



**ASIA LEADERSHIP
ROUNDTABLE**

BANGKOK
2011

Educational Reform and Change in the Asia Pacific Region

Equity Issues Facing the Chinese School Leadership

Haiyan QIAN

While the PISA scores from Shanghai, China have stunned educators in the US, the media and education scholars in China are apparently not so exhilarated by the news. A common reaction is that it is just Shanghai, not representative of China as a whole. The disparities between regions, classes and schools have widened to such an extent that equity has become one of the top concerns of education leaders of various levels. This paper attempts to discuss the major equity challenges facing school leadership in China.

The paper first outlines some basic facts of disparities and inequity in China. The inequity has been a result of different provincial score requirement for the same national test; the schooling policies for migrant worker's children and the long-established key-ordinary school divisions. The second section discusses some new initiatives that have been adopted to narrow the disparities. These initiatives include, for example, autonomous enrollment policies initiated by elite universities such as Fudan and Shanghai Jiaotong; providing migrant children opportunities to receive free compulsory education in cities and a new school review system that aims to break the key-ordinary school division. These initiatives, however, bring new challenges to school leadership. The challenges and concerns of school leaders are further explored in the section. The final section synthesizes the suggestions and insights of scholars from Mainland in the face of the equity issues. The paper ends with the discussion about what school leaders can do to create a more equitable campus.

