

Chair Professors

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Curriculum and Teaching Reforms: Contexts, Implementation and Sustainability

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The Hong Kong Institute of Education

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Curriculum and Teaching Reforms: Contexts, Implementation and Sustainability

John Chi-kin Lee

Abstract

After about ten years' curriculum and teaching reforms in China and Hong Kong introduced to enhance student learning, what can we learn from the experience? This lecture will examine the directions and contexts of curriculum and teaching reforms in Hong Kong and China followed by discussion of their implementation. In conclusion, some propositions for sustainability of the success of curriculum and teaching reforms are advocated in the context of China and Hong Kong. Firstly, it is important to pay close attention to teachers' receptivity to, and their emotions towards curriculum and teaching reforms. Secondly, it is important to preserve the merits and essence of Chinese pedagogy and explore ways of assimilating it with those Western approaches to teaching and learning. Thirdly, it is essential to give more support to the professional development of principals and teachers, especially the promotion of professional learning communities in schools. Fourthly, it is essential to pay attention to teachers' workload by providing adequate resource support. Last but not least, in future curriculum and teaching reforms it is essential to explore ways of enhancing students' self-directed learning and socio-emotional learning.

Introduction

Newspapers around the world have highlighted findings from the prestigious and highly influential Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). For the recent PISA 2009 findings, The New York Times December 7, 2010 ran a headline “Top Test Scores from Shanghai Stun Educators” and President Obama remarked that the USA was in danger of falling behind China. In that report, Andrea Schneider commented, “...China is taking education very seriously. The work ethic is amazingly strong” and “...the real significance of these results is that they refute the commonly held hypothesis that China just produces rote learning” (Dillion, 2010). In addition, the OECD (2011, p.98) report commented that “Local experts believe that this is evidence of successful reforms, whereby students are now exposed to a much broader knowledge base and are trained to integrate their knowledge and tackle real-life problems. Students have also become used to identifying questions of interest to themselves, and to making open-ended explorations”. However, Zhao (2009, p.81) remarked that China is not a threat yet as there is a recognised problem in Chinese education known as “high scores but low ability” (*gāofēn dīnéng*).

The recently published McKinsey & Company report *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* showed that Hong Kong is one of the sustained improvers which has moved from good to great and then, since 2000, from great to excellent (Mourshed, Chijioke and Barber, 2010). These findings must be set in the context of a worldwide movement of educational reform that in the course of this century has been clearly evident in the Asia-Pacific region (Kennedy and Lee, 2010; Lee and Caldwell, 2011). What can we learn from the experience of those curriculum and teaching reforms in China and Hong Kong introduced to enhance student learning, especially with regard to school students' generic skills and competencies?

I had the privilege of studying under Professor Fung Yee-wang and Professor Wong Hin-wah for my higher degrees in education at the Chinese University of Hong Kong with whom I had the opportunity to learn in depth about the diversified fields of curriculum studies and geographical and environmental education with various paradigms, perspectives and issues of inquiry (Fung and Lee, 1987; Lee and Wong, 1996; Lee, 2008). Over many years, I have gathered a wide range of shared insights from, and am greatly indebted to, many local and overseas collaborators and renowned scholars, in particular Professor Bob Adamson, Professor Brian Caldwell, Professor Yue-ping Chung, Professor Chris Day, Professor Clive Dimmock, the late Professor Rod Gerber, Professor Jin Yule, Professor Kerry Kennedy, Professor Chi-chung Lam, Professor Henry

Levin, Professor Leslie Nai-kwai Lo, Professor Carmel McNaught, Professor Samuel Pang, Dr Philip Stimpson, Professor Allan Walker, Professor Wang Jian, Professor Wang Jiayi, Professor Michael Williams, Professor Xiao Jin, Professor Yang Shaoping and Professor Zhong Binglin.

In this paper, which does not intend to be a comprehensive review, I shall draw upon some of my studies of curriculum and teaching reforms in the contexts of Asia, Hong Kong and China. For “contexts”, McLaughlin and Talbet (1990) refer to the sociocultural context as well as those organizational and policy contexts, including the school context, that shape teaching and student learning. For Mourshed, Chijioke and Barber (2010, p.62), “context” embraces two forms: “current education’s performance (poor, fair, good, great, excellent) and its impact...[and]... the influence of history, culture, values, system structure, politics, etc. upon how the system implements the common interventions in their improvement journey”.

