

# CURRICULUM, SCHOOLING AND SOCIETY IN HONG KONG

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# Contents

List of Figures	vii	
List of Tables	ix	
Preface	xi	
Acknowledgements	xiii	
List of Abbreviations	xv	
Chapter 1	Studying the Curriculum	1
Chapter 2	Curriculum Policy and Policymaking	17
Chapter 3	Curriculum Development	45
Chapter 4	Curriculum Organization	65
Chapter 5	Teachers, Teaching and the Curriculum	85
Chapter 6	Learners, Learning and the Curriculum	109
Chapter 7	Assessing Pupils' Learning	127
Chapter 8	Language Policy and the Medium of Instruction	147
Chapter 9	Evaluating the Curriculum	163
Chapter 10	Changing the Curriculum	179
References	193	
Index	203	

## List of Figures

1.1	Historical influences on schools and the curriculum in Hong Kong	13
2.1	Explanations for curriculum change	19
2.2	Policymaking and administrative bodies in Hong Kong education	28
3.1	Aims, goals and outcomes of a curriculum	46
3.2	Images of education	47
3.3	Considerations in curriculum development	54
3.4	Four key stages in curriculum planning	54
3.5	Curriculum framework for primary and secondary schools	55
3.6	Walker's model of the curriculum process	60
4.1	A curriculum map for English language in SS1–SS3	66
4.2	Different forms of curriculum organization	74
4.3	A planning wheel showing the contribution from various subjects (Primary 4) to the theme “A Happy Life”	76
4.4	Modules with similar time allocations	80
4.5	Modules with different time allocations	81
5.1	Some of the factors influencing the choice of teaching approach	96
5.2	Steps in a learning study	98
7.1	Types of written assessment	141
8.1	Additive, developing, subtractive and replacive effects	158
9.1	A model for curriculum evaluation	166
9.2	Primary, secondary and tertiary levels of curriculum implementation/evaluation	168
9.3	Performance Indicators Framework for School Evaluation in Hong Kong	171
9.4	The five stages of the institutional review and development process	172



## List of Tables

2.1	Education Commission Reports	25
2.2	Centralized approaches to curriculum development	32
2.3	Curriculum decisions and sources of influence	34
2.4	The concerns of various groups which influence curriculum decisions	42
2.5	The concerns of various groups in schools	43
3.1	Curriculum conceptions and curriculum components	51
4.1	Education codes	74
5.1	Characteristics of progressive and traditional teachers	90
5.2	Some major methods of imparting content	92
5.3	Teaching-learning strategies	100
5.4	Framework for lesson analysis	104
7.1	Assessment needs and purposes of different groups	135
7.2	Appropriateness of types of assessment	140
7.3	School-based assessment and skills development in some subjects	143
9.1	Evaluating the observed curriculum	167
9.2	Assessment criteria for school evaluation in Hong Kong	173

## Studying the Curriculum

Changes to the curriculum of schools are a regular feature of life in Hong Kong. In the past twenty years, for instance, there have been several reforms affecting the school curriculum as a whole, and many examples of changes to parts of the curriculum. Some of the reforms which have had a significant impact include comprehensive curriculum reforms, such as the Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC), *Learning to Learn* (2001) and the New Senior Secondary Curriculum, including the change to a 3-3-4 structure for secondary and tertiary education (2009); assessment reforms, including school-based assessment and a reorientation towards *assessment for learning*; reforms that seek to cater for diverse learning needs; and language policy reforms, most notably the move to promote mother-tongue instruction (1998) and the “fine-tuning” of the language policy (2009). At the same time, there have been various policies to enhance the professional quality of teachers (e.g., policies to create an all-graduate, all-trained teaching force; tests of teachers’ language and information technology proficiency; training programmes for school leaders; and the introduction of the Quality Education Fund to stimulate school-based initiatives).

The purpose of this book is to explain and use the tools of curriculum analysis to examine both the nature of the school curriculum in Hong Kong and the ongoing agenda to reform the curriculum. We also look at what actually happens in Hong Kong schools and why. These are fundamental questions in the field of curriculum studies. While the questions may seem simple, the answers are not. One of our goals is to demonstrate the complexity of curriculum problems and issues, the alternatives and the extent to which they are dependent on the historical, political, economic and social contexts, and, most importantly, the underlying perspectives, or assumptions, of those who promote their solutions.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of curriculum studies — the nature of *curriculum*, the scope of curriculum studies, and different ways of perceiving and researching curriculum issues — and we set out the approach that underpins this book.

## The Nature of Curriculum

[The secondary school] curriculum consists of a common core and, combined with the curriculum at the primary level, provides students with an integrated curriculum for nine years of free, compulsory and universal education. (*Hong Kong Yearbook* 1996, 142)

The primary school curriculum has been reviewed to incorporate the Target Oriented Curriculum elements across all subject curricula. A new curriculum for primary mathematics was developed. ... In order to enhance primary school teachers' abilities to implement the curriculum framework ... a curriculum package entitled 'Learning and Teaching 2000' was developed. (*Hong Kong Yearbook* 2000, 156)

In 2002, ... the CDC [Curriculum Development Council] developed the *Basic Education Curriculum Guide* setting out the themes essential for curriculum development throughout schools. At the primary education level, school curriculum leaders have been appointed to support primary school heads to lead curriculum development. (*Hong Kong Yearbook* 2004, 170)

The curriculum reform is the core component of education reforms. It aims to motivate students to learn, to enhance their knowledge and abilities, and develop in them positive values and attitudes to establish a solid foundation for lifelong learning and whole-person development. (*Hong Kong Yearbook* 2005, 182)

The school curriculum in Hong Kong is founded on five essential learning experiences: moral and civic education, intellectual development, community service, physical and aesthetic development and career-related experiences for lifelong learning and whole-person development of students. (*Hong Kong Yearbook* 2006, 157)

The above quotations show the many different ways in which the term *curriculum* is used. We can see that it is used to refer to the planned content of learning for various levels of schooling (e.g., primary and secondary), for specific school subjects (e.g., mathematics), learning experiences (e.g., moral and civic education), for specific school reforms (e.g., the New Senior Secondary Curriculum), and for certain groups of pupils (e.g., the "underachievers" and the academically gifted).

Just as there are a variety of ways in which the term is used, there are many different definitions of the term *curriculum*. The word has its roots in the Latin word *currere* (to run), and refers to "a race course" or "a running track". The key parts of seven definitions are shown on p. 3:

- ... the *disciplined study of permanent subjects* such as grammar, logic and reading that best embody essential knowledge.
- ... should consist entirely of knowledge which comes from the *established disciplines*.
- ... all the *planned learning outcomes* for which the school is responsible.
- ... the *experiences the learner has* under the guidance of the school.
- ... those subjects that are *most useful for living in contemporary society*.
- ... a passage of *personal transformation* (for both the teacher and the pupil).
- ... the questioning of the status quo and *the search for a better society*.

We can see that the definitions vary considerably. The first two focus on the nature of what we teach, the third on the planned outcomes or goals of schooling, and the fourth on pupils' experiences and activities in school. The fifth definition focuses on the needs of society; the sixth focuses on the process of change for individuals; and the last definition focuses on the need for critical inquiry and improvement of the human condition.

This variety of definitions reflects the fact that the field of curriculum studies, like the uses of the term itself, covers a wide range of concerns and activities. Curriculum can include a consideration of the purposes of schooling within a particular society, what we teach, how we teach, both what is planned and unplanned, and it can focus on the outcomes of schooling or on its processes. Each of these different emphases has to be taken into consideration if we are to study and improve the curriculum.

The most basic questions which are addressed in developing the curriculum are: What knowledge is most worthwhile, why should it be taught and how can it be learnt? How a society answers these questions — which relate to the *content* of the curriculum, its *purpose* and its *organization* — has a major influence on what pupils learn and how they are taught. In turn, pupils' experiences in school help to determine their beliefs and who they are. This is clearly recognized in Hong Kong where the government has stated that the school curriculum “defines the views of society about ‘what is worth learning’” (Curriculum Development Council 2001, 19).

