

Tong Ru

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PROFILE

Ph.D. candidate in Administrative and Policy Studies (Economics track), with over 10 years of experience in child development, human capital development, and education equity. Proficient in evidence-based research and program impact evaluation design (RCTs, quasi-experimental analysis, and causal mediation analysis).

EDUCATION

University of Pittsburgh Pittsburgh, the United States
Ph.D. in Administrative and Policy Studies (Economics track) Expected May 2026
Advisor: Dr. Najeeb Shafiq; Co-advisor: Dr. Xu Qin

- Dissertation:

- Understanding Human Capital Development in Rural China: Comparative Insights from the Education Production Function in Developing Countries (Literature review)
- Causal Mediation Analysis on an Early Childhood Development Intervention in Rural China (RCT-based)
- Understanding Rural Students' Creativity Attitudes: A Machine Learning & Mixed-Methods Study
- Ingroup Benefits: The Positive Effects of Tibetan Teachers on Tibetan Students — Evidence from Rural China (Instrumental Variable regression method)

- Core Coursework: Economics of Education; Experimental and Behavioral Economics; Economics of Social Policy; Causal Inference in Social Science Studies; Causal Moderation and Mediation Analysis; Natural Language Processing with Python; Data Programming with Python & R.

Shaanxi Normal University

Xi'an, China

M.Sc. in Labor Economics

June 2017

- Thesis: Impact of Parental Migration on Academic Outcomes of Left-Behind Children in Rural China (Difference-in-Difference regression method)

- Core Coursework: Econometrics, Development Economics, Program Impact Evaluation, Methods of Social Investigation, Data Analysis using Stata, Research on Social Development Theory and Education, Article and Policy Brief Writing.

Xi'an Technological University

Xi'an, China

B.Eng. in Materials Chemistry

July 2013

- Core Coursework: Advanced Mathematics, Linear Algebra, Probability Theory and Mathematical Statistics.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

UNESCO Regional Office, Bangkok

Jan–Jul 2024

Education Intern (Policy and Program Support)

- Co-developed the Education Simulation Model for Cambodia's Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2024–2028.

- Supported the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Simulation Model for ASEAN Countries; drafted research reports and policy briefs.

- Contributed to education finance modeling and policy analysis.

UNICEF China, Beijing

Jun–Aug 2023

Social Policy Intern

- Supported Public Finance Management and Governance projects.

- Analyzed 20 years of China's public education spending data; visualized data.

- Coordinated stakeholder workshops and co-authored policy briefs.

- Center for Experimental Economics in Education, Xi'an** 2017–2020
Research Assistant
 - Led and coordinated field experiments, survey design and implementation, and data analysis.
 - Engaged with local governments and NGOs for project collaboration.
 - Drafted grant proposals, program reports, and policy briefs.
- University Center for International Studies, Pittsburgh** 2022–2023
Graduate Assistant
 - Coordinated leadership development programs, tracked impact assessment.
- Asian Studies Center, Pittsburgh** 2021–2022
Program Coordinator
 - Coordinated university-wide student connection program.
 - Managed program website and social media.
 - Trained student ambassadors and implemented student assessment.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- RCT: Village-based Parenting Center for Children Aged 0–3 in Rural China**
 June 2016–Present
 - Causal inference analysis for a longitudinal ECD study; led evaluation strategy and measurement design.
- RCT: Computer-Assisted Learning (CAL) Program in Rural China**
 Jul 2019–Dec 2024
 - Supervised project in 200+ schools in rural northwest China; responsible for field coordination, data collection, and report writing.
- Health Information Intervention in Rural Tibetan Areas of China**
 May 2016–Dec 2016
 - Supervised project implementation in 58 schools; responsible for field coordination, data collection, and report writing.
- RCT: Reduce Malnutrition and Improve Infants' Development**
 Aug 2014–May 2015
 - Designed tools and protocols; led training and supervision for data collection with rural families across 100 villages in rural northwestern China.
- RCT: Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) and Maternal-Child Health Uptake**
 Aug 2014–Dec 2014
 - Designed surveys and supervised field teams across 27 minority villages in rural minority areas of China.
- RCT: Vision Care Program in Rural Schools** May 2014–Jun 2015
 - Designed questionnaires; trained enumerators; managed data collection and supervision across 300 schools in rural northwestern China.

