The rapid expansion of Hong Kong's education system has given rise to new social dilemmas which have disturbed the balance between traditional values and Western ideas. These dilemmas have been apparent in three critical areas. First, the relationship between the territory's economic needs for stratified manpower on the one hand, and the social demand for more formal education on the other, has created problems which have intensified as more educational opportunities have become available. Second, the rapid expansion has materialized by maximizing the efficient use of resources. Such a premium on efficiency is attained at the expense of equity. When, however, educational opportunities increase, questions of equity again come to the fore. Finally, with the spread of education to a larger population, the pressure to consider individual needs increases. Such a pressure runs counter to the tradition of conformity in educational practice. None of these dilemmas is unique to Hong Kong. But the exceptionally rapid and recent growth in educational provisions has brought these conflicting values to the surface and has posed new and unexpected problems for those who make and implement policy in the territory.

This article focuses, initially, on the expansion of the educational system in the 1970s and then concentrates, specifically, on the dilemmas which have accompanied this expansion. Education now receives the largest amount of public money of any social policy sector.¹ It is a major employer in government and government-subvented organizations and it caters for a large segment of the population. It is appropriate, in this light, to examine the ways and means whereby value conflicts are resolved. This relates to the extent the government relies on expertise and consultation. The paper argues that such a reliance provides the colonial government with the legitimacy to formulate educational policies. The changing political context demands special attention be paid to this issue of legitimacy.

Cheng Kai Ming is Lecturer in the Department of Education at the University of Hong Kong.
The Rapid Expansion of Education in the 1970s

The Hong Kong Education System

The structure of Hong Kong's education system can best be illustrated by the chart in Figure 1. Briefly, compulsory education starts at the age of six when pupils attend schools according to the Primary One Allocation (POA) scheme. Upon completion of primary education at the age of twelve, they are allocated by a Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) scheme into various secondary schools. Compulsory education ends at the age of fifteen (Form Three) when pupils are re-allocated to different institutions by the Junior Secondary Education Assessment (JSEA) methods. Roughly 75 per cent of the Form Three (Third grade in secondary education) population proceed to general senior secondary classes in government-aided schools (although another 17 per cent proceed to private schools); around 5 per cent to courses in technical institutes or training centres. The Education Commission in 1984 proposed to improve the two percentages to roughly 86 per cent and 10 per cent respectively by 1991.2 Around one-third of the secondary school graduates continue their education in the sixth forms. Roughly 11 per cent of the age group study in local universities, polytechnics and other post-secondary institutions; among these, less than 5 per cent are in first degree courses, with the target of increasing this to 8 per cent in 1994.3 The number of young people in higher education overseas is estimated to be greater than that in local institutions.

Because of the mismatch between the designed and the actual age distribution, it is not always meaningful to talk about exact enrolment ratios. The rough ratios in Table 1, however, may help to figure out the size of the system.

Spectacular Expansion in the 1970s

Compulsory primary education was introduced in 1971. Since then, Hong Kong education has expanded with a speed that has hardly been paralleled internationally: nine-year compulsory education was achieved in 1981, only ten years after the introduction of compulsory primary education. In 1971 less than 50 per cent of the age group were studying in senior secondary classes; whereas in 1984, the ratio was around 86 per cent.4 There were two polytechnics, eight technical institutes and sixteen training centres in 1986,5 while in 1971 there was only the Technical College and a new technical institute. Local higher education opportunities have more than tripled in
Figure 1
Education System of Hong Kong

List of Abbreviations

CUHK = The Chinese University of Hong Kong
ED = Education Department
F6 = Sixth Forms (Form 6 and 7 in Anglo-Chinese Schools and Form 6 in Chinese Middle Schools)
HKAL = Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination
HKCE = Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKHL = Hong Kong Higher Level Examination
HKU = University of Hong Kong
JSEA = Junior Secondary Education Assessment
POA = Primary One Allocation Scheme
POLYS = Hong Kong Polytechnic and Hong Kong City Polytechnic
PREVOC = Prevocational Schools
SSPA = Secondary School Places Allocation Scheme
TI = Technical Institutes (running craft and technician courses)
UPGC = University and Polytechnic Grants Committee
VTC = Vocational Training Council
Table 1

