Zhou, 2011). Most importantly, it requires an obvious provision of a large number of qualified teachers. This is indeed, the greatest challenge since the capacity for pre-service teacher education is limited in all provinces.

Therefore, it is apparent that closing the quality disparity between urban and rural ECEC services has become a pressing issue for Chinese governments who are seeking empirical evidence for future policy formation (Central People's Government of the PRC, 2010). Subsequently, The State Council's

(2010) Several Suggestions Regarding Developing Preschool Education has suggested measures for improving the quality of provision, while ensuring children's equal access. An effective quality rating system is also being formulated, and has become the focus of preschool education reform (Hu and Li, 2012). This will be a critical aspect of future developments. It is regarded as being essential that the theoretical perspectives behind the construction of tools to measure quality should not be driven by education regulations, but by the needs of children, families, and cultural values (Su and Xu, 2010).

It is also evident that China has been experiencing a state of disequilibrium due to the constant struggle to harmonize traditional cultural values with the immersion of Western philosophies and practices. The Chinese Ministry of Education has continually tried to adopt and integrate such principles over the last three decades. For example, the principles inherent to developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) have guided the development of Chinese national early childhood regulations and curriculum (Zhu and Zhang, 2008). The success of this strategy is yet to be evaluated. In fact, the adoption of Western concepts is controversial and has caused much debate. Hu and Li (2012) have suggested that the situation is "continuing to pose great challenges to researchers and policymakers trying to set standards for quality" (pp. 17–18). Although some universal principles might explain the ways in which children grow and learn, in practice such processes are moderated by circumstances and grounded in local experiences and knowledge that cannot be understood out of the context of local early learning experiences (Levine and New, 2008). Others have argued for a more socio-cultural approach that enables aspects of diverse cultures to be accommodated. This then leads to a better understanding of the factors that shape children's lives (Woodhead, 2000). The implication of accepting that early childhood learning has to be understood as a social and cultural process is that benchmarks of quality rather than being intrinsic, fixed, and prescribed, "… are extrinsic, historically specific and negotiable within a framework of promoting children's rights and welfare" (Woodhead, 2000: 24). The basic categories of physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development are viewed as arbitrary constructs that may not be appropriate for the overall Chinese context. For instance, in the Tibetan culture, the notion of intellect or mind is inextricable and inseparable from the emotional notion. Critical reconceptualist research in ECEC has revealed that this public discourse has historically instrumentalized childhood to further political agendas. What we think we know about children, families, and education "is very dependent on the value structures and biases of those who have been given or who have taken the 'right' to speak, to theorize, and ..." (Canella, 2005: 28–29). Therefore, in this way, comparative studies should not measure young children "outcomes" or levels in these categorizations especially in the years before formal schooling. It is suggested that rather we should study and compare the systems of provision that are able to ensure the best and maximum realization of individual potential.

Two universal principles concerning children's rights to a decent life and respect for local autonomy are difficult to achieve and sometimes appear to be in conflict, though they are both contingent tasks. From this view, the Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) sets the strongest challenges in the sense that it is most significant in contexts dominated by hierarchical authority relationships where the voices of children, their families, and community are not in evidence. With this in mind, the last final part of the article considers the ways in which the diverse populations of the TAR have been impacted by local and national policies.

Young Tibetan children who are left behind in education in PRC

In relation to the rights of children in the TAR, the CRC is legally binding in PRC since it was ratified in 1992. They include the right to life, education, health, the right not to be discriminated against, as well as the right to freedom of expression. The situation regarding the provision of ECEC in TAR is bleak, for both Tibetans and other ethnic groups who reside in rural areas.[4] In reality, while there are key global indicators addressing the first Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to

eradicate extreme poverty and hunger between 2003 and 2009 a high percentage of children under 5 are still underweight[5] in China's rural areas. The figure has not diminished but in fact doubled when compared with the same urban registrations ("3% in urban areas and 8% in rural areas" (UNICEF, 2010: 48)). In 2008, the percentage of children under 5 with severe malnutrition in Tibet is 6.5 percent (Wu and Young, 2012: 9), which was the highest of all the provinces as well as the whole country. Early neglect has lasting disabling effects and poor nutrition leads to early childhood stunting, and when coupled with low stimulation, it contributes to the poor cognitive and educational performance of children who are not fulfilling their potential (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). Accordingly, national guidelines and the Guidelines on Poverty Reduction and Development for Chinese rural areas (2011–2020) have proposed goals and targets to support for disadvantaged groups ("including those children left behind in rural areas, orphans, with special needs, poor children, rural children and of ethnic minorities" (Wu and Young, 2012: 36)).

Nevertheless, whether such goals and strategies will be effective will be closely linked to financial provision and a budget really needs to be clarified and specifically addressed by the Chinese government to indicate how change will occur.

