

Promoting All-Round Education for Girls

A History of Heep Yunn School, Hong Kong

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Contents

List of Illustrations	viii
Forewords	
Paul Kwong	x
Timothy Kwok	xii
Roland Chow Kun Chee	xiii
Minnie Lai Wei Kit Lin	xiv
Acknowledgements	xv
List of Abbreviations	xvii
Introduction	1
1. From Fairlea and Victoria to Heep Yunn (1880s–1936)	14
2. Finding Footing on New Ground (1936–1945)	37
3. Striking Out on a New Path in Postwar Development of Education (1945–1958)	58
4. Building an Aspiring Anglo-Chinese Girls’ School (1958–1978)	92
5. Transformation and Reform (1978–2002)	122
6. From a Grant School to a DSS School (2002–2016)	158
Appendices	189
Bibliography	226
Index	231

Illustrations

Box

Box 3.1: Rededication service programme, 6 December 1946	63
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Figures

Figure 1.1: Graduates of the junior middle school, Fairlea School	28
Figure 1.2: Staff and girls of the Victoria Home and Orphanage, Kowloon	30
Figure 2.1: Mrs. Cheung Chinn Yee Ching, Principal (Fairlea, 1925–1936; Heep Yunn, 1936–1958)	38
Figure 2.2: Heep Yunn School badge and motto	39
Figure 2.3: ‘Veterans of 1941’, taken in 1947	52
Figure 3.1: Main Building, Heep Yunn School	60
Figure 3.2: Senior Middle III students and teachers, 1947	67
Figure 3.3: Principal and staff, 30th Anniversary of Mrs. W. K. Cheung’s principalship	73
Figure 3.4: The newly built primary school building, 1954	75
Figure 3.5: English drama ‘The Jade Goddess’, 1953	79
Figure 3.6: Gymnastics performance of primary students on sports day	80
Figure 3.7: Sir Alexander Grantham and Lady Grantham visiting the school, 1955	84
Figure 3.8: The Chapel of St. Clare of Assisi	86
Figure 4.1: Mrs. Cheung Lo Pok Hing, Principal (1958–1978)	93
Figure 4.2: Ho Man Tin Cottage Area, 1962	94
Figure 4.3: Exhibition at the Opening of the Extension Building, 1965	101
Figure 4.4: Principal and staff of the secondary school, 1963–1964	104
Figure 4.5: Principal and staff of the primary school, 1966–1967	104
Figure 4.6: Principal and staff of the kindergarten, 1964–1965	105
Figure 4.7: The Intermediate Choir awarded the best choir of all classes	111
Figure 4.8: Candlelight service of Heep Kwong Tuen, 1964	112
Figure 5.1: Mrs. Minnie Lai Wei Kit Lin, Principal (1978–2002)	123
Figure 5.2: Principal and staff (1979–1980)	127

Figure 5.3: Students celebrating the opening of the swimming pool, 1981	129
Figure 5.4: Fun Fair, 1992	138
Figure 5.5: English debating team winning the inter-school championship, 1991	142
Figure 5.6: Principal, sports teachers, and girls with Omega Rose Bowl, 1990–1991	143
Figure 5.7: Diamond Jubilee thanksgiving service, 1996	146
Figure 5.8: New primary school building	153
Figure 6.1: Mrs. Clara Lau Li Kwok Kin, Principal (2002–2011)	158
Figure 6.2: Principal and staff (2003–2004)	161
Figure 6.3: Chinese debating team winning the Sing Tao inter-school championship, 2008	166
Figure 6.4: SIP building	170
Figure 6.5: Mr. Dave Lee Chun Hung, Principal (2011–2016)	177
Figure 6.6: Heep Yunn students representing Hong Kong in the Intel ISEF, 2011	178
Figure 6.7: Principal and staff (2015–2016)	179
Figure 6.8: Form Two service tour to Liannan	181
Figure 6.9: Ms. Bella Leung Siu Yi, Principal (2016–present)	184
Figure 6.10: Celebrating the 80th anniversary, 2016	185

Maps

Map 9.1: Historical locations of Fairlea School and Victoria Home and Orphanage on Hong Kong Island	222
Map 9.2: Heep Yunn School and vicinity	223

Site Plan

Site plan of Heep Yunn School	224
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Foreword

Paul Kwong
Archbishop of Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui (HKSKH) has a long tradition of involvement in education for men and women in Hong Kong. Heep Yunn is a good example of this. It is one of the oldest girls' schools in Hong Kong and a founding member of the Grant Schools Council. This book is a full history of the school from its founding in 1936 up to its eightieth anniversary in 2016.

Heep Yunn is an amalgamation of two older Anglican girls' schools: the Fairlea School that was founded in 1886 and the Victoria Home and Orphanage, founded in 1887. The name Heep Yunn means 'united in grace' in Chinese, and is a name that reflects its complex history and its Christian character. The book traces the prehistory of the school through its founding and early years. It goes on to show how the school forged new directions in the postwar period (1945–1948), and how it became an Anglo-Chinese girls' school after 1951. Unlike other Anglican girls' schools, Heep Yunn had been founded as a higher-grade vernacular (Chinese language) school, but in 1951, an English stream was added to meet the needs of the time. Since then, the school has developed an excellent programme in English education yet has maintained a strong tradition in the teaching of Chinese culture, literature, and history. Heep Yunn continued to reform its educational practices and transform its vision, eventually growing from a Grant School to a Direct Subsidy Scheme School (2012). Throughout, the book illustrates the partnership between the church and the government in educational work.

Located near Kowloon City, Heep Yunn School draws students from all classes of Hong Kong society. I know that Heep Yunn girls are proud of their education and of the legacy of their school. They once wore the traditional calf-length *cheongsam* as their school uniform, a tradition of Chinese grace and elegance. Now their *cheongsams* are cut just below the knee, and their education includes the most modern subjects and teaching methods, but the Chinese traditions remain. Students receive a well-rounded education, and they go on to a variety of post-secondary educational opportunities and careers. Long after they have graduated, the girls remember their school and take part in alumnae activities. Heep Yunn School has an Old Girls Choir, which is the case with many other of our schools. This warms my heart, because it shows that old girls and old boys continue involvement with their schools long after graduation.

Dr. Patricia P. K. Chiu, author of this book, is rightly regarded as an authority on the history of education in Hong Kong. She herself comes from an Anglican family of long-standing. She is a member of our HKSKH History and Archives Advisory Committee and has made good use of our archives in writing this account. Patricia is to be commended for the thorough research she did in producing this landmark study. This narrative is also highly readable. She expresses her hope that everyone connected with Heep Yunn can find their place in the history of the school they so deeply love. I believe she has succeeded in making this happen.

I recommend *Promoting All-Round Education for Girls: A History of Heep Yunn School, Hong Kong* to all who are interested in education in Hong Kong. It will be particularly important for the old girls of Heep Yunn, as well as teachers and staff, and also for a new generation of Heep Yunn students. It will help readers discover how the past is reflected in the present, and how a Heep Yunn education allows students to create a future that will benefit Hong Kong and the world.

Eastertide 2019

Foreword

Timothy Kwok
Bishop of Eastern Kowloon

On behalf of the Council of Heep Yunn School, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Patricia P. K. Chiu for her time and effort writing the history of the school for its eightieth anniversary. This history widens our horizons to see the amazing ways God works in our school. As we look back at the history of Heep Yunn, who would have known where we should find ourselves today. Eighty years have been a long and challenging journey, but we keep counting the blessings of the Lord. His grace is sufficient to us.

The school motto is 'In strength and grace we stand united; in faith and love we are committed'. Our school name 'Heep Yunn' stands for 'United in Grace'. For me, 'Heep' means collaboration while 'Yunn' stands for grace. Much research suggests that collaboration has a positive impact on both individuals and society at large. Collaboration requires working interdependently, sharing responsibilities, and building trust wholeheartedly. Living in this ever-changing world, we need to cooperate with others, learn from others, and stand united to uphold our Christian education principles.

The word 'grace' shares the same Latin root as 'gratitude'. Gratitude is a response to God's grace, leading to joy. Happiness does not depend on how much you have, but *what* you have. Without a thankful heart, negative thoughts arise easily with judgements. If you have an attitude of gratitude, you can bring peace to the past, transform the present into thanksgiving, and create a joyful life for tomorrow.

Over the past eight decades, Heep Yunn has been committed to nurturing students with the spirit of unity and service, not only in remarkable academic achievements. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the management and staff, Heep Yunn is now one of the top secondary schools in Hong Kong.

We thank God for His abundant blessings on Heep Yunn in the past eighty years. It is my sincere hope that our students and alumnae will carry on the Heep Yunn legacy and continue to shine in their future pursuits, serving God and our fellow citizens of the world with collaboration and grace.

Foreword

Roland Chow Kun Chee

From the Foundation Stone at the main entrance of Heep Yunn School, we come to know that the school was founded in 1936 with the merger of two CMS schools for girls, namely the Fairlea School (founded in 1886) and the Victoria Home and Orphanage (founded in 1887). Prior to the writing of this book, apart from their names the details of these two schools have not been known, nor the reasons for their union to create Heep Yunn School.

Dr. Patricia P. K. Chiu is an old girl of Heep Yunn. She graciously agreed to accept the request of the School Council to write its history to mark the eightieth anniversary. She has carried out extensive and thorough research for this book, which is not confined to the history of Heep Yunn School; it also unearths social, economic, and political aspects of the early years of Hong Kong and in particular the status of local girls, Chinese and Eurasian, and the education available to them.

This book gives full accounts of the events of each and every stage of the evolution and development of the school and also accounts for such evolution and development. Besides being a history of Heep Yunn School, it will be a valuable reference for those interested in the development of education for girls in Hong Kong and the achievements of the Heep Yunn girls over the past eighty years.

Foreword

Minnie Lai Wei Kit Lin, MH, JP

All of us closely connected with Heep Yunn know that the name of the school HEEP YUNN (協恩) was, by the Grace of God, derived from the merging of two Anglican girls' schools—Fairlea School and Victoria Home and Orphanage in 1936. Beyond that, our knowledge is negligible. This history seeks initially to enlighten us by putting together a full picture of our humble beginnings. It traces the roots of our ancestors up to the latter part of the nineteenth century, then describes the setting up of these two schools for the education of girls by unmarried lady missionaries, amidst many others, at a time of cultural, social, and economic deprivation as well as political unrest in southern China. This account makes for engrossing reading.

The book closely follows the development of Heep Yunn, especially the major challenges it has encountered in the course of the past eighty years. They include the gradual evolution of a Chinese Middle School to an English medium school; from a quiet, self-sufficient, academic-oriented institution to one focused on the development of the whole person; a grant-in-aid school to a Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) school. The reasons and rationale behind all these changes are treated in meticulous detail by the author, thus creating a dossier of utmost interest.

It is by God's guidance that the task of writing this history has been entrusted to and undertaken by Patricia Chiu, an old girl and a historian, thereby ending the long search for a suitable writer. Patricia holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge and has taught at both the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. A knowledge of Heep Yunn would not be complete without following this fascinating narrative, which is well researched, comprehensive, and informative. I would recommend it to educationalists, historians, and, in particular, all members of the Heep Yunn family.