Rough Enrolment Ratios as a Percentage of Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3–4</td>
<td>Nursery</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–6</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–12</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–15</td>
<td>Junior Secondary</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–17</td>
<td>Senior Secondary/Craft</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17–19</td>
<td>Sixth Forms/Others</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 and above</td>
<td>Tertiary Studies</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics from the Education Department, the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee and the Vocational Training Council.

those fifteen years. Special education which was almost totally neglected in the 1960s has developed into a considerable sector. Indeed, with the exception of significant efforts to develop adult education, expansion in all educational areas has been spectacular.

*The Economic Orientation*

When the human capital paradigm emerged elsewhere in the early 1960s as the greatest force behind educational expansion, Hong Kong was quick to set up in 1964 a Special Committee on Higher Education which attempted to catch up with the fashionable trend of manpower deliberations and international comparison. Almost immediately afterwards, a more practical Industrial Training Advisory Council (ITAC) was established which evolved into what is now the Vocational Training Council (VTC). The ITAC started its first manpower surveys in 1966-1967 with International Labour Office (ILO) advice. The surveys adopted an employer’s opinion approach which is still the prevailing methodology. The planning of technical institutes and training centres were largely based on these surveys.

Manpower requirement notions entered the arena of general education policy-making in the mid-1970s. This was highlighted in the deliberations of the 1977 Green Paper and the subsequent 1978 White Paper. For the first
time in the history of Hong Kong, the 1977 Green Paper\textsuperscript{9} based its recommendations on manpower considerations.\textsuperscript{10} Thereafter, the Diversification Report\textsuperscript{11} also used manpower perspectives and was at once taken by the government as a major reference in the planning of education\textsuperscript{12}. The manpower requirements approach came to its climax in 1980 when a comprehensive manpower model was constructed by the Committee to Review Post-secondary and Technical Education.\textsuperscript{13}

Apart from these continuous efforts to put education policies under economic scrutiny, the most dramatic incident was perhaps the introduction of the nine-year compulsory education. Research evidence seems to support the conclusion that the rapid introduction of nine-year free and compulsory education was not unrelated to conditions attached to the securing of trading rights with the European competitors. Apparently, nine-year free and compulsory education was introduced at the moment when the labour age of fourteen had put Hong Kong's international credibility at stake.\textsuperscript{14}

All parties were taken by surprise when MacLehose, the Governor, announced the introduction of a nine-year compulsory education programme in 1977. The announcement actually pre-empted the Green Paper\textsuperscript{15} which was published immediately after the announcement.

Evidently, the expansion of the education system in the 1970s was attributable to the economic needs of the community, variously defined, and the government's changing emphasis on the nature of these needs.

\textit{The Emphasis on Efficiency}

The expansion of education in Hong Kong has been made possible only because of an efficient utilization of resources. This can be illustrated by a number of examples.

When the extension of compulsory education was implemented in Form One (age 12-13) in 1978, 55 per cent of the Form One places were "bought places" acquired from private independent schools.\textsuperscript{16} Although the number of "bought places" has been reduced in the 1980s, the practice remains a typical measure aimed at achieving efficiency. In the "bought places" scheme the government makes use of pupil places in selected private schools by paying school fees for the pupils. In so doing, the government has been able to "create" an abundance of new places and achieve the target of free universal attendance almost overnight. There are a number of advantages in the "bought places" scheme which make it more than simply an expedient measure. Firstly, it saves the government the physical cost of
building new schools. Secondly, the arrangements are short-term and they give the government the flexibility for future expansion or contraction. Thirdly, the unit recurrent cost is cheaper in private schools than in public schools.