In 2012, the UNCRC began to review China's compliance with its commitments on human rights for young people. During 2013, they asked specific questions about targeted items in the convention. At the same time, Save the Children (2013) started to implement maternal and child health (MCH) projects in remote rural and ethnic minority areas of Tibet to stop young children from dying from preventable causes and to spread critical knowledge on MCH and child survival (Save the children, 2013: 7). In 2014, the UN report by the Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights (CESCR) highlighted child malnutrition as occurring "mainly" in TAR, and it challenged the Chinese government to reconsider unemployment, ethnic discrimination, and the mass expulsion of nomads from their land. The Committee noted the "severe restrictions on Tibetans' freedom to sustain their language, culture and religion" (UN CESCR, 2014: 12). Furthermore, the findings for the PRC in the last CESCR country examinations, looking at how well the basic quality of life is being ensured, painted a disturbing picture of impoverished Tibetans missing out on China's "economic miracle" and routinely denied the right to Tibetan culture. The committee's report also records its concerns over the link with unemployment and made clear that the worst area for child malnutrition was in the TAR:

> The Committee is concerned about the situation of food insecurity in some of the poor rural areas, particularly in the western mountainous areas, and about the persistence of child malnutrition, mainly in rural areas and in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Despite the efforts made by the State party to strengthen food safety supervision, including through the adoption of the Food Safety Law, the Committee remains concerned about the shortcomings in the implementation of that Law (art. 11). (UN; CESCR, 2014: 9)

In relation to this concern, it would seem that early childhood programs that are responsive to children needs and respectful of diversity benefit all children as well as contributing to building the foundations of an inclusive society. However, for ECEC to deliver these benefits to "be effective, accessible and equitable, a society must invest in it" (Penn, 2004: 33). Unequal access to ECEC has been found to be the basis of later inequities in achievement in the system. Thus, addressing this issue is viewed as being fundamental to improvement in performance across the whole system. For example, it has been noted that "the school readiness of rural children is lower than urban children … Their late start puts them on a lower trajectory achievement, with a long-term negative impact on education attainment, employment choice, and lifetime earnings" (Wu and Young, 2012: 42). At the same time, a market-based model of ECEC has been primarily adopted in the PRC. Competition and choice are thought to ensure the model's well-being (Hu et al., 2014). Essentially, the number

of public service programs aimed at early childhood education has been reduced significantly over the past 20 years due to strong reforms in the PRC economic system. Private service provision has been increasing in most areas of China (Liu, 2010), and it is evident that for-profit businesses provide 68% of the overall ECEC services. The percentage in rural areas is even higher and is thus of great concern to the PRC government because this is the area of most disadvantage. The system of household registration (*hukou*) in China prevents children from rural migrant workers accessing quality education in their chosen urban area. Furthermore, children in rural areas are often left behind by their parents as they go to major cities to seek employment. To date, in rural areas, it has been calculated that this number totals 27.1 million (Research Group of All-China Women's Federation, 2013). They are mostly located in the Midwest provinces, which have limited production capabilities and harsh natural environments.

In sum, migrant workers' children face many obstacles when entering public education, and these are even greater for the minority ethnic Tibetans. There exists a new generation who are growing up without the basic right to necessary care, supervision, and early education (Song et al., 2014). For the minority ethnic Tibetans, only about 5.94% of the children have opportunities to attend preschool education in their rural homelands (Wang, 2011).

External agencies have attempted to implement programs in some regions. For example, a special Europe Aid program, in partnership with the "Non State Actors and Local Authorities in Development" from the "Governance, Social Affairs and Mongolia Section," is being implemented through Save the Children Fund to strengthen the capacity of marginalized urban and rural families and communities to access quality ECEC in diverse rural Chinese provinces, with the Tibet region being targeted among them. However, the published trends regarding the selected education and health indicators do not reveal the full picture of the gaps in the quality of education and health care for the young children in TAR. Largely, the available literature has generally reported unacceptable to poor quality ECEC programs serving rural populations, especially those from economically disadvantaged or remote areas (Hu and Li, 2012; Hu and Roberts, 2013; Hu and Szente, 2009). The distribution of teachers with specialized teacher qualifications reflects the unevenness of quality, particularly between rural and urban areas (Zhu, 2011). In the TAR, it is estimated that the number of students per teacher in kindergartens is much higher than in any other Chinese province in relation to the per capita GDP. Furthermore, there are no trained specialized teachers[6] to teach in rural areas. In 2012, Save the Children established new ECEC services in Tibet for ethnic minorities in rural areas. They mobilized parents, preschool teachers, and village committees to participate, providing them with training and encouraging them to participate in the management of the settings (Save the Children, 2013). Along the same line, they launched a project titled "Learning through Playing" together with the Training and Communication Centre of the National Health and Family Planning Commission. This included developing a toy/book package regarding the essential of early childhood development for young children aged birth to 3 years of age, and a national occupational training materials/course for early childhood facilitators.

