



***The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library***

**This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.**

**Help ensure our sustainability.**

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search  
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>  
[aesearch@umn.edu](mailto:aesearch@umn.edu)

*Papers downloaded from AgEcon Search may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

*No endorsement of AgEcon Search or its fundraising activities by the author(s) of the following work or their employer(s) is intended or implied.*

# Problems of Quality of Migrant Workers and Countermeasures from the Perspective of Iceberg Model

YAN Yu-jie, LIU Yuan \*

The College of Management, Shaanxi University of Science and Technology, Xi'an 710021, China

**Abstract** From the perspective of Iceberg Model, we analyze levels and structures of quality of migrant workers from knowledge, skills, social role, self-cognition, traits and motives. On the basis of these situations, we put forward countermeasures: value rural education and enhance skill training; make clear occupational planning and set up correct sense of value; assist migrant workers in facing the reality and adjusting their state of mind in working; coordinate interest relationship and call upon social care; rebuild mental world and construct harmonious society.

**Key words** Iceberg Model, Quality of migrant workers, Problems and countermeasures

The Iceberg Model was developed by American famous psychologist David C. McClelland in 1973. He divided individual quality into "the part above waterline" and "the part below waterline" (Fig. 1)<sup>[1]</sup>. The part above waterline, including knowledge and skills, is external expression of individual quality. These can be easily measured and observed, also can be easily changed and developed through proper training. Social role, self-cognition, traits and motives are internal expression of individual quality, not easily changed by external factors, but key factors influencing external expression of individuals<sup>[2]</sup>.

At present, migrant workers' low overall quality and educational level, as well as lack of professional quality seriously influence quality and progress of social construction. This is manifested in following three aspects. Firstly, low quality of migrant workers results in their difficult employment and consequently exerts negative influence on social stability. Shortage of migrant workers' knowledge and skills poses obstacle to their smooth employment. Those migrant workers who fail to find jobs have no permanent work place will have adverse influence on current social stability. Secondly, low quality of migrant workers leads to irrational behavior, consequently influences construction of harmonious society. Migrant workers' lack of sense of belonging in cities and having no say in anything easily create distrust of urban mainstream society. In this situation, they may protest against society. Thirdly, low quality of migrant workers becomes major obstacle to their smooth integration into cities. Although migrant workers work hard in cities and hope to improve their status, they still can not be approved by citizens and it is hard for them to integrate into cities and towns due to their low quality.

From the perspective of Iceberg Model, combining levels and structure of migrant worker' quality, we present problems of each level and put forward countermeasures, in the hope of providing reference for migrant workers to conduct self-correction and government and enterprise to take pertinent measures.

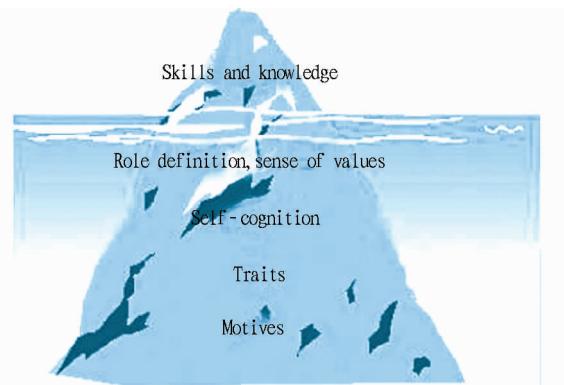


Fig. 1 Iceberg Model of quality system

## 1 Existing problems of migrant workers' quality from perspective of Iceberg Model

**1.1 Level of knowledge** Knowledge is a familiarity with someone or something, which can include facts, information, descriptions, or skills acquired through experience or education. Low knowledge and educational level of migrant workers are mainly manifested in following aspects. In the first place, their basic education is weak. Many migrant workers have educational level lower than middle school, and know little systematic theoretic knowledge. Even if they have gained some understanding, it is accumulated in daily works and just superficial basic knowledge<sup>[3]</sup>. In the second place, migrant workers' will to study is weak. Most migrant workers think that physical activities are what they are good at, so they just do not want to learn new knowledge. In the third place, enterprises provide few opportunities. Many enterprises think that China is rich in human resources, especially migrant workers, so they have not incorporated migrant workers into their human resource planning and provide few opportunities for migrant workers to study.

**1.2 Level of skills** A skill is an ability acquired through deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to perform some work through structural application of knowledge, namely, the com-

mand of technology and knowledge required in a certain field, such as ability to express, ability to organization, and decision-making capacity. From analysis of migrant workers' knowledge level, we found that educational level of migrant workers is not high and they are lack of knowledge basis, so it is difficult to turn their knowledge into skills. Therefore, many migrant workers have to accumulate experience in their works. Sometimes, they can realize their expectation, but this method takes a long time and only few migrant workers can reach this level. What's worse, many agricultural technical schools and night schools exist only in name and it is hard to arouse migrant workers' enthusiasm of learning.

