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From Capitalism to Socialism? Hong Kong Education within a Transitional Society

GERARD A. POSTIGLIONE

Contrary to events in Eastern Europe, where socialist societies are assuming the trappings of capitalism, Hong Kong is impelled to accommodate a socialist metropole. China's decision to shun the 1989 global socialist transformations resulted in a more hardline stance toward Hong Kong's future. In 1997 the British will retreat from their colony, after a period in which the territory grew from a desolate outpost in the South China Sea to one of the world's largest financial and commercial centers. As Hong Kong confronts an uncertain future—a transfer of sovereignty to the People's Republic of China—education may become a vehicle for negotiating social transition as well as an instrument to resist decolonization.

For several years there has been a swell of local scholarship on the approaching "yiguo, liangzhi" (one-country, two-system) arrangement.¹ However, literature on the implications of the transition for education is virtually nonexistent.² This article identifies some of the major implications of the 1997 return of sovereignty for selected aspects of the educational policy process. I examine three potential policy orientations—capitalism, socialism, and patriotism—and consider the potential of education to rec-

This is a revised version of a paper entitled "Hong Kong Education and the Transition," presented at the 1989 Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society, Cambridge, Mass. I am grateful to the editor and anonymous reviewers of *Comparative Education Review* for their helpful comments.

¹ See John Burns and Ian Scott, *The Hong Kong Civil Service and Its Future* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1988); Joseph Y. S. Cheng, ed., *Hong Kong in Transition* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1986); Christopher Howe, "Growth, Public Policy, and Hong Kong's Relationship with the People's Republic of China," *China Quarterly*, no. 95 (1983), pp. 512–33; Y. C. Jao, Leung Chi-keung, Peter Wesley-Smith, and Wong Siu-lun, *Hong Kong and 1997: Strategies for the Future* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, Center of Asian Studies, 1985); Lau Siu Kai and Kuan Hsin-chi, "The Changing Political Culture of the Hong Kong Chinese," in Cheng, ed., pp. 26–51; Gerard Postiglione, "The Structuring of Ethnicity in Hong Kong," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 12 (1988): 247–67; Lucian W. Pye, "The International Position of Hong Kong," *China Quarterly*, no. 95 (September 1983), pp. 456–68; A. J. Youngson, ed., *China and Hong Kong: The Economic Nexus* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1983); Ian Scott, *Political Change and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989); Albert H. Yee, *A People Misruled: Hong Kong and the Chinese Stepping Stone Syndrome* (Hong Kong: Associated Press International, 1989); Myron Mushkat, *Hong Kong: The Challenge of Transformation* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, Center of Asian Studies, 1989).

² Paul Morris, "The Effects on the School Curriculum of Hong Kong's Return to Chinese Sovereignty in 1997," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 20, no. 6 (November–December 1988): 509–28; and Gerard A. Postiglione, ed., *Education and Society in Hong Kong: Toward One Country and Two Systems* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, in press).

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oncile or heighten the contradictions between these orientations within a “one-country, two-system” arrangement.

Education in Transition Societies

Education and Hong Kong's Future

With the formal signing of the *Sino-British Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong* in 1985, the predominant vision of Hong Kong society toward its future was one of continued stability and prosperity within a framework that would permit a great degree of autonomy under the mother country's sovereignty. Until June 1989, conditions existed for the realization of that vision and were to be reflected in the Basic Law of the post-1997 Special Administrative Region (SAR) government. After June 4, 1989, the Basic Law Drafting Committee temporarily suspended work; the conditions for the fulfillment of the post-1997 vision had indeed changed.³ Accordingly, society's expectations toward education also began to change as the problem of reconciling capitalism, socialism, and patriotism became more pronounced. Hundreds of thousands of secondary and postsecondary school students, teachers, and administrators joined demonstrations to express their sentiments on political events in China.⁴ Education department officials ignored enforcement of the long-standing ban on politics in schools, and school principals and teachers wrestled with how to react to students' political poster displays and their participation in territory-wide demonstrations.⁵ Many months after the suppression of the democracy movement in Beijing, Hong Kong remained in a severe confidence crisis as cooperation between the British and Chinese governments became strained.

Educational Policy Intervention Points within the Transfer of Power

Such events added a new dimension to the already unusual nature of Hong Kong's decolonization process. Power has gradually shifted to the local elite and the new middle class, yet most power still resides with the British government. Hong Kong's people still look to the British government to press for a speedier democratization although Beijing denies its appropriateness. The local elite assert that Hong Kong is not a colony in

³ Among the first to resign from the Basic Law Drafting Committee were the outspoken liberal legislative councillors Lee Chu Ming and Szeto Wah. The editor of the *Ming Bao* daily newspaper, Louis Cha, who formerly had supported the Beijing government, also resigned after June 4, 1989.

⁴ See “World Marches for China,” *Hong Kong Standard* (May 29, 1989), p. 1; and “Xianggang Shubaiwanren zaishangjie zhichi xueyun,” *Wen Hui Bao* (May 29, 1989), p. 1.

⁵ See *South China Morning Post*, “Call to End Politics Ban in Schools” (June 7, 1989). On June 16, 1989, the University of Hong Kong Faculty of Education conducted a territory-wide meeting of school teachers and principals in which accounts of student activism were discussed. Most students were involved in territory-wide demonstrations; however, many students had organized speeches, political poster displays, letter writing, and student assemblies within school.

the classical sense yet express concern that in 1997 the mother country may gain the same amount of influence wielded by the British in the territory's affairs, including education. Some refer to the transfer of sovereignty as the replacement of one hegemonic force with another because the territory's future degree of autonomy will not be determined by the colonial metropole or even by the people of the territory itself but rather by the Beijing government. Confidence in the Sino-British Agreement on Hong Kong's future will be won or lost within a plural society that favors decolonization and supports Chinese sovereignty yet remains apprehensive in the face of Beijing's interference in Hong Kong's affairs. The degree to which decolonization is occurring as opposed to the replacement of one force by another is a complex question whose answer awaits the outcome of struggles over representative government in Hong Kong, and the direction of future events in China, including a change of governments. The precise nature and characteristics of Hong Kong as a transitional society are inseparable from the evolution of these factors during the crucial run-up to 1997.

Educational policy intervenes by shaping the thinking of the generation that will lead Hong Kong after 1997; it influences the selection criteria for recruitment into important positions within the transitional Government Civil Service; it maintains a highly skilled labor force in the face of the large-scale emigration of talented people; it determines to some extent the degree of cultural penetration; it influences socialization processes that build an identity essential for reuniting people in Hong Kong with the rest of China; and, finally, it bolsters or restrains the general process of democratization in the society.