There are a large number of different groups of people working in the field of curriculum. These include the staff of the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI), textbook and materials writers and publishers, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA), the Education Bureau (EDB), educational psychologists and counsellors, and most importantly the thousands of teachers, teaching assistants and school administrators who engage with the curriculum each day as they attempt to help pupils to learn.



## The Scope of Curriculum Studies

As the curriculum operates in different ways and exists at different levels, there is not a single curriculum. A country or a state has a curriculum. A school has a curriculum which includes all the pupils' experiences across a range of subjects. Every class and every pupil has slightly different experiences. We can also talk about the curriculum for a group of similar subjects such as science, the curriculum of a single subject, and the curriculum for a specific group of pupils such as the gifted. We are therefore faced with a wide range of events at different levels which come together under the word *curriculum*. Below we identify some of the major forms or foci of the school curriculum each of which provides a different perspective for analyzing it.

### *The intended curriculum*

This is the plan which spells out the intentions with regards to the three key elements of the curriculum, namely what teachers should teach and pupils should learn, why, and how it should be organized. In Hong Kong the *intended curriculum* is set out in key documents such as *Learning to Learn* (Curriculum Development Council 2001). We also have documents which describe the *intended curriculum* for levels of schooling and for each school subject. The curriculum guide for each school subject published by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) explains to teachers the aims of the subject, what to teach and it also advises on appropriate teaching and assessment methods. Essentially the *intended curriculum* is an official plan of what those who have the power to make decisions want the younger generation to learn, how it should be organized and why.

A distinction is also sometimes made between two aspects of the planned curriculum. That which is planned and goes on during the timetabled periods is sometimes referred to as the *formal curriculum*. Those planned school activities which are not part of the subject timetable such as sports activities, outside speakers and school trips are sometimes referred to as the *informal curriculum*.

### *The implemented curriculum*

Curriculum plans are not always achieved in practice. For instance, schools, for various reasons, may have their own interpretation of the curriculum, while teachers often have to cope with multiple demands and unexpected events, which means that the intentions are not always achieved. Moreover, many curriculum plans are statements of an ideal which is difficult to achieve in practice because the necessary

resources, time or skills are not available. The study of the curriculum is also concerned with what actually goes on in classrooms and what pupils learn in schools. This is sometimes called the *implemented curriculum*, the *taught curriculum* or the *experienced curriculum*. Furthermore, not everything taught and learnt in school is tested in the relevant examinations. That which is tested is referred to as the *tested or assessed curriculum*.

Because of the gap between the *intended curriculum* and the *implemented curriculum*, teachers should not be viewed as technicians whose job is only to deliver a pre-packaged curriculum. Teachers play a key role in determining the implemented curriculum as they make decisions every day about what pupils should learn, how they can learn it, and how it should be assessed. A teacher's personal beliefs, goals and practices are a key influence on the implemented curriculum. Schools in Hong Kong also make a number of key decisions which affect the curriculum, such as whether pupils should be taught in mixed ability groups or in streamed classes. To put it another way: the curriculum is not wholly determined by the government or its key agency, the CDI. This is acknowledged in the reform document, *Learning to Learn*, published by the CDC in 2001:

The school curriculum defines the views of society about 'what is worth learning', commensurate with students' abilities at different stages and with their ways of perceiving and learning about the world.

We have to move away from the concept of the curriculum as "documents" to the concept of the curriculum as "learning experiences" to enhance the effectiveness of learning.

Learning experiences are a nexus of

- ⇒ aims
- ⇒ learning processes
- ⇒ learning contents
- ⇒ social environment

(Curriculum Development Council 2001, 19)

### ***The hidden curriculum***

Schools sometimes teach pupils attitudes and skills which are not part of any plan. For example, pupils might learn to be selfish, racist or sexist. These attitudes might be conveyed through educational practices such as encouraging competition amongst pupils, ability grouping, teacher-pupil relationships, classroom rules, the content of textbooks, sex role differentiation of pupils and the reward structure

in schools. The pupils might also learn in school to be passive or to have a very low opinion of themselves, or even to be prepared for a certain social status in life — a study by Anyon (1980), for instance, showed how teaching differed even in elementary schools for different social classes, with school for the working class focused on mechanical, rote learning, whilst elitist schools asked students to think independently.

The social roles, attitudes and values which pupils learn that are not planned are referred to as the *hidden* (or *covert*) *curriculum*. The values and attitudes which pupils learn from the *hidden curriculum* are potentially very powerful and could be positive or negative, depending on the viewpoint one adopts.

### ***The null curriculum***

In planning a curriculum we make decisions about the content, skills and attitudes we want pupils to learn because, hopefully, we have decided that they are “worthwhile”. We also make decisions about what should not be included in the curriculum. Some topics might simply be excluded from the curriculum because time is limited or because those who plan the curriculum believe that pupils should not learn the topic. For example, in the USA, some religious groups have argued that schools should not teach the theory of evolution because they do not believe in it. The content, skills and attitudes that we decide not to include in the curriculum is termed the *null curriculum*. Eisner (1994, 97) argues that

... what schools do not teach may be as important as what they do teach. Ignorance is not simply a neutral void; it has important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider, the alternatives that one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or problems.

The concept of the null curriculum is important in Hong Kong because the curriculum of many subjects has avoided the inclusion of topics which were seen to be politically sensitive (Stimpson 1991). We will examine this in more detail in Chapter 6.

### ***The outside curriculum***

Education takes place over our whole lifetime, not just in schools. We learn from our families, friends, the internet, the media and from our workplaces. Just as school curricula have *intended*, *implemented*, *null* and *hidden* elements, so do the

many “curricula” which exist outside schools. Increasingly curriculum scholars are analyzing the multiple curricula which surround us both inside and outside schools and which have an influence on what we learn and who we are. In this book we will focus on the curriculum of schools but it is important to remember that there are many other influences outside the school which have a powerful effect on what pupils learn.

These points indicate that the study of curriculum is a large, amorphous and ill-defined field (Marsh 2009). It includes the study of what we plan to do and why we do it, what happens in practice and the context in which the curriculum operates. This suggests that the study of curriculum lies at the heart of the study of education, and is linked to the concerns of many other disciplines such as philosophy, sociology and psychology.

However, while philosophers, sociologists and psychologists are all concerned with various questions about schooling, they tend to focus on one aspect of it. Psychologists mainly focus on the nature of learning, philosophers on the aims of education, and sociologists on the links between schooling and society. The study of the curriculum tries to bring these various concerns together and thus analyzes schooling using a range of perspectives.

### Studying the Curriculum

Given the considerations outlined above we can now identify the key topics and questions which are addressed in the study of curriculum. These are:

- a. Curriculum Intentions: What knowledge is considered most worthwhile?
  - b. The Content of the Curriculum
  - c. Delivering the Curriculum
  - d. Assessing the Curriculum
- } THE BASIC OR FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENTS
- 
- e. Curriculum Policy and Planning
  - f. How is it arranged?
  - g. How is it assessed?
  - h. Does it work and how can it be improved?
- } TECHNICAL ASPECTS
- 
- i. Who makes these decisions?
  - j. Are the decisions implemented?
  - k. What are the influences on the curriculum?
  - l. Who benefits from the curriculum?
  - m. What are the future priorities?
- } SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS

The first four questions are concerned with the most *fundamental or basic components* of any curriculum. When we select certain subjects and topics for pupils to study, we have decided that they are the most worthwhile knowledge available under the circumstances and we should be able to explain why it is worthwhile. If we are not able to do this, then the schooling we provide has no defensible rationale or purpose. Similarly, the teaching and assessment methods we advocate are justifiable if we believe that they are the most effective means available to help pupils learn the knowledge, skills and attitudes that we have selected as worthwhile and to assess their understanding (Schubert 1997).