Another measure to maximize the utility of resources in secondary education is what is known as “floating classes”. The idea of floating classes is to accommodate thirty-one classes in a standard school building of twenty-four classrooms. To achieve this, a number of classes have to change rooms from lesson to lesson, hence the name “floating”. There is a full utilization of the laboratories, special rooms, playgrounds and even the assembly hall, not necessarily restricted to the purposes for which they were designed. The standard class size was established at forty students and schools are expected to take up the full capacity. The accommodation of a standard school building therefore increases from 960 to 1,240 pupils, an immediate 30 per cent expansion. Again, the measure saves physical costs while providing flexibility in planning.

Such measures are by no means haphazard. They are based on a planning ideology which places efficiency as a top priority. This is best represented by a UMELCO (Unofficial Members of Executive and Legislative Councils) paper which led to the 1974 White Paper on education. The paper, which was never published, was produced at the request of the Governor, MacLehose, to speed up the pace of expansion. The measures for improvement included “bought places”, “floating classes” and other devices such as “bi-sessional classes” (two half-day schools in the same building), “rotation classes” (pupils attend school on a day-rotation, so that only part of the school attends each day), “staggered hours” (pupils attend school at different times so that only part of the student body is on campus in each hour), enlarged class size, shared school buildings, converted primary school premises, and so on and so forth.\(^{17}\)

The emphasis on the efficient utilization of physical resources is not only significant in the planning of secondary education. Primary schools are still largely running two half-day sessions. The current experiment of converting some of these into whole-day schools is more a remedy for redundant buildings than a deliberate policy to improve teaching quality. As far as higher education is concerned, there has, until very recently, been a policy of relying on overseas institutions to satisfy a large part of the demand. Apart from the practice of subsidizing Hong Kong undergraduates in United Kingdom universities, there was even once a proposal at senior levels to explore the possibilities of having a Hong Kong university outside Hong Kong.
It is fair to say that these efficiency measures have contributed significantly to the quick expansion of the system. The whole ideology of emphasising efficiency has created a strong capacity for adaptability, and this ideology contributes to the fact that education policies in Hong Kong seldom fail in their implementation. However, the rapid growth in the scale of education has also given rise to a number of problems.

**Problems with the Rapid Expansion**

The rapid expansion has brought about problems at least in three dimensions: the inflated social demand for education, the concern for equity and the satisfaction of individual needs.

**Inflated Social Demand**

As in other countries, the social demand for education\textsuperscript{18} is hardly an independent variable. It is often stimulated by supply.

1. **Senior Secondary Education**

In 1971, when Hong Kong was just starting its compulsory primary schooling, 50 per cent (gross ratio) of the primary school leavers went on to study in senior secondary classes.\textsuperscript{19} In 1981, when a nine-year compulsory education materialised for the first time, 71 per cent (gross ratio) of the pupils who left primary school three years previously studied in Form Four.\textsuperscript{20} In 1985, this further increased to 82 per cent.\textsuperscript{21} Table 2 demonstrates the trend.

During the 1970s, when manpower forecasting and other economic deliberations shaped education policies, the policy targets often looked generous when compared with the demonstrated social demand. This generosity in the targets, however, was often defeated by the actual developments that followed. That is, the social demand for education outgrew economic needs.

In 1974, when the actual Form Four/Primary Six ratio (that is, of Primary Six leavers attending Form Four three years later)\textsuperscript{22} was just above 50 per cent, the policy target was to provide 55 per cent (of the age group) general education places in 1979. The 1974 White Paper in fact contained the confident assertion that “this latter figure may well be not far too short of the total of those who want to continue their education after Form III”.\textsuperscript{23} The actual ratio in 1979 turned out to be 66 per cent.\textsuperscript{24}

Similarly, in 1978, when the demonstrated Form Four/Primary Six
### Table 2
**Gross Survival Rate: Primary Six to Form Four**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (t)</th>
<th>Form Four (t)/Primary Six (t-3) Percentage</th>
<th>Policy Target Percentage Age Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>55 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>60/74 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>85.6 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Target for 1979 laid down by the 1974 White Paper.  


