Schooling in Hong Kong
Organization, Teaching and Social Context

Edited by
Gerard A. Postiglione and Wing On Lee

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Contents

Contributors

Mark Bray	Chair Professor, Department of Education, The University of Hong Kong
Hubert O. Brown	Senior Lecturer (retired), Department of Education, The University of Hong Kong
Kai Ming Cheng	Pro-Vice-Chancellor; Chair Professor, Department of Education, The University of Hong Kong
Kwok Wah Cheung	Assistant Professor, Department of Education, The University of Hong Kong
Nick Crawford	Head, Department of Special Education, The Hong Kong Institute of Education
Wing On Lee	Dean, School of Foundations in Education, The Hong Kong Institute of Education
Gerard A. Postiglione	Associate Professor, Department of Education, The University of Hong Kong
Kam Cheung Wong	Associate Professor, Department of Education, The University of Hong Kong

1 Schooling and the Changing Socio Political Setting n Introduction

Gerard A. Postiglione and Wing On Lee

Teaching in Hong Kong schools is very demanding work. Class sizes are large. Students seem to be increasingly unruly, and discipline has become a major concern, especially for new teachers. Language standards seem to be declining. Teachers are expected to balance both academic and bureaucratic responsibilities. Not only do teachers have to keep up with rapidly changing content in their subject area, they also have to spend increasing amounts of time on assessment and examination activities. In some subjects, such as history and economic and public affairs, the content is not only changing but has become politically sensitive. Teachers are supposed to prepare the leaders of tomorrow's Hong Kong SAR where 'Hong Kong people rule Hong Kong', but democratic practices are not well developed in most schools. In some cases new administrative reforms are giving teachers more opportunity to participate in the running of schools. At the same time, parents are more highly educated than before and are demanding a greater role in decision-making. However, teaching has yet to develop a home-grown perspective unique from that of traditional China, contemporary China, or the outside world, including Britain. In short, as Hong Kong society changes, the work of teachers becomes more complicated and demanding. Developing an understanding of the Hong Kong educational system is an important foundation for dealing with daily complexities.

This volume provides teachers with information and analysis that they can use to form their views about the organization of the education system, the role of schooling in the labour market, the educational policymaking process, the management of schools, the teaching profession, the school curriculum, and how social factors such as social class, gender, language and special needs affect educational attainment.

New challenges require teachers to become more professional. Teacher professionalization is a social process that requires more than learning the jargon of child-centered learning, the activity-based approach, school-based

curriculum, target-related assessment, and so on. It means having the autonomy to apply knowledge and skills to solve new educational challenges on a daily basis in the classroom, in the school, and in society. To become an effective teacher, it is more than ever necessary to gain a better understanding of schooling as it is situated, and as it situates itself, within Hong Kong society.

The Context of Hong Kong Schooling

Schools do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of the society that surrounds them. In his book, *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, the noted sociologist Emile Durkheim stated: 'Education is always the symptom and result of the social transformations in terms of which it is to be explained' (Durkheim, 1969: 194). There are many examples of this. Schooling in Hong Kong became compulsory for nine years in 1978 in response to criticism by the European Economic Community about the prevalence of child labour here, which kept the prices of goods lower than those of Hong Kong's European competitors. When Hong Kong society needed to replace the highly educated professionals who emigrated in 1989, it expanded higher education. When Hong Kong moved from a manufacturing to a more service-oriented economy, the education system adjusted accordingly. When rapid modernization seemed to be having detrimental effects on children's behaviour and values, schools placed more emphasis on moral education. And when there was a need for political consciousness in the run-up to 1997, civic education was introduced.

By the time the colonial period ended in 1997, Hong Kong had become one of the world's largest trading, financial and commercial centres. As Hong Kong entered the transition to resumption of sovereignty by China, its education system began to play a role in cementing the reunification of China. Many educational reforms are increasingly viewed in terms of their potential to carry out or resist decolonization.

As a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China under the principle of 'one country, two systems', Hong Kong has been promised that it can maintain its capitalist system for another fifty years and enjoy a high degree of self-government with 'Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong'. According to the Sino-British Declaration and the Basic Law of the SAR, education will retain a high degree of autonomy:

> 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. (*Sino-British Joint Declaration*, 1985: 17)

> Community organizations and individuals may, in accordance with law, run educational undertakings of various kinds in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Educational institutions of all kinds may retain their autonomy and enjoy academic freedom. They may continue to recruit staff and use teaching materials from outside the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Schools run by religious organizations may continue to provide religious education, including courses on religion. Students shall enjoy freedom to choose between educational institutions and pursue their education outside the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. (*The Basic Law*, 1991: 69–70)

This blueprint, albeit brief, clearly provides for the possibility of maintaining the status quo in education. Nevertheless, much depends upon the degree to which the Hong Kong SAR government is representative of the wishes of the Hong Kong people. Moreover, this blueprint also indirectly addresses the possibility that the people of Hong Kong may change their vision of the future and the role of education in achieving their future aspirations.