Hong Kong's economy has long contributed to nation building in China. It continues to do so, and for this reason it will not be dismantled for at least fifty years after the return of sovereignty in 1997. Hong Kong's political system has made no such direct contribution.⁶ Its future political system will be defined by the Basic Law, promulgated by China's National People's Congress, and will be strictly limited by the boundaries of the new SAR.⁷ This is not to suggest a separation between the economic and political spheres; it is only that economics and politics cannot be separated in understanding Hong Kong's development. A secluded bureaucratic polity has existed alongside an atomistic Chinese society to provide a positive noninterventionism within the economic sphere, thus allowing capitalism to operate virtually unfettered by popular influence.⁸ This,

⁶ However, in its early history Hong Kong at times became the base for launching radical activities that contributed to nation building in China, e.g., Sun Yixian's anti-Manzhou uprisings.

⁷ See *The Draft Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China* (Hong Kong: Consultative Committee of the Basic Law, April 1988).

⁸ See Lau Siu Kai, *Society and Politics in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1982).

coupled with government control over land sale, and the availability of low-wage labor—the latter made possible through government subsidized housing and inexpensive food and clothing from China—explain the tremendous success of the domestic economy.⁹

Education in Hong Kong has not yet veered from its colonial setting. Except for minor revisions to the content of some textbooks, schooling continues to introduce children to a sociopolitical system that has remained almost unchanged for over 140 years.¹⁰ Moreover, China has no explicit nation-building education strategy for Hong Kong after 1997. Nevertheless, education is increasingly considered a key institution in the transitional period. Plans for the expansion of higher education and the introduction of civics education are just two examples.¹¹ Also, without a military to strengthen a particular brand of patriotic socialization, education may assume a more important ideological function.

Informing the Study of Education in Transitional Societies

Although Hong Kong little resembles most transitional societies, educational similarities do exist.¹² In colonial to postcolonial transitional settings, preindependence education may remain largely unchanged except for schools' specific role in affirming national identity. Educational policy changes are directed more at the content of education than at the system's form or structure. Social studies, history, and language curriculum may be revised, for instance. Colonial social structures may remain almost intact through the early postcolonial period, with the colonial power vacuum being filled by a national bourgeoisie. Hong Kong will retain its economic system, and the local bourgeoisie is already replacing the colonial elite. Nevertheless, the continued emigration of large numbers of the local bourgeoisie prior to 1997 could result in totally new circumstances. One scenario depicts an ever-increasing infusion of Beijing-sponsored capital coupled with new immigrants from China—born and educated under socialism—actively replacing the present bourgeoisie with a new “socialist bourgeoisie.” This would have a measurable influence on the cultural ethos of Hong Kong schools.¹³ Another scenario depicts increasing internalization of many spheres of the territory, including education, as a way to discourage Beijing's explicit interference after 1997.

⁹ See Manuel Castells, *The Shek Kip Mei Syndrome: Public Housing and Economic Development in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Center of Urban Studies and Urban Planning, January 1986).

¹⁰ See Lau.

¹¹ “Tertiary Doors Will Open to More Students,” *South China Morning Post: Year in Review* (January 14, 1990); and “Academic Hits Out at Crisis Intervention,” *South China Morning Post* (November 5, 1989).

¹² See Philip G. Altbach and Gail P. Kelly, eds., *Education and Colonialism* (New York: Longman, 1978), pp. 1–52.

¹³ See Lau and Kuan (n. 1 above).

The conditions of education where socialist transition is under way are unique.¹⁴ Here, changes in education are complete and comprehensive, taking in the system's form, structure, and philosophical foundations. Socialist transition theory may have limited relevance to Hong Kong's initial phase. While socialist transition is viewed as a reality within the context of the "one-country, two-system" policy, such a shift will require at least 50 years. Most Hong Kong residents consider such a situation far too remote for concern at present. Nevertheless, today's primary school children will be at the helm of socialist transition in 2047. Moreover, given that the 2047 transition, not unlike the 1997 transition, will need a ten-year preparation period before the actual conversion, the education system might well begin to consider how it should prepare students. Furthermore, there are indications that a socialist bourgeoisie may gain influence in government departments such as the police. Here, the recruitment ban on graduates from the so-called leftist or patriotic secondary schools has been lifted, as it has in government-run postsecondary teacher training colleges.¹⁵ The leftist secondary schools are also poised to join the government's proposed direct subsidy scheme for private schools, a scheme many consider elitist. These schools rejected the formal curriculum in the 1960s and early 1970s, when the Cultural Revolution spilled over into Hong Kong, and were excluded from the colonial education system until recently.¹⁶ The government has also established a Provisional Council of Academic Accreditation that will consider the standing of educational qualifications from China (including Taiwan) as they relate to Hong Kong's occupational structure.¹⁷ The increasing emigration of talented members of the Hong Kong work force and the 1 percent unemployment rate have compounded the importance of the Council's work. Finally, before June 4, 1989, the American Chamber of Commerce and the Institute of International Education in Hong Kong were addressing the problem of getting students from the People's Republic of China to return home after completing their degree studies in the United States. They had proposed that these students be recruited to firms in Hong Kong as an intermediary step toward their eventual return, a measure that could

¹⁴ See Martin Carnoy, *The State and Political Theory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

¹⁵ "Leftist School Leavers Gain Acceptance," *South China Morning Post* (October 2, 1989); what distinguishes these so-called patriotic, leftist, or pro-China schools is that they have traditionally supported the Beijing government's policies. During the Cultural Revolution, for instance, they rejected the formal curriculum of the Hong Kong education department. These schools have the strongest links with those in mainland China.

¹⁶ See "Pro-China Schools in Subsidy Bid," *South China Morning Post* (October 8, 1989).

¹⁷ See "Provisional Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation," in *Hong Kong 1989* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1989).

supply much-needed highly skilled labor for Hong Kong.¹⁸ Such moves are important elements in Hong Kong's transition.

Hong Kong informs the study of education within transitional societies by adding such new dimensions as the expansion of externally sponsored national socialist capital, the increasing numbers of immigrants born and raised under socialism, and the further integration of leftist elements into government organs and the occupational structure. At the same time, liberal groups are expanding in the territory, some even advocating the downfall of the Beijing government or communism itself.¹⁹ These four elements become even more important when viewed against the background of Hong Kong's evolving cultural ethos and the dual identities, Chineseness and "Hongkongeseness."²⁰ As a Chinese society with a long history of colonial rule, Hong Kong possesses structural features distinguishable from those of both traditional and modern China. This has fostered an ethos that represents "at once a departure from dominant Chinese values and a continuation of Chinese heritage."²¹ The dual nature of the ethos is visibly a postwar phenomenon and has been particularly salient with the advent of the 1997 issue and the younger generation's rise to prominence. Furthermore, the sharp value differences in these two identities become more distinct as they are situated within selected types of schools. These types differ on such important cultural, social, and political features as the medium of instruction (English or Chinese), the school's political leaning (in support of Beijing or Taipei), their connection with various clansmen and provincial associations in China, and their social class composition.²² The plurality of Hong Kong schools has existed and flourished alongside a highly centralized educational policy-making bureaucracy. This bureaucratic polity has enjoyed a high degree of insulation as part of a government not directly representative of the people. Nevertheless, through a variety of formal and informal consultative channels, the educational policy process maintained a threshold level of legitimacy within the Chinese community, even though schools with stronger ties to the colonial elite enjoyed greater influence.

