

Education, Ethnicity, Society and Global Change in Asia

The Selected Works of
GERARD A. POSTIGLIONE



GERARD A. POSTIGLIONE



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Education, Ethnicity, Society and Global Change in Asia

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For more than three decades, Gerard A. Postiglione has witnessed first-hand the globalization of education and society in Hong Kong, China and the wider Asian region. He is a pioneer among Western scholars in the field and his fluency in Chinese has resulted in innovative primary research and fieldwork. He has brought sociological, policy, and comparative perspectives to important educational issues in Asia. His research emphasizes the diversity and complexity of the region, from studies of education and the academic profession during Hong Kong's retrocession, to reform of ethnic minority education and the rise of world class universities in the Chinese mainland, as well as the complexity of mass higher education in an increasingly dynamic Asia. He is one of the researchers most sought-after by international organizations concerned with educational reform in Asia and by major media outlets to inform the public on issues of globalization and higher education.

Gerard was honoured by the Comparative and International Education Society with a Lifetime Contribution Award and Best Book Award for his contribution to the field. In 2016 he was inducted as a Fellow of the American Educational Research Association. This selection of 12 of his most representative papers and chapters documents his scholarship in comparative higher education in Asia.

Gerard A. Postiglione is Chair Professor of Higher Education, former Associate Dean for Research, and Director of the Wah Ching Centre on Education in China, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong.

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
Introduction: contexts, processes, and institutions	1
PART I	
Contexts: society and education	11
1 From Capitalism to Socialism? Hong Kong education within a transitional society	13
2 Education: China	35
3 Contexts and reforms in East Asian education—making the move from periphery to core	49
PART II	
Cultural processes: pluralism and assimilation	67
4 The education of ethnic minority groups in China	69
5 Ethnic minority identity and educational outcomes in a Rising China	82
6 Making Tibetans in China: the educational challenges of harmonious multiculturalism	94
7 Dislocated education: the case of Tibet	114

PART III

Institutions: universities under globalization 143

- 8 Maintaining global engagement in the face of national integration in Hong Kong 145
 - 9 Anchoring globalization in Hong Kong's research universities: network agents, institutional arrangements, and brain circulation 161
 - 10 The rise of research universities: the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology 186
 - 11 Research universities for national rejuvenation and global influence: China's search for a balanced model 217
 - 12 Global recession and higher education in eastern Asia: China, Mongolia and Vietnam 235
- Index* 265

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Education, in X. Zang (ed.) *Understanding Chinese Society*, London: Routledge Press, 2011, pp. 83–98.

Contexts and Reform in East Asian Education – Making the Move from periphery to Core, with Jason Tan, in G. Postiglione, G. and J. Tan, *Going to School in East Asia*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007, pp. 1–19.

Part II: Cultural processes: pluralism and assimilation

Education of Ethnic Groups in China, *The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education*, James Banks, ed., New York and London: Routledge Press, 2009, pp. 501–11.

Ethnic Identity and Educational Outcomes in China, International Encyclopedia of Education, in Peterson, Baker, McGaw (eds). *International Encyclopedia of Education*, Oxford: Elsevier, 2010, pp. 616–22.

Making Tibetans in China: Educational Challenges for Harmonious Multiculturalism, *Educational Review*, Vol. 60. No. 1, 2008, pp. 1–20.

Dislocated Education: The Case of Tibet, *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 2009, pp. 483–512.

Part III: Institutions: universities under globalization

The Academic Profession in Hong Kong: Maintaining Global Engagement in the Face of National Integration, *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 1998, pp. 30–45.

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Introduction

Contexts, processes, and institutions

During my 35 years in Asia, three topics shaped my research on education and are reflected in the selections chosen for this volume: social context, ethnicity, and globalization. The selected works in this volume are divided into three thematic sections: Contexts: society and education; Processes: pluralism and assimilation; and, Institutions: universities and globalization. These themes address three questions: What social forces determine the form and content of education systems? What do state schools do to ethnic minority students and how do they respond? Why do universities align with or resist globalization? The selections also reflect three shifts over 35 years. My early years were spent studying Hong Kong as it approached its reunion with the Chinese mainland, and I also began to study education in China and its Asian neighbors. My middle years were occupied with fieldwork in ethnic regions of western China. In later years my focus shifted toward globalization and how it shapes universities in Hong Kong, the Chinese mainland, and Asia. The rest of this chapter will introduce the selected works in each of the three thematic sections.