Education and the Future

Education is affected not only by past social transformations, but also by expectations of a people about their future. This point was well put by Robert Church (1976: 3):

> Schools and other institutions of formal training and the expectations that people have for these institutions change dramatically only when a society's vision of its own future changes or when the conditions for the fulfilment of that vision are perceived to change. Education institutions are assumed to shape the lives of children, of future generations; therefore, major changes in educational institutions follow major changes in society's aspirations.

Members of societies approaching decolonization share a vision of their future as being one in which they will gain autonomy from the colonial metropole (Altbach and Kelly, 1978). This applies to the institution of

education which often spearheads the task of nation-building (Fagerlind and Saha, 1983). When the Sino-British Declaration was signed in 1984, the predominant vision towards the future was one of continued stability and prosperity within a framework of autonomy under the mother country, though the vision has fluctuated since 1984. However, the people of Hong Kong have not come to see schools as the leading force for future change in Hong Kong. In fact, in most societies, schools are not viewed as the major force in social transformation. Schools are usually organized to preserve the status quo. Only in rare instances, such as during the Cultural Revolution in China, have schools been a mechanism of social transformation. Schools help to legitimize the economy and political system of society, and serve a conservative function as they reproduce culture and the system of social stratification. Parents view schools as primarily a path of upward social mobility.

Yet there is reason to believe that schools can play a transformative role in Hong Kong's future. Regardless of time and place, education is believed to embody a society's visions and hopes for the future. And in a transitional society, this takes on special importance. Education in Hong Kong has several intervention points. First, it has a shaping influence on the thinking of the generation that will lead Hong Kong; second, it influences the selection criteria for recruitment into important positions within the transitional government and the civil service; third, it works to maintain a highly skilled labour force in the face of the large-scale emigration of talented people from the SAR; fourth, it determines to some extent the degree of interaction between the educational systems of Hong Kong and other parts of China; fifth, it influences school socialization processes that build a cultural 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.

A central question facing Hong Kong concerns the role of the education system in producing the kind of leaders that will bolster the confidence of the local population enough to take Hong Kong through the transitional period and into the twenty-first century. The formula of 'Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong' cannot be successfully implemented without indigenous popular political leaders that the education system can help produce.

Hong Kong as a Transitional Society: Schools, Curriculum and Identity

In colonial-to-post-colonial transitional settings, pre-independence education may remain largely unchanged, except with respect to the specific role of

schools in the affirmation of national identity. Accompanying educational changes may be directed more at the content of education, than at the structure of the system. Social studies, history, and language curriculum may be revised, for instance. Colonial social structures may remain almost intact through the early post-colonial period, with the colonial power vacuum being filled by a national bourgeoisie. Hong Kong's economic system is to be retained through the transition, and most sectors of the colonial elite have already been replaced.

Hong Kong presents an interesting case for the study of education within transitional societies by adding such new dimensions such as Hong Kong's evolving cultural ethos and the dual identities it reflects, that of Chineseness and Hongkongeseness. Thus, it is not surprising that the identity of Hong Kong Chinese has been somewhat problematic, as reflected in survey results consistently indicating a strong sense of Hong Kong identity. A 1985 survey reported that the proportion of respondents who identified themselves primarily as Hongkongers rather than as Chinese was 60 percent; only 36 percent regarded themselves as Chinese first. A 1988 survey found that the proportion of people who identify themselves as primarily Hongkongers had increased to 63.6 percent, with only 28.8 percent regarding themselves as Chinese (Kwok and Chan, 1996). As a Chinese society under a long history of colonial rule, Hong Kong came to possess structural features distinguishable from those of both traditional and modern China. This fostered an ethos which represented 'at once a departure from dominant Chinese values and a continuation of Chinese heritage' (Lau and Kuan, 1988: 187). The dual nature of this ethos is a post-war phenomenon and has been particularly salient with the advent of sovereignty retrocession and the rise to prominence of the younger generation. Nevertheless, one writer sees Hong Kong in the mid-1990s as being 'on the crossroads of cultural disorientation . . . although the cultural scene is robust . . . [yet] . . . looming anarchy persists' (Chan, 1996). Furthermore, the sharp value differences that are reflected in these two identities become more distinct as they are situated within selected types of schools. These types differ in cultural, social, and political features, including the medium of instruction (English or Chinese), the connection of the school with provincial associations in China, and the social class composition of the schools.

