

## The Educational System of Hong Kong: A Blend of East and West

by Yue-ping Chung

**H**ong Kong is a small, wealthy colony of about 409 square miles situated at the mouth of the Pearl River in South China. It was ceded to Britain after the Sino-British War in 1842. Though the immediate cause of the war was British interest in the opium trade, the war had in its background cultural conflicts between East and West: China wished to remain isolated and self-sustaining, while the West wanted access for trade. Since 1842, Hong Kong has remained an important point of entry to China for the West and a window to the West for China.

At the time of the British takeover, the population was about 5,000 and engaged mainly in farming and fishing. Rapid growth came as a result of bouts of mass migration from China whenever political turmoil or an uprising occurred.

After the Second World War a large number of intellectuals and entrepreneurs arrived from China. One of the constituent colleges of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, the New Asia College, was established in 1949 by a group of Confucian intellectuals.

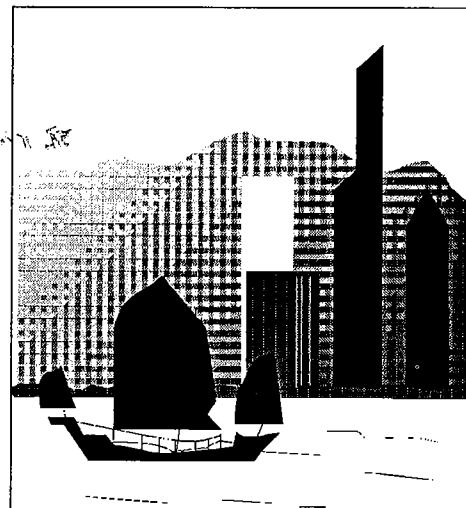
By 1990, the population of Hong Kong had reached 5.86 million, and density in the metropolitan area was as high as 20,300 people per square kilometer. The 1986 Census found that about 59.4 percent of the population was born in Hong Kong, with 37.0 percent born in China and 3.6 percent born elsewhere. Most of the population was of Chinese origin. The estimated number of overseas citizens residing in Hong Kong in 1986 was 168,000, including

about 36,800 Filipinos, 16,000 Britons, 15,000 Indians, 14,000 Americans, 8,400 Australians, 7,500 Japanese, 5,400 Singaporeans and 1,300 Dutch.

Though immigrants keep arriving from mainland China and other Asian countries, Hong Kong is suffering from brain drain. During the early 1980s, about 20,000 emigrants left Hong Kong each year. This figure began to escalate after 1984 when the Chinese and British governments signed a Joint Declaration agreeing to revert sovereignty back to China in July 1997. It is estimated that 45,000 emigrants left in 1988 and 62,000 in 1990, many of whom were highly educated. The Government has already announced plans to expand local university enrolments to replenish this loss.

Hong Kong's economic growth has been remarkable. During the Korean War, the United Nations imposed an embargo on mainland China which forced the colony to switch from reliance on trade with China to the development of light industries. The manufacturing of textiles, plastics and metal products took off in the 1950s and thrived in the 1960s. By the end of the 1970s, Hong Kong had become an important trading and financial center, diversifying its industries and adopting more advanced production technologies.

The colony is now the fourth largest financial center in the world. The gross domestic product (GDP) grew by an average of 6.3 percent each year from 1965 to 1988. The per capita GDP reached US\$9,220 in 1988 (versus US\$330 in mainland China,



US\$3,600 in South Korea, US\$12,810 in Britain and US\$19,840 in the United States).

Economic growth has been accompanied by an equally remarkable development of the educational system. The proportion of the population aged 15 and older having a secondary education or more grew from 26.2 percent in 1961 to 40 percent in 1976 and 56.7 percent in 1986.

On average, Hong Kong spends about 17 percent of its annual budget on education, or 2.6 percent of the GDP. The estimated expenditure on education in fiscal 1991-92 is about 15 percent of the total budget, amounting to HK\$1,558 million in capital expenditures and HK\$13,888 million in recurrent expenditures. (HK \$=7.8 x US\$1.)