Educational Policy Options and the Resolution of Contradictions

There are three broad policy options or orientations relating to school politics and educational policy in Hong Kong's transitional period. Each

¹⁸ See *Returning to Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Employment Guide for 1990 Graduates of Overseas Universities* (Hong Kong: American Chamber of Commerce, with the Institute of International Education, 1990).

¹⁹ See Stanley Leung, "Mind Your Own Business Ji Tells Hong Kong," *South China Morning Post* (June 23, 1989), p. 1.

²⁰ See Lau and Kuan.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

²² See *Xianggong jiaoyu shouce* (Xianggong: Shangwu shuguan, 1988); also, Huo Guoqiang, *Xianggong zhongxue gailan* (Xianggong: Xianggong zhonghua jidujiao qingnianhui, 1988).

deals differently with reconciling emerging problems. The first and most likely option, in the short run, would maintain the status quo consensus-bound consultative policy process. The second option hinges on increased democratization of the society. This would bring the pluralism of Hong Kong schools more into the forefront of the policy process, resulting in a less consensus-bound, and a more conflict-prone, policy process. The third option would reflect the replacement of the influence of one metropole by another. This option would see the shoring up of traditional consultative mechanisms for insuring legitimacy of the educational policy process, with greater influence exerted by those individual schools and groups of schools having or building closer ties with mainland institutions.

These characteristics and potential options provide a background to view the potential role of education in Hong Kong in solving complex problems emerging from the transfer of sovereignty from Britain to China. Their positioning will determine whether educational policy will work toward reconciling or heightening the contradictions between capitalism, socialism, and patriotism. The degree to which educational policy does either will depend not only on the positioning of these unique characteristics and the dual identities reflected in the cultural ethos of Hong Kong but also on how selected contextual features bear on the educational policy process.

The Sino-British Declaration and the Educational Policy Process

The Sino-British Declaration in 1985 provided a blueprint for the territory's future. Although the agreement furnishes little detail aside from declaring the return of sovereignty over Hong Kong to China, it nevertheless permits Hong Kong to maintain its capitalist modes of production along with the general life-style of its people. "Gong Ren Zhi Gong," Hong Kong people running Hong Kong, is a basic tenet of the document. The Sino-British Declaration contains a brief provision concerning education that is similar to that found in the Draft Basic Law.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government shall on its own decide policies in the field of culture, education, science, and technology, including policies regarding the education system and its administration, the language of instruction, the allocation of funds, the examination system, the system of academic rewards and the recognition of educational and technological qualifications. Institutions of all kind, including those run by religious and community organizations, may retain their autonomy. They may continue to recruit staff and use teaching materials from outside the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Students shall enjoy freedom of choice of education and freedom to pursue their education outside the Special Administrative Region.²³

²³ *Sino-British Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong*, initialed text, Xinhua News Agency, Hong Kong branch (September 26, 1984). See also these Chinese sources on the subject of the "one-country, two-system" policy: for instance, Zhao Qiu Yi, *Yi Guo Liang Zhi Gai Lun* (Jilin: Jilin Daxue

This statement, and that in the Draft Basic Law, places educational control with the SAR government. Many groups in Hong Kong doubt this government will be autonomous and representative, especially in the wake of the military crackdown on the democracy movement in China. Nevertheless, in 1997 the People's Republic of China will inherit a government-education relationship that is, in one way, similar to its own. In both societies, educational policy is the province of a small group of elites. The government of Hong Kong is not directly elected by its people; yet it has steadily increased its role in shaping the course of education over the last two decades.²⁴ Despite these considerations, the educational provisions of the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law, in themselves, give little hint as to which of the three educational policy orientations will be favored.

Maintaining Legitimacy within the Policy Process

The key feature of educational policy in Hong Kong in regard to transitional processes is the maintenance of legitimacy. Colonial societies carry an inherent suspicion toward government and an opposition to its policies. The Hong Kong government has skillfully minimized this problem by building an extensive consultative network. Having the chance to be heard by government increases the satisfaction of groups and thereby yields a threshold level of legitimacy for its policies. This occurs within a system possessing a marked degree of pluralism under a centralized, nonrepresentative structure of territory-wide educational governance.

Under the Education Ordinance, the Director of Education controls all government schools and supervises all other kindergarten, primary, and secondary schools in the territory.²⁵ He also supervises postsecondary institutions except universities and polytechnics. The ordinance provides the director with broad-ranging powers over the life and practice of schooling, staff and pupils, and particularly the appearance of anything political in schools. Most of the schools are publicly funded but privately operated; each has an unpaid management committee and supervisor appointed by the sponsoring body. In most cases, committee members are lay persons who are not involved with policy-making or day-to-day

Chubanshe, 1988); Zhao Xiao Wang, Deng Yun, and Zhou Bing Yin, *Yi Ge Guo Jia Liang Zhong Zhi Du* (Tianjin: Jie Fang Jun Chubanshe, 1989); *Xianggong Wenti Wenjian: Xuanji* (Beijing: People's Press Renmin Chubanshe, 1985); *Xianggong Jiaoyu Mian Mianguan* (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1988); and Lei Qiang, Wu Fu Guang, Zhong Guang, and Zheng Tain Xiang, *Xianggong Gaodeng Jiaoyu* (Guangzhou: Guangdong Gaodeng Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1988).

²⁴ See, e.g., *The Hong Kong Education System* (Hong Kong: Education Department, 1981); also, for an earlier historical account, see Anthon Sweeting, *Education in Hong Kong, Pre-1841 to 1941: Fact and Opinion* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1990); and Bernard Hung-kay Luk, "Chinese Culture in the Hong Kong Curriculum" (paper presented at the annual conference of the Comparative and International Education Society, Cambridge, Mass., March 31, 1989).

²⁵ See Bernard Hung-kay Luk, "Education," in *The Other Hong Kong Report*, ed. T. L. Tsim and B. H. K. Luk (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1989).

school affairs. The supervisor has considerable legal responsibility and usually works closely with the school head in policy and personnel decisions. The principal has absolute power over the staff and pupils. The education department appoints heads of government schools, and sponsoring agencies name those of other schools. According to the government's Code of Aid, all aided schools are funded according to the same formula, regardless of location, sponsorship, or prestige. Schools in the small private sector are mainly financed by fees paid by the students' parents.