I. Contexts: society and education

This section analyzes education and society from three different theoretical perspectives: socialist transition, competing social demands, and world systems.

The first article, entitled “From Capitalism to Socialism?” was published in *Comparative Education Review*, and anticipated Hong Kong’s reunion with China. It was composed while on sabbatical at Stanford University, when there was intensive study of socio-political transition in the third world (Carnoy and Samoff 1990). At the time, socialist states were beginning to assume the trappings of capitalism. Socialist China was weary of capitalism but ready to integrate capitalist Hong Kong into the nationalist framework (Postiglione 1991). Deng Xiaoping had not yet taken his 1992 Southern Tour which reinvigorated the country’s market economy and kick started its economic boom. Although published eight years before Hong Kong’s reunion with China, this article has an interpretation that still rings true 20 years after the reunion, though changes since 2016 have begun to chart a new course for this special administrative region of China.

2 Introduction

The second selection introduces China's education system for the second edition of *Understanding Chinese Society* (Zang 2011, 2016). After providing a brief historical background, this extract takes a straightforward Weberian approach. It does so by explaining the form and content of education as a result of a market of demands for practical skills, status culture, and social control. These three demands operate simultaneously, but each takes precedence in different historical circumstances. In times of rapid economic growth, the demand for practical skills exerts the most influence, emphasizes relevant knowledge in the school curriculum, and prepares students for the labor market. In times of political strife, the demand of the state for social control takes precedence with an added emphasis on patriotism in the school curriculum. In more prosperous times as the urban middle class grows and gains influence, there is a demand on education for status culture to differentiate middle class children with prestigious certification and academic degrees. The market of social demands is recalibrated year by year according to how fast the economy grows, how much the urban middle class gains influence, and how much the state exerts control to ensure social stability. Case studies can be found in *Education and Social Change in China: Inequality in a Market Economy*, a collection of fieldwork papers that contrast the education of rural, ethnic minority, urban migrants and urban middle class students (Postiglione, 2006).

The final selection, entitled "Contexts and Reform in East Asian Education – Making the Move from Periphery to Core," was composed with Jason Tan, a past student and professor of the Singapore National Institute of Education. It contains an overview of education in East and Southeast Asia (Postiglione and Tan 2007). Originally written as an introduction to an 18-chapter volume, this abridged selection argues that Asia has been moving from the periphery to the core of the world system. While venerating world systems theory, this extract also gives it a decent burial in light of new economic circumstances and geopolitical realities. South Korea, Japan, and China, including Hong Kong and Taiwan, helped make world systems theory obsolete. Yet, this is less apparent in much of Southeast Asia. This selection points out how each country, in its own way, adapted to economic globalization and what this means for student life. The manner in which different socio-political systems adapt is selective, sometimes more democratic, and sometimes more autocratic. Meanwhile, intra-regional cooperation in education has grown amid the new regional environment of financial interdependence.

II. Processes: pluralism and assimilation

Having spent the first 28 years of life amid the ethnic diversity of New York City, I became attracted to the study of China's ethnic minorities – the subject of the selections in this section. China's 110 million ethnic minority population is relatively under researched. What happens when people of different ethnic groups come together? Does education promote assimilation, pluralism, or something in between?

The first selection, "Education of Ethnic Groups in China," introduces the study of China's ethnic minority education, including policies and related literature in order to raise the question of whether or not multiculturalism is an option. It poses the Western concept of multiculturalism against that popularized by Fei Xiaotong (Fei, 1989). Fei's *duoyuan yiti geju*, which may be rendered as "pluralism within the organic configuration of the Chinese nationality," or, in short, "pluralism within unity," gives recognition to the reality of China as a multiethnic state. However, it takes an historically situated assimilationist stance. In order to capture the reality of multiethnic socialization in such a large and diverse country, the selection poses a central research question: To what extent do schools in China create an atmosphere that has positive institutional norms toward diverse cultural groups. In fact, state policy accords prominence to the cultural characteristics of ethnic minority regions. Yet, in practice, ethnic minority cultures are often viewed by much of the citizenry as backward.