Although the structure of the educational system is basically British, the forces shaping its growth are twofold: first, the value placed on education in the Chinese culture expressed as "the educated person is superior to all others," and second, the British meritocratic ideal that builds upon a pyramid of educational qualifications.

### Administration and Educational Policy-Making

As a colony, Hong Kong is administered by a government headed by a governor who is appointed by the Queen of England and is her representative. He is advised on the development of

policy and legislation by the Executive Council and the Legislative Council.

The members of both councils used to be either ex-officio members or members appointed by the governor. In 1987 the government explored the possibility of developing a system of representative government, and finally decided that the Legislative Council would be re-constituted in 1991 to include 18 directly-elected members, 21 indirectly-elected members from functional constituencies, 17 appointed members and 7 ex-officio members. Among the 21 indirectly-elected members from functional constituencies, only one is elected from the teaching profession.

Within the Government, the Secretary for Education and Manpower is responsible for all educational policies. The Secretary co-ordinates and gives policy directions to the Director of Education, who heads the Education Department, and the Director of Technical Education and Industrial Training, who heads the Technical Education and Industrial Training Department.

There are also committees with appointed members to advise the government on educational policies and practices at different levels. These are the Education Commission (EC), the Board of Education (BOE), the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee (UPGC) and the Vocational Training Council (VTC). All these bodies serve only in an advisory role without statutory status, except for the VTC.

The Education Commission gives advice to the Education and Manpower branch in the government secretariat, and the Board of Education to the Education Department. The UPGC gives advice directly to the Governor as to the development and funding of the universities and polytechnics.

The Education Department is responsible for the operation of kindergarten education to matriculation education (K-13), the training of non-gradu-

ate teachers, adult education and postsecondary colleges such as the Institute of Language in Education. The newly-established Curriculum Development Council will also operate under the Department.

The VTC is a statutory body established to operate the Technical Institutes with administrative support from the Technical Education and Industrial Training Department. Another independent and statutory body concerned with the educational system is the Hong Kong Examination Authority. The Authority is responsible for the operation of all public examinations, including the local Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and the overseas GCE. The Authority creates its own advisory board to solicit input from their appointed members.

### The Educational System

The formal educational system in Hong Kong consists of six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, two years of senior secondary education, two years of matriculation and three years of university education. In order to climb up the educational ladder, a typical child in Hong Kong has to pass examinations and face allocations at various points. The accompanying flow chart shows the ladder and the allocation points.

### Pre-Primary Education

Pre-school education is voluntary and not free. All kindergartens are privately-run, charging fees from US\$25 to US\$500 per month. In 1990, there were some 200,000 children enrolled in 785 kindergartens. Non-profit kindergartens are eligible for rent and rate rebates from the Government, and needy parents can apply for remission ranging from 25 to 100 percent of the weighted average fees charged by non-profit-making kindergartens.

## Primary Education

Since 1971, the six years of primary education have been free and compulsory for all from age six. In 1990, there were 524,920 primary school children enrolled in 686 schools: 50 government, 554 government-aided and 82 private.

Children reaching the age of six are allocated a place in the government sector through the Primary One Admission Scheme, based on district of residence, parental choice and random assignment. Those who choose private schools have to pay fees, but less than 10 percent of primary school children do so.

In 1989, 84 percent of primary students were enrolled in government-aided schools, which are financed by the government but operated by voluntary agencies or religious groups. In order to receive funding from the government, these schools have to observe a Code of Aid which specifies school equipment and facilities, teacher qualifications, the class-teacher ratio, teaching salaries, and budget distribution. Also, these schools must surrender most of their places to the government for central allocation.

All primary schools basically follow the same curriculum suggested by the Curriculum Development Council of the Education Department. The curriculum includes Chinese language, English language, mathematics, general studies, arts and crafts, music, and physical education. Schools run by religious groups may also offer religious studies. There is no separation of Church and State in Hong Kong schools.