Educational policy in Hong Kong falls somewhere between a centralized and a decentralized system. More accurately, decision making and policy are part of the centralized system, yet a broad and complex consultative process has evolved since the late 1970s. Although the education system is modeled on that of the United Kingdom in its structure, organization, admission and examination regulations, and curriculum, it is not a duplicate of that or any other educational system. Traditionally, a colonial elite that is less representative of the people than the existing powers has shaped educational policy. As the education system expanded in the 1960s and 1970s, the policy process became more complex with the flowering of a variety of education associations, unions, and pressure groups, all entering into the consultative process.

In general, the highest decision maker is the governor in council. Four committees advise the governor on educational matters: the Board of Education concerns itself with education from kindergarten to sixth form, the Universities and Polytechnics Grants Committee is responsible for funding and development of university education, and the Vocational Training Council is responsible for technical education. Insufficient coordination led to the founding of a fourth committee, the Education Commission, composed of appointed members of the community and representatives from the other three committees. It provides the governor consolidated advice on overall development of the education system.²⁶

The legitimacy of the educational policy process is increasingly tied to committee membership. The most controversial issue concerned Szeto Wah, president of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union and one of the few elected (rather than appointed) members of the Hong Kong Legislative Council.²⁷ As a long-time critic of the Government Education Department and a liberal member of the Legislative Council, which opposes many of the Beijing Government's policies toward Hong Kong, Szeto was not appointed to the Education Commission even though he enjoyed broad support among both the rank and file of the teaching profession and large sectors of the community. This became a major challenge to

²⁶ See Visiting Panel, *A Perspective on Education in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1982).

²⁷ See Luk, "Education," p. 178.

the government's legitimacy in matters of educational policy. Other characteristics of the transitional period further threaten that legitimacy and heighten contradictions facing Hong Kong. Furthermore, these characteristics determine whether policy orientations will incline toward the colonial status quo consultative or nonconsultative, the emergent conflict-prone democratic, or new restructured consultative patterns of formulating educational policy.

Contextual Processes and Educational Policy

Educational policy changes in Hong Kong's history have occurred within the context of a minimally integrated sociopolitical system: a British-controlled autonomous bureaucratic polity has existed alongside an atomistic Chinese society.²⁸ The government was largely secluded from Chinese society until the latter part of the 1980s. However, more activism by Chinese society, particularly in struggles for more representative government, is bringing a new sociopolitical context to educational policy issues.

Decolonization

A local British economist once described Hong Kong as "a part of China that happens, for the time being, to be administered by someone else."²⁹ This statement does little to alter the fact that Hong Kong is still a colonial society, even though decolonization has already begun. The first section of Hong Kong was obtained by the British as a result of the First Opium War (1840–42). Through the Sino-British treaties of 1842, 1860, and 1898, the area of what is today known as Hong Kong was ceded or leased to the British,³⁰ although the People's Republic of China refuses to recognize these treaties. Nevertheless, negotiations have been completed for recovery of the territory. Initial indications are that the colonial elite will be replaced by an elected and appointed group of local residents of Chinese descent. It is not yet clear how and to what degree the new leadership will represent Beijing's interests. At present, the Xinhua News Agency, Beijing's official representative in Hong Kong, already exerts considerable influence.

Educational issues during decolonization were long a serious problem in former British colonies. History shows that events leading to drastic changes in tertiary education have been repeated again and again in different British colonies, such as India, Kenya, and Malaysia. Political observers and educational reformers suggest that, in the past, Britain used education as a powerful tool to keep control over its colonies after decolonization. The elite education system allowed the British government

²⁸ See Lau (n. 8 above).

²⁹ Youngson, ed. (n. 1 above), p. 1.

³⁰ Gregor Benton, *The Hong Kong Crisis* (London: Pluto, 1983), p. 4.

to continue to influence those who received tertiary education and would subsequently become community leaders. This was to insure a favorable relationship with the territory after British withdrawal.³¹

Decolonization is leading to a fundamental change in Hong Kong's educational policy process. This has been most clearly exemplified in a controversial proposal for the standardization of university education into a three- rather than four-year scheme.³² Although not part of any colonial conspiracy, the Hong Kong Education Commission appears to be working toward insuring a continuation of the three-year British system, while many sectors of the education community pressure the commission to bring the University of Hong Kong into line with universities in China, the United States, and elsewhere. The commission also proposed a second scheme that would allow increased government subsidies to elite schooling. The major result of the first proposal was to pressure the Chinese University of Hong Kong to cut its academic program from four to three years. At the same time, it prevented the University of Hong Kong from implementing a planned conversion to a four-year scheme. Although gaining approval in the Legislative Council, the debates surrounding approval and the narrow margin of victory for the measure made it clear that the education community was split over which model university education should adopt.

This growing activism manifested itself after the 1988 release of the Education Commission's Report Number Three, which contained the controversial proposals. At one time, 4,000 university students, more than one-quarter of Hong Kong's total university student population, marched on the government to protest the plan. The proposal also had resource implications, thus uniting secondary school principals who received government subsidies for the upper year of their secondary schools. This upper year would have been eliminated if a four-year university structure prevailed. The major educational groups were divided over this issue.³³ This split marked a significant change from the past consensus-bound politics of education to a more conflict-prone, yet democratic, debate among various sectors of the education community and helped to advance the second plan even though the result was a marginal victory for the status quo. However, owing partly to this controversy, the government decided to bypass the consultative process in its next major educational policy venture.

What makes this issue a manifestation of the decolonization process is that the Hong Kong government, having traditionally avoided such

³¹ See Frank Choi, "Education Report Criticized for Promoting Elitist System," *Hong Kong Standard* (October 25, 1988).

³² See *Education Commission Report No. 3* (Hong Kong: Education Department, 1988).

³³ See, e.g., "Split Over Educational Reforms," *South China Morning Post* (October 27, 1988).

legitimacy-threatening confrontation, instead opted to break away from the means it used in the past to avoid confrontation and create consensus. As Cheng notes, it had so often in the past dealt with such situations by "putting the issue to rational scrutiny or resorting to powerful third party arbitration. Instead, members of the Educational Commission came out in defense of its proposals, thus intensifying government-citizen antagonisms."³⁴ There have been other examples as well. Since 1989, important policies have been announced with little or no consultation among relevant groups.³⁵ The government appears less concerned about its legitimacy in educational matters, without apparent reason. Its legitimacy is more, rather than less, vulnerable as 1997 approaches. Its efforts to short-circuit the traditional consultative process may be naively calculated to avoid any political instability during the last phase of colonialism.