Introduction

In November 1965, not long after the announcement of his retirement, Bishop R. O. Hall sent a key to Mrs. P. H. Cheung, the headmistress of Heep Yunn School, with the following note:

I write to ask you to let me give you to keep among your other records the Key with which I opened and dedicated the Chapel of St Clare of Assisi. Perhaps this will be of some interest to future generations when all of us are forgotten in the busy life of the new Hong Kong of 2065 A.D.¹

* * *

School history writing is about remembering the people, places, cultures, and practices that make up our past. It gives contexts to the achievements and disappointments through the years; the ideals and values; the destruction of war and the celebration of rebirth. It links private experiences with collective memories.

As Heep Yunn School approached its 80th Anniversary in 2016, an opportunity arose to remember and commemorate the past through a research-based history for the Heep Yunn community that was at the same time relevant for the general public, representing the school's commitment to public history as an educational institution. Heep Yunn is one of the oldest girls' schools in Hong Kong and a founding member of the Grant Schools Council. It embodies the multifaceted history of girls' education in a city that had journeyed from nineteenth-century European missionary work and the prewar modernization process, to the postwar introduction of mass education and the search for a global outlook in the twenty-first century.

As a school that grew up with Hong Kong, the development of Heep Yunn was shaped by the social, cultural, and political changes in this distinct cultural-historical place situated at the edge of the Chinese and British empires.² As an Anglican school amalgamated from two girls' schools founded by British missionaries, the history of Heep Yunn documents the evolving vision of all-round Christian education for girls encompassing the spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, and physical aspects through the years. The narrative of Heep Yunn's gradual change from a vernacular school to an English-medium school demonstrates the social and cultural tensions underlying the contested issue of 'medium of instruction' in the history of Hong Kong education.

This introduction is written as a companion to be read with the narrative presented in the following chapters. It highlights three characteristics in Hong Kong educational history which underlay the development of Heep Yunn School—the traditions of Anglican grant schools, girls' education, and Chinese education—thus providing readers with multiple lenses through which they can read the Heep Yunn story. A discussion on sources and interpretation follows, ending with a brief summary of the readership and structure of this book.

Anglican Grant Schools in Hong Kong's History of Education

The provision of elementary education in early colonial Hong Kong relied heavily on voluntary effort, mainly the Christian missions, as was the case in Victorian England. As pointed out by G. B. Endacott, education was left to private arrangement or public generosity. The Anglican National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor (National Society) and the non-denominational British and Foreign School Society (British Society) were the two major societies that built schools for the poorer children using modest government grants—as an act of charity and a means to teach their own dogmas.³ When the British forces took possession of Hong Kong Island in 1841, there existed a number of farming and fishing villages, and private schools (*sishu*) for the education of these village children, mainly the boys. The population increased from an estimated 5,650 in 1841 to 39,000 in 1853, and about 94,917 in 1860 before the cession of the Kowloon Peninsula. Manual labourers, artisans, traders, and merchants came to the colony to find their fortunes. Catholic and Protestant missionaries strived to set up schools for a transient population but with little success in the first two decades due to limited funding and personnel. It was observed that the students were not interested in a formal education. They left school soon after acquiring basic literacy, numeracy, and a smattering of English.

To meet the growing demand for a more educated bilingual workforce as the economy grew, the government established the Central School in 1862 to provide a non-religious Anglo-Chinese education to Chinese boys and young men under British schoolmasters. However, the use of public money to fund secular education, with little help given to the mission schools, attracted criticisms from the clergy and expatriate community. Eventually, a grant-in-aid scheme was introduced in 1873. The size of grants for each school was assessed annually through an examination by the Inspector of Schools. This 'payment by result' approach held the schools accountable without interfering with their religious and cultural traditions. Missionaries of different denominations speaking different European languages could thus carry out their education mission in their unique traditions under the Grant Code, taking advantage of the flexibility of the system. Annual government reports show that the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Female Education Society (FES), and the London Missionary Society (LMS) comprised the main Protestant effort in providing education for boys and girls in the colony under this system alongside their Catholic counterparts. Among the schools founded in this period were Fairlea School, by the FES, and Victoria Home and Orphanage, by the CMS, the predecessors of Heep Yunn School.⁴

Flexibility and population growth boosted the number of grant-in-aid schools but not necessarily the standard. In the first comprehensive review of the colony's education system, conducted in 1901, the varied standard of Chinese schools was criticized and the effectiveness of the system was questioned.⁵ The government began to revise the system by introducing a less costly subsidy scheme to aid Chinese primary schools founded by local charities and individuals to meet the demand of a rapidly growing population. It gave a quarterly block grant judging by size, financial position, and usefulness of the school and not the exact number of pupils as in the grant-in-aid system. Old grant-in-aid schools offering a Chinese education (lower grade vernacular schools), including mission schools, were transferred to the subsidy scheme in 1921–1922. Only new schools offering an English education would be considered being aided under the grant-in-aid system.

CMS schools offering an elementary Chinese education were transferred to the subsidy scheme and became known as the CMS Day Schools under the supervision of Miss S. Hollis. By 1938, there remained fifteen English schools and three upper grade vernacular girls' schools under European supervision in the more generous grant-in-aid scheme. These eighteen Christian schools, among them six Anglican schools, including Heep Yunn School, established the Grant Schools

Council in 1939 to provide a body representative of the 'grant schools' and to cooperate with the government in the working of the grant-in-aid scheme.⁶ This ecumenical body reflects a unique tradition of voluntary efforts in the history of education in Hong Kong, as stipulated in a 1933 memorandum published by the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies regarding mission schools in the British colonies:

It is not only because aided institutions may be a cheaper form of education than Government institutions that voluntary efforts in education are to be encouraged. Private management is valuable in any system of education because it ensures that variety and play of personality which is important in every education system. . . . the utmost elasticity in school management and curricula is desirable, if education is not to be robbed of all its colour and all the contributions that the local circumstances and personality are capable of making. If aid is given only to institutions that are managed and taught by the right kind of person, the more freedom that can be given to such managers and teachers the better.⁷

In the period of postwar reconstruction, the government had again to depend on voluntary bodies to participate in the provision of secondary education when the major government secondary schools were being rebuilt. A number of financial incentives were offered under the terms of the Grant Code. New pieces of land and capital subventions to meet half the cost of approved new buildings could be granted. Special grants for major repair, teachers' salary, and provident fund were also made available under the Grant Code to enable well-established missionary bodies to operate large schools offering a high standard of academic education in English.⁸ Heep Yunn was granted a second plot to build the primary school, while the two Wah Yan Colleges also moved to new sites, in 1952 and 1955 respectively, to name but a few examples.⁹

This tradition of autonomy and partnership with the government shaped the development of grant schools as a whole and individually. Each grant school could carry on its education ideals and mode of governance according to cultural and denominational differences—be it part of an Anglican or non-conformist tradition, or led by a religious order or lay missionary society. Despite this, one main vision the schools all shared was the provision of a whole-person, all-round Christian education, emphasizing a high standard of academic study and moral conduct, alongside participation in extracurricular activities (sports, music, drama, scouts and guides) and social service. Most of these schools operated a boarding school alongside their day schools until the 1950s to 1960s—a unique tradition aimed at fostering self-discipline, character building and spiritual formation. The close ties between diocese, parish, and school, while varied in structure, formed a network that facilitated the practice of evangelism and Christian service. The unique identity of 'grant schools' in terms of their funding mode was eliminated when a unified code of aid was implemented across Hong Kong in the 1970s, but the tradition of all-round education remains.¹⁰

Development of Girls' Education: Conflicts and Ideals

Early colonial Hong Kong was made up of a predominantly male and transient population looking for employment and business opportunities. In the first two decades of colonial rule, females constituted less than 20 per cent of the adult population. Apart from those living in fishing and farming villages, young girls residing in Victoria, the urban area, were mostly *mui tsai* (bond servant girls), daughters of grassroots families, or Eurasian orphans born of foreigners and Chinese women. Promotion of education for these girls began with the efforts of European nuns and missionary women with grants from government and private donations. The aim was to save the souls of these girls; protect the destitute and poor from being sold as *mui tsai*, concubines, or prostitutes; and to

educate girls to become Christian wives and mothers serving the developing indigenous church. Up to the last decade of the nineteenth century, it was considered superfluous to teach Chinese girls, who mostly came from humble backgrounds, English or 'so-called accomplishments' other than a purely Chinese education and needlework. The Inspector of Schools, Mr. Frederick Stewart, reiterated in his reports that teaching these subjects would only 'give them a distaste for their future humble sphere of life.'¹¹

As time went by, the growing economy in Hong Kong brought Chinese families from Guangdong Province, while early settlers began to find their footing. There was increasing demand for girls' schools as the number of Chinese families increased and more parents were willing to send the daughters to school for a better chance in the 'marriage market'. The basic Chinese education for girls provided by most mission schools and the government was regarded as insufficient, as the education standard of boys had been raised—particularly in terms of exposure to English and Western knowledge. Mr. Stewart's successor, Dr. E. J. Eitel, in appealing to the Legislative Council for the need of English education for girls, claimed that 'the Government have, by excluding Chinese girls from the onward movement of English education in the colony, systematically widened the gulf separating men and women, and, by leaving the men brought up with a knowledge of English to marry wives devoid of that knowledge, methodically prevented the spread of the English language in Chinese families.'¹²

The idea of broadening the scope of girls' education was not necessarily shared by the evangelical women missionaries, as reflected in an article in a missionary publication:

Have we given too much time to educational and moral, rather than *spiritual* training? Perhaps, in these 'progressive' days, there is most danger of the latter. Even in mission schools now, there is growing (as at home) a desire for higher education, which may crowd out the necessary proportion of simple Bible-teaching... Oh! younger sisters... Whatever you have to do, see to it that you make all subservient to the one great aim. Teach the Bible *most*.¹³

The government Central School for Girls (later renamed Belilios Public School), which gave an English and Chinese education similar to the Central School for boys (renamed Victoria College and later Queen's College), was subsequently founded for this purpose. In 1901, a group of Western-educated Chinese merchants appealed to the government for the foundation of a school giving liberal education in English and Chinese to 'a better class' of Chinese boys and girls. Historian John Carroll suggests that the petition reflected the formation of a class of bicultural, bilingual Chinese elites which distinguished themselves from the Chinese in mainland China.¹⁴ St. Stephen's College and St. Stephen's Girls' College were subsequently founded by CMS missionaries, with funding from the Chinese elites. The educational ideals for the bicultural, bilingual elite girls were elaborated in the 1909 prospectus which states: 'The aim of St. Stephen's Girls' College is to conserve and stimulate all that is noblest and best in the character of Chinese young ladies, and at the same time to provide for them an excellent modern education under the direction of experienced English ladies. Hence while they are instructed in Western science and arts they will be required to hold to their own national good manners and propriety.'¹⁵