There is no differentiation between the academic stream and the vocational and technical stream at the primary level. While English usually receives the most attention in the curriculum, Chinese is used as the medium of instruction in nearly all primary schools since it is the mother-tongue for most children. ►



## Secondary Education

In 1978, free and compulsory education was extended for three more years to the third year of secondary education. Primary 6 leavers are allocated to different secondary schools through the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System. Besides parental choice and district of residence, the allocation system also considers the academic achievement of the child. It divides children into five groups according to the results of internal school assessments scaled by a centrally-administered Academic Aptitude Test, given in the second term of primary six. Children in higher groups have priority to be assigned to schools of their first choice. Since secondary schools are of varying quality, there is pressure for children to do well in primary schools in order to get into a "good" secondary school that can help them move up the educational ladder.

In 1989 there were 258,258 junior secondary (S1 and S3) and 145,678 senior secondary (S4 and S5) students enrolled in 431 schools: 40 government, 310 government-aided and 81 private. Of the total, 73 percent of secondary students were enrolled in government-aided schools.

About 20 percent of students are allocated to "bought" places in private schools. In 1978, when the Hong Kong government decided to extend general and free education up to S3 level, the development of government and government-aided schools could not catch up with the rapid increase in demand. The government therefore had to "buy" school places from those private schools which had reached a satisfactory standard to supplement the supply. These private schools were of lower quality and some were located in commercial buildings without even a playground. As the development of government-sector schools accelerated,

the proportion of "bought" places decreased from about 58 percent in 1980 to about 20 percent currently.

At the end of Secondary 3, students have to take part in the Junior Secondary Education Assessment in order to be allocated to subsidized Secondary 4 places. In 1989, 73.3 percent of the 80,287 Secondary 3 leavers were allocated to S4 places, and 9.3 to craft courses in technical institutes. The rest had either to work or to seek a place in private schools.

Senior Secondary education (S4 and S5) is not compulsory and is therefore not free. However, school places in the government sector are heavily subsidized and parents only pay a nominal fee. For those students who seek places in private schools because they fail to get a government allocation or are unwilling to accept the allocation (e.g. allocation to craft courses), an average fee of about US\$150 a month is charged.

### Grammar Schools Dominate

There are three different types of secondary schools in terms of their curriculum emphasis: grammar (academic) schools, technical schools and pre-vocational schools. In 1989, there were 22 technical schools enrolling 5 percent, and 21 pre-vocational schools enrolling 3.9 percent of secondary students. More than 91 percent of students were enrolled in the 382 grammar schools.

In terms of language of instruction, however, there have traditionally been two types of secondary schools: Chinese Middle Schools, where Cantonese is used as the language of instruction, and Anglo-Chinese schools, where English is used.

Until the early 1960s, Chinese Middle Schools played an important role in the educational system. Their enrollment was 52 percent of the total secondary school enrollment in 1952. Since

the mid-1960s, this percentage has dropped rapidly: 28 percent in 1968, 18 percent in 1976, and only 8.9 percent in 1989.

### Chinese Middle Schools Dying

Using the language of instruction as a dividing criterion for secondary schools is no longer really valid for a number of reasons: 1. many schools used to operate both a Chinese section and an Anglo-Chinese section under the same roof; 2. Chinese Middle Schools have been dying rapidly, either closing down or switching to the Anglo-Chinese mode to appeal to their clients; 3. most so-called Anglo-Chinese schools do not have teachers who can teach totally in English, so Chinese is used as the medium of instruction most of the time; and 4. some Chinese Middle Schools hire expatriate English teachers and use English text books to boost their students' English capabilities. With the two types of schools becoming indistinguishable, there is a movement to abolish the labels of "Chinese Middle" and "Anglo-Chinese."

### Instruction in English Preferred

Chinese is the mother tongue and dominant language for daily communication (e.g. there are 47 daily newspapers written in Chinese and only two in English) for nearly all people in Hong Kong, and it should be the more effective language of instruction. However, parents strongly prefer English. Many Chinese Middle Schools had to convert to Anglo-Chinese or simply close down for lack of parental support and a shortage of students.