Questions e, f and g focus on more *technical issues* which are concerned with how a curriculum should be planned, organized and improved. Questions h, i, j and k relate to *social and political aspects* of the curriculum.

The different views of the curriculum which we identified above reflect very different perceptions people have of the nature of society and what is considered worthwhile. It is important to recognize, as noted earlier, that there is not a single way of analyzing the curriculum which is generally accepted. Unlike the study of mathematics or some branches of science, there are no generally accepted universal truths or methods of analysis in the study of the curriculum. Instead, there are different approaches to or traditions of curriculum research. Elliott (1996) identifies three research traditions, which he terms the *technical-rational*, *critical-social* and *experimental-innovative* research.

The *technical-rational* tradition of research views the curriculum as a programme of learning that can be rationally planned and implemented in the light of pre-specified objectives. Goodson (1994) has described this tradition as based on a belief in the “science of education”, which implies a technological view of school knowledge. He criticizes this tradition as being preoccupied with setting out prescriptions and guidelines.

The *critical-social* tradition is concerned with answering very fundamental questions about the curriculum, such as who constructed it, what sort of knowledge is valued, and who benefits from the curriculum. Central to these questions is a view that the school curriculum is not a neutral object, but is a product of social and political forces in society and that those in power tend to define the nature of the curriculum. Recent developments in critical-social theories and sociology have contributed to the development of a movement called “postmodernism”. Postmodernism refers to a range of ideas, and the movement is subject to different interpretations, even from those who advocate it. Basically, postmodernists reject the traditional idea of “objective” or “certain” knowledge. Instead, they argue that knowledge is socially constructed and linked to the exercise of power. Hence, truth is ideological in nature. In line with postmodernism’s stress on pluralism and the contextual nature of understanding, Slattery (2006, 192) argues that curriculum development

in the postmodern era emphasizes discourses that promote understanding of the cultural, historical, political, ecological, aesthetic, theological and autobiographical impact ... rather than the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of context-free and value-neutral schooling events and trivial information.

The *experimental-innovative* tradition is primarily concerned with improving the quality of learning. It is strongly associated with the work of Stenhouse (1975) and Elliott (1996), which stresses the role of the teacher as a researcher, and the value of action research as a means for teachers to improve the quality and effectiveness of the implemented curriculum.

We will see examples of each of these traditions in this book as different chapters focus on topics which are more central to different traditions. Linked to these traditions are various research perspectives that are commonly found in the social sciences are evident in the study of education: *empirical*, *interpretive* and *critical* perspectives. The *empirical* or *positivist perspective* focuses on trying to obtain and analyze data which describes how the curriculum operates. The *interpretive perspective* is concerned with trying to make sense of the way the curriculum operates in society, the influences on it and its functions. The *critical perspective* addresses the normative question — how should the curriculum be changed to create a more just, equal and moral society. Clearly these perspectives are derived from very different assumptions and judgements about both why we should study the curriculum and the appropriate methods to use.

Another key distinction used in the social sciences — that between positivist and normative analysis — is also evident in curriculum studies. A normative approach is concerned with what should happen in schools, while a positivist approach is concerned with what actually happens in schools. It is important to be clear which approach is being used as they can produce very different answers to the questions. Many discussions on the curriculum are confusing because one person is focusing on what should happen while the other is concerned with how things are in practice.

Another way of distinguishing the specific ways of analyzing the curriculum is provided by Reid (1992) and by Marsh and Willis (1995). They distinguish between four key conceptions that people hold in terms of two criteria: the extent to which existing social institutions are seen as determining the nature of an individual's behaviour, and whether we analyze curricula in terms of predetermined theories or principles. The main features of the four conceptions are summarized below.

*Systematizers or System Maintainers:* They focus on the idea of a curriculum as a plan or blueprint for activities, and expect schools and individuals to implement it unproblematically. They use curriculum aims to determine the details of the plan and spend a great amount of time defining what should be in the various components

of the curriculum plan. The focus is on the parts of the curriculum, especially the identification of objectives, the design of programmes to achieve them and the evaluation of their effectiveness. The curriculum analyst is seen as a specialist who has the essentially technical job of keeping the machine running smoothly and helping teachers and schools to implement the master plan. In essence, the education system and its curriculum are broken down into and analyzed as part of a complex planned system, but the system itself and the plan are viewed as unproblematic and therefore accepted and taken for granted.

*Radicals or System Changers:* They are the opposite of systematizers, for they believe that the system is not operating efficiently or fairly and requires radical change. The curriculum is seen, along with other social institutions such as the legal system, as a political tool which reproduces the existing social order which oppresses the majority or certain sectors of the population. A great deal of radical analysis is concerned with identifying how schools in general, and the curriculum in particular, play a part in establishing and maintaining the unequal distribution of power in society. Their concern is with analyzing what the curriculum is for rather than with trying to make it work. Central to radical analyses is the strong use of an *a priori* or predetermined theoretical position. This means that they start with a view of the role of education in society and search for evidence to support that viewpoint.

*Existentialists — Focus on Individuals:* They share the radicals' view that the curriculum should be viewed critically, but they do not share their view that this can be explained solely by reference to the role of education as a vehicle for social oppression. They are more concerned with the individual's lived experience of education in general, and schooling in particular. The broad generalizations and macro explanations of radicals are replaced by a concern with individual experiences, personal growth and consciousness. For some people, the curriculum is liberating; for others it may be oppressive. They thus tend to focus on areas of analysis concerned with the individual and how one can improve one's position, for example, psychoanalysis, biography and gender studies. They do not start with a strong predetermined theoretical position, but tend to try to generate theory from specific concrete cases.

*Deliberators — Focus on the Practical:* These avoid seeing the curriculum as a plan, a system of social control or a personal experience. They see the study of the curriculum as the discovery of problems, deliberation on those problems and inventing solutions to the problems. They focus then on the way in which plans can be realized in schools and classrooms that are recognized as different and to a degree unique. In effect, this is a compromise perspective and to a degree a contradictory one. It sees plans and institutions as limited; it accepts differences between schools and individuals, and it is concerned with problems and actions.

Each of these four perspectives provides a different way of analyzing the curriculum. However, it is clear that different areas of curriculum analysis have been more influenced by some of these perspectives than others. For example, the analysis of the basic technical questions we identified on pp. 7–8 has been strongly influenced by systematizers; the social and political aspects of school curricula have been more influenced by radicals; the analysis of teaching methods, school improvement and staff development have been the focus of concern of deliberators and existentialists. Each of these conceptions represents a different philosophy about the nature of society and social action. The need is to recognize both the philosophy which underlines an analytical perspective and an awareness that alternative perspectives and interpretations exist.

### **Complexity, Society and Curriculum Dilemmas**

The study of the curriculum will not provide us with a set of simple and certain answers for the fundamental curriculum questions. Although we need not accept all the postmodernists' claims, it may be worth following their advice to be sceptical of simple solutions to educational problems, especially those solutions which are dressed in a cloak of science! The curriculum is strongly connected with all aspects of the wider society in which it exists, especially the political system. People have different values and do not always agree on what knowledge is most worthwhile; and some people have the power to make decisions about the curriculum whilst others are relatively powerless. An education system, with the curriculum at the centre, is therefore a site where different groups in society compete to ensure that their views about what should be taught to the new members of society prevail. As Apple (1999, 13) explains:

[A]s inherently part of a set of political institutions, the educational system will constantly be in the middle of crucial struggles about the meaning of democracy, about definitions of legitimate culture, and about who should benefit most from government policies and practices.