The issue of truncating the Chinese University program from four to three years was not new.³⁶ Although it had been argued before, the context of the deliberations surrounding the latest debate was different. The Sino-British declaration added strength to the case for bringing Hong Kong University education into line with that in China. At one time, opposition groups even appealed, albeit unsuccessfully, to China's quasi ambassador in Hong Kong, to support the four-year structure since it coincided with that in China. The result of this case does not so much signify an abandonment of the Chinese character of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and an embrace of colonial values, as an acknowledgement that groups in Hong Kong are prepared to exercise their right, as spelled out in the Joint Declaration, to resist following the model of education in China.

Democratization

"Power, both administrative and executive is in the hands of civil servants who are in law primarily responsible, through the governor, to the United Kingdom."³⁷ Until 1985 the people of Hong Kong could neither appoint these public servants to office nor remove them. Nevertheless, government officials and others often proclaim that Hong Kong is essentially democratic. Until 1980, the only major body even partly elected was the Urban Council, whose main functions are municipal (e.g., street cleaning, control of hawkers, public libraries). As late as the mid-1970s, only 10 percent of the adult population was entitled by education

³⁴ Cheng Kai Ming, "Educational Policy-making in Hong Kong: The Changing Legitimacy," in Postiglione, ed. (n. 2 above).

³⁵ Vicky Wong, "Academic Hits Out at Crisis Intervention," *South China Morning Post* (November 5, 1989).

³⁶ A. E. Sweeting, "The Cat among the Pigeons, ECR3 and the Universities" (University of Hong Kong, Department of Curriculum Studies, 1988, typescript).

³⁷ John Rear, "One Brand of Politics," in *Hong Kong: The Industrial Economy*, ed. K. Hopkins (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 55.

to vote in its elections, and in 1969, for example, only 0.05 percent bothered to do so. In 1983, a district administration scheme was set up in order to permit some forms of public consultation and participation. A portion of the membership of these district boards is elected in the same way as a portion of the members of the Urban Council. At the end of 1983, there were 904,916 registered electors representing only 32 percent of the total potential electorate. Moreover, voter turnout was sparse. In urban regions, for instance, only 250,000 of the potential electorate of 708,119 were registered to vote, and of this group only 35 percent actually cast ballots. The first concrete effort to permit election to a governing body that wields any real power and influence took place in 1985. This breathtaking reform allowed indirect election of a small section of the recently enlarged Legislative Council. The election involved only 1 percent of the population, and of the 1 percent only 50,000 bothered to vote. The most recent popular elections for the district board showed a disappointing 17 percent of the eligible population participating.³⁸ A government green paper on representative government was published in 1987 and contained several graduated options ranging from a continuation of the status quo to a "one man, one vote" system of electing a majority of the legislature before 1997.³⁹ The Beijing government viewed this document as potentially interfering with the smooth transfer of sovereignty since the Basic Law Drafting Committee, established by the 1985 Sino-British agreement, was also to take up the issue of representative government and had not yet reported to the National People's Congress. At that time, a large sector of the general public considered it wise that Hong Kong avoid confrontation with Beijing over this issue. However, the 1989 suppression of the democracy movement in China fueled calls for speeding up the pace of political reform in Hong Kong. This resulted in a tremendous surge of support for direct elections of all legislative councillors before 1997.

The schools have never been a force in democratizing Hong Kong; if anything, they hindered the process. Until the late 1980s, the school curriculum virtually ignored raising political consciousness. The planned return of sovereignty changed that to some degree, leading to minor modifications of the school curriculum.⁴⁰

Such curriculum changes also provided much-needed legitimacy to a colonial government often accused of dragging its feet in introducing opportunities for representative government. In this sense, the curriculum appears to the populace as an instrument to bolster attempts at expanded representative government.

³⁸ Norman Miners, *The Governance and Politics of Hong Kong*, 4th ed. (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1986).

³⁹ See *Green Paper: The 1987 Review of Developments in Representative Government* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, May 1989).

⁴⁰ Morris (n. 2 above), p. 514.

After 1985, the year of the signing of the Joint Declaration, the number and range of school curriculum topics dealing with political awareness increased. Although this may be associated in any society with a general trend toward more affluence and a growing middle class, it derived at least equally from the expected return of sovereignty in 1997. For example, civics education made its appearance during this time. Implementation was difficult due to a political apathy spawned over many decades. Yet this constituted the most direct attempt to influence the curriculum with regard to Hong Kong's future. Nevertheless, activities that encourage political involvement are minimized. Government guidelines emphasize political tranquility: "In light of Hong Kong's recent political development, evolution should be the watch-word and the emphasis in this guide will be on civic education as a politically socializing force for promoting stability and responsibility," and "Democracy means different things to different people. . . . So education for democracy per se would be difficult to interpret."⁴¹

These curriculum changes are occurring against a backdrop of important changes in the political culture of Hong Kong. The sociopolitical landscape has been gradually transformed away from its traditionally apolitical orientation. Rapid economic growth, expanded educational opportunity, and a younger population have led to a decline of traditional institutions and social customs. Social and economic issues have been pushed into the political arena, and this has led to demands for more government action. After a long period in which a secluded bureaucracy existed apart from the Chinese society, there have been new efforts to formalize government-people relationships. An increasing number of people hold that the government is responsible for the solutions to their personal and family problems. The people of Hong Kong are fast adopting an active, and even interventionist, conception of government, and they would like the government to measure up to their expectations. Moreover, it is apparent that the people of Hong Kong are becoming more favorably disposed toward political activism of many kinds as the growth of political pressure groups demonstrates. A prominent Hong Kong political scientist notes that "tactics which involve a quantum of confrontation or violence are increasingly rated as effective means to compel the government to give in."⁴² This is no small change. Local structures are still inadequate for social and political participation, including areas of education decision making. Nevertheless, curriculum changes, coupled with the general move toward more political activity within schools and teachers' increasingly

⁴¹ See *Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools* (Hong Kong: Education Department, 1985), pp. 8–9.

⁴² See Joseph Cheng, "The Changing Political Culture of the Hong Kong Chinese," in Cheng, ed. (n. 1 above), pp. 37–38.

activist role in grass roots politics, point to a shift away from status quo policy options that limit schools from taking a more visible role in territory-wide educational policy processes.