Parents send their children to Anglo-Chinese schools, even though they fully realize their children will encounter difficulty in an alienating learn-

# The Hong Kong Education System (1990)

**Source: H.K. Education Dept.**

[illegible]

(1) Apart from Lingnan College, an Assisted Approved Post-Secondary College, there is the Hong Kong Shue Yan College, which offers 4-year courses, the minimum entry requirement of which, in terms of the Post Secondary Colleges Regulations, is successful completion of Form V.

(2) 1st degree in medicine requires 5 years of study.

(3) BA (Bldg.) requires 4 years of study while BA (Arch.) and MBBS require 5 years of study.

(4) Students with craft certificate may enroll in the Technician Course after the completion of a bridging course which lasts for a minimum of one year.

ing environment where the mother-tongue is not used as the language of instruction. This choice is not totally irrational. Parents are simply responding to the reality that English ability in Hong Kong has always been a tool for social mobility. Children with better English ability can get into "better" schools which will then help them move up the educational ladder further, and graduates with better English ability will get higher paying jobs either in the private sector or in the government sector.

Even for occupations that do not require a high level of English ability, such as police work or the postal service, an applicant with a good examination result in English will have an advantage in getting employment and a higher beginning salary.

The curriculum of secondary schools is strongly influenced by the syllabuses of the public examinations for the school-leaving certificate. Grammar schools usually offer English lan-

guage, Chinese language, mathematics, electives in sciences (biology, chemistry, physics, etc.), electives in social sciences (history, geography, economics, etc.), art, music and physical education.

Technical and pre-vocational schools also provide technical, commercial and practical subjects in addition to general subjects. As in the case with primary schools, secondary schools run by religious groups may offer religious studies.

At the end of secondary education (S5), all students take the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). This is a major school-leaving certificate, very much like the British Ordinary Level General Certificate Examination (GCE). Most students terminate their formal schooling and start to work at this point. In 1989, only 19,132 students, representing about 26 percent of the total Secondary 5 enrollment, proceeded to Secondary 6. An

additional 6,000 Secondary 5 graduates, representing about 8 percent, entered full-time technician training courses in the technical institutes.

Secondary 6, or the matriculation course, normally lasts two years. At the end of the course, students take the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE). This is another important school-leaving certificate equivalent to the British Advanced Level GCE. The University of Hong Kong and other tertiary institutes in Hong Kong select their students mainly based on the results of the HKALE and the HKCEE. However, students at this stage can also sit for overseas examinations, such as the British GCE Ordinary-Level and Advanced-Level Examinations, and the American Scholastic Aptitude Test and Achievement Tests, at their own expense. They may leave in the middle of the matriculation course for overseas university education.

## Tertiary Education

Three universities, two polytechnics, two colleges and one open learning institute offer programs of study leading to the award of degrees in Hong Kong. These are the University of Hong Kong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, The Open Institute of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Polytechnic, the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Baptist College, and Lingnan College, which has just been admitted into the UPGC system to become the eighth degree-granting institution.

Among these institutions, the University of Hong Kong and The Chinese University of Hong Kong have the most comprehensive programs and the longest history of granting degrees officially recognized in Hong Kong. Competition for university education is very intense. Until 1986, these two universities together could provide places for

only about 3.5 percent of the relevant age group. Even after the recent expansion, less than 10 percent of the age group can get a place in a degree program at one of the six institutions.

The University of Hong Kong is the oldest degree-granting tertiary institution in Hong Kong, established in 1911 and modeled after the British three-year university system. It has nine faculties enrolling 9,256 students. In 1990, it admitted only 1,979 first-year students from 15,676 qualified applicants who had finished the two-year matriculation course.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong was the second university empowered to grant degrees by the government. It was inaugurated in 1963 as a federal university, adopting a credit unit system with some resemblance to the American four-year university system. It may admit students who have completed one year of matriculation

education (i.e. 12 years of pre-university formal schooling). It has five faculties enrolling 9,237 students at present. In 1990, it admitted 1,820 first-year students from 23,000 potential candidates.