**1.3 Level of social role** Social role relates to how we project ourselves, our outer self, and the image we want to project based on our attitude and sense of values. Attitude-based way of act refers to what kind of occupation an individual wants to choose and how about the career planning. Since migrant workers' lack of knowledge and skills, they have no much choice but to do manual labor and those works with higher risks. As to future career planning, migrant workers feel mixed-up, and many migrant workers do not have such conception. The values-oriented style of individual refers to the spirit of co-operation shown in the course of working. Migrant workers flow frequently and most of them are groups of fellow villagers. This kind of cooperation is greatly different from cooperation of colleagues, because migrant workers do not have formal occupational quality.

**1.4 Level of self-cognition** Self-cognition is the cognition and attitude of individual to oneself, such as self-confidence and optimistic spirit. Migrant workers have to bear tremendous pressure. On one hand, they have to shoulder the entire heavy burden of family. On the other hand, they have to face cool detachment of urban residents and hazardous working environment. In serious internal and external environment, it is difficult for most migrant workers to become optimistic. They have to worry about whether their salary will fall into arrears, feel anxious about their future, and worry about if they can withstand such tremendous pressure. All of these difficulties make migrant workers hard to take breath. Due to living at the bottom of society, far from urban mainstream culture, and low occupational quality, many migrant workers are not confident when facing urban people, and some migrant workers even show hatred for urban people. Migrant workers do not have the concept of no high and low distinction of jobs, so it is extremely necessary to adjust their attitude.

**1.5 Level of traits** Traits are characteristics of constant and stable behavior of individuals, such as integrity, honesty and sense of responsibility. Traits are differences between people and not related to nature and type of jobs, so there are no fundamental differences of traits between migrant workers and urban people. Traits are basic principle to conduct oneself. In reality, however, the cruel environment has an obvious influence upon traits of migrant workers. Currently, many urban people complain about migrant workers' low quality, no good faith and coveting small gains; enterprises think that migrant workers are

not responsible and lack professional morality. Mobility of migrant workers determines that it is impossible for them to stay for long time in an enterprise or place. Therefore, when facing benefits, most migrant workers will choose benefits and ignore integrity and responsibility. Such problem is related to traits of migrant workers and actual situation of cruel society, we should pay much more attention.

**1.6 Level of motives** A motive can be defined as natural and sustained thought, preference, or drive that acts as incitement to actions of individual, such as the need of achievement, the need of interpersonal communication, etc. According to Maslow's hierarchy of human needs theory, the human needs include five levels, namely, biological and physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs (interpersonal communication needs), esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. At present, migrant workers only hope to satisfy their biological and physiological needs and safety needs. For higher level of needs, they do not have strong desire. In this situation, their motives are not strong. However, we should analyze problems from the perspective of development, and should not neglect those levels of needs that migrant workers want to have but fail to realize for the time being.

## 2 Countermeasures for improving quality of migrant workers from the perspective of Iceberg Model

### 2.1 Valuing rural education and enhancing skill training

Currently, the low educational level and shortage of knowledge of migrant workers are largely because rural education is not valued. Therefore, we should pay more attention to rural education. Firstly, rural parents should place great emphasis on education of their children, do not let their children discontinue their studies or drop out of schools, but should support their children to continue their studies, avoid their going out to work too early. Secondly, government should attach importance to rural education. The state has formulated many policies to support compulsory education, for example, free tuition and incidental expenses, to provide rural children more opportunities of study, we should insist on these policies<sup>[4]</sup>.

In view of migrant workers' lack of skills, enterprises should strengthen training of migrant workers, get rid of the thought of "instrumental men", and be generous to migrant workers. It is proposed to find out urgent demand of migrant workers through survey and interview, and provide centralized training for migrant workers in accordance with different industries and jobs. This will play a greater role in improving skills of migrant workers, promoting healthy and sound development of enterprises, and finally achieving the "win-win" effect. In addition, government should also rectify training schools, bring their training contents, time and size more reasonable, and provide formal channels for study and training of migrant workers, to meet training needs of migrant workers<sup>[5]</sup>.