Changing Schools

Schools are constantly being challenged both from within the education system and from the environment outside the school. If the school is to survive, it must be must be flexible and adaptive. Maintaining a viable

educational programme is always dependent on individuals and groups that are internal and external to the school.

Many aspects of an educational system are affected by changes in society. Changes in Hong Kong society have led to more places being available in universities, a broader curriculum being offered in sixth form, a code of practice for teachers, more opportunities for parents to choose schools for their children, and more participation of parents and teachers in the running of schools.

The Dynamics of School Change

Ballentine (1989: 369) believes that change can occur at any level of analysis — individual, organizational, societal or cultural — or can affect all levels if it is major change. At the individual level, change may be initiated by or towards persons holding roles within the school — teachers, students and others. For example, there may be attempts to change teacher attitudes towards children with learning disabilities. At the organizational level, there may be changes within the school, as perhaps when a new curriculum, such as liberal studies, is introduced into the sixth form. This may require changes in the role structure of the school or in what teachers are accustomed to teaching. The institutional or societal level refers to large system changes. This usually relates to changes in other parts of the society. For example, post-1997 changes may act to bring schools in Hong Kong more in line with those in the rest of China. The cultural level refers to changes in attitudes or values. These are often the slowest things to change and often lag behind the technological changes. For example, some teachers still resist the use of teaching technologies that could enhance their teaching because of the belief that such technologies could undermine their authority in front of students.

The process of change originates from stresses or strains within or outside of the education system. Ballentine (1989: 370) notes that stresses external to the system may come from:

1. population size and composition — the emigration of large numbers of people, including teachers, can have a large impact on education. At the same time more students in Hong Kong at all levels are coming from China;
2. individuals who affect the system — the classroom teacher may initiate change in the classroom. For example, some teachers insist on employing new methods and use their long experience in one organization to ensure their security in implementing change; and
3. material technology and the natural environment — computer software has facilitated more flexible scheduling, and increased people's access to knowledge. The size of a school may determine the kind of activities that are organized in it.

There are also strains within the larger social system. These may come from conflicting goals of individuals or groups such as political parties, worker unions, or school principal associations. If enough students fail, disobey school rules, misbehave, or drop out of school, this may also result in changes to the education system. Deviant students, including those who drop out of school, may be included in this group. Also, strains can develop because of inconsistencies between traditional thinking, goals and resources.

Perspectives on Change

Change can be seen from several theoretical perspectives. The social order approach views the system as working to maintain equilibrium, and tending towards stability. In this view, schools aim to maintain order and integration among the parts of society. Schools are social control mechanisms that help maintain stability. The socialization process in schools occurs in such a way that children internalize values that will not threaten the status quo. Threats to this equilibrium in the form of pressures for social change can threaten this equilibrium. Major change risks jeopardizing the delicate balance in society. Most change, however, is gradual, and the system adapts to it. Change stems from adjustment to environmental demands, from the growth of the system, and from innovations of the people within it. When we hear government officials and those in the Education Commission speak about the school system, it is most often done from a functionalist point of view. The problem with the social order model is that it cannot account for the fact that, at times, change may be sudden. Systems are not always integrated and change can be generated through conflict or contradictions. Moreover, reactions to change are not always smooth.

The conflict approach views change as inevitable and often disruptive. In this view, society is not just static, but rather it is dynamic. Change is ubiquitous. Conflicts occur between different interest groups in the society, whether they be based on social class, economic interest, religion, political beliefs, or otherwise. The dominant groups that hold power attempt to shape schools for their own interests. For example, the middle class in Hong Kong works to influence school policy so that it will benefit their children, and since the middle class has more power than the working class, they are often successful in their efforts. One of the problems with the conflict perspective is that it often limits its focus to conflicts between social classes. However, even in socialist societies, there are conflicts among social groups that change the education system.

A more balanced approach views change as an integral part of the

system; it can be disruptive or can help the school adapt to changing demands from society. In this view, change, whether evolutionary or revolutionary, is inevitable and always present. Change may emanate from inside of the school, or from the environment. The school system relies on feedback from the environment around it in its process of adaption.

Teachers and Educational Change

As members of society, teachers have many ways in which they are involved in social change. However, we will specifically talk about the role of teachers in bringing about change in schools.

Bringing about Change

Most important in bringing about change is working with all levels of the system, including the classroom, the school, the community and the society. A teacher can make change occur more quickly and easily in the classroom than in the school. Likewise, changes are easier to execute in a school than in the surrounding community or society. Thus, as one moves from the classroom outward (to school, community, and society levels), it becomes increasingly important to be part of an organized movement for change. The individual teacher has less chance of effecting change in educational policy at the whole society level than does a teacher union or educational association.