The second selection, "Ethnic Identity and Educational Outcomes in China," looks at ethnic identity by placing an emphasis on how identity is constructed by students within state schools. It does this by reviewing case studies of my past doctoral students who published books about how Tibetan, Uyghur, Mongol, Naxi and Korean students in China construct their ethnic and national identities within their school experience. While constructed through state schooling, these identities are rooted in the distinct ethnic ideological themes of each group. Moreover, China's interethnic relations have been pushed toward an era of critical pluralism by the intensification of market reforms and rapid urbanization. Where enlightened policies and practices in education produce greater interethnic understanding, critical pluralism leads to a harmonious multiculturalism. However, in other cases, critical pluralism leads to plural monoculturalisms when policies and practices in education inadequately alleviate interethnic misunderstanding and conflict, and where ethnic minority cultures resist national integration. In short, education policies and practices can play a pivotal role in determining the possibility of promoting harmony or separatism.

The third and fourth selections resulted from a decade of studying education in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of China. At the time, doing fieldwork in the TAR was a unique experience. The warmth and cultural intelligence of Tibetan people are legendary. The challenge was to uncover the truth in an atmosphere in which the Chinese state and international media were engaged with each other in a war of symbolic violence. It is easy enough to cherry pick data that aligns neatly with a particular interpretation. It was obvious from the start of the research that the truth lay somewhere in between two poles. My access to Tibetan areas of China outside of the TAR was helped by my engagement as a consultant with international development agencies, such as the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme. My research focused on bread and butter issues in rural and nomadic areas such as school finance, student dropouts, bilingual education, boarding schools, and teacher quality.

4 Introduction

The third selection, “Making Tibetans in China: Educational Challenges for Harmonious Multiculturalism,” is an abridged introduction to 50th anniversary of the journal *Educational Review*, part of a collection of studies by scholars of Tibetan education. The article reviews policies and realities in semi-rural and nomadic regions of the TAR (Postiglione, Jiao, Gyatsola 2005, 2006). These policies aimed to provide basic subsidies for items like food, lodging at school, and cloth (for clothes and blankets), as well as inland schools (which admit students to boarding schools throughout the country for their secondary education). This article delves into the issue of state schooling versus Tibetan culture. This issue is often viewed through the lens of education as a civilizing institution. Useful as it might be, this lens lacks an emphasis on student agency. Schooling also contains space where ethnic minority students construct their identities. They do it in ways that are not always prescribed by the state, in ways that are rooted in their ethnic ideological themes which give meaning to their everyday lives within and outside of school (Luo 2016, Yang 2017).

The fourth selection, “Dislocated Education: The Case of Tibet,” was the lead article for an issue of the *Comparative Education Review*. It examined a specific and sometimes controversial policy: education for ethnic minorities in boarding schools far away from their home communities. A similar policy was used unsuccessfully in three Western countries. Many scholars, present company included, have a fixed notion of schools in which minority students are plucked from their ethnic homelands and schooled in mainstream national culture far from home. There is good reason for such a viewpoint since Americans, Australians, and Canadians imposed such practices on native peoples with devastating results. This was less the case in the so-called Tibet inland (*neidi*) schools – boarding schools in major Chinese cities for graduates of primary school (most of who were Tibetans) from the TAR. Anglo-Christian cultures of America, Australia and Canada established boarding schools to eliminate native cultures to which they had no affinity. This contrasts with the case of Chinese and Tibetans who shared a Buddhist tradition, as well as adjunct geographies, for a thousand years. While Tibet *neidi* schools made ample use of the opportunity to inculcate patriotism to the Chinese state above any regional or ethnic allegiance, they also tolerated and even celebrated selected aspects of Tibetan culture. These schools inadvertently deepened ethnic identity by situating Tibetan students within Chinese cities. This particular selection uses Ogbu’s folk theory of success to explain how such a policy could be sustained for so many years with the support of Tibetan parents who were initially apprehensive but became convinced that *neidi* schools would lead to good jobs for their children when they return to Tibet (Ogbu 1987). The flip side is that these schools take the best students away from local secondary schools, and return many of them as teachers who are less fluent in Tibetan and without native fluency in Chinese. Since the research was carried out, the policy changed and become more focused on older students – those entering senior high school (Zhu 2007).