### 2.2 Making clear occupational planning and setting up correct sense of value

As long plan for occupational development, occupational planning is directional and oriented to

wards objectives. However, due to their own traits, most migrant workers do not make occupational planning. Human resource departments of enterprises should incorporate migrant workers into their human resource planning, strengthen communication with migrant workers, and provide favorable occupational planning for migrant workers, to make migrant workers see the hope in enterprises. This not only satisfies the demand of migrant workers for stable work, but also makes migrant workers feel at ease in their enterprises.

Correct sense of value is the wind vane of development, and also criterion and measure of conducting oneself. The society is a large community. To maximize benefits, individuals should cooperate with each other. Therefore, migrant workers should change their ideas of small groups of fellow villagers, get rid of their rural complex, and treat their colleagues with occupational attitude and opinion. It is required to set up good cooperative awareness, strengthen communication with colleagues, straighten out the relationship with superior leaders, actively participate in activities of their companies, and respond to the company's call. Besides, migrant workers should take care of little things and incorporate themselves into corporate culture.

**2.3 Assist migrant workers in facing the reality and adjusting their state of mind in working** Cruel reality brings great psychological pressure to migrant workers. They have to support their families, work in unfavorable conditions, so they have to bear huge pressure. The Survival of the Fittest is the survival law in nature, and it is also applicable to current social life. However, it is impossible to change the reality through escape, so migrant workers should strengthen self-cognition, be brave in facing the reality, rather than escape or indulgence. Besides, migrant workers should be ready for the next and future challenges with optimistic and positive attitude. In this way, it will be favorable to performance of migrant workers, and it will also improve work efficiency and create higher value.

The state of mind of migrant workers has become a hot spot of society and attracts more and more attention. Enterprises can invite teachers of psychology to provide training for migrant workers and guide them to set up healthy state of mind. At the same time, it is proposed to provide them channels to express their complaints, so as to relieve their working pressure. Government should also carry out appropriate propaganda, and call upon the whole society to provide support and help, to jointly solve psychological problems of migrant workers.

**2.4 Coordinating interest relationship and calling upon social care** Sincerity and sense of responsibility are differences between people. Migrant workers and urban people are equal, so migrant workers should not betray their self-esteem just for immediate interest, but rather should rebuild their image from the long-term viewpoint. Migrant workers should handle the relationship between immediate benefits and long-term benefits in a proper way, correctly handle the relationship between morality and benefits, set up good moral concept, do what is appropriate and discard what is inappropriate.

Countryside and city are different communities. The barrier between rural and urban residents is also resulted from the respective environment. With rapid development speed and complete infrastructure, cities are quicker in accepting new things. By comparison, rural areas are relatively closed and backward. When looking at migrant workers, urban people often have the sense of superiority. The state also calls upon social care of migrant workers at the bottom level, and asks everyone to be lenient with each other and understand each other, to promote construction of spiritual civilization and improve soft strength of culture. Through coordinating benefits of migrant workers, understanding and tolerance of urban people, as well as appeal of the state, it is expected to improve quality of migrant workers and promote socio-economic development.

**2.5 Rebuilding mental world and constructing harmonious society** From analysis of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs theory, present migrant workers only hope to satisfy their biological and physiological needs and safety need, and higher level of needs are just unattainable. However, we should not neglect the hope of migrant workers for belongingness and love needs ( interpersonal communication needs ), esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. It is recommended to help migrant workers to build mental world to satisfy their higher level needs. In the first place, we should strengthen communication with migrant workers, and provide them with comfortable communication platform, to make them have the feeling of being members of enterprises. In the second place, the whole society should improve their respect for migrant workers, care about them, and let them have the feeling of being cared. In the third place, on the basis of basic needs satisfied, migrant workers should actively participate in social activities, communicate with others, and express their opinions clearly through reasonable channels.

Through helping them to build mental world and satisfy higher level of needs, it is able to urge them to set up higher objectives, so it will play favorable influence on improving their own quality. They will undertake self-reflection, self-correction, self-adjustment, and reorientation, which will be helpful for building harmonious labor relationship and interpersonal relationship.

## References

- [1] MCCLELLAND DC. Testing for competence rather than for intelligence[J]. American Psychologist, 1973, 28: 1 - 14.
- [2] SPENCER LM, SPENCER SM. Competence at work: models for superior performance[M]. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1993.
- [3] JIANG WL, BU XL. On farmers' education[M]. Beijing: China Agriculture Press, 2006. (in Chinese).
- [4] SONG ZR. Analysis on measures for strengthening the construction of agricultural technology extension team's quality[J]. Management of Agriculture Science and Technology, 2007(2) : 36 - 37. (in Chinese).
- [5] WANG GZ. Analysis of Shanxi farmers' training with iceberg theory [J]. Shanxi Agricultural Economy, 2008(5) : 48 - 51. (in Chinese).