Any time we introduce a major change in one part of the system, there will be an impact on all of the other parts. Individuals, such as teachers, who occupy positions in the school system influence the rate of change by their initiating of, acceptance of or resistance to it. For those trying to implement change, certain conditions are necessary. It is important to understand the way in which the education system functions, and to be familiar with strategies for bringing about change. Teachers, students, parents and administrators can serve as catalysts for change. The teacher's role in initiating change may only be minor in many cases. This may be because of their subordinate position in the school. For example, many teachers remember good ideas they had which never came to be used because of resistance from administrators.

An organization should ideally possess certain characteristics that make it receptive to efforts to change itself. The state and characteristics of a school may determine whether change will be successful. In order to be

receptive to change, a school needs to have clear goals, good communication between staff, participation of teachers in policymaking, and effective use of all the members of the school community. Teachers need to have good morale, a sense of satisfaction with their work, and autonomy to carry out their professional work. Finally, the school must also have a sense of community, a positive attitude towards innovation, and the ability to solve problems and adapt to change. With the above characteristics, schools can overcome many of the obstacles to change.

Strategies for School Change

The greatest obstacles to change may be the teachers themselves. Although in many respects, teachers are like those in many other professions, there are some fundamental differences that may account for the resistance of teachers to change (Ballentine, 1989: 369):

> Teachers, unlike those working in most similar occupations, have much prior experience of their work milieu. They are socialized into the general ways of schools since childhood. They then, without much of any other occupational experience, undergo a powerful process of occupational socialization, often in the isolated environment of a monotechnic, the college of education, prior to returning for life to schools as teachers. Furthermore, the academic knowledge which they teach is basic in nature and hence rarely subject to much change. In the case of the moral curriculum teachers are often seen as the guardians of traditional behavior standards to which parents wish their children to conform, but which they themselves tacitly, or even sometimes, openly abjure. On all these counts teachers are not easily going to act as major agents of change.

In order for real change to occur the whole school system and the community within which it exists must change. The issue must be clear in the minds of all, the financial support for the change must be available, the school principal must provide the leadership, and the teachers and students must be willing to change. The strategies themselves can be aimed at parts of the system or a total overhaul of the whole system.

Change will not always occur smoothly, even though it may have been well planned. Resistance may come from any part of the system and its environment, however it is of critical importance for the classroom teacher to be involved in the planning for change. Otherwise, even well-planned change will be doomed to failure.

Your Future as an Agent of Change

Teachers are, by definition, individuals who were successful in their own schooling. Why would teachers want to change schools if they were successful in the 'old system'? What fundamental changes have been occurring in Hong Kong schools? What kind of change is needed in Hong Kong education for the twenty-first century? This book provides information with which teachers in Hong Kong can form perspectives about how change occurs in education and their role in bringing about change in schools.

The Education System, Labour, and Policy

The first section of this book focuses on systems. It starts with Kai Ming Cheng's chapter on 'The Education System'. This chapter is meant to be a quick sketch of the basic structure of the Hong Kong school system. Cheng firstly outlines the general profile of the school system, covering pre-school education, general school education (running from primary, junior secondary to senior secondary levels), technical and vocational education, higher education and adult education. The profile sketch outlines some key features of the school categorization system and significant educational bodies. Hong Kong schools can in general be categorized by language of instruction, funding and management. In terms of language of instruction, schools in Hong Kong can be divided into English medium and Chinese medium schools, the former comprising the larger proportion. In terms of funding and management, Hong Kong schools can further be divided into government, subsidized and private schools. Cheng also introduces readers to the existence of a number of significant educational bodies which have substantial governing or advisory powers, including the Education Department, the Vocational Training Council and the University Grants Committee. In addition, Cheng's chapter covers the examination system and the funding system. Cheng concludes his chapter with a discussion of a number of issues which may influence the shaping of school features that he has outlined. The issue of efficiency and equity is a determinant for government expenditure in education and demand for individual inputs. The issue of culture and of conformity is a determinant for the monolithic school structure in Hong Kong, and is an important account for an emphasis on competition and efforts among students and discipline in the classroom, based on which Cheng argues that it is difficult for individual-based and student-centred teaching to take root in Hong Kong.

Society views one of the major roles of education to be the production

of a labour force. Chapter 2 of this section addresses the concept of added values in terms of training of human capital. Bray particularly highlights that the training of human capital is very much seen as the purpose of educational service in Hong Kong. This is clearly expressed in the *Report of the Advisory Committee on Diversification* and the *Education Commission Report* (1979). As the Diversification Report says,

> Education means the acquisition of a knowledge and understanding of the theory relevant to a particular vocation . . . Training means the acquisition and practice of skills . . . necessary to attain the level of proficiency required for his vocation.