The escalated social demand has apparently caused the government to re-think its planning strategy and adapt itself to a “social demand approach”. This is evident in the Education Commission Report No. 1 published in 1984, which adopted 85.6 per cent as the target ratio for general education when the demonstrated ratio in 1983 was 84.6 per cent. However, the social demand approach immediately resulted in protests from the industrial sector. There have been worries among industrialists that an inflated aspiration for general education will create difficulties in...
recruiting low-skilled labour trainees,\textsuperscript{28} and low-skilled labour is believed to contribute most to the competitiveness of Hong Kong in the international market.

2. Higher Education

The situation in higher education is similar. The size of first degree courses remained at around 2 per cent of the age group in the late 1970s. The government then maintained a growth rate of 3 per cent for universities and this kept the expansion of universities at a very modest level. Even when the growth rate was changed to 4 per cent, this did not have any significant implications. Hence, the demand for higher education was not visible in the expansion of local institutions.

Rather, the social demand of higher education was, and still is, exhibited by the number of students studying overseas. In a review in 1981, it was estimated that for every university student in Hong Kong, there were two Hong Kong students in universities in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.\textsuperscript{29} In fact, Hong Kong has become one of the world's largest contributors of overseas students. According to the latest UNESCO statistics, in 1982,\textsuperscript{30} Hong Kong is the largest "sender" of overseas students to Canada, the second largest in both the United Kingdom and Australia, and number seven in the United States. This is further modified by unofficial but reliable data that Hong Kong has become the largest "sender" of overseas students to the United Kingdom since 1984 and is challenging Malaysia for the foremost position in Australia. There should be no doubt that in terms of density ratio among populations, Hong Kong sends a far larger proportion of students overseas than any other country.

The 1980s witnessed a rapid growth in the number of students in educational institutions in Hong Kong. The first degree courses catered for 4.8 per cent of the age group in 1986-87 and this is to be increased to 6 per cent in 1990-91 and 8 per cent in 1995-96.\textsuperscript{31} The expansion in non-degree higher education is even more remarkable. Yet, despite this, it is still too early to say whether or not the Hong Kong government will turn to a "social demand approach" in higher education, even though the establishment of a third university is already on its way. If the Education Commission's proposal for a comprehensive system of open education does materialize, then the scene is not too far from a total "social demand approach".\textsuperscript{32}

The change of policy approach from manpower requirements to social demand may have far-reaching repercussions on the education system and
The Issue of Equity

When the manpower approach was the main concern and efficiency was given top priority, people were expected to tolerate large degrees of inequity. When educational opportunities began to even out and the government turned to satisfying social demands, the issue of equity emerged.

1. Resources Distribution

"Bought places" is an obvious case of inequity. The disparity between unit teaching costs in "bought places" and other school places is conspicuous, as Table 3 illustrates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Government Places</th>
<th>Government-Aided Places</th>
<th>&quot;Bought Places&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985/86</td>
<td>10,300</td>
<td>7,304</td>
<td>3,359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986/87</td>
<td>11,891</td>
<td>8,752</td>
<td>3,837</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In other words, the rapid accomplishment of nine-year compulsory education was made possible with the help of a large sector of "second rate" school places. The government traded equity for efficiency. This would have been intolerable if Hong Kong were a Western community.

However, the disparity involved has only become a matter for public discussion when the government announced its intention to reduce "bought places" and the private schools had to defend their existence. On the one hand, there are the private schools and the advocates of equality. They press for equality of resources for all students. The argument is a strong one, because after all the student attendance is "compulsory" and it is a case of "compulsory inequality". On the other hand, to eliminate all
“bought places” is to force the planners to give up the emphasis on efficiency and flexibility. An obvious alternative to “buying” school places is to build more government-aided schools, but that would be workable only if the community were prepared to tolerate redundant places in times of declining demography.