The works in this section followed publication of *China's National Minority Education: Culture, Schooling and Development*, a collection of research papers by a group of noted overseas specialists (Postiglione 1999). Taken together, that research and the selections in this volume cast some doubt on straight line assimilation theory and bring out the complexity of China's ethnic minority education, especially the stunning diversity across groups and regions. The debate in China continues about the policy, initiated at the establishment of the PRC, which designates large parts of the country as ethnic autonomous areas. Some scholars contend that this policy has deepened ethnic divisions rather than promoted national unity. Nevertheless, when compared internationally, China has been a relatively stable multiethnic nation considering the size of its minority population and the vast area they occupy – including half of the land and ninety percent of the border shared with 14 countries. There is no simple template for understanding China's ethnic intergroup relations. Critical pluralism as a theory of ethnic intergroup processes in China opens the way for regions to respond on the basis of different demands at different times with implications for what form of multicultural education is practiced. There is a need for further research to assess the extent to which educational policies support social equality, enliven the economy for local benefit, sustain a concerted cultivation of ethnic cultures, and offer opportunities for national inclusion.

III. Institutions: academies, universities and globalization

This section contains five articles about the institution of higher education, including research universities and the larger systems of which they are a part. The selections cover Hong Kong, the Chinese mainland and the adjoining region. There is an overriding interest in how globalization, particularly global networks and economic forces, shapes the rise of Asian universities.

The first article, "The Academic Profession in Hong Kong: Maintaining Global Engagement in the Face of National Integration," was published in *Comparative Education Review* shortly after Hong Kong's retrocession to Chinese sovereignty. Universities on the Chinese mainland had not yet experienced a period of institutional consolidation that would raise the average enrolment of a university from a few thousand to ten or twenty thousand students. Access to higher education in the Chinese mainland was only four percent in 1995, rising to 20 percent by 2005 and 40 percent by 2017. Hong Kong also expanded its enrolments in university degree places from eight to 16 percent between 1989 and 2000, and enrolment in all forms of postsecondary education reached 60 percent by 2015. Unlike in the Chinese mainland where only about fifteen percent of academic staff possessed a doctorate, most university academics in Hong Kong were hired with a doctorate. This first article cites the Hong Kong professoriate's key challenge: to maintain its professional autonomy and academic freedom, both of which have been challenged on occasion since 1997. Data in the article came from the first international survey of the academic profession, a study coordinated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement

6 *Introduction*

of Teaching. In comparative terms, Hong Kong academics were among the most internationally collaborative in their research, and deeply concerned about institutional governance. As of this writing, there is still nowhere in Asia where academic freedom is more highly protected by institutional heads. Nevertheless, as the first sentence of the last paragraph of the first selection states: “The main challenge for Hong Kong’s professoriate is to maintain its globalism while fostering the rapid expansion of academic exchange with universities in China” (Postiglione 1998: 45)

The second selection, “Anchoring Globalization in Hong Kong’s Research Universities: Network Agents, Institutional Arrangements and Brain Circulation,” explains how a society with seven million people and an economy that only allocates 0.7 percent of its GDP to research and development, can have more highly ranked research universities than any other city in the world. Known for its entrepreneurial prowess, global trade, and competitive business practices, Hong Kong evolved to become a center for the translation and diffusion of knowledge. Under its mini-constitution, making it a system distinct from that in the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong kept its universities closely integrated into global research networks, while benefitting from the economic and cultural rise of the rest of the country. An enabling environment of institutional governance, bilingual and cross cultural competency, and academic freedom helps ensure that it can anchor globalization in beneficial ways. Open borders and communication infrastructure drive a global reception and dissemination of scientific knowledge. In short, Hong Kong’s exceptionalism depends also on the ability of its universities to anchor globalization.

The third selection, “The Rise of Research Universities,” is a case study by invitation of the World Bank. It explains the unprecedented rise of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), which became a leading international university within ten years of its establishment. This study became part of a collection about the challenge for middle-income and developing countries—as well as some industrial nations, to build and sustain successful research universities. That challenge includes how to participate effectively in the global knowledge networks on an equal basis (Altbach and Salmi 2011). HKUST capitalized on the advantages long enjoyed by Hong Kong’s premier university, the University of Hong Kong. Yet, HKUST also had the advantage of unique timing. It joined the fold of research universities at a period of rapid expansion in higher education, when the Hong Kong Research Council was being established, and when Hong Kong’s economy was able to provide the highest academic salaries in the world. In anticipation of Hong Kong’s return to China, HKUST attracted outstanding overseas Chinese scientists and scholars, many already distinguished at top tier American universities. HKUST was also able to focus heavily on the fields of science and technology and emphasize the commercialization of scientific discoveries with expertise in its business faculty. Students were required to take liberal arts courses, a curriculum reform that was unique at the time in Hong Kong’s universities.