Directions and Contexts of Curriculum and Teaching Reforms in Hong Kong and China

Regarding Hong Kong and China, the policy contexts of curriculum reform in basic education have, since the end of the 1990s, been associated with “learning to learn” and quality-oriented education respectively. In Hong Kong curriculum reformers have undertaken some priority tasks such as creating more curriculum space through “trimming and restructuring the curriculum”, “reducing excessive tests, examinations and dictations” and so on; motivating students to learn; using four key tasks (moral and civic education, reading, project learning and using information technology) as tools for enhancing teaching and learning; helping students “acquire basic competencies in Chinese, English and Numeracy”, and developing nine generic skills according high “priority to critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills” (CDC, 2001, pp.6-7). Zhu (2007) summarizes that the changes brought by the national curriculum reform (NCR) in China, aiming at transcending “subject-centeredness”, include: revising academic courses and connecting them to student experience and social development; adding integrated practice activity courses; diversifying curriculum with locality- and school-based courses; and providing elective courses to all students.

From a historical perspective, Hong Kong adopts both “hard policies” such as regulations and directives that are formal requirements and “soft policies” such as guidelines or informational devices that offer advice on how to implement curriculum changes. For the curriculum reform since 2000, Hong Kong authorities have tended to use “soft policies” such as the use of government guidelines (e.g., CDC, 2001), the recommended textbooks and the adoption of school-based curriculum in which teachers are expected to assume an expanded role of being “professionals, academic(s) and leaders at classroom level, collaborative partners at school and community levels” (Chan, Kennedy and Fok, 2008, p.149). This is distinct from the dominant use of “hard policies” during the colonial period in Hong Kong when teachers tended to be technicians, delivering mandated syllabuses and using officially approved instructional materials. Such a drastic shift from using “hard policies” to adopting “soft policies” has generated challenges for curriculum reform and its success hinges on “the extent to which teachers can be convinced that they are valued and professional members of the Hong Kong community” (Chan, Kennedy and Fok, 2008, p.150). Nonetheless, the government still employs “hard” policies or measures such as Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) and school-based assessment (SBA) as well as school self-evaluation/external school review (SSE/ESR) which are perceived as sources of teachers’

increasing workloads and pressure particularly when there has been a continuous decline in school population and a threat of school closure. In the case of project learning as one of the key tasks in curriculum reform, even “soft” policies or measures such as application for Quality Education Fund (QEF) funding and sharing and provision of curriculum resources might be perceived as instruments that “encouraged competitions for funding and performances among schools” (Fok, Kennedy and Chan, 2010, p.9).

For curriculum management, China has adopted a triple-level approach (80% determined at the national level, 15% at the local level and 5% at the school level) while Hong Kong’s school-based curriculum development represents a negotiation between centralized curriculum requirements and school and student needs (Lee *et al.*, 2011; Kennedy and Lee, 2010). In China and Hong Kong, the curriculum reforms aim to provide more autonomy for teachers to develop their school-based curricula and improve their pedagogy and to attempt to reallocate the power and responsibilities of managing and developing the curriculum within the educational system from the central to the school level. While such empowerment has, to some extent, increased teachers’ ownership of the curriculum reform, teachers’ workloads, responsibilities, and accountabilities for implementing the new curriculum have also been increased (Song, Lee and Cheng, 2010).

As regards the context in terms of the performance of the education system and school system, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 results revealed that Hong Kong ranked fourth in the world in reading and third in both mathematics and science. According to the press release by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, while greater difference in student performance within schools implies a gradual increase of student diversity in academic abilities within school, “the impact of socio-economic status (SES) aggregated at school level is considerably reduced. Taking together, these changes suggest that the basic education of Hong Kong is heading toward a quality education with equality” (CUHK, 2010).