Localization

Localization, a process in which local people are increasingly given priority in appointments to high-level posts in government and industry, was never taken as a serious objective until the signing of the Joint Declaration on Hong Kong's future in 1985. Before then, recruitment to upper-level government posts clearly favored expatriates. Political scientist Myron Mushkat expressed this view just prior to the Sino-British Joint Declaration:

A more subtle explanation for the extent of expatriate recruitment is that it dovetails with the higher objectives of "colonial control." Hong Kong, after all, is a British dependent territory and in order to fulfil its role with a measure of effectiveness the United Kingdom must have at its disposal reliable mechanisms for providing societal direction. The presence of a fairly large number of Britons in key policy making posts may thus be construed as a factor which facilitates "colonial management." One could argue, however, that this legitimate objective no longer requires the balancing of each local appointment with an expatriate one and that a ratio more favourable to the local component need not detract from the U.K's grip over Hong Kong.⁴³

The Hong Kong government adopted localization of the civil service as official policy as early as 1947, but expatriates continued to hold a significant number of high-level positions as late as the mid-1980s.⁴⁴ Expatriate officers comprised almost one-half of all directorate officers and almost one-third of those at the top of the Master Pay Scale.⁴⁵

According to the Sino-British Declaration on Hong Kong, after 1997, "The government and legislature of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be composed of local inhabitants."⁴⁶ Furthermore, while foreign nationals may be employed by the future Hong Kong civil service, they may not hold posts as heads of major government departments, including the police department, nor as deputy heads of some of those departments.⁴⁷ In his study of government planning in respect to localization policy, John Burns concluded in 1987 that "it indicates a failure of the government's policy of localization over the years. Coherent plans to localize problem grades and departments are urgently needed. Hong

⁴³ Myron Mushkat, *The Making of the Hong Kong Administrative Class* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, Center of Asian Studies, 1982), p. 60.

⁴⁴ See Civil Service Branch, "Civil Service Personnel Statistics, 1986" (Hong Kong: Civil Service Branch, Government Secretariat, 1986, mimeographed), pp. 11–12.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *A Draft Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Future of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1984), p. 17.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Kong must develop a confident, forward looking civil service for the years up to and beyond 1997. Much needs to be done.”⁴⁸

Since that time, however, the government appointed the first non-expatriate as director of education.⁴⁹ Local Hong Kong Chinese are increasingly appointed to top posts in other government departments as well. Nevertheless, because of the great exodus following the Sino-British agreement, the pace of localization, particularly in the middle-level civil service, has slowed. In an effort to stall the exodus of key individuals, the British government is proposing to make available 50,000 “insurance” passports, carrying the right of abode in the United Kingdom, and is encouraging other nations with large interests in Hong Kong to do the same.⁵⁰ This will confound the educational policy process by building stronger loyalties to the United Kingdom on the part of educational policymakers even after 1997. China has already asserted that it will not recognize the overseas passports of local residents of Chinese descent and will undoubtedly develop countermeasures throughout the transitional period for what it sees as illegitimate means to limit its sovereignty.

Educational policy has been increasingly fashioned toward the recruitment of native Hong Kongese into the civil service. Because an explicit English language facility is necessary to succeed on linguistically based civil service examinations, the policy process reflects colonial support of elite schools and the preservation of the University of Hong Kong as a wholly English-medium institution.

This process has also favored a large Anglo-Chinese system of secondary schools. By the early 1980s, these schools peaked, surpassing the number of Chinese medium schools by nine to one.⁵¹ Although the official medium of instruction in the Anglo-Chinese schools was English, a different reality prevailed in most schools. The limited number of competent English-speaking teachers led to many variations in the quality of language instruction. Even when competent English-speaking teachers were available, many students were not able to learn through this medium. Parents, however, resisted educationalists’ pleas to reconsider Anglo-Chinese schools. The Education Department eventually took steps to increase the number of schools in the Chinese sector by providing incentives for those questionable Anglo-Chinese schools to convert to Chinese-medium instruction. This resulted in an increase in the number of Chinese-medium secondary schools and a corresponding influence on the ethos of many Hong Kong secondary schools.

⁴⁸ John Burns, “Succession Planning and Localization,” in Burns and Scott (n. 1 above), p. 105.

⁴⁹ Michael Leung became the director of education.

⁵⁰ Ronald Skeldon, “Emigration and the Future of Hong Kong,” *Pacific Affairs* 63, no. 4 (Winter 1990–91): 500–524.

⁵¹ See *Report of the Working Group Set Up to Review Language Improvement Measures* (Hong Kong: Education Department, 1985).

The medium of instruction in most secondary schools in Hong Kong is still officially English, a fact of educational life that places a tremendous burden on students, especially since most have little contact with native English speakers. The effects of this practice on culture and identity interest researchers more than parents—most of whom continue to opt for as much English-medium education as possible.⁵² Thus, children attending elite English-medium schools have an advantage in gaining government civil service posts.

This pattern may be further reinforced by a new set of language policy proposals that would make entrance into English-language secondary education dependent on an examination administered after primary six.⁵³ The stated aim is to improve competency in at least one language and eliminate the use of “Chinglish,” a mixture of English and Chinese. In reality, however, the proposal will further extend elitist elements in the educational system and further restrict access to the University of Hong Kong and thus government civil service positions.⁵⁴

However, all past government-initiated language proposals have fallen short of implementation. The medium-of-instruction controversy dates back to the end of World War II, the government forever being in the bind of either eliminating parental choice in medium of instruction on the one hand, or eliminating good sound educational practice on the other. Some accuse the government of being halfhearted, as has been the case with *Putonghua* (Mandarin, the official idiom of China) teaching. In this respect the Education Commission never went beyond recommending that the schools be encouraged to teach *Putonghua* either before or after hours or as an extracurricular activity, and only two schools use it as a medium of instruction.⁵⁵ Some researchers, like Robert Baur and Herbert Pierson, are confident that *Putonghua* will replace English and Cantonese to become the language of power and the official language of government and that everyone will be required to learn it.⁵⁶

Growing business opportunities in the China trade and investment area along with the expanding interactions between China and Hong

⁵² See John Gibbons, “The Issue of the Language of Instruction in the Lower Forms of Hong Kong Secondary Schools,” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, no. 3 (1982), pp. 117–28.

⁵³ See *Report of the Working Group Set Up to Review Language Improvement Measures* (Hong Kong: Education Department, 1985).

⁵⁴ “Jiaoyu shiqu tigong jihui xiaoyong fenliu jiaoxue tuzeng fenhua maodun,” *Jingji Ribao*, Hong Kong (November 24, 1989); and “Zhongchan jieji zinu jiaoyu yaoqiu zendzhuang shangxuewei mianliu xianggong rencai,” *Xin Bao*, Hong Kong (November 27, 1989).

⁵⁵ See Ora Kwo, “Language Studies in a Changing Political and Economic Context: The Teaching of Putonghua in Hong Kong Schools” (paper presented at the First Hong Kong Conference on Language and Society, Hong Kong, April 1988).