When the University of Hong Kong opened its doors to women in 1921, higher education had become the new aspiration for girls who wanted to be doctors and engineers, though reserved for a few privileged girls only. While opportunities widened, whether girls should receive the same education as boys and aim for same destinations in professional careers beyond the 'female professions' of teaching and nursing was still a matter of debate. In an article discussing social change and secondary schooling for girls in interwar Europe, Joyce Goodman argues that in the case of England, 'a perceived blurring of gender lines occasioned by the war's upheaval, heightened by the

partial enfranchisement of women in 1918, led many to seek the re-establishment of sexual differences as a way to re-create a semblance of order.' There was a shift from the earlier 'dual aims' of a liberal education oriented to fitting girls for domestic life or work without compromising their femininity, to the 'divided aims' of a gender-differentiated curriculum.¹⁶

Mr. Edmund Burney, an Inspector from Britain, who was invited by the government to review the education system of Hong Kong in 1935, made the following comments regarding English education for girls as a symbol of modernity:

Education in Hong Kong has been dominated by the converging influence of two factors: Chinese traditionally regarded success in life and social dignity belonged to those whose only tool was the pen. Admission to this class was through examination. Second was the great demand from commercial firms for clerks, who must know English. This demand came from parents and pupils, quite as much as from employers. Nowadays not confined to boys. Girls, even if they are not going to work, in teaching or in office, where English is required, regard a knowledge of English as a social asset and a matrimonial qualification. It is one of the marks of their modernity, like unbound feet, proficiency in swimming, and the use of lipstick. Also it opens their eager ears to Western culture as voiced by Hollywood.¹⁷

Another comment from Miss E. M. Gibbins, headmistress of the Diocesan Girls' School offered a reflection from another perspective:

Should a woman's life and education be modelled as closely as possible on that of a man? Ambitious school teachers hold out to promising pupils dazzling careers as lawyers, doctors and politicians and tend rather to regard marriage as a refuge for the mentally unfit. Parents, on the other hand, hesitate to provide money for an expensive career on the assumption that if their daughters marry, the outlay will be wasted. . . . What is to be the answer? Are we to give a girl sufficient education to enable her to earn a modest competence if she does not marry and a smattering of domestic science and cookery in case she does? We must go far deeper than that. . . . Our duty, surely, is to give girls the same opportunities as boys of a good education and a chance to follow their particular bent.¹⁸

In the postwar years, the discourse of girls' education seemed to have moved beyond the career–domestic and progressive–backward binaries. In the speeches of the principals of Heep Yunn, girls were encouraged to pursue academic study in universities, teachers' colleges, and nursing schools while more extracurricular activities were introduced. However, discussion about women's domestic role still appeared in school annuals occasionally, such as an essay with the title 'Is Education Desirable for Women Who Do Not Intend to Take Up Paid Employment?' published in the *Heep Yunn Annual* in 1967, which says:

Value of female education was not merely defined by its qualification for employment but its help to reduce ignorance and illiteracy in the world. 'Well-educated women can help their husbands in their careers, encourage them instead of remaining indifferent or ignorant of what their husbands are doing. . . . family happiness would enable men to concentrate solely on their jobs and carry on making developments in different fields leaving household affairs in the hands of their capable wives or mothers. . . . educated women, although they remain in their houses, are still part of the driving force that move the world onto the rungs of further improvements in all fields.'¹⁹

While the grant schools have a tradition of promoting all-round education, its breadth and intensity varied from school to school, and between boys' schools and girls' schools. Similar to some of the convent schools, extracurricular activities in Heep Yunn used to focus on social service, Christian activities, interests and skills development, which were mostly organized at the school level, apart from the participation in Schools Music and Speech Festivals. The focus of promoting

an all-round education was shifted to sports, inter-school competitions, and further expansion of the previous involvements in music and drama under the third principal Mrs. Minnie Lai. The focus was not only to equip girls with knowledge and skills but also personal qualities: confidence, autonomy, toughness, persistence, excellence—qualities that would give them the tools to make use of widened opportunities in a man's world.

With free and compulsory education introduced in 1978 and the expansion of tertiary education since the 1990s, women were entering fields and realms previously dominated by men. In her study of women leaders in civil service and the political arena in Hong Kong, Helen Siu remarks that an English education in mission schools, which offered superb language training and nurtured a religious commitment in public service, had been instrumental in preparing these women to become leaders in the past few decades.²⁰ This phenomenon of girls excelling in academic study and careers led to the emergence of a discussion on 'over-achieving girls' and 'under-achieving boys'. The difficulties for girls in being both smart and feminine; outstanding and nice; and the need to negotiate achievement with interpersonal and family relationships, and competition with cooperation in school life, became subjects of local and international research.²¹ Within the Heep Yunn community, students also began to voice questions about issues such as femininity, sexuality, achievement and modesty, school regulations and discipline, acceptable behaviour and attire, and authority and fairness in student newspapers since the 1990s. This reflected students' awareness of the contradictions and tension in their endeavour to make the best out of the all-round education offered. From educating the poor and destitute to preparing girls to negotiate their 'girl power' in a globalized world, education for girls continues to be a field of struggle for educators and young girls.

The Ebb and Flow of Chinese Education in Hong Kong

Until the early twentieth century, most children who received any schooling in Hong Kong attended *sisbu*-style schools for a few years to acquire the rudiments of literacy, and sometimes also numeracy. This could be at a village or district school under the aegis of the government where the schoolmaster was directly paid and supervised by the Inspector of Schools, or a *kaifong* (neighbourhood) school run by Chinese charitable institutions such as the Tung Wah Hospital. Even mission schools under the grant-in-aid scheme adopted a similar style—a Chinese teacher, most likely a Christian, was hired to carry out the basic teaching while the missionaries gave the religious instruction. All followed a centuries-old curriculum of basic education that was largely uniform throughout South China. Upon completion of the course, most pupils sought employment in Chinese shops and merchant firms. Some Christian converts might become assistants of missionaries. A few could be sent to school in Canton (Guangzhou), the provincial capital of Guangdong Province, to acquire some literati culture and prepare for imperial examinations. The growth in trade and commerce saw a surge in demand for a bilingual workforce in the colony. With the establishment of the government Central School in 1862 and the expansion of Christian boys' schools to admit Chinese boys besides Europeans, Eurasians, and the Portuguese—such as the Diocesan Home and Orphanage and St. Joseph's College—more would seek English education in those schools for opportunities of employment as clerks and interpreters in European trading firms and the government.

What the government and the British firms needed was a bilingual workforce with a strong foundation in traditional Chinese studies. Young boys attending those English schools would go to a *sisbu* after school hours in order to further their Chinese studies. It was also common for young men in their late teens and early twenties to attend English schools after completion of classical

Chinese studies. The undesirable situation of young men sitting with boys ten years younger than them but learning from the same English primer was often criticized by officials and the expatriate community. Bernard Luk commented in his study on Chinese culture in the Hong Kong curriculum that, in spite of their Chinese studies, the graduates of the colonial schools were not literati. They simply did not have time to devote to those sorts of areas of Chinese high culture, such as social verse making and the eight-legged examination essay. The English education was vocational in its aim and the Chinese education also foregrounded a pragmatic approach. Therefore, this group of aspiring professionals was a class of its own, outside the realm of the literati.²²

The situation changed in the early twentieth century when China underwent drastic political change: the revolution in 1911 brought down the Qing dynasty, and the Republic of China was established in 1912. Despite this, stability was not restored. Conflicts between warlords escalated, along with increased aggression from foreign powers. People of all classes and backgrounds thus relocated to Hong Kong, including prominent literati as well as a new generation educated in the modern schools of China who would succeed the old literati. Some individuals of both groups became educators in the colony.²³ These two strands of Chinese education, disparate in pedagogy, curriculum, style, and ideals, were questioning the pragmatic nature of Chinese education that Hong Kong had adopted and which had little concern with high culture or the national agenda. Private schools of different modes—ranging from those offering a modernized curriculum, teaching Western knowledge in Chinese with nationalist sentiments, to *sishu* housed in tenement buildings meeting the needs of immigrant children with humble means—coexisted in the colony.

However, in 1925 a boycott and general strike in Hong Kong and Guangzhou against the British triggered by the May Thirtieth Incident—a nationwide series of strikes and demonstrations precipitated by the killing of thirteen labour demonstrators by British police in Shanghai—‘pushed’ the Hong Kong government to revise their policy after the strike ended. The newly appointed governor, Sir Cecil Clementi, invited all the senior literati then in Hong Kong—men who had imperial examination degrees and had held court ranks under the now-defunct Chinese Empire—to a tea party at Government House. He asked that they join him in projects to interpret traditional scholarship for the younger generation, ‘so that they would know what to follow and to propagate morality and scholarship throughout the world so as to remove all barriers to understanding and friendship between foreigners and Chinese.’²⁴ The government Vernacular Middle School was subsequently opened in 1926, with a normal (teachers’ training) section to train Chinese teachers. A Chinese Unit, later upgraded to a School of Chinese Studies in 1929, was established at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) with Mr. Lai Jixi, a leading scholar among the Chinese literati, appointed as head. Luk commented that with the establishment of these two institutions, and the senior literati being appointed to positions within them, the literati and their followers exerted considerable influence on Chinese culture subjects in Hong Kong schools throughout the pre-Second World War era.²⁵ The government’s move was not without controversy, and was particularly ‘ridiculed’ by scholars in higher education in China. Hu Shi, a pioneer of the New Culture Movement and an educator, criticized Chinese education at HKU as being ‘managed by a few outmoded literati selected through the imperial examination, isolating this university from the influence of mainstream developments on the Mainland where Chinese education had undergone dramatic transformation.’²⁶ Lai retired in 1932 and his colleague acted as interim head until 1935, when Hsu Ti Shan (Xu Dishan) was appointed as the new head of the department. Prof. Hsu, an expert in comparative religion in China, having been educated at Columbia University and Oxford University, was an ideal candidate to bridge the gap. Hsu advocated that ‘Chinese “national learning” should be properly investigated and carried forward with a scientific attitude so as to acquire its principles and truth, and to explore the future based on studies of the past.’²⁷

Another Chinese scholar educated in Columbia University, Prof. Ma Kiam, joined the department in 1935, and succeeded Prof. Hsu after his untimely death in 1941.

While the academic research of Chinese Studies in HKU adopted a more 'conservative' classical approach in the beginning, Chinese education at the school level followed the curriculum of the Nanjing government in China. Private schools attaining a certain standard registered with the Nanjing government as an overseas school and presented their senior graduates for university entrance examinations in China. The government and missionary schools also generally used the Nanjing syllabi and Shanghai textbooks for the Chinese culture subjects, although they might follow them less closely than institutions on the Mainland. Graduates of mission schools also pursued their study in Chinese universities while very limited vacancies were available in HKU. Teachers trained in China were also employed to teach Chinese subjects in Hong Kong.