The recently published McKinsey & Company report pointed out that educational changes in Hong Kong are characterized by “higher skill educators, provid[ing] only loose, central guidelines for teaching and learning processes, in order to encourage peer led creativity and innovation inside schools, the core driver for raising performance” as well as placing emphasis on shaping school professionals, raising the caliber of principals and teachers and their school-based decision-making, creating additional support mechanisms for professionals and system-sponsored innovation across schools (Mourshed, Chijioke and Barber, 2010, p.26, p.39 and p.43).

The outstanding performance of the Hong Kong education system, as depicted by the PISA results and/or some international consultancy reports, could have been influenced by the socio-cultural context which is partly related to the Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) and the influence of Confucianism. The CHC embedded by Confucian moral and political values systems might have exerted profound influence on self-cultivation, social harmony, leadership as well as values for learning and teaching. Under the aspect of educational governance and management, the influence of Confucian ethics and collectivism tends to affect schools as organizations with explicit hierarchical superordinate-subordinate relationships and respect for authority (Pang, 2011). It is noticeable that the historic cultural influence of examinations and credentials has had a profound impact on education in China partly because success in examinations is generally seen to lead to upward social mobility and family/social respect. The influence of the examination culture, however, has induced examination pressure on students, teachers and parents, and student motivation tends to be extrinsic. In addition, as the examples of Shanghai and Hong Kong in the OECD (2011, p.85) report prepared by Kai-ming Cheng indicated, “The importance attached to examination results also underpins the prevailing mentality among teachers, students and parents, in which the direct relevance of the curriculum is less important than achieving high scores”, which has posed both ideological and practical challenges to the introduction of quality education and curriculum reform.

From a foreigner’s viewpoint, the Chinese views of teaching and learning (Kavanagh, 2005) have the following salient characteristics: Firstly, the social orientation emphasizes conformity and compliance, obedience, respect for superiors, and filial piety. Secondly, education highlights high expectations on student achievements and belief in effort. Thirdly, attitudes to study and assessment often stress hardship and diligence and perseverance, not enjoyment as well as the imperative of memorization and practice. Last but not least, while the West may emphasize knowledge and skills, the Chinese tradition of education considers morality as an important order of the fivefold aims (Moral, Intellectual, Physical, Social and Aesthetic) of education.

Implementation of Curriculum and Teaching Reforms

As regards implementation of curriculum and teaching reforms, success or failure often hinges on criteria such as effectiveness (e.g., students' learning outcomes), popularity or spread, and survival or longevity of innovation as well as the perspectives of implementation (fidelity versus mutual adaptation) (Cuban, 1998; Lee, 2006). For the curriculum reform in Hong Kong, the mid-term report issued by the Education Bureau (2008) revealed the following positive effects and outcomes:

- More than 99% of school heads, more than 92% of primary school teachers and 83% of secondary school teachers perceived that they had developed improved learning and teaching strategies to enhance student learning (p.19). Before the curriculum reform, teachers tended to adopt the role of knowledge transmitter and after the reform, greater percentages of teachers had taken up the role of facilitator (from more than 30% to around 70%) (p.20).
- More than 85% of the primary students and 75% of the secondary students perceived that teachers “ask us questions, discuss with us, and encourage us to express our views”, “listen to our questions patiently and try their best to answer them”, “teach us to use different ways to find information to finish a task”, and “encourage us to find answers and solve problems on our own” (p.20).
- About 75-86% of primary school teachers and 58-71% of secondary school teachers perceived that students' generic capacities of communication, creativity and critical thinking had improved (p.20).

As regards popularity of the reform, while the media is included in the reform process to enhance “perception management” (OECD, 2011, p.104), “a vocal undercurrent of local dissatisfaction with both the process and results of these educational reforms has emerged” (Hallinger, 2010, p.404; Cheng and Walker, 2008).