The equity problem also occurs in higher education. University places are still scarce and heavily subsidized. The unit recurrent cost for a university student is almost ten times that for a secondary school student, but the university student is made to pay only around 5 per cent of his or her recurrent cost.\(^{33}\) The situation is even more remarkable because the monetary rate of return on higher education in Hong Kong is significantly high by international comparison.\(^{34}\) Thus, Hong Kong is paying a large amount of resources to a small group of its young people who will earn a great deal relative to the rest of the population after graduation. This would be quite unacceptable in a Western culture but has as yet aroused no controversy in Hong Kong.

2. Equal opportunity

Although Hong Kong has been “colonized” by the British for over 120 years, the tradition in the institution of education is still very much Chinese. As is the case in most countries with some Confucian tradition, the education system is designed for competition rather than for equal opportunity, for selection rather than for qualification.

One example is the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) scheme. The scheme, started in 1978, seeks to allocate primary school leavers to secondary schools. The actual scheme comprises assessment of pupils’ performance through school internal assessment, coupled with scaling of schools using pupils’ academic aptitude tests. The scheme replaces the old Secondary School Entrance Examination which was a highly competitive public examination. It also avoids competitive entrance examinations held by respective schools. On the one hand, the SSPA scheme can claim the successful achievement of the major criteria which are accepted in Western societies: (a) even geographic distribution of pupils, (b) even distribution of types of schools in each geographic unit (called “school nets”), (c) fulfilment of parental choice to the largest extent possible, and (d) elimination of the pressure due to public examination. On the other hand, however, the net result of the SSPA system is that pupils with better performance end up in better secondary schools — a tradition of the society.
The last point is controversial. The SSPA scheme practically divides pupils in each "school net" into five "bands" according to their academic attainments. This is effectively a step towards mixability teaching, because the best schools may now take in pupils in the twentieth percentile while they used to be in the top five percentiles. The radical pressure groups are still dissatisfied and view this as a preservation of the "elite system" where the Band One students are given first choice. Those who hold opposite views worry that such a measure would dilute the quality of education and jeopardize the spirit of competitiveness which has been regarded as essential to the survival of Hong Kong. The controversy developed into a hot debate when government decided to change the five-band system to a twenty-five-band system. The opponents argue that this last decision will effectively revert the mixability trend and increase the difference among schools. Supporters argue that this yields more efficient and effective teaching.

Controversy also surrounds the Junior Secondary Education Assessment (JSEA) which is essentially a device to re-allocate pupils who have completed compulsory schooling to post-compulsory institutions. Technically, the assessment is similar to SSPA, except that an attainment test replaces the aptitude test and all subjects are counted. The result of the re-allocation channels pupils into government-aided general schools, pre-vocational schools or craft courses in technical institutes.

The problem with the JSEA is that the allocation does not match parents' or pupils' aspirations. There are often more people who opt for general education than places available in the government-aided sector. In 1983, for example, 84.6 per cent of the age group attended Form Four when only places for 61 per cent were available in government-aided schools. The JSEA therefore in practice constitutes another open competition which interrupts the school system. Since its birth on paper in 1974 and its implementation in 1981, there has been continuous pressure from both the radical and conservative groups to get rid of the JSEA. In response, the government eventually announced its intention to abolish the JSEA in 1987. Yet this policy does not seem to satisfy the opponents of JSEA, since there remains a problem of re-allocation.

The only solution to achieve equity would be for the government to over-provide places in both general and technical education, so that everyone who wishes to study in either stream would be satisfied. This is a common practice in most developed countries, but is obviously against the traditional doctrine of the efficient use of resources. Over-provision of places is regarded as a wastage of resources in Hong Kong. The Diversification Report, from
a purely economic point of view, did advocate over-provision. Such a proposal was exceptional and in fact received little attention from the government. If over-provision is out of question, then equal opportunity becomes a myth and satisfaction of social demand remains a partial truth.

**The Issue of Individual Needs**

The spread of education opportunities has also given rise to the dilemma between conformity and individual needs.