Referring to the *Education Commission Report* No. 5, it says,

> We see education spending as an investment, and we believe the community shares this view. If resources are invested wisely within a well-managed education system, the social and economic returns for both individuals and the community can be substantial, as Hong Kong's recent history has shown. (Education Commission, 1992: 2)

In this perspective, it is always justified that social investment in education and training is important for its added values to the human capital. Because education is a matter of producing the kind of outputs needed by society, there is a need for planning, which is often called manpower planning or manpower forecasting. However, Bray points out that planning for educational provisions is not always based on manpower needs or forecasts, sometimes it can be affected by the demands of society. Educational planning according to this approach is what is often called the social demand approach.

Decision-making: Rationalistic or Political?

Referring to the specific situation of Hong Kong, Mark Bray paints a rather complicated picture. The government has never adopted a social demand approach to higher education, but the recent expansion of higher education places is clear evidence of meeting social demands rather than economic needs. Bray further notes that the employment of manpower planning is never easy. This is firstly due to the fact that conducting manpower forecasts has not proved to be successful in most countries, and nor has the calculation of exact rates of return. This is also due to the specific situation of Hong Kong, in that *laissez faire* has always been the guiding principle for the

Hong Kong economy. An interesting case in point is also that Hong Kong's economic growth does not seem to have had much correlation with its vocational education system, which is a rather subsidiary system in Hong Kong.

While Bray's chapter discusses the organization of education from the input-output, or economic, perspective, Cheng's following chapter focuses on the policymaking process. To some extent, Cheng's definition of policymaking process resembles that of the input-output process, as he defines policymaking as 'a process of finding the optimal means to achieve an end'. A process of this kind is regarded as rational decision-making, which is a way to shape the education system to meet the needs of society. However, there is another dimension of the policymaking process that can be described as political. A policy has to be made when there are diverse views, and a process leading to a compromise between diverse views, or the overriding of one view over the others, is always political. Nevertheless, the two dimensions are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as *analysis* and *politics* can both be basic components of the policymaking, and there can be political procedures that guarantee the rationality of policy, which is called *procedural rationality*.

Cheng feels that 'Hong Kong is basically a Chinese community which traditionally believes in rational decision-making'. The Hong Kong situation is nonetheless complicated, in that the kind of procedural rationality is very different from Western types of procedures, which assume direct democratic procedures. The social set-up of Hong Kong is that the Governor can have autocratic power, as he is *de jure* the sole decision maker and *de facto* the final decision maker of educational policies in Hong Kong. In this sense, the policymaking process can well develop an entirely *political* dimension.

However, Cheng argues that any government that wants policy decisions to be accepted needs to show the legitimacy of its decisions. In this context, Hong Kong has developed a traditional practice that the Governor seeks wide consultations for his decisions. This can be evidenced by the establishment of a number of advisory bodies in Hong Kong, such as the Board of Education, the Vocational Training Council, the University Grants Committee, the Education Commission, and the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualification. There are also a number of consultative committees, such as the Private School Review Committee, the Advisory Committee on the School Management Initiative and the Curriculum Development Council. All these bodies and committees are called *legitimized consultants* by Cheng, as their existence has presented a picture that the Governor is not making decisions as an autocrat, but rather through an official consultative procedure. Some Hong Kong political and social scientists often name this kind of consultative procedure in policymaking *consultative*

democracy, as although decision-making in Hong Kong is structurally autocratic, the procedure of decision-making has involved public participation. In this way, Cheng considers that the educational policymaking procedures in Hong Kong can largely be regarded as rationalistic. The procedures have in general allowed the Hong Kong government to go through a process of identifying a problem, seeking suggested solutions, and inviting public responses to the suggestions, before any significant policy is made.

Schools, Teachers and Curriculum

Whereas Bray and Cheng's chapters mainly employ a macroscopic approach to discussing the organization of education in Hong Kong, and are more concerned with the education system than with schools, Kam Cheung Wong adopts a rather microscopic approach and look into the internal organization of the school. However, Wong's starting point is very much in line with the above two chapters, as he bases his discussion of school organization on the concept that 'an organization is a social system which can be either "open" or "closed" '. In this context, Wong alleges that a school is an open system, as Hong Kong schools are closely interacting with the social environment. For example, changes in Hong Kong's economic structure and political circumstances have led to a substantial loss of teaching personnel in Hong Kong in the turn of the 1990s. Moreover, despite the educational value of using Chinese as a medium of instruction, most schools in Hong Kong are seen as English-medium, mainly due to *parental demands*.