Both institutions have master's programs (MA, MSc and MPhil) and PhD programs in various fields. In 1989, there were 635 graduate students at the University of Hong Kong and 496 graduate students at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. The MPhil and PhD programs are mainly by research and dissertation with external examiners. Other master's programs are by course work and thesis with external examiners.

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology is a new university which admitted its first students in 1991. The two polytechnics used to offer diploma and certificate courses for technologist and technician train-

## Degree-Granting Tertiary Institutions

University of Hong Kong  
Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong

The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong

The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology  
Clear Water Bay Road, N.T., Hong Kong

Hong Kong Polytechnic  
Yuk Choi Rd., Hunghom, Hong Kong

City Polytechnic of Hong Kong  
83 Tai Chee Avenue, Hong Kong

Hong Kong Baptist College  
224 Waterloo Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Lingnan College  
15 Stubbs Road, Hong Kong  
(new campus planned in Tuen Mun, N.T.)

Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong  
Trade Dept. Tower, 700 Nathan Road  
Kowloon, Hong Kong

The Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong (OLI), modelled after the British Open University, was established as the seventh degree-granting institution in Hong Kong in 1989. It enrolled about 4,000 students in 1989, but the dropout rate was high.

More than 65 percent of university graduates now working in Hong Kong received their degrees from overseas universities. In 1985, Hong Kong had some 30,000 students studying overseas, an average of 5,500 overseas students per million of population, the second highest worldwide. Most of these overseas students were studying at institutions in the United States (31 percent), Canada (26 percent), Britain (23.4 percent), Taiwan (11.3 percent), and Australia (5.7 percent).

The shortage of university graduates is further aggravated by the brain drain. The return of overseas graduates also can

no longer be counted upon. People will not return to Hong Kong to work until they are assured that they can leave if the situation deteriorates. The Government plans to double enrollment in tertiary institutions to provide places for over 18 percent of the age

group by 1994-95, and it is estimated that 1,000 more university teachers will be needed in the next four years to staff this expansion.

Because the supply of university places falls far short of local demand, there is no active policy to recruit overseas students. However, both the University of Hong Kong and The Chinese University of Hong Kong have exchange programs with universities in Britain, the United States and other English-speaking countries, as well as Japan, and they admit a few overseas students each year to their graduate programs.

Though university students have to pay a fee up to about 10 percent of the recurrent costs, the government provides grants and loans to needy students. It was estimated that in 1986, the direct private cost of university education for the average student was less than US\$100 a year.

In addition to the eight degree-granting institutions, other tertiary institutions include four Colleges of Education, nine Schools of Nursing and several postsecondary colleges such as the Hang Seng School of Commerce. These institutions offer diploma and certificate courses lasting one to four years, and enrolled about 10,000 full time students in 1990. Two, Shue Yan College and Chu Hai College, offer four-year programs and award degrees recognized by the Taiwan Ministry of Education.

## Education for Special Groups

Various groups of children receive special attention, including the handicapped, the gifted, children of British expatriates and of expatriates from other countries.

In 1990 there were 71 government-aided special schools providing 8,840 places for the blind, the deaf and the mentally handicapped. Some of these special schools also provide residential places. There are also 6,200 places provided in ordinary schools for partially handicapped children and those

with learning difficulties. Those who are gifted in art and sports have a secondary school supported by the Jockey Club. There is also a recent proposal by the Education and Manpower Branch of government to set up special programs in ordinary schools for the academically gifted.

There are eight primary schools, four secondary schools and one special school operated by the English Schools Foundation especially for children of British expatriates in Hong Kong which receive funding from both the government and private donations.

There are also privately-run international schools catering to children of expatriates from various countries. These include the German Swiss International School, the Hong Kong Japanese School, and the Hong Kong International School for Americans. A Singapore International School is being planned. The Hong Kong government may provide land and start-up capital for these schools. These institutions offer programs of study articulated to the education systems of the respective countries, and may admit local children for fees of more than US\$500 a month. ►



## Teachers and Teacher Education

In 1990 there were 19,254 primary school teachers and 19,477 secondary school teachers. The average student/teacher ratio was 27.3 in primary school and 22.2 in secondary school. However, this ratio was better in government sector schools than in private schools. For example, in secondary schools in the government sector, the ratio was 21 students per teacher as compared to 29 in private schools.