It follows from this that studying the curriculum cannot be undertaken without reference to people's values and to political considerations. For example, what knowledge is most worthwhile, whether education is provided free and who receives education are questions that are influenced by the nature of society. Educational research might provide more information and allow for greater efficiency, but it does not provide simple answers to the fundamental questions. Educational research can be used to support a preconceived viewpoint. For example, a person who believes



that Cantonese should be used as the medium of instruction could gather data to show that pupils learn more effectively when they use their mother tongue. In contrast, a person who believes that English should be used could collect data which shows that pupils who have received instruction in English have better opportunities for further study and employment prospects.

What the above example demonstrates is that many disagreements about the curriculum are essentially dilemmas rather than problems or issues. Ogawa, Crowson and Goldring (1999, 278) define dilemmas as:

... neither problems to be solved nor issues to be faced. Problems are presumed solvable; issues can be negotiated and are thus resolvable ... [D]ilemmas reveal deeper, more fundamental dichotomies. They present a situation with equally valued alternatives. As a result dilemmas cannot be solved or resolved.

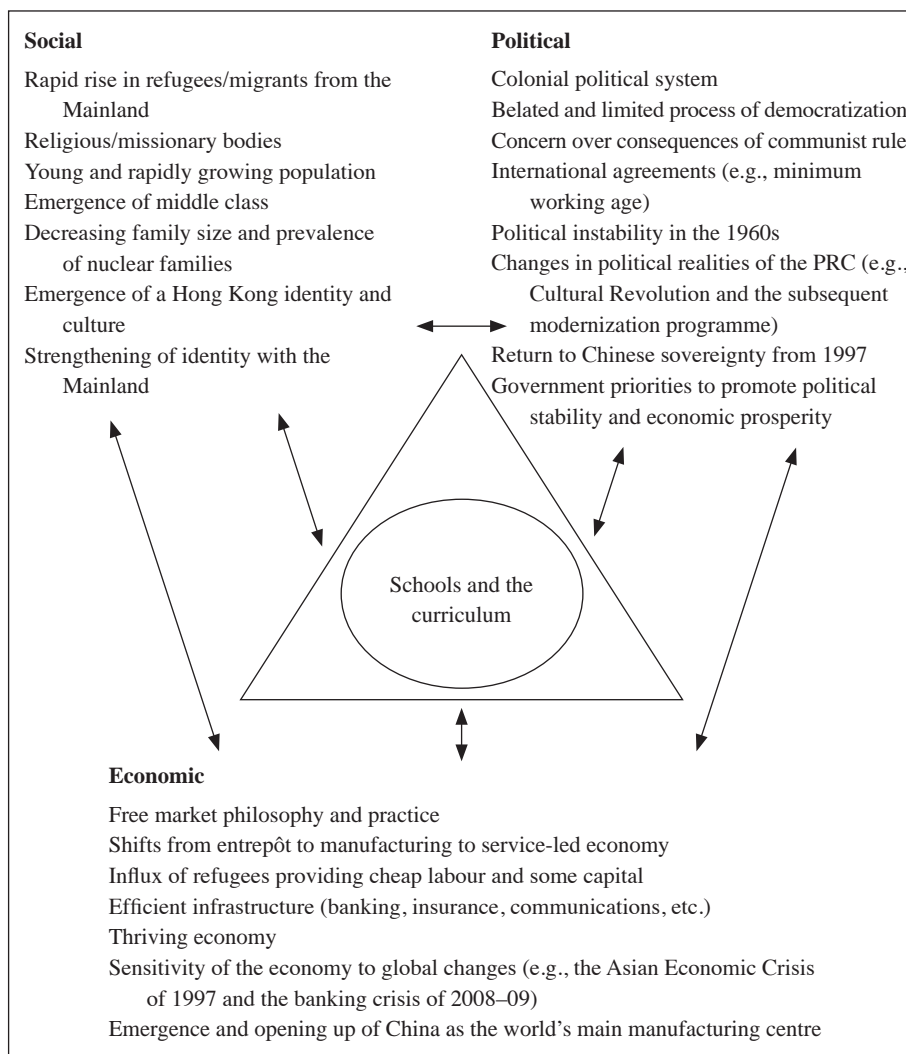
Tyack and Cuban (1995, 43) identify five contradictory purposes for education. They argue that Americans want schools:

- to produce young people who are obedient but on the other hand they also expect schools to ensure that they are critical and creative citizens;
- to pass on academic knowledge drawn from the past, but to also teach practical and marketable skills for the future;
- to encourage co-operation, but teach pupils to compete with one another;
- to stress basic skills but also develop creativity and higher-order thinking; and
- to focus on “core” knowledge, while permitting a wide range of subject choice.

These dilemmas are never completely solved and the outcome is usually a compromise which shifts over time between alternatives that are valued differently by different groups in society.

This book draws separately upon the three traditions — technical-rationalist, critical-social and experimental-innovative — in analyzing the historical, political, economic and social influences on the curriculum. Political and economic developments in China have been especially influential on the Hong Kong school curriculum. Figure 1.1 illustrates the historical interrelationship of these forces. However, it needs to be noted that these forces are not just limited to China’s influence on schools and the curriculum in Hong Kong: political and economic forces also exist at the global level and at the micro-level within Hong Kong.

Furthermore, the relationship is not just in one direction. The influences affect schooling, and are affected by schooling. Thus, for example, schooling has been affected by the economy, while the competitive examination system has served to reinforce values consistent with a highly competitive economy. Also, the schools have provided the economy with skilled and educated workers who have enabled



**Figure 1.1** Historical influences on schools and the curriculum in Hong Kong

Hong Kong's economy to develop, and thus reinvest in raising the quality of education in a virtuous circle.

At this stage, we should define the scope of this book. As Bray and Yamato (2003) note, there are dozens of curricula operating in schools within the Hong Kong SAR, if we take into account all the international and private schools that have links to different education systems. Our concern is with the curriculum that is formulated by the EDB for implementation in schools that fall under its aegis. We will look at the interaction between various societal forces and this school curriculum.

The conceptual framework shown in Figure 1.1 will be used in the following chapters as we address the questions about the Hong Kong curriculum that are listed on p. 7. In each chapter we identify and analyze the different factors which influence the answers to these questions in Hong Kong. Each chapter considers a different aspect of the Hong Kong curriculum, such as issues relating to the intended curriculum (Chapters 2–4), the implemented curriculum (Chapters 5–6) and the assessed curriculum (Chapter 7). We also look at language policy across all aspects of the curriculum (Chapter 8), curriculum evaluation (Chapter 9) and, in the final chapter, we draw together some of the themes emerging from the book. The structure of this book is spiral, which means that certain topics are revisited, albeit from a different angle. For example, in Chapter 2 we examine questions concerning the content of the curriculum, and then, in Chapter 4, we analyze how that content can be organized.

At the end of each chapter there are questions for you to consider. Our purpose is to encourage you to recognize that “certain” and “simple” answers to questions about how we educate our children are dangerous, for they deny the complex nature of human societies and their curricula.



## Questions

1. The Curriculum Development Council (1993a, 7) defined a curriculum in the following terms: “A school curriculum consists of all those activities designed or encouraged within its organizational framework to promote the intellectual, personal, social and physical development of its pupils”.

The Australian Curriculum Studies Association (2009, ACSA principles for Australian curriculum, para. 2) states:

Curriculum involves what is taught (knowledge, understandings, skills, values); how it is taught (pedagogy, teaching style); and how it is assessed (assessment, testing, reporting). Curriculum shapes and is shaped by social, political, economic and historical forces. It involves the selection, interpretation and implementation of culturally-based knowledge, skills, values and beliefs.

Compare these definitions. What are the similarities and differences? What would be your definition of a curriculum?

2. Select a specific school subject and use the table on p. 15 to identify the main features of the planned, implemented and hidden curriculum in a specific context. What are the influences on the implemented and hidden curriculum?