⁵⁶ Herbert Pierson, “Language Attitudes and Use in Hong Kong: A Case for Putonghua” (paper presented at the First Hong Kong Conference on Language and Society, Hong Kong, April 1988); also, Robert Bauer, “The Hong Kong Cantonese Speech Community” (University of Hong Kong, Center of Asian Studies, 1984, typescript).

Kong have added to a new groundswell favoring Chinese mother tongue schooling over English-medium schooling. In fact, the battle to preserve Hong Kong's status as an English-speaking territory is far from won. At the same time, many educationists in China criticize Hong Kong's return to Chinese mother tongue education. This is because Hong Kong Chinese consider Cantonese, rather than *Putonghua*, as their mother tongue.⁵⁷ The majority of Hong Kong educators strongly resist Mandarin as a teaching medium. This exemplifies again how the dual identity of Hong Kong's cultural ethos manifests itself within educational issues even as it impinges on localization and recruitment into the government civil service. Thus, school language policy and the extent to which individuals can function competently in *Putonghua*, Cantonese, and English may easily influence the legitimacy of emerging political leaders and the orientation of educational policy.

The Structuralization of Social Classes

There is a high degree of inequality in Hong Kong. While the average citizen enjoys the third highest living standard in Asia, half a million people live without running water or legal electricity.⁵⁸ The inequality of income distribution in Hong Kong is staggering. Such levels of disparity, in the case of most societies, could generate class conflict and industrial hostilities. However, when industry, trade, and commerce are prosperous and the labor market is active, workers' wages in Hong Kong are still much better than those of their counterparts on the mainland. The Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality in a population, fell from 0.49 in 1961 to 0.43 in 1971 and remained about the same in 1981. This was still considerably higher than what was observed in the United States (0.25), Taiwan and Korea (0.3), and Singapore (0.4).⁵⁹ Forty percent of the population is engaged in manufacturing, 22 percent in government and science occupations, 16 percent in commerce, and 5 percent in agriculture. In 1976, 51.6 percent of the population comprised the working class (all manual employees), 36.5 percent the new middle class (nonmanual employees), and 11.9 percent the capitalist class (all employers and self-employed persons).⁶⁰ The working class has had no political power in the legislature despite the fact that its political orientation and ideological identifications run the gambit from extreme right (in support of Taiwan) to extreme left (in support of the People's Republic of China).⁶¹ Except for 1952, 1967, and 1984, when there were street riots, the territory has

⁵⁷ S. W. Wai, "Secondary Schools Favor Teaching through Chinese," *South China Morning Post* (November 12, 1986), p. 3.

⁵⁸ See Benton (n. 30 above), p. 19.

⁵⁹ Lee M. K., "Emerging Patterns of Social Conflict in Hong Kong Society," in *Hong Kong in the 1980s*, ed. Joseph Y. S. Cheng (Hong Kong: Summerson Eastern, 1982), p. 25.

⁶⁰ *Hong Kong Census* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1976).

⁶¹ Lau (n. 8 above), p. 4.

been stable, with little overt social unrest or conflict since the end of World War II. Signs indicate, however, that a politically conscious middle class is emerging and assuming a more active role in organizing community political affairs. It is gaining more control over the education system and insuring that its children inherit their middle-class status. A future concern with regard to China's regaining sovereignty over Hong Kong is not so much its willingness to tolerate capitalism as much as its tolerance of the great gaps that exist among social classes in Hong Kong.

Access to opportunity and life chances has increasingly been placed within the domain of formal education. Chinese tradition holds education in high esteem, and the idea of having a scholarly examination system as a key determinant for access to high positions, especially in government, is not new.⁶² However, the character of the school selection process in Hong Kong is brutal. Even though education is compulsory (and free) until age fifteen, less than 6 percent enter postsecondary university-level education in Hong Kong. Equity within this system is questionable, and as in other industrial societies, the meritocratic ideology (anyone who is capable and works hard in school, regardless of social class, can achieve success), has remained quite durable.

Research in Hong Kong has consistently confirmed what has been all too evident in the Western developed nations: that family background, however measured, is the best predictor of school achievement.⁶³ School factors also play a large role. In this regard, there is great disparity among schools, as confirmed in a recent report by a visiting panel: "There are striking variations indeed. Hong Kong has some of the best schools in the world in terms of student attainment. . . . most of the schools however, leave something to be desired. Facilities, teacher qualifications, examination results and other indicators of quality rank low. Students are allocated to these school for various reasons, including their test performance and lack of opportunity owing to the educational and economic status of their parents."⁶⁴

Little has been done to relieve inequality, and if, as expected in the early 1990s, the economy goes through a period of crisis, the gap between

⁶² See Max Weber, *The Religion of China* (New York: Free Press, 1951); J. M. Menzel, *The Chinese Civil Service* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1963); and E. A. Kracke, "Religion, Family and Individual in the Chinese Examination System," in *Chinese Thoughts and Social Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

⁶³ See Allan Brimer and Patrick Griffen, *A Study of Mathematics Achievement in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, Center of Asian Studies, 1985); R. E. Mitchell, *Pupil, Parent and School: A Hong Kong Study* (Taipei: Orient Culture Service, 1972); Pedro Ng, "Access to Educational Opportunity: The Case of Kwun Tong" (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Social Research Centre, 1975); and David Post and Pong Suet Ling, "Socio-economic Indicators and Higher Education Access in Hong Kong" (paper presented at the Comparative and International Education Society Annual Meeting, Cambridge, Mass., March 31, 1989).

⁶⁴ Visiting Panel (n. 26 above), p. 58.

the social classes could increase. If so, the schools will likely become an arena of social class conflict.

Interdependence

There has been a growing interdependence, both economically and politically, between Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China. China is well justified in its assertion that it is responsible for the economic success of Hong Kong. Through immigration, it provides the indispensable manpower needed to fuel Hong Kong's industrialization. China also subsidizes a large percentage of Hong Kong's foodstuffs and provides relatively inexpensive clothing. Moreover, the mainland provides the colony with 35 percent of its water supply. Hong Kong remains a useful contact point with the West for China. The most common explanation for China's position with respect to Hong Kong has been and remains mutual advantage. This is not to suggest that it would be unwilling to sacrifice some level of mutual economic advantage for sovereignty. China has the military power to overrun Hong Kong in a few hours. Alternatively, it can use its supporters in Hong Kong to destabilize it.