The qualifications and salary schedules for teachers in the government sector are determined by the government. Many teachers in private schools have no pedagogical training, or received training outside of a Commonwealth country, which is not recognized. Even

if they have comparable qualifications, they are paid lower salaries than their counterparts in the government sector. The initial salary of teachers in the government sector compares well with salaries of employees in other industries or professions.

All primary school teachers in the government sector have to complete secondary education and receive formal training in one of the Colleges of Education operated by the Education Department. They are awarded Certificate Masters (CMs). CMs can also teach in junior secondary schools. However, teachers for senior secondary classes and matriculation classes must have a bachelor's degree in a specialized field recognized by the gov-

ernment. They are awarded Graduate Masters (GMs). Those GMs who have no teacher training are only "permitted" to teach and are expected to receive in-service training at one of the Faculties of Education in the two local universities.

The Faculties of Education of the University of Hong Kong and The Chinese University of Hong Kong are responsible for the training of graduate teachers (GM) and school administrators. Both institutions offer three kinds of graduate programs in education: the Diploma/Certificate of Education for GMs, which lasts one year full-time or two years part-time; the Master's program and the Doctoral program in education.

## Vocational and Technical Education

One of the special characteristics of education in Hong Kong is the de-emphasis of vocational and technical education. There is no differentiation between technical and academic streams in the primary school curriculum. In secondary schools, the curriculum does differ for the two streams, but more than 91 percent of the age group enrolls in the academic stream.

When technical schools were first established, they were expected to train technically-inclined students who would take this type of education either as their terminal schooling or as preparation for technician or technologist training programs in the polytechnics. However, these technical secondary schools turned out to be indistinguishable from grammar schools in offering a matriculation course which was well articulated for the entrance requirements to Hong Kong University. Some technical secondary schools are well-known for supplying students to the two universities.

Similarly, the pre-vocational secondary schools started as three-year junior secondary schools, training students either as terminal schooling or as preparation for craftsman training programs in the technical institutes. Since 1982, pre-vocational schools have been running a five-year cycle (S1-S5) so that their students can also sit for the HKCEE, much the same as students from the academic stream. These schools now are planning to reduce the proportion of vocational subjects and to start matriculation courses in 1992. It seems that these schools will offer vocational and technical studies only to the point that academic subjects are not sacrificed, and the option to return to the main stream is kept open.

The de-emphasis of vocational and technical education is also reflected in the enrollment patterns in the eight Technical Institutes, which are operated by the Vocational Training Council and may be considered as post-secondary study.

These Technical Institutes offer three kinds of courses on either a full time or part-time basis: technician courses, craft courses and short courses. Both technician and craft courses are 1-2 years full time or 2-3 years part-time. The general minimum admission requirement for technician courses is graduation from Secondary School (5) with four subjects at grade E in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination. Admission to craft courses is completion of Secondary School 3.

The total full-time and part-time enrollment in technician and craft courses at all eight Technical Institutes was 54,955 in 1989. However, full-time enrollment was only 6,965 in technician courses and 4,988 in craft courses.

Technician and craft courses are offered in a wide range of vocational and technical disciplines such as technician courses in food technology, civil engineering, mechanical engineering

## Technical Institutes in Hong Kong

Morrison Hill Technical Institute  
6 Oi Kwan Road, Wan Chai  
Hong Kong

Kwai Chung Technical Institute  
20 Hing Shing Road, Kwai Chung  
New Territories

Kun Tong Technical Institute  
25 Hui Ming St., Kwun Tong  
Kowloon

Haking Wong Technical Institute  
702 Lai Chi Kok Road, Cheung Sha  
Wan  
Kowloon

Lee Wai Lee Technical Institute  
30 Renfrew Road, Kowloon Tong  
Kowloon

Tuen Mun Technical Institute  
Tsing Wun Road, Tuen Mun  
New Territories

Sha Tin Technical Institute  
21 Yuen Wo Road, Sha Tin  
New Territories

Chai Wan Technical Institute  
30 Shing Tai Road, Chai Wan  
Hong Kong

and electrical engineering, or craft courses in food processing, basic construction, welding, plastic mold-making and hair dressing.