Finally, the Chinese government continues to face the greater challenge of increasing the quality of programs serving vulnerable children. Further research and training is required to adequately address the need for contextually enhanced teaching resources and authentic strategies to reflect and promote equal access to high-quality ECEC (Hu et al., 2014). Therefore, taking care of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups through reformed resources allocation can play an important role in ensuring social stability and social justice (Ruan and Song, 2013). Yet, equal education opportunity means more than an entitlement to equal resources. It requires the implementation of differentiated curricula to meet children's various special needs (Zhu, 2011). When children who have experienced migration or internal displacement enter early education settings, new dilemmas are created, and the cultural identity of both child and parent may undergo change in the new

environment. There exist macro-level issues which shape life chances and trajectories for children. Hence, a special curriculum that can be designed to help children grow and respect their home cultures, while integrating them into the new environment they are going to live in is essential (Song et al., 2014). For Su and Xu (2010), "policy-makers, when deciding on universal standards, need to leave room for people from unique cultural contexts to negotiate and converse about the meaning of quality" (p. 24). Hence, there is a recognition that the early years of life are formative, and one of the most important questions in early childhood education research is how best to support the learning experiences and processes of children growing up in multilingual settings to meet their needs. For young children, learning in their first language or mother tongue provides the link which enables them to build on their prior knowledge and skills. This is a feature recognized that resonated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declaration of 1951 that the best medium of teaching a child is the mother tongue. The language a child first learns to speak at home has a powerful influence on their identity and learning, so "whether or not a child is taught in their first language has strong effect on whether or not they attend school, particularly in rural areas" (Brooker and Woodhead, 2010: 38). Coping with a different language of instruction in preschool and school alongside experiencing conflicting values and expectations can be very challenging for young children, and can have long-term implications for learning. This culture of testing can lead to young children believing, from a very early age, that they will not be able to obtain good results in the system. This is to the detriment of them reaching their full potential.

Summary

There is a fragile space for the development of an explicit Tibetan identity and a consistent policy toward Tibetan language instruction in the current system (Bass, 1998; Upton, 1999 cited by Carney, 2008). The context for growth has been the wish to integrate all children into the prevailing educational system with its inherent values, rather than a concern to make schooling relevant for its diverse constituents (Carney, 2008). A report of CESCR (2014) of UN has noted with respect to the cultural rights of ethnic minorities in PRC that "despite the measures adopted by the State party, the Committee is concerned about the restrictions faced by Tibetans and Uighurs, in particular regarding the restriction of education in the Tibetan and Uighur languages (art. 15)" (p. 12). Moreover, the Tibetan language is under threat as it has been replaced as the official language, and bilingual preschool programs are only announced on the media.[7] These examples illustrate how cultural diversity is connected to economic inequalities, and "this tension is especially evident in contexts of rapid social change and migration, especially for minority children growing up in complex, pluralistic societies where they encounter competing values and expectations, and are at the greatest risk of educational exclusion" (Brooker and Woodhead, 2010: ix). As result, Tibetans are left behind in a highly disadvantaged position. It inhibits their future potential to obtain entry into further education. The level of education of minority ethnic Tibetans remains lower (Norbu, 2006) and this is basically due to a lack of educational opportunities. Since the early 1990s, well over 7000 children, including toddlers, have taken tremendous risks in order to make the exodus and journey across the Himalayas, in the hope that they will receive in exile, what they have been denied back home; health, education, and a sense of security and well-being.[8] Pema (2005) has suggested that theirs is a difficult choice; give up the right to education or abandon their Tibetan identity (Pema, 2005). Therefore, it has become evident that, in the case of the minority Tibetans in the PRC,

> it is not sufficient to intervene in young children's learning experiences at the local level without first addressing the structural inequalities which actually shape it … it must ensure equity access and process,

> as well as quality, and at the same time ensure the cultural appropriateness of programme content and intervention. (Brooker and Woodhead, 2010: 9, 35)

These are regarded here as basic human rights according to the Convention.

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Notes

1. Cited by Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China (2004), "Who has benefited Most in Tibet?" China's Tibet, no. 2.
2. The central government spent 1.28% of the total education expenditure on preschool education, in the majority to support urban provision (Ministry of Education (Department of Development and Planning), 2006).
3. *Hukou* is a household registration system that ties social benefits to a person's domicile origin.
4. Considering the definition of vulnerable groups expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) General Comment 7 (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 2005).
5. Definition of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) indicator "Underweight prevalence": percentage of children between 0 and 59 months of life who are below minus two standard deviations from the median weight for age according to the World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards.
6. A Professional Title system called *Zhi Cheng* is implemented in education system to indicate teachers' professional levels, though preschool (*Youeryuan*) and primary school teachers are in the same professional title system; however, the former ones, "especially teachers from private or rural *Youeryuan* have little chance to receive any '*Zhi Cheng*' because of vague identity of this position" (Song et al., 2014: 364).
7. Education authorities in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region said Friday all children in Tibet's farming and herding areas will receive at least two years of free preschool education in both the Tibetan language and Standard Chinese. "By then, at least 60 per cent of Tibetan children will attend kindergarten, compared with the current 24.5 per cent", a Tibet education bureau spokesman said. (*Xinhua*, 2015)
8. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Katmandu has registered such minors, many of them who were unaccompanied, in the past years (cited by Pema, 2004).

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