1. **Diversification of Curriculum**

There has long been a call for diversification of the curriculum. The establishment of the Curriculum Development Council in 1972 and the reconstituted Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) in 1978 was to serve the purpose of designing a “common core” curriculum to serve non-academic objectives. This was meant to be in line with the coming of universal attendance. The “common core” and “non-academic” notions, however, did not automatically lead to diversification. In recent years, there have been new advocates for a diversified curriculum. In 1979, the Board of Education released a Report on Sixth Form Education and called for a broadening of the sixth form curriculum. Committees were set up within the Education Department for that purpose. Such committees soon died a silent death. In 1986, reform of the curriculum has become the focus of attention when the Education Commission proposed to insert an Intermediate Level examination in the sixth forms, with the call for review of the nine-year compulsory education.

The school curriculum remains, in any event, largely conformist and teaching in schools is highly examination-oriented. There is little sign that the society is prepared to entertain the diversity of individual needs. Apparently, it is not a matter of knowledge of this diversity, but rather a matter of educational ideology. It is not an ignorance of individual needs, but rather, a belief that individuals should strive to meet societal expectations.

In terms of education, there is a basic folklore that students should be educated to adapt themselves to the system, rather than for the system to tailor itself to fit the students. This basic folklore is deep-rooted in the entire realm of education, in early childhood education, classroom teaching, attitudes towards examination, career counselling, and so forth. This also explains the features of the education system where there is an identifiable “mainstream” and deviation from the mainstream is not encouraged. All these are quite familiar in those countries with some Confucian heritage.
Individual needs therefore give way to conformity. Diversification of the curriculum becomes difficult.

2. Adaptability

There are also more far-reaching implications. Hong Kong prides itself on the adaptability of its people. The Diversification Report typically attributes Hong Kong's economic success to the responsiveness, high mobility and high redeployability of its labour force.\textsuperscript{38} If one tries to relate this to education, one may soon find the European experience alarming. In recent years, there has been a tendency to attribute the serious unemployment problems there to the lack of adaptability, "enterprising spirit" and "entrepreneurship" among young people.\textsuperscript{39} To resolve these problems, governments install training schemes, "breeding centres"\textsuperscript{40} and similar facilities to re-cultivate such spirits.

The task before Hong Kong educators is therefore not just to swim against the traditional tide of blind conformity, but rather, to reach a balance between satisfying individual needs on the one hand and retaining high adaptability on the other.

All in all, the Hong Kong education system is unintentionally moving into a number of paradoxical situations: rapid expansion has aroused inflated expectations for education which in turn arouse demands for further expansion. Expansion was initially motivated by manpower requirements, but inflated social demand has made manpower planning difficult. Rapid expansion materialized through efficiency measures which have been carried out at the expense of equity; in return the spread of educational opportunities has called for a greater degree of equity through which efficiency may suffer. The expansion in the 1970s made full use of the tradition that prefers conformity and adaptability over individuality, but the expansion has pinpointed a concern for individual needs and this may in the long run undermine the entire tradition. In short, while planners of Hong Kong education have tried hard to reach a balance between traditional values and Western ideas, this balance itself is now in jeopardy.

In tackling these problems, Hong Kong will be forced to abandon some of the values which were traditionally acceptable. There is, however, the risk that it might adopt imported educational concepts without paying due attention to the context in which these concepts apply.
Legitimacy in Policy-making

The paradoxical situations currently emerging are further complicated by the change in polity with the resumption of Chinese sovereignty in 1997.

The dilemmas which have been discussed involve value judgements. Resolution of these dilemmas may only be achieved through political means. This suggests a closer look at the policy-making process.

Given the colonial nature of the Hong Kong government, its legitimacy in policy-making does not structurally come from the citizens of Hong Kong. Instead, the legitimacy comes from, first, the economic well-being of Hong Kong and second, from the extraordinary caution the Hong Kong government takes in making social policies. We shall look at the latter.

There are two basic elements in educational policy-making by which the Hong Kong government gains its legitimacy: rational deliberation and consultation.