Technician courses can lead to a terminal certificate or to further education opportunities at polytechnics. Most students would not choose a terminal course of technical study until they were already working.

Craft courses are usually terminal

study designed to provide basic skills related to a specific trade or occupation, and offer an alternative to senior secondary education. A student holding a Craft Course certificate also has the option of taking a bridge course which might enable him/her to pass the HKCEE and gain admission to a technician course.

In 1990, there were 57,500 students in the craftsman and technician training

programs in these eight technical institutes. Out of this total enrollment, only 21 percent were studying full-time.

Short courses do not lead to any certificate, and are taken mainly for recreation.

Vocational and technical schools in Hong Kong are under constant pressure from parents not to operate as a terminal point on the educational ladder. Chinese want their children to move up the educational ladder as far as possible. They tend to hold a less deterministic view on a child's ability to do well in school. If a child is not doing well, they would attribute this to the child's lack of effort, not innate incapability; therefore he/she should not be doomed to a terminal educational stream. This belief fits well with the meritocratic civil service system in which employment and salaries are determined by educational qualifications and public examination results. With this amalgamation of Chinese culture and the British ideal, the education system in Hong Kong has done well as a means of "sponsored mobility." Because of these cultural values, vocational and technical education does not hold much appeal for parents and students.

## The Problem of 1997

After 1997, when Hong Kong will be under Chinese rule, the incompatibilities between China's education system and that of Hong Kong will have to be resolved. First, there is no school in mainland China teaching an ideology or faith different from that of the ruling party. How will the hundreds of schools run by different church groups and voluntary agencies respond to an environment demanding such conformity?

Secondly, mainland China has been emphasizing the development of vocational and technical education, enacting a national policy to enroll 50 percent of China's secondary students in vocational and technical schools. In contrast, this kind of education is only a subsidiary stream in Hong Kong by design and by parental choice. With an educational expenditure of only about 3 percent of the Gross Domestic Product, Hong Kong has been able to

supply free education to all up to the Secondary 3 level and to subsidize education to more than 75 percent of students up to Secondary 5 level and 30 percent up to matriculation level. Moreover, Hong Kong has not suffered from the problem of training students for mismatched fields of work. Will major cities in mainland China take note of the Hong Kong experience? Or will Hong Kong have to change the emphasis of its education system after 1997?

Thirdly, even though the development of university education in Hong Kong lags far behind private and social demand, the economy has not suffered seriously because the Government has promoted education abroad. There has been no restriction on the movement of students or the transfer of private monies to other countries.



Many of those who attended universities abroad returned to Hong Kong, bringing with them their valuable experience and connections to fuel economic growth. Mainland China has a more restrictive policy towards overseas studies. Will the door to education abroad be closed to Hong Kong's students after 1997? How can the new government encourage overseas graduates to return and work in Hong Kong?

Finally, though people may disagree that there is a single education system in mainland China, the mainstream in major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou includes six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, three years of senior secondary education and four years of university educa-

tion. The structure of formal schooling in Hong Kong includes six years of primary, three years of junior secondary, two years of senior secondary, two years of matriculation and three years of university education. Will these two systems be merged? One advantage of the Hong Kong system is the long history of equating the HKCEE with the British GCE Ordinary Level examination and the HKALE with the GCE Advanced Level examination. The academic standard of Hong Kong students is recognized by universities worldwide.

It is important for both Hong Kong and mainland China to have Hong Kong remain in touch with the outside world, continuing to serve as a bridge between East and West. ■



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#### Please note these corrections on "Perspectives on Education in Mexico," F91

- Page 1: "...the number of university students increased 800 percent to 1.2 million." (not 2 million)
- Page 16: The grading abbreviation for Muy Bien is "MB", not just "B."

■ Graphic design throughout this issue by  
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