It was not until 1952 that a Committee on Chinese Studies was appointed by the Education Department to review the Chinese curriculum. Their report submitted in 1953 was liberal in its pedagogic approaches to the teaching of language, literature, and history, advocating a student-centred and active approach while addressing the decades-long debates between the 'wen-yen' (*wenyan*, classical Chinese) school and the 'yu-ti-wen' (*yutiwen*, written vernacular Chinese) school. At the same time, it strongly urged a culturalistic emphasis on Chinese studies to counteract the nationalistic and revolutionary fervour in the Chinese culture textbooks from Taiwan and mainland China. It recommended that the aims of Chinese studies should be to develop the pupils' power of expression in their mother tongue; and to lead the pupils to understand and to cultivate their appreciation of Chinese thought, literature, and traditions. Recommendations regarding syllabus and textbooks were laid down in detail for both the Chinese and Anglo-Chinese schools, with the aim to strengthen the study of Chinese in both streams according to their needs. Hong Kong gradually developed its own Chinese curriculum. The writing of textbooks, staffing of schools, and even training of teachers were the concerted effort of local and immigrant (refugee) teachers who adopted Hong Kong as their abode whether by chance or by choice. Together, they shaped the Chinese education in this rapidly expanding educational system.²⁸

Heep Yunn School had been part of this narrative since its early days. The founding principal, Mrs. Cheung Chinn Yee Ching was educated privately under one of the senior literati, Mr. Lai Cham Chi, prior to her English education at St. Stephen's Girls' College, and was well versed in Chinese high culture. She was first appointed as the principal of Fairlea School, the predecessor of Heep Yunn, in 1925 at the juncture of critical change. Prof. Hsu Ti Shan sat on the School Council of Heep Yunn from 1939 to 1941 and gave a speech on mother-tongue education at the opening ceremony of the school. Prof. Ma Kiam was also a Council member until his retirement. Calligraphy by the two scholars graced the covers of *Heep Yunn Annual* until 1978. Teachers with different ideas of Chinese culture and history trained in institutions in China or Hong Kong constituted the postwar teaching staff. In her speech delivered at the 1955 Speech Day, Cheung openly advocated the adjustment of English standard for entry into HKU for students pursuing Chinese Studies:

There is a real need for raising the status of the Chinese scholar, a real need for the training of good teachers of Chinese for present as well as for future needs. Especially will this be true when the present supply of refugee intellectuals from the mainland and the few local scholars will have been depleted by superannuation. There exists, however, a reservoir of good raw materials, and the HKU could and should become a centre of Chinese scholarship in the community.

Unfortunately, present conditions in the colony actually discourage promising students of Chinese from studying it as their main subject. Such students rarely have a chance of getting in[to] HKU, the number of desirable posts for them are strictly limited, the scale of salaries is lower,

prospects for advancement and success in life are not as good as for students who specialize in English, medicine, engineering and other subjects. . . . Should present conditions remain unremedied, the time will soon arrive when there will be a critical shortage of good scholars of Chinese in the colony, not only for schools, but for government and other institutions where a high standard is required.²⁹

The unfavourable circumstances mentioned in Mrs. Cheung's speech continued until the founding of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1963, which provided higher education in the medium of Chinese. Reports of Heep Yunn graduates enjoying a vibrant undergraduate life at the new university were found in school annuals, alongside letters from graduates who pursued their tertiary education overseas, and increasingly, photos and accounts of old girls studying in different faculties of HKU. The school gradually became an English medium school to meet the demands for English education, while striving to keep a high standard in both languages. The Chinese culture engrained in layers of history of Heep Yunn—a convergence of disparate ideals and experiences—slowly took on a different form amidst social and cultural change in Hong Kong, but not without struggles, as the following chapters will discuss.³⁰

Sources and Interpretation

The research and writing of this book spanned four and a half years, beginning with the first interview in December 2014. A wide range of documentary, oral, and visual sources were collected, consulted, interpreted, and analysed. As a historian, the author's task and responsibility is to make the best sense that she can of all the evidence, in whatever form that comes before her, and to use all the available data to arrive at a synthesized account which goes beyond the descriptive power or the explanatory potential of each piece of evidence if considered separately.³¹ In the process of interpreting sources and constructing a narrative, there are historiographical questions that need to be addressed.

The sources consulted in the writing of this history came from different periods and in different formats. They included materials in institutional archives, namely the Church Missionary Society (CMS) archives, the Hong Kong Public Records Office, and the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Archives; official records, periodicals, and photographs of Heep Yunn School, all dated from January 1946 onward apart from the School Council minute books dated from September 1936 and three issues of Fairlea School magazines published in the 1930s; oral interviews with fifty-two individuals; government reports, and assorted secondary sources. Records from CMS archives, including correspondence and annual letters of missionaries, reports, and minutes, complemented by Hong Kong government reports, were the main sources used in the writing of pre-1946 history.

Heep Yunn School does not have an organized archive. As this research project commenced, records and periodicals were gathered and old records that had been hidden away were unearthed in stages with the help of the school secretary and principals. A set of blueprints of the Main Building was found in 2017, while a school logbook (1946–1952) and a notebook (1954) recording programmes of the morning assembly and announcements found in June 2018 were later added to the collection. A serendipitous reconnection with the founding headmistress' daughter in March 2018 brought to light historical photos and an album in which Mrs. W. K. Cheung had carefully put together photos and documents of the farewell service and dinner in 1958. The continuing discovery of historical documents and artefacts not known before reflects the fragmentary nature of documentation, and reminds the author and readers of the incompleteness of written history.

The fifty-two individuals were interviewed between December 2014 and September 2016, including past students studying in different periods (from the prewar years to the 2000s), retired and current principals, Council members, teachers from three divisions of the school, and a parent. While not all interviews are quoted in the narrative, collectively they provide multiple perspectives in understanding and interpreting the materials collected. The use of oral history interview as a method was sometimes questioned regarding its reliability and representativeness. Undoubtedly, the people interviewed only represent a very small proportion of the respective original groups. Their willingness to be interviewed also suggested that their life and experience in Heep Yunn was somehow significant to them and was viewed in a relatively positive light.³² They also represent a 'self-selected group'—most of them stayed in touch with the school after graduation and retirement, attended fun fairs and special events. Some were active participants in the Heep Yunn Old Girls' Association in Hong Kong or Canada. While some conveyed a great sense of indebtedness to the school, disappointments, unfair treatment, or hurtful relationships were occasionally mentioned and reinterpreted by the mature self of today.

In his classic work on the meaning and interpretation of oral history, Portelli points out that 'the first thing that makes it [oral history] important is that it tells us less about events than about their meaning'. Sometimes they 'reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events; they always cast new light on unexpected area of the daily life of the community . . . It reflects not only the narrators' effort to preserve the past, but how they made sense of the past, and gave a form to their lives.'³³ The author was aware that in the retelling of an interviewee's account, she did not simply tell a shorter story but reconstructed the account through regrouping the material into themes and chronological periods. Individuals' private recollections were also part of a collective memory situated in larger historical contexts commonly known by their contemporaries. Many others are involved in the construction of the memories of each individual. On the other hand, similar to the gaps in documentary records, there were inevitably certain 'voices' missing in the research and writing process. Some might find it difficult to reconcile their experience with the 'mainstream' voices, while others might have simply moved on in life with little residue of Heep Yunn tagging along. Portelli writes that '[if] no research (concerning a historical time for which living memories are available) is complete unless it has exhausted oral as well as written sources, and [it is the case] that oral sources are inexhaustible, the ideal goal of going through "all" possible sources become[s] impossible'.³⁴

Photographic images portraying the campus, buildings, people, and multifaceted school life were collected from archives, individuals, and albums stored in the school. Together they tell a rich story of change and continuity in terms of landscape and buildings, hairstyles and fashion, teacher–student relationships, extracurricular activities, celebrations and parties, which cannot all be incorporated into this publication. The selected images included in this volume only give a glimpse of a story that began over 130 years ago.

Structure of the Book and Readership

This history of Heep Yunn School, founded by the amalgamation of two mission schools, Fairlea School and Victoria Home and Orphanage in 1936, is written in chronological order, beginning from the arrival of the founder of Fairlea, an Irish missionary by the name of Miss Margaret Johnstone, and continuing to the 80th anniversary of the school in 2016. It seeks to trace the development of all-round education for girls through the case study of Heep Yunn School against the

backdrop of broader social change, when traditions and practices, values and beliefs in Hong Kong were challenged and redefined.

Chapter 1 starts with the missionary work of Miss Johnstone and her colleagues, the founding of Fairlea and Victoria Home, their relocations; and ends with the appointment of Mrs. Cheung Chinn Yee Ching as the first Chinese principal and the establishment of Heep Yunn School. Chapter 2 covers the building of Heep Yunn at its new site and the development of the school before the Japanese Occupation. Chapter 3 documents in detail the postwar reconstruction and development process in respect of space, language, and culture, up to the retirement of the founding principal. Chapter 4 traces the rapid expansion of Heep Yunn—in terms of numbers of pupils, buildings, and facilities—under the second principal, Mrs. Cheung Lo Pok Hing. Chapter 5 presents a picture of transformation when Mrs. Minnie Lai took up the principalship and promoted an all-round education to the fullest. The last chapter, Chapter 6, records another phase in Heep Yunn's history when the school applied to switch to Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) mode under the principalship of Mrs. Clara Lau. The baton of operating a DSS school was then passed on to the first male headmaster of Heep Yunn, Mr. Lee Chun Hung. When he retired after the 80th Anniversary, Ms. Bella Leung was appointed the sixth principal from September 2016, and is the first alumna to take up the post.

A chronology of events and milestones, lists of members of different groups, maps and site plan are included as appendices for the reader's reference.

For the members of the Heep Yunn community—past and current students, teachers, principals, Council and staff, parents and coaches—this book does not attempt to be a collective memoir, despite the fact that the reminiscences of over fifty individuals from different generations were woven into the narrative. It is neither an inventory of honours and awards, nor an edition of 'Who's Who in Heep Yunn', though achievements are recorded and many people remembered. This volume seeks to furnish an account of past events, and to provide an interpretation of change and continuity, and by so doing provide sufficient information, ideas, and stimulus to enable the readers to locate themselves within historical time, and construct their personal history of Heep Yunn School.³⁵

As one reviewer comments, this is a book that has been written 'with a community but not just for a community'. To the general readers in Hong Kong, it is believed that this school history documenting the persistent effort of a Christian school in achieving its vision and mission through times of destruction and reconstruction, economic growth and social unrest, changing demography and landscape, bureaucratic and political reform in this unique historical space of Hong Kong will broaden their understanding of Hong Kong history through the particular lens of education.

For international readers interested in colonial and transnational histories of education with a focus on women's history, this volume provides a case study of girls' education—examining themes such as the shift from Victorian missionary endeavours to local professional efforts; the construction of cultural and religious ideals of girlhood through curriculum and activities; language and social mobility in a colonial context; and the transnational ideas of leisure and cultural practices as exhibited through all-round education across distinctive contexts and periods.

Original romanization of names of Hong Kong people, places, and institutions have been retained in this volume. In the case of Chinese names, surnames are displayed first.