The fourth selection, “Research Universities for National Rejuvenation and Global Influence: China’s Search for a Balanced Model,” arose from an invitation to guest edit a special issue of the journal, *Higher Education*, about the rise of Asia’s research universities. This research was driven by an emergent discourse – that globalization will shift from Westernization or Easternization. The question became: Can a Chinese university model develop and eventually become a force in international higher education? The Chinese model has its roots in the academies of the Tang and Song Dynasties. The PRC regime that leads the world’s second largest economy is promoting national rejuvenation and a “China Dream”. Since culture follows power, China began its soft power initiative that included building Confucian Institutes around the world. In May of 1998 I was present at a speech by China’s president in which he told an international audience that China would build world class universities. I wondered about the long-term implications of this for Hong Kong’s universities. How were Hong Kong’s universities to integrate with counterparts in the rest of China when they were at opposite end of the continuum with respect to institutional governance and academic culture? With data from the Changing Academic Profession project, an international study of 19 countries, it became clear that there were key differences in university governance and academic culture between the systems in Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland.

Despite the differences in academic governance with leading Western systems, China’s universities will continue to rise in the global rankings and their international influence will grow. While Hong Kong’s top universities have an academic profession with an international profile unsurpassed anywhere else, China’s top universities are also riveted on internationalization by providing preferential policies to attract returning talent home from overseas, as well as by permitting foreign universities to run degree programs and set up campuses.

Nevertheless, China’s universities embody a precarious balance. On the domestic side they must respond to the rising demand for greater access to higher education, the demands of the new urban middle class for high status degrees and credentials, the demand of the industrial elite for relevant knowledge and skills, and the demand of the state for social stability. Meanwhile, the aspiration “to go global” necessitates a difficult juggle. That juggle comprises a deepening internationalization, an increase in institutional autonomy, and a growing concern by government about a loss of national sovereignty in education.

Research for the fifth and final selection in this book was invited by the Asian Development Bank, and considers the inevitable. Global and regional economic shocks will occur every decade or two. In 1998, Asia experienced a regional economic crisis that had a significant effect on higher education by pushing universities toward public-private partnerships in order to survive. A decade later, Asia was rocked by a global economic recession. Vulnerable populations throughout Asia could no longer afford to pay for their children’s higher education. The global economic recession also threatened to stifle national initiatives

8 Introduction

for building knowledge economies by making it more difficult to attract talented scientists and teachers who could offer quality instruction and conduct world standard research.

This final selection, “Global Recession and Higher Education in Eastern Asia: China, Mongolia and Vietnam,” published in the journal *Higher Education*, looks at how higher education systems in three Asian countries handled economic shocks. With an open and exposed economy, Mongolia had to moderate its strategic plans for higher education, though it has since moved back on track. Vietnam focused on widening its pathways to technical and professional higher education with an emphasis on science and technology. Although China has a larger population than both Mongolia and Vietnam, it managed to limit its exposure to external shocks. China handled the earlier Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s by expanding higher education in order to keep youth out of a tight labor market for four more years until the crisis subsided. It also viewed the crisis as an opportunity to stimulate the domestic economy through consumption by a growing number of single-child urban middle class households who were very willing to transfer a chunk of income for the opportunity to acquire a university education for their children. It behooves Asian universities to anticipate future economic shocks and take advantage of them in ways that encourage intra-regional cooperation, and push university systems toward innovative ways to protect vulnerable populations.

Conclusion

The selections in this book hardly do justice to the complexity of education in Asia, a region arrayed with political systems that take different approaches to principles and practices of democracy and equality. Some economies relied on excavation and low skill manufacturing. All aim to expand their service economies with high tech manufacturing. Asia is no longer on the periphery of the world system. If anything, it is becoming the core again, with China returning to the position it held for 17 Centuries as the world’s GDP leader. In short, contexts, processes, and institutions can help explain how this dynamic region approaches educational reform.

As this collection illustrates, cultural values and historical experiences still constitute a context for debate about educational reform, especially as societies grapple with overlapping philosophies, rapid social change, new methods of learning and assessment, and new management practices. Those who look back at the era straddling the 20th and 21st Centuries will have to untangle themes such as globalization, decentralization, and privatization as they wove their way into a landscape of educational reform, with results that defy simple generalizations. Educational reforms in Asia will continue to address new challenges. However, the results already include some striking accomplishments.