TEACHING INTERESTS

- **Economics of Education:** including Labor Economics, Human Capital Theory, Education Production Function, Education Policy Analysis.
- **Education Research Methods:** including Causal Inference, Causal Mediation Analysis, Experimental Design, Quasi-Experimental Analysis, Data Analysis using Python, R, and Stata.
- **Seminar on Child Development and Family Education:** focusing on methodological tools and practical applications, and the critical evaluation of classic literature and recent empirical studies.

PUBLICATIONS

1. Yueming Cao, Dan Wang, Yu Bai, **Tong Ru**. (2024). Effect of ethnic stereotype threat on academic performance: Experimental evidence from rural China. *China Economic Review*, 86, 102204.
2. Ai Yue, Yali Zhang, Shuhang Zhao, Shibin Liang, **Tong Ru**, Na Qiao, Yaojiang Shi. (2024). The effect of paternal parenting behaviors on children development in western rural China. *Journal of Asian Economics*, 92: 101736.
3. **Tong Ru**. (2023). How To Reduce Educational Inequality Between Urban and Rural Regions in China: Evidence from Field Experiments. *Written Response to the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) 2023 Annual Conference*.
4. Yu Bai, Michael Neubauer, **Tong Ru**, Yaojiang Shi, Kaleigh Kenny, & Scott Rozelle. (2020). Impact of Second-Parent Migration on Student Academic Performance in Northwest China and its Implications. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 56:8, 1523–1540.
5. Yaojiang Shi, Linxiu Zhang, Fang Chang, Han Liu, Bin Tang, Qiufeng Gao, Hongyu Guan, Jingchun Nie, Jie Yang, Yu Bai, Ying Li, Lei Tang, Ai Yue, & **Tong Ru**. (2020). Practices and Experiences of Randomized Controlled Trials in China's Targeted Poverty Alleviations in Education. *Journal of East China Normal University (Educational Sciences)*, 38(8): 1–67. (in Chinese)
6. Wenbin Min, **Tong Ru**, & Yaojiang Shi. (2019). The Impact of Childhood Poverty Experience on Rural Youth's Non-cognitive Ability—From the Perspective of the Life Course Theory. *Contemporary Education Forum*, 5: 90–98. (in Chinese)

WORKS UNDER REVIEW

1. **Tong Ru**, Xu Qin, & Ai Yue. Causal Mediation Mechanisms Underlying Early Childhood Development Interventions in Rural China. Revise & Resubmit at *Child Development*.
2. **Tong Ru** & Yaojiang Shi. Understanding Human Capital Development in Rural China: Comparative Insights from the Education Production Function in Developing Countries. Under review at *Journal of East China Normal University (Educational Sciences)*.

WORKING PAPERS

1. Parental investment, School Choice, and Persistent Benefits of Early Childhood Intervention in Rural China.
2. Using Curiosity to Promote Caregivers Visiting the Parenting Center in Rural China: Evidence from A Field Experiment.

PRESENTATIONS **How UN Agencies Promote Education Initiatives: Case Studies of UNICEF and UNESCO**

- Invited Presentation at the International Forum on Rural Education and Evidence-based Research, Xi'an, China, June 2024

Ingroup or Outgroup: Will Tibetan Teachers Benefit Tibetan Students More Than Han Teachers?

- Oral Presentation at the 2023 Annual Conference of Comparative & International Education Society, Washington, D.C., February 2023

Education in Rural China: A General Description using Contemporary Chinese Village Gazetteer (CCVG) Dataset

- Invited Presentation at the Conference on Rural Society and Politics in China, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, April 2022

Understand the Creativity Development of Children in Rural China: A Mixed-Method Study

- Oral Presentation at the 2022 Annual Conference of Comparative & International Education Society, Minneapolis, April 2022

Order Matters: The Effect of Second-Wave Migration on Student's Academic Performance in Northwest China

- Oral Presentation at the Hayami Conference, Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Tokyo, Dec 2017

- Oral Presentation at the Chinese Economist Society (CES) Annual Conference, Shenzhen, Jun 2016 (with Michael Neubauer).

SKILLS

Programming: Python, R, Stata

Documentation: HTML, \LaTeX , Markdown

LANGUAGES

Chinese: Native language

English: Professional working proficiency

Japanese: Basic communication skill

MEMBERSHIP

Association for Asian Studies

November 2021/Present

Chinese Economists Society

June 2016/Present

Comparative & International Education Society

April 2021/Present