From a curriculum implementation perspective, the government has tended to facilitate a mutual adaptation stance through “soft policies” about which the OECD (2011, p.104) asserted that “...with the pulling force of the public and university entrance exams, schools have developed rather diverse approaches to implementing the reform. Nonetheless, because of the change led by the reform, schools across the board have developed their own mechanisms of collective decision making and division of labour which respect their individual school cultures”. School practitioners are encouraged to develop their school-based curriculum especially through the external funding support of the Quality Education Fund and the Education Bureau as well as the professional support

from teacher education institutions. In Hong Kong, there is a substantial record of publications on school-university partnerships that facilitate schools wishing to, or being encouraged to, undertake curriculum and teaching changes. For example, a team of researchers led by Mun-ling Lo (2009) used Ference Marton's theory of variation (Marton and Booth, 1997) in a number of projects designed to help teachers to plan lessons for better teaching and learning. Teams of school development officers and researchers at the Chinese University of Hong Kong have also undertaken a number of large-scale school improvement and curriculum development projects that promoted an action-research approach to curriculum development (e.g., Lee, 2006, 2010a, 2010b).

Successful implementation of curriculum and teaching reforms is never easy. Since 2000, there has been criticism of the pace of reform and other issues such as "the problem of designing curriculum targets, the implementation of curriculum integration, school-based curriculum development, and the resource support for curriculum reform" (Lam, 2001, p.131). Fok and Ip (2010) commented that there were three major limitations on curriculum reform in Hong Kong: the excessively large scale of the reform generating difficulties in coordination; heavy teacher workloads; and the backwash effect of the examination culture. The following obstacles to education reform in Hong Kong have also been identified: unclear goals, changing goals, clash of values between culture and reforms, lack of systemic perspective, lack of communication of vision, lack stakeholder involvement and ownership of change, lack coordination in implementation, change in leaders during implementation, implement surface changes and ignore deeper reforms, inadequate preparation of staff in terms of readiness and skills and lack a research base for change. (Hallinger, 2010, p.407)

In China, the latest initiative is a national comprehensive campaign to improve education – "Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Educational Reform and Development (2010-2020)", which was announced in July 2010 and focused on eradicating educational disparity and respect for diversity and individual needs (Ministry of Education, 2010b). The Ministry of Education issued a document on "Further promoting quality education through deepening basic education curriculum reform" in April 2010 and declared that the curriculum reform has made significant progress in the following aspects: establishing a new curriculum system with Chinese characteristics; producing many teaching materials that have been well received by teachers and students; highlighting talent development with an emphasis on students' social responsibilities, spirit of innovation and practical abilities; reforming the examination and evaluation systems; and instituting positive changes of teachers' educational concepts and teaching behaviors (Ministry of Education,

2010a).

Liu and Kang (2011, p.38) have commented that in districts and schools that had implemented the new curriculum reform, real changes had happened as illustrated by the findings that “Relationships between teachers and students are more harmonious, the classroom atmosphere is more democratic, students are treated with more respect, and the curriculum content has moved closer to students’ own experiences”. However, it is important to note that “...the number of teachers who are comfortable with the basic requirements of the new curriculum standards is still relatively low. Those daily lessons that are not observed or watched, which account for 80 to 90 per cent, still use old fashioned methods of instruction such as drill work by students” (p.39).

Feng (2006) also concluded that there were four positive outcomes of the reform: the administrative style of government was, to a greater or lesser degree, decentralized; the ratios between local and school curricula have been increased in the three-tier system consisting of national, local and school curricula; innovative approaches in teacher development have been introduced, such as “expert teacher studio” and school-based teaching research; and a positive trend emphasizing teaching reflection has emerged in the learning and teaching process (Yin and Lee, 2011).

As regards empirical evidence, an early evaluation of implementation of the new curriculum reform showed that more than 90% of teachers “adapted” to new curriculum and teaching materials and more than 95% of teachers maintained that ideas and goals of curriculum reform could be realized. A student survey also revealed that nearly 60% of student respondents reported that teachers frequently make use of modern technology such as projection and slides and about 84% of them felt that teachers frequently encourage students to raise questions (Ministry of Education “New Curriculum Implementation and Evaluation of Implementation Process” Team, 2003, p.36). The findings from survey and qualitative methods to investigate the implementation of curriculum reform in early years, however, showed that in the experimental regions, there were several problems: a lack of adequate resources for curriculum implementation; a backwash effect of examinations; and teachers’ stress. There was a call for enhancing professional development (Tang and Ma, 2002). A recent study by Li and Ni (2011) on primary mathematics in China found that a greater proportion of higher cognitive level tasks and more high-order level teacher questions that probed into students’ responses were implemented in those classrooms under the impact of curriculum reform than in those non-reformed classrooms. Another study found that primary students gave higher scores to the factor *class emphasis on performing well* than that of *class emphasis on learning and learning with peers*. However, the factor, *class*