Students in Singapore, South Korea, Shanghai, and Hong Kong nearly lead the world in mathematics and science achievement. Asian students overwhelmingly populate prestigious graduate schools of science and engineering at leading

American universities. Asia's top-tier research universities have indeed risen. According to the Times Higher Education, almost one-eighth (24) of the world's top 200 are Asian universities, most with Confucian heritages. This could rise to one-quarter by 2050 (Postiglione, 2015). But world class universities are not enough if systems of higher education remain relatively weak. Moreover, Asian higher education is highly vulnerable to global economic trends.

I have been privileged to be a scholar in residence for 35 years in Asia. Looking back, I am also humbled by the work of many colleagues who have explained Asia far better than I have. Finally, any errors in this text are my responsibility alone.

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Part I

Contexts

Society and education

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

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

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

Education in Transition Societies

Education and Hong Kong's Future

With the formal signing of the *Sino-British Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong* in 1985, the predominant vision of Hong Kong society toward its future was one of continued stability and prosperity within a framework that would permit a great degree of autonomy under the mother country's sovereignty. Until June 1989, conditions existed for the realization of that vision and were to be reflected in the Basic Law of the post-1997 Special Administrative Region (SAR) government. After June 4, 1989, the Basic Law Drafting Committee temporarily suspended work; the conditions for the fulfillment of the post-1997 vision had indeed changed.³ Accordingly, society's expectations toward education also began to change as the problem of reconciling capitalism, socialism,

and patriotism became more pronounced. Hundreds of thousands of secondary and postsecondary school students, teachers, and administrators joined demonstrations to express their sentiments on political events in China.⁴ Education department officials ignored enforcement of the long-standing ban on politics in schools, and school principals and teachers wrestled with how to react to students' political poster displays and their participation in territory-wide demonstrations.⁵ Many months after the suppression of the democracy movement in Beijing, Hong Kong remained in a severe confidence crisis as cooperation between the British and Chinese governments became strained.

Educational Policy Intervention Points within the Transfer of Power

Such events added a new dimension to the already unusual nature of Hong Kong's decolonization process. Power has gradually shifted to the local elite and the new middle class, yet most power still resides with the British government. Hong Kong's people still look to the British government to press for a speedier democratization although Beijing denies its appropriateness. The local elite assert that Hong Kong is not a colony in the classical sense yet express concern that in 1997 the mother country may gain the same amount of influence wielded by the British in the territory's affairs, including education. Some refer to the transfer of sovereignty as the replacement of one hegemonic force with another because the territory's future degree of autonomy will not be determined by the colonial metropole or even by the people of the territory itself but rather by the Beijing government. Confidence in the Sino-British Agreement on Hong Kong's future will be won or lost within a plural society that favors decolonization and supports Chinese sovereignty yet remains apprehensive in the face of Beijing's interference in Hong Kong's affairs. The degree to which decolonization is occurring as opposed to the replacement of one force by another is a complex question whose answer awaits the outcome of struggles over representative government in Hong Kong, and the direction of future events in China, including a change of governments. The precise nature and characteristics of Hong Kong as a transitional society are inseparable from the evolution of these factors during the crucial run-up to 1997.

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

Hong Kong's economy has long contributed to nation building in China. It continues to do so, and for this reason it will not be dismantled for at least fifty years after the return of sovereignty in 1997. Hong Kong's political system has

made no such direct contribution.⁶ Its future political system will be defined by the Basic Law, promulgated by China's National People's Congress, and will be strictly limited by the boundaries of the new SAR.⁷ This is not to suggest a separation between the economic and political spheres; it is only that economics and politics cannot be separated in understanding Hong Kong's development. A secluded bureaucratic polity has existed alongside an atomistic Chinese society to provide a positive noninterventionism within the economic sphere, thus allowing capitalism to operate virtually unfettered by popular influence.⁸ This, coupled with government control over land sale, and the availability of low-wage labor—the latter made possible through government subsidized housing and inexpensive food and clothing from China—explain the tremendous success of the domestic economy.⁹