A third example is that the internal organization of schools in Hong Kong is largely influenced by the bureaucratic model, which is a classical organizational approach, introduced by Max Weber, arguing on the basis that this provides a rationalistic decision-making mechanism. The bureaucratic concept of organization has been a dominant model of organization for more than half a century, not only in the West but also in many other parts of the world. Many sophisticated management programmes, for example, the Programme Evaluation and Review Technique, Management by Objective and Zero-Based Budgeting, were developed on the basis of the bureaucratic model.

The bureaucratic model of organization places organizational achievements as the primary goal, and individuals within the organization have become insignificant. Within the organization (or school, in this context), there exists a hierarchy, whereby decision-making is top-down and the leadership style is authoritative. Wong suggests that there is yet another

organizational perspective to be considered, which is called the contingency model (Getzels and Guba, 1957). The contingency model sees that an organization has two major components. The first component relates to goals of the organization, which are determined by the *roles* and *expectations* of the individuals. The focus on roles and expectations of the individuals is consistent with the emphasis of the bureaucratic model. However, as a contrast to the bureaucratic model, the contingency model also looks at a second component, i.e. the *personalities* of the individuals. There are organizational perspectives developed along this line of thinking. The one cited in Wong's chapter is a model developed by Leavitt (1964), who sees an organization to be composed of four subsystems, namely *task, structure, technology* and *people*. What should be noted is that this variant of organizational view does not discard the need for efficiency and rationality, which are essential components of Weber's concept of bureaucracy. It is therefore regarded that the newly proposed contingency concept is only a variant of the Weberian concept rather than a replacement of it, and is thus only regarded as neo-Weberian. None the less, it is significant at this point to remind readers that Leavitt's four subsystems of task, structure, technology and people are context-dependent. In this sense, the school organization is to be seen as context-dependent.

Returning to the Hong Kong situation, Wong suggests that school organization is developing a context-dependent orientation, in that people are more valued as a part of the organization. Such an orientation of development is a clear departure from its traditional bureaucratic and administrative orientations. The best-known example is the introduction of the School Management Initiative by the government in 1991. The major thrust of the initiative is to allow for decentralization to the school level or school-based management. Also, the initiative is proposed in a way to encourage schools not only to look at their tasks and structures, but also to pay more attention to the *people*. This is manifest in its recommendation for teachers and parents to sit on the School Management Committee and increase their participation in decision-making.

However, the proposed initiative does not seem to have been successfully implemented. Wong remarks that the involvement of parents and teachers in the School Management Committee has become a 'stumbling block' to many of the schools who participated in the project. His research on SMI implementation in 21 schools also suggests that in practice, teachers' participation in preparing Programme Plans and Procedure Manuals (which is an activity recommended by the SMI document) was minimal, be they teachers with or without administrative positions. Like Bray and Cheng, the school organization picture in Hong Kong as depicted by Wong is also a complicated one. What is clear however is that school organization in Hong

Kong is becoming more contingent- or people-oriented, despite all the complications taking place in the process of reform.

Hubert O. Brown introduces readers to the key personnel in a school — teachers and their teaching. Brown provides valuable information on many aspects of Hong Kong teachers rarely available elsewhere, including the size of the teaching force against the total workforce in Hong Kong, their average age, the qualifications of teachers and their training, their social background, their academic and professional status, their salaries, their views of teaching, their job satisfactions and dissatisfactions, and their opportunities for career advancement including opportunities between genders. Readers will find all this information useful in understanding the teaching force of Hong Kong. However, like Cheng, in addition to providing important descriptive information, the main purpose of Brown's chapter is a discussion on the nature of the teacher's job in Hong Kong. This purpose is clearly stated in the introduction of his chapter:

> Today, this iron rice bowl is fast disappearing. Teachers today must accept new responsibilities in school management, and curriculum development. They must meet detailed student learning targets, work to improve community relations; and even conduct school-based research. This expanded role gives teachers new opportunities for personal advancement, satisfaction, and development that were hardly thought of even a few years ago, but it also burdens teachers with new pressures.

It is in this context that Brown ends his chapter by discussing how teachers are involved in the SMI, the school-based curriculum development projects, and factors leading to teacher wastage.

Social Factors Affecting Educational Attainment

The above chapters illustrate that schooling is affected by the social factors and the inputs from society. In this sense, it is important to pay attention to the social context, in addition to the organizational and educational contexts.