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Appendix 7

Chronology of Key Events (1936–2018)

Year	Event
1936	Mrs. Cheung Chinn Yee Ching appointed the first Principal 23 October, Laying of foundation stone by the governor, Sir A. Caldecott
1937	18 and 19 May, Dedication service and opening ceremony officiated by Bishop Mok Shau Tsang
1941–1945	School campus occupied by the Japanese Army
1946	8 February, school re-opened 6 December, Rededication service officiated by Bishop R. O. Hall
1947	Reopening of school library and laboratory; building of tennis court First issue of post-war school annual published
1948	11 November, Laying of foundation stone for the gymnasium Domestic science room opened Student Handbooks introduced Upper Forms split into English and Chinese streams
1949	Opening of the gymnasium Reopening of the Free School
1950	Extension of site to build a junior school and extra playing space granted
1951	Completion of recreation room Music Room and new courts opened
1953	30 June, Heep Yunn Old Girls' Association (HYOGA) re-established Geography room opened 23 October, Laying of foundation stone for the new junior school building
1954	New junior school opened Movie room and Biology room opened. Distinct streams in English and Chinese introduced in secondary school.
1955	Art room opened
1957	6 September, Laying of foundation stone of the Chapel of Saint Clare of Assisi 20 December, Dedication service officiated by Bishop R. O. Hall
1958	Retirement of Mrs. Cheung Chinn Yee Ching Mrs. Cheung Lo Pok Hing appointed the second Principal

Appendix 8

Chronology of Student Development and Milestones of Achievements (1946–2018)

Year	Event
1946	Establishment of Student Union
1947	Establishment of House system: students divided into four houses: Heep, Yunn, Chung, and Hok
1949	Reopening of Free School Establishment of Christian Association
1950	School Prefects System introduced After-school extra-curricular activities programme launched First Visual Arts exhibition on record held on 15 November
1951	School choir awarded the King's Music Trophy
1952	Reestablishment of Girl Guides 4th West Kowloon Company
1953	Christian Association reformed and renamed 'Heep Kwong Tuen' (Light of Heep Yunn Fellowship)
1954	Enhancement of School Prefects System
1960	Establishment of Art Club
1962	Senior Choir placed first in Hong Kong Schools Music Festival
1968	Establishment of Debating Club, Drama Club, Geography Club, Music Club, Photography Club, Science Club, Singing Group and Speech Club
1969	Establishment of Chess Club and Chinese-verse-speaking Club
1970	Establishment of Chinese Debating Group, Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Group, Current Affairs Discussion Group, Economic and Public Affairs Club, Folk Song/Folk Dance Club, and Sewing and Cooking Club Intermediate Choir awarded the Best Choir of all classes
1971	Establishment of Knitting Club
1972	Addition of Hau House to the House System Establishment of English Literature Club and Sports Club
1973	Establishment of Mandarin Club, Mathematics Club and Social Concern Club
1974	Establishment of English Language Club
1976	Establishment of Chinese History Club and Psychology Society
1977	Establishment of Chinese Literature Club

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Index

Note: *italic* page numbers refer to figures and page numbers followed by “n” denote endnotes.

- Aberdeen Technical School, 133
Adjudicators' Award, 165
Akers-Jones, Sir David, Acting Governor of Hong Kong, 136
all-round education, 3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 137–39, 144, 145, 147, 152, 159, 162, 164, 167, 169, 172–74, 176, 177, 180, 181, 183
 ideal of, 130
 implementation of, 130–35
 promotion of, 131
 reconstruction of, 69–70
all-round students, 137–54
Anglican Church in Hong Kong, 2, 14–15, 17, 20, 22, 27, 31–32, 48, 66, 122, 147, 168
Anglican Communion (1998), 97, 148
Anglican grant schools, 1, 90n78, 106, 123
 in Hong Kong's history of education, 2–3
 girls' schools, 14, 93, 106
Anglican schools, 2, 38, 76, 82, 87, 110
Anglo-Chinese education, 2, 20, 83, 98
art, as a subject, 72, 98, 131, 135, 137
Atkins, Edna S., 24–28, 31, 32, 51, 58, 61, 62, 66, 77, 87

baby boom, 77, 95
Baker, Bishop John Gilbert, 21, 92, 103, 106, 108, 113, 117–18, 128
Bank of China Hong Kong (BOCHK) Bauhinia Bowl Award, 164, 171, 182. *See also* Omega Rose Bowl
Bank of China Hong Kong (BOCHK) Outstanding Athlete Award, 164
Barnett, Archdeacon, 22–25
Baxter Memorial School, 16
Baxter, Susan Harriet, 14–16, 18, 22
Baxter Vernacular Girls' Schools (1870s–1899), 14–16, 18

Belilios Public School, 4, 20, 59
Bennett, Joyce, 158
Bible study groups, 112
Big Sister Scheme, 162, 181
bilingual workforce, demand for, 2, 6
Bishop Hall Jubilee Fund, 85
Bishop Hall Jubilee School, 76, 123
Bishop of Hong Kong, 39, 92, 97, 128
Blake, Sir Henry, Governor of Hong Kong, 19
boarding school, 3, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 40, 45, 53, 114
Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association, 47
brain drain, problem of, 140
British and Foreign School Society, 2
British Council, 106, 138
British expatriate community, 106
British missionaries, 1, 22
British Society. *See* British and Foreign School Society
Bruce, Iain F., 115, 128, 144, 148, 175
Bull, L., 65, 66, 70
Burney, Edmund, 5
Burney Report (1935), 38, 41

Caldecott, Sir Andrew, Governor of Hong Kong, 41, 43
Canton Blind School, 45
Capacity Enhancement Grants, 173
Carpenter, G. K., Rev., 39–40, 44, 50
Central British School. *See* King George V School
Central School for boys. *See* Queen's College
Central School for Girls. *See* Belilios Public School
Certificated Masters Pay Scale (1973), 126
Chan, Alan C. C., 111
Chan Chung Ching Fan, Patricia, 127
Chang Shao Mui, 101–2, 127–28, 132

- Chan Hin Cheung, Rev. Canon, 135, 148, 159, 163, 170, 175, 193
- Chan, Jeanie, 183
- Chan Mei Ngan, Anna, 117
- channel for communication, 175
- Chan Poon Tan Sun, 78, 95, 99, 106, 108, 115, 127
- Chan Pui Lan, 65, 76, 101
- Chan Wong Hang Yin, Ruth. *See* Wong Hang Yin
- Chang Yin, 81, 90n77, 91n90
- Chan Yuen Wah, 102, 103, 107, 139, 171
- Chapel of St. Clare of Assisi, 84–86, 86
- Chau, I. N., Architect, 41–43, 48, 60, 74, 103
- Chau & Lee Co (also Messrs. Chau & Lee), 41, 42, 48, 74, 97, 103
- Cheng Cheuk Sang, Arnold, 171, 175, 180
- Cheng Frank Chi Yan, 115
- Cheng Wai Sim, 126, 133, 143, 151, 164, 182
- Chen Suen Ling, Susan, 126, 140, 150, 151, 180
- Cheung Chinn Yee Ching, 1st principal, 8–9, 32, 38, 72, 84–86. *See also* W. K. Cheung, Mrs. appointment as the first Chinese principal of Fairlea, 26–28 appointment as the first principal of Heep Yunn, 38 award of MBE, 88 bidding farewell to, 86–88 retirement of, 84–88 school song, 37 thirtieth anniversary of principalship, 72, 73
- Cheung Lo Pok Hing, 2nd principal, 93, 96, 98, 100, 104, 105, 106, 108, 110, 113–19, 126, 131, 133–35 appointment of, 87, 92–93 Memorial Prize, 127 as Principal Granny, 118 retirement of, 113–19 tributes from students and staff, 118
- Cheung, P. H., Mrs. *See* Cheung Lo Pok Hing
- Cheung, S. K., Mrs. *See* Cheung Lo Pok Hing
- Cheung Wing Kue, 9, 26, 31, 44
- Cheung, W. K., Mrs., 8, 9, 11, 26–29, 38, 39–46, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 58, 66, 67, 69, 72, 73, 74, 75, 78–79, 81, 83, 84, 84–88, 108, 116, 123, 133. *See also* Cheung Chinn Yee Ching
- Chien Tang Ling Yee, 115
- Chinese Christian Church of Amoy, 76
- Chinese education, 1, 2, 4, 15, 20, 21, 26, 27, 82, 98, 100 cultural value of, 129 curriculum, 8 *versus* English education, 7 for girls, 4, 37 grant-in-aid scheme, 6 higher education, 7 in Hong Kong, 6–9 Nanjing syllabi, 8 nature of, 7 quality of, 37 Shanghai textbooks, 8
- Chinese Education Mission (CEM), 26
- Chinese Empire, 7, 15
- Chinese language, 27 core subjects of, 172 enhancement of, 164
- Chinese Ministry of Education, 51, 82
- Chinese primary schools, 2, 86
- Chinese School Certificate Examination, 83, 96, 98. *See also* English School Certificate Examination
- Chinese University of Hong Kong, 9, 76, 96, 100, 110 Provisional Acceptance Scheme of, 141
- Chinn Yee Ching. *See* Cheung Chinn Yee Ching
- Chiu Kit Yee, Priscilla, 125, 126, 130, 133, 134
- Choi Ching Wah, 139, 186n13
- Choi Cho Cheong, Richard, 126, 140
- Choi Hiu Nam, Peggy, 141, 143
- Choi Wing Sze, Alice, xvi, 175, 180
- Chow, Alice, 113
- Chow Kun Chee, Roland, 106, 115, 117, 168, 173, 174, 182
- Christian education, 3, 28, 47–48, 66, 79, 108, 111–13, 160, 163 for girls, 1 at Heep Yunn school, 81, 125 missionaries, 1–2, 6 in prewar Hong Kong, 81 resistance to, 70 school vision of providing, 174 service, 3, 51, 81–82
- Chu Mei Mei, 60, 65
- Chung Chi College, 96
- Chung Wah Yiu, 80, 105, 110
- Church Missionary Society (CMS), 2, 9, 14, 77 Day Schools, 2, 28, 46–47, 87, 93 East Asia Committee of, 50, 78 missionaries in Hong Kong, 31, 61 revival of the schools, 58 schools associated with, 23–26 South China Mission, 22, 32, 43, 49–50, 53, 62 war and destruction, 51–54