The largest component of rational deliberation has been manpower requirement calculations. As mentioned earlier in this paper, there is a strong tradition of manpower forecasting in education in Hong Kong. The Vocational Training Council still bases its planning of training facilities on manpower surveys. There is also a comprehensive stock of educational statistics and considerable expertise to interpret the statistics.

Rational deliberations are meant to be "impartial" and "value-free". The impartiality provides the government with the legitimacy that comes from the impression that policy-making is objective and apolitical.

Legitimacy is also achieved through an extensive network of consultation. The network, mostly in the hands of the government's Education Department, extends over all levels of education, to all types of schools, among almost all employees in the teaching profession. There are again numerous organs to carry out consultations on an ad hoc basis about particular issues of the time. Most policy documents are first issued in the form of a Green Paper in order to solicit public reaction. Few policy decisions are made without certain amount of consultation. Although critics may rightly argue that consultation does not constitute genuine participation and hearing seldom lead to listening, it is the process and not the output that gives the government the legitimacy to formulate policies.

In addition to the above, third-party consultation, very often by overseas experts, is frequently employed to consolidate the government's legitimacy in making policies. Third-party consultation is a device which combines consultation with the impartiality of expertise. In the educational
arena, the decision of universal primary education was stipulated in the 1965 White Paper, which based it proposals on the March and Sampson Report. In the formulation of policies on secondary and post-compulsory education, Williams was appointed as overseas consultant both in the deliberation of the 1978 White Paper and in the review of tertiary and technical education in the early 1980s. The best known and most influential third party consultation was perhaps the Overall Review carried out in 1981-82 when a four-man panel was organized by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). There are other less publicised overseas consultations such as the Helmore visit in 1983 to review technical education. The inclusion of a substantial number of overseas members in the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee (UPGC) is a way to involve constant third-party consultation in matters of higher education policies.

The practice of third-party consultation was also used to settle internal disputes. A committee chaired by T.K. Ann was set up to study the strike launched by the non-graduate teachers in 1973 and the then University of Hong Kong Vice-Chancellor, Rayson Huang, was appointed to chair an investigation in 1978 when there was a community-wide concern over the closure of a school operated by the Precious Blood Convent.

Hong Kong government then appears to rely a great deal on rational expertise and extensive consultation to maintain its legitimacy. Until recently, it has been extremely cautious in seeking to secure popular credibility which could otherwise be established through a direct electoral mechanism.

However, the capacity of such rational deliberations and extensive consultations does not seem to match the requirements of the system to reach a new balance between traditional values and Western ideas. The consultations are criticised as "one-way"; the professional groups remain in low-level consultations; curriculum development remains a semi-official affair; crucial educational decision-making is still kept unnecessarily confidential. The rational deliberations, despite the high level of sophistication, were again confidential and failed to inform the public who were supposed to participate in policy discussions. It is difficult to see how these rational and consultative measures can handle value dilemmas, resolution of which would involve all parties in the community. Further, any attempt to improve the existing capacity may soon be superseded by the change of polity which might completely change the rules of the game in policy-making.

The establishment of the District Boards and the opening of the Legisla-
tive Council to public elections have considerably changed the source of
government legitimacy. If the ballot box were to provide full legitimacy for
an elected government, and the present policy-making system were main-
tained, then the use of rational techniques and consultations might be seen
as dispensable. If this really happened, education policies, as they are else-
where, might become the most vulnerable area of social policies. Then, the
balance between traditional values and Western ideas, which has in any event
become insecure, might be even more difficult to maintain.