Main features of School subject	The planned curriculum	The implemented curriculum	The hidden curriculum

3. Can you identify any “dilemma” which affects the curriculum of your school or of schools in Hong Kong?

### Further Reading

A comprehensive overview and analysis of the nature and development of the curriculum is provided by Connelly, He and Phillion (2008) and Marsh (2009). For more on approaches to research in curriculum studies see Adamson and Morris (2007). Tyack and Cuban (1995) provide a clear analysis of the dilemmas facing education systems.

For details of the reform agenda in Hong Kong, see *Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong* by the Education Commission (2000). Various documents are also available at the following websites:

<http://www.hkedcity.net/main/reform/>

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/>

# Index

- A B C D rule 57
- ability, pupils 2, 5, 39, 41–2, 48, 51–2, 56, 72, 82, 85, 93–6, 100–1, 117–8, 140–1, 143, 159–60
- academic disciplines 3, 7, 48, 51, 67, 69–73, 78–9, 82, 89–90, 101, 119, 124
- academic rationalism 38, 48–50, 53, 68, 101, 115
- academic subjects 36, 68, 70, 118
- accommodation and catering services 77
- accountability 58, 87, 127, 168–70
- Action Plan to Raise Language Standards 153
- action research 9, 97
- active pupil participation 90, 92
- Activity Approach 91, 111, 121, 181, 189
- Advisory Committee on Teacher Education 28
- aesthetics 68–9, 118
- affective outcomes 56, 58
- agencies, educational 24, 29–30, 32–4, 39, 168, 188
- all-graduate teaching 1, 88, 96
- Alliance Française 156
- Analects, The 114
- analyzing 11–2, 57, 65, 67, 73, 175
- art and design 78
- arts education 71
- assertiveness training 101
- assessment 1, 14, 27, 30, 32–3, 35, 51, 53–4, 60, 66, 81–2, 105–6, 127–45, 163–4, 182, 188
- authentic 132–3
- continuous 135, 142
- coursework 142
- criterion-referenced 131–2, 134, 188
- diagnostic 133
- e- 142
- formal 182
- formative 129, 134, 139, 142, 182
- informal 132
- instruments 128–30, 133, 144
- internal 35, 96
- ipsative 131–2
- language of 139
- for learning 129
- low-stakes 142
- methods/strategies 4, 8, 27, 52, 93, 99, 118, 127, 140–1, 166, 187
- norm-referenced 131–2
- objective 111
- online 135, 142
- processes 129–30
- public 35, 39–40, 136–8, 185, 187
- purposes 88, 128, 133, 135
- school-based 1, 35, 142–4, 181, 188
- standardized 75
- summative 129, 139, 182
- validity 128
- written 128, 141
- attainment 81, 131–2, 135, 173
- Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) 14
- banking crisis 13 *see also* financial crisis
- Baptist Lui Ming Choi Primary School 75

- basic education 52  
 Basic Education Curriculum Guide 2, 89  
 Basic Learning 114  
 behaviour 48, 56–8, 69, 101, 105, 111, 120, 123, 163, 165  
     measurable 58  
 behavioural models 101  
 behavioural outcomes 57–8, 80  
 behaviourism 101–2, 111  
*bei shu* 114  
 Bernstein, B. 48, 72–3, 75, 96, 102  
 bilingual education (*shuangyu jiaoyu*) 153  
 bilingualism  
     additive 157  
     developing 157  
     replacive 157  
     subtractive 157, 159  
 biliteracy 152, 157–60  
     and trilingualism 152  
 biography 10  
 biology 67, 70, 73, 79, 136  
 Bloom's Taxonomy 56, 139–40  
 Board of Education 151  
*Book of Songs* 114  
 bottom-up decision-making 30–1, 186  
 Bourdieu, P. 48  
 Bridge Programmes 152  
 Britain/British Empire 22, 137, 147, 150–1  
     *see also* United Kingdom  
 Burney Report 151  
  
 Cantonese 12, 79, 147–9, 151–3, 155, 157–60, 189  
 Cantopop music 155  
 Carmel English School 39  
 Catholicism 49  
 Central School 150  
 Centre for Assessment Research and Development (CARD) 131  
 child-centred teaching 91–2  
 China 12–3, 21–3, 36, 87, 113, 117, 137, 149–51, 153–4, 156, 158, 181  
 Chinese as the Medium of Instruction (CMI), schools 151–3, 156, 159–60, 183  
 Chinese Communist Party 36, 87, 149  
 Chinese government 23, 156  
 Chinese history 22–3, 70, 72, 81, 161, 181  
 Chinese language 38, 71, 78–9, 82–3, 96, 120, 143, 153  
     characters 95, 114, 149  
 Chinese literature 67, 175  
 Chinese University of Hong Kong, The 151  
 citizenship 21, 45, 47, 147, 157, 161, 165, 181  
 civic education 2, 69, 119  
 civics 77  
 civil war 85, 151  
 class sizes 17–8, 37  
 classification of curricular knowledge 73–5, 83, 97, 102  
 classroom activities 89–90, 167  
 classroom management problems 86  
 classroom organization 94, 103, 105  
 co-curricular activities 94  
 co-operative learning 94, 99, 105, 182, 188  
 code-mixing 159  
 code-switching 159  
 cognitive pluralism 49  
 collaborative learning 23, 169  
 collection codes 74  
 Colleges of Education 25  
 colonial government 21, 36, 72, 151  
 communicative approach 189  
 community schools 150  
 competencies 31, 50, 134, 141, 153  
 compulsory education 78  
 computer-based learning packages 49  
 computer studies 77  
 conflict perspectives 17–8, 40  
 Confucian education 113–4  
 Confucianism 20–1  
 Confucius 114, 179  
 contingency management 101  
 core curriculum 77–9, 82, 120, 122–3  
 Counts, G. S. 48  
 creative expression 90  
 creativity 12, 40, 52, 54, 59, 63, 89, 91, 111, 118, 141  
 critical/ critical-social perspective 3, 8–9, 12, 49, 116, 176  
 critical thinking 22, 40, 48, 52, 59, 63, 89, 91, 118, 182  
 curriculum

- aims 9, 47, 57
- analysis 1, 11
- antecedents 165–7
- assessed 5, 14, 29, 117, 179
- balanced 52, 79
- change 18–9, 24, 85, 123, 136, 180–1, 183–4, 186
- coherence 165
- common-core 66, 78–9
- components 32–3, 39, 41, 46, 49, 51, 61, 99, 182
- conceptions/ideologies 49–52, 63, 176
- content 54, 67–8, 73, 77, 116
- decisions/design 18, 30–4, 39–40, 60, 70, 73, 75, 188
- definition 2, 4
- developers 22, 45, 53–4, 60, 93, 169, 184
- development 2, 8, 27, 30–3, 42–3, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53–5, 57–9, 61, 63, 81, 184, 189
- dilemmas/problems 1, 11–2, 15, 41, 50, 86, 102, 121, 150, 155, 170, 179, 189
- discipline-based 71
- documents 17, 32, 34, 46, 56, 61, 83, 88, 91, 94–5, 112, 118, 121, 166–7, 183
- efficiency 169
- evaluation 14, 163, 166, 168–9, 174, 177
- formal 4, 33, 129
- framework 2, 52, 55
- fundamental questions 11
- goals 137
- guidelines 29
- guides 4, 27, 33, 38
- hidden 5–6, 14, 121–3, 125
- hybrid 61
- implemented 4–5, 9, 14, 17, 30, 33–4, 38, 88, 93, 165, 168, 180, 183–4, 188
- informal 4, 33
- innovations 73, 123, 185, 189–90
- integrated 2, 70–3, 75–7, 83, 182, 189
- integrated/planned 4–5, 7, 14, 17, 27, 29–30, 32–4, 39–40, 50, 63, 88–9, 109, 118–9, 170, 179–80, 182–4
- intentions 4, 32–3, 45, 51, 54, 56–7, 62–3, 73, 86, 89, 127, 166–7, 182, 184–5
- knowledge 73–5
- learner-centred 41, 121
- lived 120
- map 66, 75, 81
- materials/resources *see* resources 59, 174, 177, 189
- messages 121–4, 175
- modular 65, 80–3
- null 6
- observed 166–7
- optional 78
- organization 65, 67, 69, 71, 73–5, 77, 79, 81–3
- ownership 186–7
- planning *see* planning, curriculum
- policies *see* policies, curriculum
- processes 60, 185, 188
- reform 1–2, 20, 22, 25, 45, 50, 59, 85–6, 109, 169, 179–82, 190–1
- research 8, 30, 32
- resources *see* resources
- standardized 32, 82
- studies 1, 3–4, 9, 15
- subject-based 72
- transactions 165–7
- Curriculum Development Council (CDC) 2–5, 14, 27, 29, 33–4, 38, 40, 42, 48, 52, 55, 63, 66, 78–9, 94, 118–9
- Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) 3, 5, 24–5, 27, 29, 31, 34, 75
- curriculum enactment perspective 184
- declarative learning 69
- deliberators 10–1
- Dependency/World Systems theory 19
- dialects 148–9, 154–5
- Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) 24, 181
- direct training 101
- disciplinary codes 122 *see also* schools, rules
- discomfort factor 102
- drugs 69, 72
- economic and public affairs (EPA) 70, 72, 77, 79
- economic forces 19–20, 23–4, 152
- economic prosperity 13, 156, 183
- economy 12–3, 20–1, 23, 47, 86, 117, 150

