

The University of Hong Kong
Faculty of Education

Master of Education programme (MEd)
Education and Society in China

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This specialism aims to provide participants with sociological theories, contextual knowledge, and analytical skills to understand and analyse educational issues in China. The goal of the specialism is to cultivate in the participants the ability to critically analyse the influence of social, cultural, political, and economic forces on education in China. Specifically, participants will learn classical and contemporary sociological traditions, acquire a comprehensive knowledge about education in China, and engage in in-depth analysis of one or more focus issues. The specialism will help students to understand China in the global context and to distinguish the unique Chinese character of its educational development.

Who would benefit from this specialism?

The specialism is designed as an inter-disciplinary program to attract students from overseas and from Mainland China, who are interested in education and social development in China. The rising China has attracted increasing scholarly interest around the world. Universities in Hong Kong are currently offering various programs on China Studies, which are quite successful. However, at present no program is offered with the focus on education in China. As education is an important institution that is shaping and being shaped by economic and political forces, this MEd program has great potential to attract enthusiastic students from many parts of the world. The program is also designed with a strong theoretical orientation to attract students from Mainland China who plan to pursue an MPhil or doctoral degree in sociology of education afterwards. The interdisciplinary nature of the specialism will suit the learning needs of students from various backgrounds.

Mode of study:

The specialism is available in part-time and full-time modes (for 2-year (up to 4-year) part-time study or 1-year full-time study).

Outline of the four Specialist Courses:

Course 1: Sociology of Education: Classic and Contemporary Theories (6 credits)

This course examines sociological theories, both classic and contemporary, in Western and Chinese contexts for the study of educational institutions and systems. The main objective of this course is to provide a disciplinary grounding to students in the sociology of education. The course includes an examination and application of the main sociological concepts in various cultural and social contexts. The ultimate aim is to employ the sociology of education to strengthen conceptual skills for research development of students. Case studies from Hong Kong, Mainland China, and other countries in Asia will be used to discuss how to adapt both concepts and methods to sociological research in education. In sum, this course offers an overview of the fundamental sociological concepts that can guide the analysis of specific educational issues in China.

Course 2: Contemporary Issues in Education in China (6 credits)

The course seeks to critically examine contemporary, critical issues in education in China by using theories of sociology and development situating the analysis in both Chinese and international contexts. Topics can include: educational access and equity; quality of education and curriculum reform in a global age; economy, migration and education; citizenship education for creating obedient citizens or free and autonomous persons; multiculturalism, ethnic diversity and national solidarity; and the pursuit of world class universities, institutional autonomy, and academic freedom.

Course 3: China's Universities: Balancing Domestic Demands and Global Aspirations (6 credits)

The course examines how higher education is shaped by a shifting market of demands from three sectors of the population. First, there is the demand for knowledge and skills for jobs, not only by Chinese households, but also by employers who demand talented hires to drive innovation for competition in goods and services. Second, there is the demand for status culture by an expanding urban middle class that uses higher education to transmit their social position to their children. Third, there is the demand by the state for political stability. The course examines how each of these three demands takes precedence in different circumstances and at different times in the evolution of higher education in China. This market of demands approach is used to better explain the unintended consequences -- a growing dissatisfaction with widening inequalities and a serious concern about the quality of university teaching and research for upgrading the economy and stabilizing society, during the transition from elite to mass higher education.

Course 4: Chinese Educational Traditions and their Modern Transformation (6 credits)

China's educational heritage is rich. Yet, few people from Chinese societies can articulate the relevance of Chinese classical educational values. Since the West came to China with immense prestige during the late Qing dynasty, China's educational traditions have been packaged poorly in light of Westernization. This becomes increasingly inappropriate against a backdrop of a rising China. Integrating Chinese and Western ideas is urgently needed. Based on the vast range of literature in classical and contemporary Chinese and English across historical periods, this course explores how China's rich educational heritage has been interpreted differently in the Western and Chinese literature. It attempts to sort out what are the fundamental features of Chinese traditional education, and investigates whether or not and how such traditions inform China's contemporary educational policy and practice. It aims to equip students to position themselves at the interface of Chinese and Western traditions in education.

In addition to four specialist courses, students will also have to complete:

- a research methods course "Methods of Research and Enquiry" (12 credits); plus
- either an option of one elective course and a DISSERTATION (18 credits),
or an option of three elective courses and a PROJECT (6 credits each).