The points of interdependence between China and Hong Kong are unique to ideologically opposed economic systems. Hong Kong is the largest market for China's exports, while China has become the second largest export market for Hong Kong.⁶⁵ In short, Hong Kong is a major source of China's investment capital and will continue to play a major role in financing China's modernization. By 1980 China's net foreign exchange earnings from Hong Kong had already reached U.S. \$6.9 billion, representing 36.5 percent of China's total foreign exchange for that period.⁶⁶

Economic interdependence has not been followed by educational or academic interdependence. There is virtually no structural interdependency between the two educational systems. Few formal institutional agreements have been signed between universities in Hong Kong and universities in other parts of China. The number and diversity of these universities would make it difficult to choose only a few with which to engage in formal arrangements. Yet formal agreements with many could easily become overwhelming given the small size of Hong Kong's only two universities. Informal exchanges allow links to be maintained with the majority of higher educational institutions in China. Thus, formal academic exchanges and research projects are conducted through faculty or academic department agreements, although each university sets aside funds that members of departments and faculties can use in academic exchanges.

⁶⁵ See Lau Pui-king, "Economic Relations between Hong Kong and China," in Cheng, ed. (n. 1 above), pp. 235-67.

⁶⁶ See Jao Y. C., "Hong Kong's Role in Financing China's Modernization," in Youngson, ed. (n. 1 above), pp. 12-76.

In the 1980s, academic exchanges, albeit imbalanced in favor of science and engineering, increased between Hong Kong and the rest of China.⁶⁷ Early exchanges brought university staff together but resulted in little substantive cooperative work. The later phase moved toward joint cooperative projects between departments or faculties of different institutions, including those facilitated by the World Bank and other international agencies. There are also foundations within Hong Kong that encourage and sponsor faculty exchanges between universities.⁶⁸ Student exchanges in both directions have also increased. Special scholarships have permitted an increasing number of Hong Kong students to study at China's leading universities, although the number dropped after June 4, 1989 (postgraduate enrollment decreased by 75 percent). Key point universities in China such as Beijing University and Qinghua University offer full scholarships to Hong Kong students. This complements the already large number of Hong Kong students attending universities in South China in close proximity to Hong Kong. More students from China are enrolled in graduate rather than undergraduate programs in Hong Kong's two universities, and the numbers have steadily increased.

Hong Kong's interdependence extends beyond China. As an international trading center it has developed economic interdependence, including student flows, with many other nations. Many of the university staff in Hong Kong earned their credentials outside of Hong Kong or the rest of China. Furthermore, Hong Kong students presently earning postsecondary degrees outside of Hong Kong number at least 35,000—more than double those studying at the territory's two universities.⁶⁹

Given the strengthening of ties with universities in other parts of China, where academic freedom is often limited, Hong Kong's universities have expressed surprisingly little concern over academic freedom, even after the crackdown on universities in China following the Tiananmen incident. At the moment, the tenure system in Hong Kong's universities protects the critical scholar. However, many non-tenure-track three-year renewable contracts are offered to new recruits. Such terms potentially make critical scholars more vulnerable. Unlike Hong Kong's journalists, who have steadfastly battled the forces that threaten their future openness, the universities have yet to elevate this issue to the forefront. However, the universities have seldom been openly critical of government policy, whether of Hong Kong or China. On the only occasion when both universities challenged the government's Educational Commission on the length of university education, the commission's decision prevailed.

⁶⁷ Bai Jie Rui, *Jinggong Xueshu Jiaoliu Xiankuang Yu Qiantan* (Xianggong: Jinggong Xueshu Jiaoliu Zhongxin, 1985).

⁶⁸ The Peihua Foundation and the Beijing–Hong Kong Academic Exchange Center are examples.

⁶⁹ Jay Henderson, "Hong Kong Students Flood U.S.," *South China Morning Post* (April 27, 1986), p. 19.

Although interdependence with the rest of China has a tremendous potential to influence educational policy in Hong Kong, as yet it has not. The extent of Beijing's influence will be determined either by mediation through an essentially democratic educational policy process or by exertion through a restructured consultative system designed to align educational developments with mainland interests. Even if in the unlikely event that Beijing makes a determined effort to leave Hong Kong educational politics in its present form, local leaders would be hard-pressed to pick up where the colonials left off without establishing a new source of legitimacy.

Education, Culture, and Identity

Traditional Chinese society was perpetuated by a state-dominated social order. In colonial Hong Kong, such a social order has existed for a hundred and fifty years. Although it has undergone changes in the last two decades, the basic nature of the political order has remained unscathed, albeit different in many ways from that of traditional Chinese society and of mainland China.

The nature of governance in Hong Kong includes such elements as authoritarianism, benign and enlightened rule, separate but blurred public and private spheres, and the rule of law. As Lau Siu Kai and Kuan Hsin Chi state: "The establishment of colonial rule in Hong Kong was based until several decades ago on military force. In the long span of colonial rule, subtle versions of the doctrine of the economic prowess and cultural superiority of the white people, and the civilizing mission of the colonizer, had occasionally emerged to justify colonial dominance. Still, there has not been an elaborate, systematic theory, explicitly articulated, to buttress the legitimacy of authority in Hong Kong."⁷⁰

Confucianism, for instance, disappeared from the content of Hong Kong civil service examinations. This deprived the residual Confucian presence of instrumental value, relegating it to cultural backwaters. The Confucian influence lingers, but this is contingent more on the natural influence of social customs and family socialization than on any institutional underpinning such as schooling.

Hong Kong Chinese society differs from traditional and modern Chinese society in a number of ways: its high degree of modernization, industrialization, and urbanization; its dominance by market forces; the erosion of tradition; the adapted changes in the family and other primary and quasi-primary social structures; the lack of a moralizing elite; and the dominance of an economic elite. Furthermore, the values embodied in the Hong Kong Chinese elites differ from their counterparts in China. Their moral status is shaky, and they lack a sense of cultural or moral mission.

⁷⁰ Lau and Kuan (n. 1 above), p. 19.

Hong Kong's history has left the school system with the task of resolving the tensions that result from a long colonial period. Dora Choi Po-King considers the strains between cultural tradition and modern education as manifest in the identity crisis of Hong Kong students. She explains, in part, the source of this tension in the 1970s: "The post-war generation was, therefore, bombarded with Western cultural influence both in and outside the school. Yet they were constantly reminded of their Chinese cultural heritage, and they did acquire a national cultural identity which was, however, never substantiated by any concrete ties, nor even candid discussion of relevant political developments. Caught in this ambiguous situation, the Hong Kong-born post-war generation met with a severe crisis of cultural identity."⁷¹

Local scholars raise questions as to the implications of the reincorporation of Hong Kong in 1997, especially as it relates to the apparent tension in the cultural identity of Hong Kong students. They identify the educational challenge of 1997 as socialization into a "one-country, two-system" society. Hong Kong educational policy will be beset with a major dilemma, that of building an education system that can reconcile the ideological contradiction between capitalism, socialism, and patriotism.

⁷¹ Choi Po King, "Cultural Identity and Colonial Rule: The Hong Kong-China Connection" (paper presented at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Conference on Chinese Cultural Tradition and Contemporary Modern Education, November 7, 1988), p. 31.