- education 6–7, 9–13, 19, 23–9, 36–7, 42, 47–8, 52–3, 56, 74, 87–9, 150–4, 156–8, 163–5, 179–81  
 aims 42, 45–6, 54, 56, 139, 156  
 change 18–9, 184  
 outcomes 63  
 policymaking *see* policymaking  
 research 11  
 science of 8  
 systems 10–1, 13, 15, 18, 37, 48, 59, 83, 91, 93, 98, 115–6, 135, 138, 148, 165  
 technical 24  
 technology 70–1  
 theory 20  
 traditions 113  
 universal 2
- Education and Manpower Branch/Bureau (EMB) 24–7
- Education Bureau (EDB) 3, 13, 24, 26–7, 41–2, 86, 142, 147, 159, 169, 171, 173–4
- Education Commission (EC) 15, 24–7, 29, 38, 42–3, 75, 91, 183
- education consultants 169
- Education Department (ED) 24, 30, 36, 152
- Education Guardian 62
- education providers 24
- Education Regulations 29
- educational, change triggers 19
- educational forces 45
- educational manifesto 46
- empirical/positivist research 9
- employers 23, 33, 50, 53, 82, 115, 134–5, 149
- employment 47, 50–1, 78, 86, 88, 117, 124, 133, 135, 137
- engineering science 77
- England 91, 98
- English 12, 22–3, 35, 39, 41, 47, 63, 77, 79, 86, 111, 119–20, 139, 142–3, 147–60
- English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) 39, 151–4, 160
- English language 38, 66, 71, 77–9, 82, 95, 120, 122, 124, 134, 152–3
- English Language Student Resource Centre 122
- environmental education 29
- evaluation 9–10, 17–8, 54, 56, 72, 97, 127, 140, 163–5, 167, 169–74, 176–7
- formative 74–5, 77, 163
- models 165, 168–70
- process 72, 169
- skills 130
- examinations 5, 29–30, 40, 91, 93, 115, 127, 132–7, 143, 152, 164, 167, 182, 188
- examiners 129, 132, 136–9, 188
- existentialists 10–1
- experiential learning 2, 5, 59, 62, 70, 81, 88, 110–1, 113, 115, 118–21, 125, 136, 139, 164, 169
- experimental-innovative tradition 9
- external inspection of schools 169
- external school review (ESR) 50, 169–70
- extracurricular activities 88, 143
- fashion and clothing 77
- feedback 59, 77, 80–1, 88–9, 97, 99, 111, 129–32, 135, 143, 164
- feedforward 130
- fidelity perspective 164, 184, 186
- fieldwork 142
- financial crisis 45
- Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau 41
- France 98, 137
- functionalist theories 19
- gender studies 10
- General Studies for Primary School 55
- generic skills 40, 52, 55–6, 59, 61–2, 111, 117–8, 143, 182
- geography 21, 38, 49, 70–2, 79–81
- gifted education 27
- girls 119–20, 122, 124
- government and public affairs 21, 77
- government officials 37, 40, 149, 183
- grades 88, 90, 130, 133, 137, 142, 144
- Great Learning 115
- group work (*see also* co-operative learning) 51, 74, 89–90, 93–4, 101, 105, 108, 132
- Guangdong 95, 117, 148
- Guidelines for Review and Internal Development in Schools (GRIDS) 172
- handover (1997) 21, 23, 36–7, 147–9, 152, 181
- history 21–3, 38, 48, 58, 66–71, 78–81, 103, 161



- HKCEE subjects 137, 156  
 home economics/design and technology 78  
 homework 77, 91, 120, 124, 132  
 Hong Kong culture 20, 148  
 Hong Kong Dream 138  
 Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) 3, 27–9, 33–5, 40–2, 66, 132, 137, 143–4  
 Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers 87  
 Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) 18, 24–5, 27, 87–8, 131  
 Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (HKPTU) 87, 108  
 Hong Kong Teachers' Welfare Association 86  
 humanistic models 113–4  
  
 identity 13, 21–3, 49, 86, 103, 116, 119, 147–8, 150, 152–3, 155, 157, 160–1  
 images of schooling 50, 60–1, 156  
 in-service education 167  
 independent learning 52, 94, 118, 136  
 Indian community in Hong Kong 149  
 inductive teaching and learning 92, 188  
 information processing models 101, 112  
 information technology 23, 59, 63, 87, 142–3, 174  
 innovations 24, 30, 38, 59, 72, 77, 81, 83, 86, 97, 106, 111, 129, 181–2, 184–8, 190  
 inquiry-based project learning 71  
 instruction *see* pedagogy  
 instructional outcomes 57  
 integrated humanities 77  
 intellectual services 23  
 intelligences 50, 174  
 interactions  
     pupil-pupil 93  
     social 101–2, 105, 112  
     teacher-pupil 94  
 interdisciplinary curriculum 72–3, 76  
 interest groups 19  
 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) 37  
 international schools in Hong Kong 147  
 interpretive research 9  
 Islam 49  
 issues-based teaching 188  
  
 Japanese 149  
  
 karaoke teaching 93  
 Key Learning Area Committees and Functional Committees 38  
 Key Learning Areas (KLAs) 27, 52, 55, 61–2, 70–1, 77, 79, 82, 118, 143  
 knowledge 2–3, 7–8, 11–2, 46–9, 51, 53–4, 56, 58, 61–2, 68–9, 110, 112–3, 115, 127–9, 136–41, 166–8  
     aesthetic 68, 115  
     cross-curricular 77  
     declarative 110–1, 118  
     educational 69  
     human 48, 68  
     mathematical 68, 115  
     moral 68, 115  
     philosophical 68, 115  
     procedural 105, 110  
     religious 68, 115  
 knowledge society 37, 183  
 Korean 149, 160  
 Kuomintang/Guomindang/KMT 21, 36, 175  
  
 laboratory work 142  
 language competence 26–7, 96, 111, 147  
 language education 150, 153  
 language environment 159–60  
 language immersion 159  
 language policy 1, 14, 35, 42, 147, 149–61  
     fine-tuning 1, 50, 154  
 Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (LPAT) 86–7, 153–4  
 language standards 37, 42, 153, 183  
 language subjects 79, 143, 148  
 language teachers 86, 153–4, 159–60  
 language teaching and learning 39, 153, 159, 174  
 languages 1, 23, 26, 31–2, 35, 37, 42, 47, 49, 63, 68, 70, 78–80, 87, 142, 147–60  
     colonial 148–9  
     foreign 152, 156  
     high-status 120, 154–5  
     national 150, 157–8 *see also* Putonghua  
     standard 148 *see also* Putonghua  
 league tables 58