Curriculum as a Social Practice

Curriculum is a vital part of schooling. However, in order to understand the school system, we should not limit our study to the curriculum structure or

curriculum contents, but should be aware of the social basis of the curriculum. Kwok Wah Cheung's chapter introduces the social basis of the curriculum from two major sociological perspectives, namely Marxian and Durkheimian. The former focuses on analysing the conflict between antagonistic social forces, whilst the latter focuses on the integration or order of social organs.

Referring to the Marxian perspective, Cheung builds his arguments on the well-quoted saying of Marx that men's social existence determines their consciousness. The mode of production necessarily involves an unequal social and economic relationship between those who own resources and those who do not, and the unequal relations of production are reflected in the existence of two major classes of people, i.e. the dominant class or the bourgeois, who own resources, and the dominated or the proletariat, who own no resources. The inequality between the two classes is sustained, perpetuated and reproduced in society through various channels, including the education system, very often in a concealed way. For example, when educational failure is experienced by children from an underprivileged class background, they and the teachers would only attribute it to their own failure.

Cheung further explains how the reproduction of class can take place in the education system, or specifically through the curriculum, by drawing on Michael Apple, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, and Michael Young's related works. Apple is famous for his explanation of the ideological functions of the curriculum, i.e. the curriculum helps to preserve and produce institutions which in turn help to sustain the ideological dominance of the dominating groups in social and economic life. This is in the main manifest in the prevalence of pre-packaged sets of curricular materials, which has become a deskilling labour process. First, the provision of curriculum packages reduces a teacher to a 'curriculum manual operator'. Second, the reliance on deskilled packages leads to the formation of the ideology of individual possession of technical competence. This has made the learning process individualized, and has reduced the learning experience to the mastery of prescribed competence and skills that can be monitored and assessed. In this way, curriculum delivery has become a process of transmitting the dominant ideology, for the purpose of sustaining the interests of the dominating class.

Ideological dominance is also manifest in the differentiating function of the curriculum, in that, as Bowles and Gintis point out, there is a tendency for schools to limit the curriculum and expectations for low-achieving students. This was further developed by Michael Young, who takes the science curriculum as an example to discuss the differentiating, segregating or stratifying functions of the curriculum. Young argues that the teaching of science has presented an image that science learning can only take place in

the closed world of a laboratory, which is full of apparatus and formulae. Moreover, school science is presented in such a specialized way that it is distanced from the common sense knowledge of science and technology already possessed by the students. In this way, everyday life experience is downgraded as 'raw' experience, and students thereby need to master the specialized language of science if they want to upgrade themselves. In the end, school science segregates students into three groups, i.e. the academic scientists who are 'pure scientists', the pragmatic scientists who can only apply, and the 'scientist illiterates' whose schooling teaches them that science is an specialized activity which has nothing to do with them.

Looking at the differentiating functions of the curriculum represents only one sociological perspective on curriculum. In the second part, Cheung traces how Bernstein offers an alternative view on curriculum by looking at its integrative functions. Developing Durkheim's notions of mechanical and organic solidarity in the social division of labour, Bernstein suggests that the movement in British society from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity can also be detected in education. It was translated into certain curriculum movements. For Bernstein, fundamental changes in the curriculum are a reflection of fundamental changes in society.

Although such sociological perspectives of understanding the curriculum are attractive, Cheung points out that there have been very few Hong Kong studies along these lines of thought, and he therefore calls for strengthening sociological analysis of Hong Kong schooling. Although not exactly the kind of sociological analysis proposed by Cheung, the following chapters in this section represent some efforts at analysing Hong Kong schooling from sociological perspectives, all of which look at the differentiating functions of schooling.

Gerard A. Postiglione begins his chapter with a discussion of concepts related to social stratification and social reproduction. There are two major views on social stratification. The social order view accepts stratification as a natural or even equitable social phenomenon, whereby people get what society seems to say they deserve, and are rewarded for their merits with upward social mobility. In this sense, the education system performs a function of role allocation for people. The conflict view however does not see that achievements and rewards are reasonably convergent, as these are fundamentally distributed in the society in an unequal way according to people's class background. The education system therefore plays a role in perpetuating class differences, in the sense that students from an upper class background have a higher chance of making higher achievements and getting social rewards compared to their counterparts from a lower class background.

This leads to his discussion on social and cultural reproduction in school.