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

Informing the Study of Education in Transitional Societies

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

The conditions of education where socialist transition is under way are unique.¹⁴ Here, changes in education are complete and comprehensive, taking in the system's form, structure, and philosophical foundations. Socialist transition theory

may have limited relevance to Hong Kong's initial phase. While socialist transition is viewed as a reality within the context of the "one-country, two-system" policy, such a shift will require at least 50 years. Most Hong Kong residents consider such a situation far too remote for concern at present. Nevertheless, today's primary school children will be at the helm of socialist transition in 2047. Moreover, given that the 2047 transition, not unlike the 1997 transition, will need a ten-year preparation period before the actual conversion, the education system might well begin to consider how it should prepare students. Furthermore, there are indications that a socialist bourgeoisie may gain influence in government departments such as the police. Here, the recruitment ban on graduates from the so-called leftist or patriotic secondary schools has been lifted, as it has in government-run postsecondary teacher training colleges.¹⁵ The leftist secondary schools are also poised to join the government's proposed direct subsidy scheme for private schools, a scheme many consider elitist. These schools rejected the formal curriculum in the 1960s and early 1970s, when the Cultural Revolution spilled over into Hong Kong, and were excluded from the colonial education system until recently.¹⁶ The government has also established a Provisional Council of Academic Accreditation that will consider the standing of educational qualifications from China (including Taiwan) as they relate to Hong Kong's occupational structure.¹⁷ The increasing emigration of talented members of the Hong Kong work force and the 1 percent unemployment rate have compounded the importance of the Council's work. Finally, before June 4, 1989, the American Chamber of Commerce and the Institute of International Education in Hong Kong were addressing the problem of getting students from the People's Republic of China to return home after completing their degree studies in the United States. They had proposed that these students be recruited to firms in Hong Kong as an intermediary step toward their eventual return, a measure that could supply much-needed highly skilled labor for Hong Kong.¹⁸ Such moves are important elements in Hong Kong's transition.

Hong Kong informs the study of education within transitional societies by adding such new dimensions as the expansion of externally sponsored national socialist capital, the increasing numbers of immigrants born and raised under socialism, and the further integration of leftist elements into government organs and the occupational structure. At the same time, liberal groups are expanding in the territory, some even advocating the downfall of the Beijing government or communism itself.¹⁹ These four elements become even more important when viewed against the background of Hong Kong's evolving cultural ethos and the dual identities, Chineseness and "Hongkongeseness."²⁰ As a Chinese society with a long history of colonial rule, Hong Kong possesses structural features distinguishable from those of both traditional and modern China. This has fostered an ethos that represents "at once a departure from dominant Chinese values and a continuation of Chinese heritage."²¹ The dual nature of the ethos is visibly a postwar phenomenon and has been particularly salient with the advent of the 1997 issue and the younger generation's rise to prominence. Furthermore, the sharp value differences in these two identities become more distinct as they are

situated within selected types of schools. These types differ on such important cultural, social, and political features as the medium of instruction (English or Chinese), the school's political leaning (in support of Beijing or Taipei), their connection with various clansmen and provincial associations in China, and their social class composition.²² The plurality of Hong Kong schools has existed and flourished alongside a highly centralized educational policy-making bureaucracy. This bureaucratic polity has enjoyed a high degree of insulation as part of a government not directly representative of the people. Nevertheless, through a variety of formal and informal consultative channels, the educational policy process maintained a threshold level of legitimacy within the Chinese community, even though schools with stronger ties to the colonial elite enjoyed greater influence.

Educational Policy Options and the Resolution of Contradictions

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

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

The Sino-British Declaration and the Educational Policy Process

The Sino-British Declaration in 1985 provided a blueprint for the territory's future. Although the agreement furnishes little detail aside from declaring the return of sovereignty over Hong Kong to China, it nevertheless permits Hong Kong to maintain its capitalist modes of production along with the general lifestyle of its people. "Gong Ren Zhi Gong," Hong Kong people running Hong

Kong, is a basic tenet of the document. The Sino-British Declaration contains a brief provision concerning education that is similar to that found in the Draft Basic Law.

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

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

Maintaining Legitimacy within the Policy Process

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

Under the Education Ordinance, the Director of Education controls all government schools and supervises all other kindergarten, primary, and secondary schools in the territory.²⁵ He also supervises postsecondary institutions except universities and polytechnics. The ordinance provides the director with broad-ranging powers over the life and practice of schooling, staff and pupils,