- learner, autonomy 91, 156 *see also* self-learning  
 learner-focused approach 52, 118 *see also* pupil-centred  
 learners (*see also* pupils) 3, 46, 53, 75, 89, 101, 109, 111–7, 119, 121, 123, 125, 128, 147, 157  
 learning 1–2, 50–4, 56–8, 79–83, 88–91, 93–9, 109–15, 117–23, 127–32, 134–6, 142–5, 155–7, 163–5, 179–82, 187–8  
   diversity 108  
   environment 123  
   goals 89  
   processes 5, 52, 96, 106, 109, 121, 130, 143, 164–5, 174, 188  
   strategies 113, 180  
   styles 48, 52, 94, 102, 118  
   theories 97, 121, 123  
 learning activities, organization 59  
*Learning and Teaching 2000* 2  
 learning experiences 59  
 learning outcomes 58, 97–8, 143, 164–5, 167, 169, 180  
   integrated 97  
   intended 99, 128, 176  
   planned 3  
   unintended 128  
 Learning study 97–8  
 Learning to Learn 1, 4–5, 48, 50, 63, 77, 79, 111, 118, 123, 187  
 Legislative Council 18, 37, 87, 150  
 lessons 34, 57–8, 77, 88, 91, 93, 98, 103–6, 109, 115, 117, 120, 122, 124, 134, 159–60  
   structure 103  
 liberal studies 71, 77–9, 136, 143  
 life skills 117, 124  
 lifelong learning 2, 37, 52, 55, 118, 182–3  
 literacy 23, 79, 90–1  
   mass 149  
 literature 67  
  
 Mai Po Wetland Park 57  
 Malaysia 148, 153  
 markers 129, 137–8  
 marking pupils 88  
 Marxist theories 19  
  
 Maslow, A. 113  
   mass education 86  
   mastery learning 49  
   mathematics 2, 8, 38, 48, 67–8, 70–1, 78–80, 82–3, 120, 122, 134, 142–3, 153, 175  
   media, mass 17, 153, 155  
   medium of instruction (MoI) 12, 22, 26, 33, 35–7, 39, 111, 147, 149–57, 159, 161, 189  
   metacognition 113, 118  
   methods, teaching/learning 52, 62, 88, 94, 118  
   microphones 88, 93  
   modern growth theory 111  
   moral education 20, 81, 90, 120, 137  
   morality 29, 56  
   mother tongue 12, 120, 148, 150, 155–6, 158, 160  
     education 156  
   multidisciplinary learning 73  
   music 57, 68–9, 78–9, 122, 128, 142, 174  
   mutual adaptation perspective 184  
  
 Native-Speaking English Teacher scheme 153  
 native-speaking teachers 152–3, 160  
 Neill, A.S. 117  
 Neo-Marxist theories 19  
 New Senior Secondary Curriculum (NSSC)  
   1–2, 50, 71, 78–9, 182, 190  
 non-directive teaching 101  
 normative analysis 9  
 numeracy 23, 59, 63, 79, 90–1  
  
 Open Learning Institute 24–5  
 Open University of Hong Kong 24  
 orthodoxies 47, 49, 78, 102  
 outcomes  
   educational 139  
   expressive 57  
   intended 58, 166, 176  
  
 pacing 102–3, 105–6  
 parent-teacher associations 39  
 parents 34–5, 39–40, 42, 50, 53, 59, 72, 77, 106, 122, 124, 131, 134–5, 141–2, 151–4, 173–4  
 patriotic education 23, 182

- Pavlov, I. 111–2
- pedagogy 12, 26–7, 29–30, 53, 88–9, 93–6, 98–9, 103, 106–7, 147–9, 151–3, 155–7, 174–5  
 context 180  
 innovations 22, 98  
 teacher-centred 91
- peer-assessment 130
- performance, pupils' 131–2
- Performance Indicators (PIs) 170–1, 173
- periphery-centre 30
- Personal, Social and Humanities Education (PSHE) 63, 71, 80
- philosophers 7, 48, 69
- philosophy 7, 11, 53–4, 68, 114, 170
- physical education (PE) 69, 71, 78  
 teaching 95, 124
- Piaget, J. 67, 101, 112
- planning, curriculum 4, 6–7, 9–10, 17, 29–30, 32–4, 38, 48, 54, 56–62, 90–1, 97–8, 123–4, 166, 184–5, 188
- platform 60, 186
- policies  
 curriculum/educational 1, 17–21, 23–5, 27, 31–3, 35–7, 39–43, 45–6, 50, 60–1, 85–6, 151–3, 160, 183–4, 186, 188–9  
 symbolic 29, 36–7, 40–1, 152, 183
- policy  
 formulation 28–9  
 implementation of 24, 37–8, 183  
 intentions 37, 169, 183
- policymakers 17, 40, 85, 95, 163, 179, 183–5, 191
- policymaking 17–9, 21, 23–5, 27–31, 33, 35–7, 39–41, 43, 184  
 centralized approaches 30–2
- political stability 13, 183
- politics 21, 23, 72, 154
- postmodernism 8
- Precious Blood Secondary School 87
- primary schooling 2, 36, 50, 65, 107, 181
- primary schools 2, 25, 33, 36, 55, 72–3, 75, 79, 87, 98, 103, 107, 121, 152, 168, 181  
 curriculum 2
- principal 26, 31, 43, 50, 96, 122–4, 127, 160, 190
- private schools 13, 25, 36, 149
- problem-based learning 59
- problem solving 23, 40, 48, 59, 63, 90, 92, 111, 117, 133, 183, 187–9
- Professional Chinese/English Language Teacher 154
- professional learning communities 187 *see also* teacher learning networks
- Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 37, 144
- progressivism 49–50
- project work 59, 140, 142
- PSHE (Personal, Social and Humanities Education) 63, 71, 80
- psychoanalysis 10
- psychologists 3, 7, 48, 67, 71, 112
- psychology 7, 53–4, 131
- Pu Yi 114–5
- public examinations 27, 122, 124, 132–3, 135–8, 142, 144, 174, 185, 187–8
- publishers 3, 29, 33, 38, 40, 175, 183
- pupil-centred 124 *see also* child-centred teaching
- pupil-teacher ratio 185
- pupils  
 attitude 56  
 freedom 117  
 involvement 93, 99  
 needs of 1, 30–2, 41–2, 47–8, 52, 59–60, 89, 93–5, 114–5, 117–8, 121, 134, 157, 189–90  
 passive 90–1  
 performance of 131, 143  
 progress 82  
 questions 132  
 secondary 71, 122  
 selecting 137  
 understanding 164  
 work 100, 129, 142
- Putonghua 21, 23, 36, 79, 147–50, 152–60, 181
- quality education 27, 37, 183
- Quality Education Fund 1, 86, 186, 189
- questionnaires 167–8