- Church Missionary Society (CMS) Associated Schools, 23–26, 28, 31, 32, 47. *See also* Fairlea Girls' School, St. Stephen's Girls' College
- Church Mission Trust Association (CMTA), 96–97
- Church of England, 19–20
- civil servants' house ownership scheme, 94
- civil war, in China, 59, 68
- Clementi, Sir Cecil, Governor of Hong Kong, 7
- clubs and societies, 109, 131, 134, 146, 148
- co-curricular activities, 165–66, 169, 183
language activities, 163–64
- Code of Aid, 3, 151, 157n93
- Cold War embargoes, 73
- Committee on Chinese Studies (1952), 8
- communism, challenge of, 78
- Communist China, 134
- Community Youth Club, 137
- Cork International Choral Festival, Ireland, 183
- Council-principal partnership, in Heep Yunn, 140
- Courtesy Star Campaign, 162
- creative writing, 81, 163
- Cree, Clara, 21–25
- Crown Lands and Service Office, 85, 99, 100
- Crozier, D. J., Director of Education, 72, 75, 76
- Curriculum Development Committee, 131
- Daily Press*, 16
- debating, 109, 134, 137, 141, 145
as co-curricular language activities, 163
as training of the mind, 166–67
different styles of Chinese and English debating, 167
- Hong Kong Inter-school Debating Championship, 178
- Inter-Primary Schools Debating Competition, 178
- Inter-school English Debating Championship, 141
- Inter-school Debating Contest, English debating team, 142
- interclass, 141
- inter-school, 133, 141
- restructuring of, 166
- Sing Tao Inter-school Debating Championship, Chinese debating team, 166
- Der, Edmund B., 117, 135
- Diocesan Boys' School (DBS), 20, 26, 60, 110, 123
- Diocesan Girls' School (DGS), 5, 14, 20, 38, 106, 132
- Diocesan Native Female Training School (DNFTS), 15
- Directors of Education, 41, 44, 46, 49, 61, 64, 72, 75, 87, 98, 99, 103, 108, 130, 136
- Director of Public Works, 40, 49, 50, 72
- Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS), 11, 168
admission talks and recruitment, 180–81
Audit Commission (Audit) regarding, 176
expansion of curriculum and activities, 181–82
feasibility study of, 174–75, 180,
fee remission, 180, 181, 183
in Heep Yunn style, 177–80
improving teaching and learning, 181–82
issue of staff redundancy, 172–74
new senior secondary education, 172–74
public relations (PR), 175, 184
road to, 171–77
support of the HYOGA, 183–84
- diverse student body, education of, 44–48
academic pursuits and vocation, 46–47
Christian activities and social service for, 47–48
strengthening teaching and learning for, 161–67
- double stream, 67, 83
- drama, 3, 6, 69, 77, 79, 108, 109, 124, 134, 137, 138, 145, 149, 174, 182
Adjudicators' Award, 165
amateur producer and actors, 71
drama night, 109, 117, 170, 184
Hong Kong Youth Arts Festival, 165
in teaching, 163–65
School Drama Festival, 79, 133, 165
- educational ideals, 4, 124
- Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), 150, 151, 168, 172
- Education Bureau (EDB), 168, 173, 174, 176, 177
- Education Department SIP section (ED-SIP), 152
- Education (Amendment) Ordinance (2004), 167–68
- Education Report (1910), 22
- Eitel, E. J., 4, 12n12
- elementary education, in colonial Hong Kong, 2, 15, 20
- Eltham, D. L., 61–62, 65, 67
- English education, 2, 5, 8, 26, 66, 78, 100
versus Chinese education, 7, 129
demands for, 9
employment opportunities, 6, 96
for girls, 4, 5
market value of, 129

- in mission schools, 6
- under the grant-in-aid system, 2
- English language, 4, 20, 79, 107, 125, 167
 - as core subjects, 172, 181
 - as medium of instruction, 1, 20, 62, 96, 125, 134, 138, 150, 163
 - 'Speaking with Confidence' programme, 163
- English School Certificate Examination, 65, 68, 83, 106
- English Schools Foundation, 141
- External School Review (ESR), 168–69
- extra-curricular activities, 5, 69, 107–13, 124, 128, 131, 134, 137
 - as leisure-time training, 108, 165
 - benefits of, 131
 - debating. *See* separate entry
 - in Heep Yunn Primary School (HYPS), 137–39, 183
 - inter-class competition, 109
 - inter-house competition, 109
 - Inter-school Public Affairs Competition, 109
 - moral value of, 108–9
 - music and sports. *See* separate entries
 - religious activities and Christian fellowship. *See* separate entries
 - school annual. *See* separate entry
 - special programme of, 79
 - Student Union, clubs and societies. *See* separate entries
 - swimming, 77, 79
- Eyre, Lucy, 17, 21, 22

- Fairlea Girls' School, 2, 28, 38
 - advertisement in the *Daily Press*, 16–17
 - amalgamation with Victoria Home and Orphanage, 29–32, 37
 - beginning of, 16
 - from Bonham Road to Prospect Place, 21–23
 - Christian identity of, 27
 - development of, 20–29
 - exit of the pioneers, 20–21
 - under Female Education Society, 16–18
 - first Chinese principal of. *See* Cheung Chinn Yee Ching
 - as grant-in-aid school, 17
 - from mission school to a higher-grade vernacular school, 20–29
 - tradition and ethos of, 37
 - See also* CMS Associated Schools
- family life education, 142
- Fang Lim Kay Chiok, 110, 127
- Farm Road, school location, 70, 77, 93, 95
- Feasibility Study Report (FSR), of the SIP, 152
- feeder school, idea of, 100, 137, 176, 182
- fee remission, policy of, 23, 68, 77, 106, 174, 176–77, 180–81, 183
- Female Education Society (FES), 2, 14–15
 - Baxter Vernacular Girls' Schools (1870s–1899), 14–16
 - Fairlea Girls' School under, 16–18
 - Female Missionary Intelligencer (FMI)*, 16
- Fletcher, H. S., 17–19, 21, 22
- folk song, 109, 111, 134
- Fok Ching Shan, Mrs., 17, 41
- free education, provision of, 108
- free school, 27, 47–48, 69, 76, 79, 94
- fundraising, 147, 148, 159, 165
 - for building of the chapel, 85–86
 - for building of the gymnasium, 71
 - for building of the primary school, 74
 - for building of the swimming pool, 128–29
 - for the SIP building, 159–60
 - for the switch to DSS, 175
 - for Tai Po Rural Orphanage, 30–31
 - for war victims, 47
 - organised by HYOGA, 183
- Fun Fair, 10, 47, 74, 126, 129, 135–36, 138, 139, 151, 159, 165, 170, 184
- Fung Ngan Kwan, 65, 72
- Fung Ping Nam, 67
- Fyson, Bishop Philip K., 14

- Gatherine* (student newspaper), 145
- gender equality, in workplace and family, 122
- Ginling College, 64
- Girl Guides, 41, 79, 113, 137
- girls' education, 1, 11, 14, 17, 22, 32, 87, 122
 - Anglo-Chinese education, 20
 - Chinese education, 4
 - conflicts and ideals regarding, 3–6
 - development of, 3–6
 - English education, 4
 - over-achieving girls, 6
 - sex education, 78
- 'Good Performance' record system, 162
- graduating class yearbook, 83
- Grant Code, 2, 3, 21, 22, 52, 59, 61, 62, 65
 - based on 'deficiency grant,' 49
 - financial incentives, 3
 - requirements of, 50

- to secondary schools, 101
- triennial budget required under, 50
- Grantham, Sir Alexander, Governor of Hong Kong, 54n1, 64, 72, 76, 84
- grant-in-aid schools (grant schools), 20, 38, 49, 59, 62, 65, 73, 82, 106, 122, 171
 - Anglican. *See* separate entry
 - achievement of (in postwar rehabilitation), 64
 - Chinese education, 2
 - grant-in-aid scheme, 2–3, 6, 15–16, 49, 75
 - identity of, 3
 - New Senior Secondary (NSS) structure and, 172–73
- Grant Schools Council (GSC), 1–3, 49, 108, 172
- Griffin, W., 23–24, 26
- Hall, Bishop Ronald Owen, 1, 30–31, 43, 46, 47, 49, 51, 59–63, 68, 70, 72, 76, 84–87, 84, 93–100, 106, 107, 116, 128, 129
- Handover of Hong Kong (1997), 140, 161
- Hamper, A. K., 18, 19, 21, 29, 51
- Harcourt, Cecil, 58
- Hart, J. B., 74, 96–97, 99, 106, 129
- Hayhoe, Ruth, 105, 108–9, 125
- health-related physical fitness, 131
- Heep Kwong Tuen, 79, 81–82, 112, 160, 163. *See also* Christian fellowship
- Heep Yunn Old Girls' Association (HYOGA), 10, 116–17, 126–27, 136, 146, 150–51, 154, 171, 175, 176, 186
 - HYOGA choir and orchestra, 183
- Heep Yunn Primary School (HYPS), 2, 75, 101–2, 104, 129–30, 132, 153, 169
 - admission to, 102
 - all-round education in, 137–39, 183
 - bi-sessional subsidized, 101–13
 - changing landscape in the neighbourhood, 76–77
 - cost of building, 76
 - demographic profile of students (1962), 101–2
 - English standards of students from, 107
 - extension of site and planning for, 71–72
 - extracurricular activities, 107–13
 - feeder school arrangements, 182
 - Hong Kong Schools Sports Association Gold Medal Award, 138
 - joining the Secondary School Entrance Examination, 102
 - junior hall and library, 103–5
 - new building for, 74–77
 - new primary school and kindergarten, 74–76
 - opening ceremony of, 75, 153
 - sports day, 80
 - rebuilding of, 148–49, 170
 - seventieth anniversary musical, 171
 - site and funding, 74
 - teaching staff of, 78, 102, 104
 - upgrading facilities at, 143–44
- Heep Yunn Primary School Incorporated Management Committees, 182
- Heep Yunn Primary School Old Girls' Association, 183
- Heep Yunn Primary School Parent Teacher Association, 182
- Heep Yunn School (HYS), 39, 75, 101, 104, 110–11
 - athletics meet and swimming gala. *See* sports
 - Chinese literature and culture, 66
 - Christian education. *See* separate entry
 - constitution of, 37, 62, 96–97, 148, 168
 - demographic profile of students, 66–69, 77–78, 93–95
 - development of, 1, 59, 92, 131–33
 - Diamond Jubilee celebration, 146, 146–47, 171
 - Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS). *See* separate entry
 - domestic science room, 71
 - educational ideals and values promotion, 124
 - eightieth anniversary, 1, 184–86, 185
 - English and Chinese streams, 82–83
 - enrolment, 83, 92, 97–98, 130
 - entrance examinations, 60, 68
 - establishment of, 37–39
 - expansion of secondary education in, 95–101, 115
 - extracurricular activities. *See* separate entry
 - fiftieth anniversary celebration, 134–36
 - five-stream system, 129–30
 - floating classes, 115–16, 118, 135
 - free school. *See* separate entry
 - fundraising campaign. *See* separate entry
 - Golden Jubilee celebration, 134–36
 - gymnasium, 75, 81, 86, 88, 124, 134, 149
 - building of, 49, 71
 - demolition and rebuilding of, 151–52, 159, 169
 - hostel, 65, 69, 71, 74, 78, 80, 95, 98–100, 110
 - closing of, 113–15
 - house song (*tso koh*), 69
 - house system, 69, 109
 - language learning, 133–34