NOTES

1. In 1986-87, education takes up 18 per cent of the total public expenditure. This represents
the largest single sector in government spending.
4. As mentioned earlier, there is a mismatch between age group by design and the age group
actually attending the various institutions. An age group percentage therefore does not always give
meaningful indications. It is provided to give a schematic picture only.
5. In 1986, there are two training complexes run by the Vocational Training Council, com-
prising thirteen training centres for various trades. The Vocational Training Council also operates a
Management Development Centre. Besides, two training centres, each operating in two premises, are
run by the respective authorities in the clothing and construction industries.
6. The total number of full-time students in the two universities in the early 1970s was around
6,000. See University and Polytechnic Grants Committee of Hong Kong, Special Report: October
1965 to June 1976 (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1976), p. 77. The number has gone up to
14,000 in 1986. The expansion in polytechnic education is much greater, but the variety of course
durations has rendered the calculation of full-time equivalents less straightforward. Triple expansion is
a safe under-estimation.
7. Special Committee on Higher Education, Interim Report (Hong Kong: Government Printer,
1966).
8. The Final Report of the Industrial Training Advisory Committee, March 1971 (Hong Kong:

10. The recommendations in the Green Paper were based on an attempt to work out a comprehensive manpower plan. This led to an elaborate report prior to the Green Paper. The report was not published.


12. In 1980-81, the Topley Committee was set up to review post-secondary and technical education. The committee took the *Diversification Report* as one of its major references. The *Topley Report, 1981* was produced but was not published.


14. This was discovered by an OECD panel which visited Hong Kong in 1981-82 to carry out an overall review of the education system. The point was included in the draft report but was dropped in the published final report, the *Llewellyn Report*.


18. Social demand as used in the literature of educational planning refers to the demand as demonstrated by aspirations of the individuals. This is often regarded as the opposite of economic or manpower needs of the community.


22. The survival rate from Primary Six to Form Four, sometimes called the "pull-through rate" by Hong Kong planners, is the ratio that would allow the most reliable base for planning. The assumption, which is usually valid, is that Primary Six attendance is nearly universal. Age-group enrolment ratios are less meaningful in the Hong Kong context because of the mismatch between ages and grades.


33. In the academic year 1985-86, the average unit recurrent cost was HK$80,000 for the University of Hong Kong and HK$66,000 for The Chinese University of Hong Kong (figures quoted from government sources in *South China Morning Post*, March 9, 1986). A university student was made to pay HK$4,200. The average unit recurrent cost for government-aided secondary students was HK$7,304 (See Table 3).

37. Report of the Board of Education’s Committee on Sixth Form Education (Hong Kong: Board of Education, mimeographed, 1979).
39. CESO (Centre for the Study of Education in Developing Countries), Proceedings of International Conference on Youth Programmes and the Transition from School to Work, Wageningen, the Netherlands, December 16-21, 1986 (forthcoming).
40. “Breeding centres” are facilities established in the Netherlands where unemployed youths are given capital and space to start their own business. The youths pay minimal but escalating rents. They are expected to become independent entrepreneur and leave the centres in five years’ time.
42. R.M. Marsh and J.R. Sampson, Report from the Education Commission (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1983). The authors were educators invited from the Hamshire County, England.
43. Peter Williams was consulted when the 1977 Green Paper was being transformed into the 1978 White Paper; and was again appointed as overseas expert to the Committee to Review Post-secondary and Technical Education in 1980-81. He was Professor and Head of Department of Education in Developing Countries in the University of London Institute of Education in the latter case.
44. An OECD Panel carried out an overall review of education in the years 1981-82. The panel comprised Sir John Llewellyn of the United Kingdom, Dr. Karl Poeloffs of West Germany, Professor Michael Kirst of the United States and Dr. Greg Hancock of Australia.
45. R.L. Helmore was invited by the Hong Kong Vocational Training Council in November 1983 to review technical education and vocational training in Hong Kong. He was Principal of the Cambridgeshire College of Art and Technology, United Kingdom. A report was produced after the visit. See Helmore, Report of Consultant on Technical Education (Hong Kong: Vocational Training Council, 1983)
48. In a study of participation of education groups, it was revealed that the professional groups took part at most in subject committees, the major task of which was the drafting of syllabuses or the conduction of examinations. See K.M. Cheng, “Participatory Education Planning: The Position of Hong Kong Educational Bodies” (Hong Kong: Unpublished M.Ed. dissertation, University of Hong Kong, 1983).