Again, Postiglione identifies two major views on social and cultural reproduction. The correspodence view takes the Marxian perspective that school reproduces capitalist society by (1) allocating students into levels of the work hierarchy so that workers' children become workers and capitalists' children become capitalists, (2) socializing children into the attitudes and world views of the jobs they take so that lower level workers will be obedient and upper-level workers will be innovative, and (3) legitimizing the system of social stratification by putting forward the view that the existing system is the best of all possible worlds. While the correspondence view suggests that class reproduction is proceeding in a concealed way, the resistance or class conflict view suggests that actually underprivileged students are actively protesting against the existing system, for example in the form of juvenile delinquency. Postiglione criticizes the first view as being too conformative to the existing system, and the second view as too resistant. He proposes the adoption of a Weberian view, which looks at how schooling is used for reinforcing the culture of various status groups, i.e. cultural reproduction.

The rest of Postiglione's chapter explores the social context of Hong Kong schooling in detail from three different aspects: family, school, and higher education. With respect to family influences on educational attainment, his collection of research findings since the 1960s evidences that there is a clear correlation between family background and educational attainment. The strongest quote he has adopted is from Tsang (1993), who commented that 'Hong Kong is not an open society in the absolute sense [sic]. Furthermore, I have verified that the social class structure of Hong Kong has become more restraining over time.' With respect to school, Postiglione observes a hierarchy of schools which correlates to students' family backgrounds, and which also represents differences in students' exposure to teaching, resources and life opportunities. Within schools, the streaming system can create differential educational experiences which may eventually lead to class reproduction. With respect to higher education, despite a rather even representation of class backgrounds in the student profile in higher education institutions in Hong Kong, Postiglione argues that the profile has undermined the fact that many students who can afford to pay pursue higher studies abroad. Moreover, gender stratification is clear in higher education, as females are significantly underrepresented.

Cheung's chapter explains how the curriculum provides a differential educational experience among students, and Postiglione's chapter explains how the school system perpetuates social stratification by class reproduction. The following two chapters by Wing On Lee and Nick Crawford attempt to consider two specific cases, the former language and the latter special education. Lee argues that even the language we use in the classroom plays some social functions that differentiate students. Beginning with an argument

that language has significant social functions, Lee puts forward Bernstein's discussion on two types of language codes that may correlate to social class background. The working-class family's language code is restricted, with frequent use of commands that carry little explanation or opportunity for discussion. However, the middle-class family tends to use an elaborated language code which allows for more discussion and individual expression of experience and emotion. As school language seems to coincide with the type of middle-class language, children with this type of language habit tend to have a higher chance of mastering knowledge transmitted in school. While there seems to be a consensual view of the linkage between language habits and educational achievement, there is no consensus on whether the relationship between the two is causal.

Based on the above observations, Lee further examines the situation of Hong Kong. Research findings suggest that language proficiency has a positive correlation with educational achievement. This happens with both the Chinese and English languages. However, in a society where English is seen as important for enhancing one's socioeconomic opportunities, the impact of English proficiency on school success becomes explicit. Studies have found that there is a correlation between social class background, English proficiency and the academic ranking of schools. Moreover, it has been found that students from an upper-class family background tend to view that the social distance between them and the native English speaker is closer as compared to that of their counterparts from a lower-class background. This attitude further enhances the second language acquisition of upper-class students.

Crawford's chapter mainly introduces the development of special educational services in Hong Kong. However, the latter half of his chapter discusses the special education issue in a way very similar to the other chapters in this section. He criticizes the use of the term 'special educational needs', in that it tends to imply that the problems lie with the students concerned, particularly with a connotation that the students are 'deficient'. This has undermined the social implications of special education. When outlining four major views of social policy concerning the provision of special education (namely humanitarian, social investment, conflict and social control), Crawford points out that it would be difficult to understand the other three views without reference to social control, in that the provision of 'special education' is a way of controlling disruptive children by segregating them from the regular classes. One example is the interesting phenomenon that the number of special schools has increased, despite continued calls for integration and equal social opportunity. Another example is the overrepresentation of lower socioeconomic class pupils amongst those classed as mildly handicapped, which implies the lower ability of 'lower-

class' children. Classifying them as children with special educational needs actually further reduces their chances of upward social mobility.

Referring to the situation of Hong Kong, Crawford cites Pott's view that the uniformity of the Hong Kong education system has entailed rejection of many students who cannot fit in. The expansion of the special education system over the years has unfortunately necessitated extension of identifying, classifying and labelling of weaker groups of students, who are then dominated by the more powerful groups.

Conclusion

It is the intention of the authors of this book to stress that we need certain theoretical background for understanding schooling in a particular society. Readers will find that most of the perspectives employed are rooted in Western Europe and North America. There is certainly a need to develop Eastern perspectives in the future. Moreover, analysis of the Hong Kong situation in this book is based on its political situation as a British colony. As Hong Kong becomes a part of China, the changing political context will certainly provide a new framework for understanding Hong Kong schooling. We believe educational theorists need to devote more effort to this direction of analysis.

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