- location of, 70
 Main Building, 42, 60, 61, 70, 72, 86, 88, 170
 Grade III historic building, 152
 male teachers, 28, 65, 87, 146
 employment of young male teachers, 126
 new site, 40–44
 new structure and direction, 72–73
 new wing and expansion of the English stream, 97–101
 Omega Rose Bowl. *See* sports
 phasing out of Chinese section of, 129–30
 physical education. *See* separate entry
 prefect system, 69, 80, 110, 125, 145
 ‘junior prefect’ scheme, 162
 principal and staff, 52, 73, 104, 127, 161, 179
 rededication service programme, 63
 rehabilitation of, 58–59
 religious activities. *See* separate entry
 religious education, 141–42
 revamping the school magazine, 125
 school badge and motto, 39
 school song, 37
 seventieth anniversary celebration, 167–71
 seventy-fifth anniversary, 177
 site formation, 72
 Speech Day. *See* separate entry
 spiritual support and guidance, provision of, 163
 split-class teaching, provision of, 173
 sports. *See* separate entry
 staff-management consultative committee, 126
 staff team, 65–66, 126–28
 student life, 78–82
 students’ self-governed society, 61
 student support, 141–42
 swimming bath. *See* swimming pool
 swimming pool, building of, 48, 128–29, 129
 tenth anniversary celebration, 64
 towards a ‘good, worthy, bilingual institution’, 77–83
 Heep Yunn School Alumnae Ontario, 184
 Heep Yunn School Council, 8, 39, 43, 59, 75, 128, 150, 167, 168, 182
 Council of Heep Yunn School Incorporation Ordinance (1961), 97
 incorporation of, 96–97
 membership of, 39, 62, 97
 new constitution of, 96–97
 Heep Yunn School Education Fund, 147, 160
 Heep Yunn School Opportunities Enabling Fund, 183
 Heep Yunn School: *Origins and First Twenty-one Years’ History 1937–1958*, 87
 higher education, in China, 4, 7, 9, 24–25, 38, 46, 64, 92
 Higher Level Examination, 127, 130
 history of education, in Hong Kong, 2–3, 122
 Ho, Ada, 141, 145, 147
 Hoare, Bishop Joseph C., 19, 20
 Holland, Mary, 78
 Hollis, S., 2, 19, 32, 41, 45, 47, 53–54
 Holy Angels Canossian School, 95
 Holy Trinity Church (later Holy Trinity Cathedral), 19, 22, 29, 39, 43–44, 47, 64, 68, 70, 97, 112, 128, 135, 142, 159, 163, 186
 Ho Man Tin Cottage Area, 94
 Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), 106, 141, 172
 Hong Kong Association of Sponsoring Bodies of Schools (HKASBS), 168
 Hong Kong Budding Scientists Award, 166
 Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), 141, 163, 165, 170, 172
 Hong Kong Chemistry Olympic Competition, 166
 Hong Kong Council of Women, 122
 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE), 172–73
 Hong Kong International School, 141, 163
 Hong Kong Music Association, 80
 Hong Kong Polytechnic, 124
 Hong Kong Schools Sports Association, 132
 Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui (HKSKH) secondary schools, 82, 112, 128, 147, 151, 168
 Hong Kong Student Science Project Competition, 166
 Hong Kong Students Relief Fund Organisation, 47
 Hong Kong Union for Young Leaders, 178
 Hoskins, D. M., 65, 71
 Ho Tung, Robert, 20, 23
 Hsu Ti Shan, 7, 8, 43, 51, 80
 Hunt, F., Mrs. *See* Kwok Wai Chun
Hymns of Universal Praise, 125
 incorporated management committees (IMC), 168, 182, 183
 Inspector of Schools, 2, 4, 6
 International Junior Science Olympiad, 166
 International Science and Engineering Fair, 177–78
 Inter-school Basketball League, 80
 inter-school competitions, 6, 111, 124, 131, 137, 141, 143, 164

- Ip Hay Wood (H. W. Ip), xvi, 103, 126, 127, 132–33, 140–41, 147, 154
- Ip Lo Hing Yuen, 105, 105, 139, 170
- Ip, Yvonne, 106
- Japanese invasion of China, 44–45, 53
- Japanese Occupation, 11, 40, 46, 53–54, 92, 135
- Jennings, M. A., 32, 39, 42, 45, 49, 53, 60
- Johnstone, Margaret, 10, 11, 14–21, 32, 43, 45, 51
- Joint Primary Six Examination, 75, 77, 95
- Jordan Road Government Primary School (1958), 95
- Journal of Education*, 81
- jubilee building, extension of, 136–37, 140, 143–44, 149, 153, 170
- kai fong* (neighbourhood) school, 6, 102
- Kang, Edward B. T., 68
- Kan Kit Ching, 130
- kindergarten, 23, 28, 39, 42, 46, 58, 72, 74–76, 83, 92, 100, 105, 109, 116–18, 125, 128, 132, 136, 137, 183
- making all-round students in, 139–40
- management of, 116
- principal and staff of, 105
- quality of education, 124
- restructuring of, 139–40
- King George V School, 40, 69, 94
- King's College, 59
- Kong Ching Wah, 126, 160
- Kong Wong Kuk Fong. *See* Wong Kuk Fong
- Kwan, Jeanie, Mrs. *See* Chan, Jeanie
- Kowloon Docks Memorial Primary School, 149
- Kwan, Sir Cho Yiu, 39, 41, 50–51, 62, 71, 74, 85–87, 96–97, 99–100, 106, 115
- Kwong Chi Ip, 126
- Kwok Wai Chun, 71, 78, 103, 104, 116
- Kwong Kong Kit, Peter, Archbishop, 82, 123, 128, 148
- Lai Chack Girls' Middle School, 27
- Lai, Jixi, 7
- Lai, Minnie, Mrs. *See* Lai Wei Kit Lin, Minnie
- Lai Wei Kit Lin, Minnie, 3rd principal, xv, 6, 11, 117, 122–26, 123, 127, 128, 130–41, 143, 144, 147–54, 159, 163, 170, 180, 186
- appointment, 117, 122
- extension of service, 149–51
- farewell to, 152–54
- speech, 123
- tribute to, 154
- Lam, Shui Hing, 107, 113
- Lam, W. K. Galen, 164
- Lam Woon Sum, Maria, 139, 156n59
- Lam Yim Wah, 113
- Lam Yuen Fan, Fanny, xv, 180
- Langford, K., 62. *See also* Wheeler, K.
- language ability, of weaker students, 150, 163
- language learning, aspects of, 133, 170
- LaRose, Stella, xv, 40
- Lau Chung Shang, 65, 76
- Lau, Clara, Mrs. *See* Lau Li Kwok Kin, Clara
- Lau Li Kwok Kin, Clara, 4th principal, xv, 11, 158–64, 158, 166, 167, 169, 171, 173–80, 186
- leadership skills, of Heep Yunn girls, 111, 165, 178, 183
- Lee Chun Hung, Dave, 5th principal, xv, 126, 127, 133, 140–41, 146, 150–51, 161, 171, 176, 177, 178, 184, 186
- appointment as first male principal, 179
- Lee Kau Yan, 39, 60, 62, 70, 96
- Lee Kit Yee, Fion, 159, 175
- Lee, Richard, 41, 85, 97, 115
- Lee Tang Mei Chu, Anne, xvi, 105–6, 112, 114, 137
- Lee Ying Piu, 39, 41, 48, 52, 70, 87, 116
- Lee Yuk King, Polly, 176
- Legislative Council (LegCo), 4, 20, 31, 97, 149, 152, 168
- leisure-time training
- extracurricular activities as, 165
- of girls, 107–9
- significance of, 108
- Leong Hao Bing, 99
- Leung Siu Yi, Bella, 6th principal, xv–xvi, 11, 141–42, 160–61, 163, 169, 184, 186
- Leung Lee Kwai Fong, 106, 115–16, 136
- Li Luk Wa, 46, 52
- Li Wan San, 65, 88
- Liu Wan Man, 115, 164
- Local Examination Syndicate, 46
- London Missionary Society (LMS), 2, 15
- Lo Tsz Kwai (T. K. Lo), 97, 99, 108
- Lui Foon Sai, 77
- Lui Ho Yin, 65, 71, 79, 81, 109, 115
- Luk King Yee, 85, 87
- MacDougall, David, 59
- Ma Chiu Man Che, Cindy, 142–43
- Ma Chun Mui, 125, 130
- Madam Au Lam Shui Lan Memorial Library, 170

- Ma Kiam, 39, 62, 80, 85, 96, 97
- Man Ng Wing Yee, Winnie, 38, 44, 116–17, 136
- marketable skills, acquisition of, 162
- 'marriage market,' 4, 20
- Marriage Reform Ordinance (1971), 122
- Maryknoll Convent School, 30, 38, 98, 132, 173, 177
- mass education, 1, 124
- Ma Tau Chung Camp (Ma Tau Wei Camp), 48, 54
- Ma Tau Chung Government Primary School (1962), 95, 130
- Ma Tau Wai Road, 30, 40, 70, 94–95
- Ma Yen Sheng, 80, 105, 110, 117, 135
- May Thirtieth Incident (1925), 7
- Martin, E. W. L., Rev. Canon, 32, 38, 39, 41
- Mau Kwok Kwong, Brenda, 146
- medium of instruction (MOI), 1, 20, 62, 82, 87, 96, 134, 150, 161, 163
- Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools, 149
- Merchant of Venice, The* (play), 27
- Merit Conduct Certificate, 162
- Messrs CYS Associates (Hong Kong) Limited Architects and Urban Designers, 148
- Middleton-Smith, E., 24, 25
- Ministering Children's League (MCL), 27, 29, 35n72
- Mission Road Government Primary School, 76, 95
- mission schools, 2–4, 8, 17, 25, 29, 65
- English education in, 6
- modern girlhood, idea of, 131
- Mok Pui Yuen, 65, 72, 105
- Mok Shau Tsang, Bishop, 32, 41
- Mok Shau Tsang, Mrs., 17
- Mok, Zandra, 145
- 'Moving towards a Creative Future' exhibition, 171
- 'Moving Towards Self-Discipline' campaign, 162
- Mui Fong Girls' High School, 27
- Mui Yu Tin, 72, 78
- mui tsai* (bond servant girls), 3, 16–17, 32
- multi-media learning centre, 153
- music, 110–11, 133–34, 164–65
- band, 142, 147, 153
- Chinese orchestra, 142, 147, 153
- choir, 63–64, 80, 85, 108, 122, 133, 143, 145, 153, 165, 171, 178
- Donald Fraser Memorial Rose Bowl, 110
- folk song, 111
- further development in, 142–43
- instrumental classes, 133, 142, 147, 160, 164
- interclass hymn singing competition, 110
- mixed choir with Diocesan Boys' School, 110, 117
- orchestra, 133, 147, 153, 165, 178
- promotion of, 133
- Schools Music Festival. *See* separate entry
- Sir Fung Ping Fun Trophy, 111
- National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor, 2
- New Asia College, 76–77, 96, 99
- New Culture Movement, 7
- New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum, 172
- Ng Hay Yin, 140
- Ng Shiu Han, 78, 107
- Ngan Hing Sui, 146
- Northcote Teachers' Training College, 59, 61
- Omega Rose Bowl, 132–33, 143–45, 143, 164. *See also* Bank of China Hong Kong Bauhinia Bowl Award
- Ost, J. B., 18, 19
- Ost, Mary, 18
- Overseas Registered Chinese School, 64, 82
- Oxlad, M. J., 15, 16
- Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), 102, 139, 160
- establishment of, 148
- 'P.A.T.H.S. to Adulthood' Project, 162
- Pearse, G. E., 65, 89n31
- Perkins, Steele, 49
- physical education (PE), 27, 45, 103, 111, 126–27, 131–32, 164
- Pioneer, The* (1958), 87
- Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (P-I-E) cycle, 168
- Po Leung Kuk (PLK), 18
- Pope, Beatrice M., 26–28, 32, 39, 40, 42–54, 52, 58, 61, 62, 65–67, 67, 69, 70, 74, 77–78, 81, 87, 96, 97, 105, 108, 115
- population growth, 2, 95
- postcolonial education reform, 168, 187n37
- Post-Secondary Colleges Ordinance, 96
- 'prayer wall' campaign, 160
- Precious Blood Golden Jubilee School Affair (1977–1978), 126
- primary education, expansion of, 17, 38, 47, 73, 75, 101–13, 143
- principal's report, 43, 62, 64, 78, 82–84, 86, 92, 108, 118