- radicals/systems changers 10–1
- rainforests 106–7
- Raise Language Standards in Hong Kong 153
- rational perspective 17–8
- recess 120
- reconstructionism, social 47–50
- reforms, educational (*see also* curriculum innovations and curriculum initiatives) 1–2, 17, 22, 24, 26, 30, 37, 40–1, 49–50, 85–7, 168–9, 179–84, 186–7, 189–90
- reliability 128–9
- religious education 78
- research lesson 97–8
- resources 5, 27, 32–3, 35, 38, 40, 59, 77, 89, 92, 94, 101, 106, 109, 165–7, 174–7
- multimedia 174, 176
- rituals 103, 105, 121
- Rogers, C. 101, 113
- role model 20, 114–5, 123
- rote learning 6, 20, 91, 93, 115
- routines 103, 105, 121
- rules 103, 105, 109, 121–3
- SARS 179
- school
- performance 87, 170, 173
- rules 117, 122–3
- trips 4, 57
- school-based, programmes 30
- school-based approaches 31–2, 60, 180
- School-based Assessment (SBA) 1, 35, 143–4, 181, 188
- school-based curriculum 31, 34, 43, 58, 63, 96, 160
- School-Based Curriculum Development (SBCD) 31, 33, 43, 63, 187
- School-Based Curriculum Project Scheme 31, 189
- school-based initiatives 1, 83, 96, 186
- School-based Management (SBM) 31, 39
- School Development and Accountability (SDA) 169, 173
- School Development Plan 170
- School Improvement Team (SIT) 173
- school leaders 1, 117, 143, 160, 169, 173, 187
- see also* principal
- school-leavers 75, 153, 181
- School Management Committee 39, 43, 127
- School Management Initiative (SMI) 30–1
- school principal *see* principal
- school self-evaluation (SSE) 50, 169, 173
- schooling 2–3, 7–8, 12, 33, 40–1, 45–6, 49–50, 52–3, 56, 60–3, 85–6, 89–90, 136, 151, 181–2
- goals of 3, 49–50, 62, 95, 102, 109
- levels of 4, 33, 50, 136
- pre-primary 27
- schools 1–7, 9–10, 12–3, 25–7, 29–39, 41–3, 47–9, 56–9, 62–3, 79, 120–4, 135–7, 149–60, 168–74, 179–87, 189–90
- administration 3, 106, 167
- banding 135, 155, 165
- co-educational 124
- community 117, 123
- contexts 109
- curriculum leaders 2
- elitist 6
- ethos 95, 170
- government 150
- improvement 11, 170, 173
- national 147
- review of 169, 172
- self-appraisal 170
- sponsoring bodies 37, 151, 154
- schools, environment 29, 94, 103, 121, 165
- science, social 9, 68
- science and technology 77
- science subjects 4, 8, 11, 57–8, 63, 67–8, 70–3, 77–9, 89, 142–3, 153, 189
- SCOLAR (Standing Committee on Language and Research) 153, 158
- secondary schooling 2, 26, 33, 36, 50, 52, 55, 65, 78–9, 85, 88, 102, 133, 135–6, 151–3, 181
- secondary schools, teachers 72, 87
- self-assessment 130–1
- Self-directed Learning Oriented Assessment (SLOA) 131
- self-learning 91, 143 *see also* learner, autonomy
- sequencing 59, 65–7, 104, 111, 174–5
- spiral 67–8

- sex education 5, 72, 79
- Shanghai 37, 155
- Shatin Tsung Tsin School 189
- Singapore 37, 148, 158
- situational analysis 59
- skills
- cognitive 51, 140
  - emotional 56
  - employment/life 116, 119
  - generic learning 23
  - parenting 117
  - problem-solving 139, 189
  - social 57, 118
  - technological 59, 174
  - thinking 77, 94
- skills development 71, 143
- Skinner, B.F. 101, 111
- slippage 95, 184
- social and economic efficiency 47, 50, 102, 116, 157, 165
- social change 20, 48, 50
- social culture 52, 116
- social education 69
- social forces 13, 20, 85, 147
- social problems 70–1, 78, 90
- social studies 38, 68, 70–2, 77–9, 136, 182
- society 2–12, 18–24, 32–4, 36, 40–2, 46–54, 68–70, 78–80, 84–6, 88–90, 100–2, 108–10, 116, 132–4, 150–2, 154–6
- needs of 3, 47, 51–2, 79, 86, 89, 97, 120–1, 134–5
- sociologists 7
- sociology 7–8, 53–4
- stakeholders 17–8, 40, 46, 93, 106, 134, 165, 170, 173, 176, 181, 183–4, 186
- standards 31, 42, 90, 131, 133, 153–4, 189
- Standing Committee on Language Education (SCOLAR) 28, 42
- Star Ferry Riots 87
- Stewart, F. 150
- Student Assessment system 142
- Student Council 117
- subject content 22, 90, 110, 131–2, 137
- subjects 2–4, 8, 14–5, 21–2, 32–6, 38–40, 45, 62, 65, 67–73, 75–83, 91–2, 117, 139–43, 152–4, 181–2
- boundaries 81
- choice of 12, 134, 187
  - common-core 78
  - compulsory 71
  - creative 57
  - generic 63
  - high-status 80, 154
  - integrated 79
  - peripheral 21, 122
  - permanent 3
  - single 4, 80
  - traditional 78
- Summerhill School 117
- syllabus 29–30, 38, 99, 121, 174
- symbolic policies 29, 36–8, 40–1, 151–2, 180, 183
- systematizers/system maintainers 9–11
- systems
- educational 11, 41, 123, 182, 187
  - political 11, 13, 37, 43
- Taba's model 59
- Tagalog 149
- Taiwan 175
- Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) 1–2, 38, 41, 77, 95, 107, 167–9, 189
- Targets and Target-Related Assessment 25
- task-based learning 59, 91, 96, 104, 111, 121, 181, 185, 188
- teacher, observations 129
- teacher-centred instruction 93
- teacher-centred presentation 91, 93
- teacher education 28, 37, 85, 183
- teacher-pupil interaction 93
- teacher-pupil relationship 5
- teachers 3–5, 29–35, 37–40, 57–62, 72–3, 85–110, 112–5, 118–20, 127–36, 142–4, 152–4, 159–61, 163–7, 173–6, 179–80, 182–91
- acts 100
  - beliefs 88, 96
  - competence 137–8
  - decisions 105
  - development 187
  - female 87
  - involvement of 58, 72, 138

- novice 87–8, 95
- professional development 86, 131
- professionalism 183, 188
- prospective 88
- registration 87
- specialist 103
- trained 88
- working conditions 88
- teachers, appraisal 174
- teaching 22–3, 33–4, 40, 51–2, 76–7, 85–91, 93–107, 118, 130–1, 135, 138–9, 143–4, 152–3, 173–4, 184–5
  - approaches 96, 101–2
  - award schemes 86
  - cycles 98, 130
  - materials *see* resources
  - methods (*see also* pedagogy) 11, 23, 33, 39, 41, 52–3, 86, 89–91, 93–5, 99–102, 106, 139, 166
  - styles 14, 89, 102, 107
- teaching assistants 3
- teaching profession 30, 87
- technology 49, 63, 69, 77–9, 111, 142
- Territory-wide Student Assessment (TSA) 135, 143–4
- tertiary education 1, 23, 25, 82, 88, 134, 136, 144 *see also* universities
- tests 1, 97, 128–9, 132–6, 141–2, 153, 164, 167
- textbooks 3, 5, 27, 33–6, 38, 91–2, 102, 107, 114, 127, 136, 152, 160, 174–7, 183
- textiles 77
- Tiananmen Square Incident 72, 175
- top-down bottom-up decision-making 30, 186
- top-down decision-making 29–31, 186
- travel and tourism 77
- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) 37, 144
- trilingualism 152, 157–60
- true/false items 141
- Tung Chee Hwa 157
- Tyler, R. 32, 45
  
- United Kingdom (UK) 31, 56, 62, 75, 78, 93, 117, 137, 147, 154
- universities 25, 56, 71, 85, 88, 127, 133–5, 149, 151
- University of Hong Kong, The 151
- USA 6, 31, 48, 70, 72, 98, 180
  
- validity 128, 143
- value-neutral schooling 9
- variation, theory of 97–8
- vernacularization 151
- Visiting Panel 24–5, 30, 91, 151
- vocational, schools 50
- vocational education 25, 151, 182
- Vygotsky, L. 112, 186
  
- Walker's model 60–1
- whole-class teaching 94
- whole-person development 2, 52, 55, 86, 94, 118, 124
- whole-school approach 25, 131
  
- ZPD
  - education system 180
  - pupils 112, 180
  - schools 180
  - teachers 180