- professional training, 26, 38, 46
 profit-making private schools, 95
 quality assurance, mechanism of, 168
- Queen Elizabeth School, 106
 Queen Elizabeth Hospital, 94
 Queen's College, 4, 15, 20, 59, 80, 158, 180
- Radio Hong Kong, 81, 133, 163
 Raichandani, L. P., 105–7, 125
 Rayson Huang Report (1978), 126
 rededication service programme, 62–64
 refugee students, 64
 religious activities, 64, 69, 111–13, 163
 - evangelism, practice of, 3, 48, 61
 - evangelistic meetings, 52, 70, 112
 - Christian fellowship, 79, 82, 108, 112, 125, 138, 142, 160, 163, 182. *See also* Heep Kwong Tuen
 - morning prayers (assembly), 42, 45, 61, 64, 68, 69, 71, 80–82, 112, 125, 176
 - morning prayers in the chapel, 159
 - programmes of, 81
 - Religious Activities Committee (later renamed Christian Activities Committee), 111, 160, 163
 - Sunday School. *See* separate entry
- Rowell, T. R., 59
 Rural Reconstruction Movement, 31
- Sai Sa. *See* Chang Yin
- school annual, 5, 9, 43, 51, 61, 64, 70, 72, 76, 79–81, 87, 94, 108, 110–11, 113, 116–17, 126, 137. *See also* school magazine, *Vintage*
- school-based management (SBM), 167–68
 School Certificate Examinations, 46, 65, 68, 71, 79, 82, 83, 89n32, 92, 96, 106–7
 School Development and Accountability Framework, 168
 School Drama Festival. *See* drama
 School Improvement Programme (SIP), 151–52, 159, 170
 School Incorporation Ordinance (1961), 97, 168
 school magazine, 27, 81, 116, 118, 125, 134, 146, 160, 162. *See also* school annual
 School Management Committee, 169
 School Self-Evaluation (SSE), 168
 school sponsoring bodies (SSB), 150, 168
 Schools Music Festival, 5, 80, 110–11, 111, 131, 133, 143, 164, 176
- Schools Speech Festival, 5, 110, 131, 133, 163–64, 166
 science and mathematics, teaching and learning of, 78–79, 89n32, 105, 131, 165–66
 secondary education, 3, 75, 131
 - '3+3' structure, 172–73
 - expansion of, 95–96
 - postwar, 66–67
- Secondary School Entrance Examination (SSEE), 95, 122
 Secondary School Placement Allocation (SSPA) scheme, 115, 122
 Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant, 173
 Seven Year Primary School Expansion Plan, 95
 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), 160–61
 Shanghai Foreign Language School, 173
 She, George, 26, 58, 60, 61, 87, 93
 Sidebotham, M. J., 106, 115
 Sieux J. Y., 65, 105
Sing Tao Evening News, 81
 Sino-British Joint Declaration (1984), 140
 Sino-Japanese war, 46, 49, 51, 53, 66
sisbu-style schools, 6
 'sister forms' system, 48
 SKH Good Shepherd Primary School (1963), 95
 SKH Holy Trinity Primary School (1952), 95
 SKH St. Timothy Primary School (1957), 76, 95
 Smith, Bishop George, 15
 Smith, Lydia, 15, 17
 Snell, D.M., Mrs. *See* Hoskins, D. M.
South China Morning Post, 150
 Speech Day, 8, 27, 42–44, 46, 51–52, 64, 71–72, 80, 84, 86, 92, 95–96, 100, 103, 118, 123, 129, 136, 137, 159
 sports, 3, 6, 27, 45, 61, 71, 109, 110, 124, 128, 135, 137, 141, 145, 164, 182
 - athletics meet, 132, 138, 164, 171
 - Bank of China Hong Kong (BOCHK)
 - Bauhinia Bowl Award. *See* separate entry
 - coaches, 11, 128, 133, 141, 143, 164, 174
 - gymnastics and dance, 111, 131
 - inter-school swimming championship, 137
 - masculine-feminine divide, 111
 - Omega Rose Bowl. *See* separate entry
 - promotion of, 111, 131–33
 - sports day (in Fairlea Girls' School), 27
 - sports day (in Heep Yunn Primary School), 80, 103

- sportsmanship, 109
 sports teams, 45, 132, 138, 143, 143, 145, 164, 182
 swimming gala, 132, 138
See also physical education
 Sportsgirl of the Year (1991–1992), 141, 143
 staff-management consultative committee, 126
 Stanley Internment Camp, 54, 58
 St. Catharine's School for Girls, 158
 Stewart, Frederick, 4
 St. Paul's Co-educational College (SPCC), 17, 80, 110, 171
 St. Paul's Girls' College, 17, 27, 32, 38, 41
 St. Stephen's College (SSC), 4, 20, 22, 54, 61
 St. Stephen's Girls' College (SSGC), 4, 14, 20, 23–26, 37, 58, 102, 106
 Student Ambassador programme, 178
 student register, 77, 101
 Students' Association, 46, 79, 85
 Student Union, 108–10, 138
 Summer Bridging Course, 134
 Sunday School
 at Holy Trinity Church, 43, 64
 at Miss Hollis' day school, 47
 for primary day pupils and free school children, 69
 for Heep Yunn Primary School students, 112
- Taipo Rural Orphanage, 50, 54, 68
 Tai Wan Shan Swimming Pool, 128, 132
 Tam Ping Kuen, 99
 Tang Man Wai, Simon, 141, 180
 Tang Mei Chu. *See* Lee Tang Mei Chu, Anne
 teachers' training, 7, 27, 52, 59, 61
 teacher-student relationship, 10, 134, 145
 teacher training colleges, 65, 79
 teaching and learning, for a diverse student body
 challenges of, 162
 co-curricular language activities, 163–64
 discipline, guidance, and care, 162–63
 drama and visual arts. *See* separate entries
 religious activities. *See* separate entries
 science and mathematics, 165–66
 sports and music. *See* separate entries
 strengthening of, 161–67
 training of the mind, 166–67
 tertiary education, 6, 9, 64, 95–96, 162, 178
 opportunities of, 124
 T. K. Ann Report (1976), 126
tong fai (subscriptions), 62, 99, 122, 126, 133
- Tong, Ting Kin, Anselm (T. K. Tong), 166, 169, 175, 180
 traditional Chinese values and practices, 6, 111, 123
 True Light Middle School, 92, 98
 Tseung, F. I., Mrs., 62, 87, 96–97, 117, 128
 Tsik Pak Sun, 105, 125
 Tso, S. W., 20, 24, 30, 47
 Tsui, Bishop Louis, 140, 148, 170
 tuition fees, 39, 50, 56n75
 Tung Koon District Society School, 76, 95, 130
- Understanding the Adolescent Project, 162
 UNICEF Young Envoys, 178
 Union Theological College, Canton, 47–48
 United College, 96
 university admissions, 172
 university education, 68, 82. *See also* tertiary education
 with Chinese as medium of instruction, 87
 university entrance examinations, in China, 8
 University of Hong Kong (HKU), 7, 38
 admission of women, 24
 application to (1950s), 82
 Chinese Studies in, 7–8
 entry for students of Chinese, 8
 Urban Council, 95
 Urmston, A., 141
- Vancouver Heep Yunn Old Girls' Association, 127, 184
 vernacular education, 19, 21, 38
 Vernacular Middle School, 7
 Victoria College. *See* Queen's College
 Victoria Home and Orphanage (VHO), 2, 14, 38
 amalgamation with Fairlea Girls' School, 31–32
 from Bonham Road to Kowloon City, 18–19
 development and relocation of, 29–31
 separation from Heep Yunn School, 48–51
 idea of moving to the New Territories, 31
 staff and girls of, 30
 See also Fairlea Girls' School
Vintage, 137, 140, 143–47, 153, 159, 162, 176–78, 182–83
 visual arts, 165, 173, 186
 volunteer service trip to Liannan, 181–82, 181
- Wah Kiu Yat Po*, 81
Wah Kwong Tuen (Light of China Club), 27. *See also* YWCA Club
 Wah Yan College, Kowloon (WYK), 3

- Old Boys' Choir, 165, 183
 Walton, John, 105, 107, 112
 Wang Yim Bun, 99
 War of Shanghai, 47
 'War on Rape' campaign (1977), 122
 Wheeler, K. *See* Langford, K.
 White Paper on Primary Education and Pre-
 primary Services (1981), 139–40
 Wittenbach, Harry, 53, 78
 women missionaries, 4, 15–16, 22, 24, 26, 51
 Women's Conference of the South China Mission
 (1911), 22
 Wong Hang Yin, 45, 53
 Wong How Poe, 40
 Wong Ka Wing, 62, 70, 80, 82
 Wong Kuk Fong, 61
 Wong Kuk Yue, Elizabeth, 128, 166
 Wong Lee Pui Fong, 116
 Wong Mun Hang, 62, 82
 Wong Pui Lan, 78, 112, 133
 Wong Shen Yuen Tjen, 105, 127
 Wong Shiu Cheuk, 106
 Wong Wai Fong, 42, 53, 60, 65
 Woo, Catherine (Katie), 17, 32
 Woo Yee Kai, Mrs., 17, 41
 Wu, L., Mrs., 95, 105–7, 110, 115, 126, 134, 140
 Wu Wong Wai Tuen, 65
 Yang Ching, Carol, 126, 134, 140, 150, 151
 Yenching University, 46, 65
 Yeung Chung Girls' School, 27
 Yeung Pui King, 62
 Ying Wah Girls' School, 38, 46
 Yip Lit Luen Yuen, Rebecca, 127, 137
 Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)
 clubs, 27, 92
 Club Leadership Training Class, 47
 youth culture, in Hong Kong, 80
 Yu Chi Man, Joyce, 141, 164
 Yuen Hoi Kau, Allan, 174, 175, 180
 Yum Ming Man, Dora, 164