emphasis on learning and learning with peers, was a more significant predictor of primary students' perceptions of the quality of school life than the factor *class emphasis on performing well*. It might be inferred that, in line with some other studies (e.g., Zhang and Wang, 2006) and after some years of curriculum reform in China, there would be less emphasis on academic excellence in primary school classrooms and an increasing emphasis on teacher-students and peer interactions (Lee, Zhang and Song, 2011).

Despite the positive impact of the curriculum reform, four tensions have become evident during implementation: the cultural tension between the new pedagogical culture advocated by the reform and strong cultural traditions in China; the professional tension between the demands on teachers' competence and the professional support available for them; the institutional tension between education reform requirements and the local policy environment; and the resource tension between the high resource expectation put on schools and the actual availability of resources to meet these high expectations (Yin and Lee, 2008). A study of teachers' emotions in the context of senior secondary school reform revealed that teachers found the following had an emotional impact (Yin and Lee, 2011): using new textbooks and teaching materials in face of demands for interdisciplinary and integrated knowledge, adopting new teaching approaches that promote independent inquiry, teamwork and self-regulated learning, and encountering changes in the New College Entrance Examinations. In addition, there has been a discrepancy in the quality of implementation of new curriculum reform between more developed, coastal, eastern and urban areas and developing, inland, western and rural areas where resources are constrained and teachers are less well trained and tend to be textbook-bound (Song, Lee and Cheng, 2010).

Using the implementation of school-based curriculum development (SBCD) in China as an illustration, the study of Li and Shuai showed (as cited in Kennedy, 2010, p.11) that "teachers find it difficult to find concrete proposals from scholars on how to develop school-based curricula" and they point to a lack of knowledge and skills on the part of teachers. In Hong Kong, Law, van den Akker and Wan found (as cited in Kennedy, 2010, p.11) that with regard to organizational issues that impacted on teachers' participation in SBCD, teachers "need time to sit down and discuss...design materials...need people to help".

While the curriculum implementation strategy tends to be dominated by "soft policies" in Hong Kong, China tends to adopt top-down "hard policies" as the country is vast and educational administration is centralised. Taking Shanghai as an example, an experienced educator commented that "...the changes in student learning were brought about chiefly by organised and structured top-down reforms, implemented either through examinations or policy shifts.

Such measures may be well designed, but students are still not given much autonomy in their study. Schools with outstanding characteristics are still rare, and examination pressure still prevails” (OECD, 2011, p.98).

It is still notable that in some schools, “quality education is loudly spoken, but test-oriented education gets the real attention” (Zhao, 2009, p.97). The dynamic evolution of curriculum policy implementation, however, has been shaped through interactions between policy designs, place and such people as teachers, principals, government officials and textbook producers. Experience in the city of Guangzhou (in the southern part of China) revealed that implementation of senior secondary school curriculum reform encountered two major tensions: coping with the requirements of the “curriculum standards” and the demands of the College Entrance Examination (CEE), and addressing the mismatch between resource and policy demands for realizing the curriculum reform and the actual “resource-stricken” situation of many ordinary schools (Lee and Yin, 2010, p.31).

Towards Sustainability of Curriculum and Teaching Reforms

Sustainability has received increasing attention not only in the area of education for sustainable development (Lee and Williams, 2009). Sustainability is also important for leadership, educational innovation and development (Lee, 2010c). For educational innovation and development to be sustainable, at the policy level it is essential to have a participative process in which the languages of appreciation and cooperation and internal evaluation plus external support are emphasized. At the level of practice it is essential to have a constructive process where learning, local and appropriate knowledge, conceptual understanding and capacity building are highlighted (Sterling, 2001, p.38). Hargreaves and Fink (2006, pp.18-20) advocate seven principles of sustainability in educational change and leadership:

- (1) *Depth*: deep and broad learning instead of narrowly defined academic achievement. In the contexts of China (and Hong Kong), there will be implications for reducing students' schoolwork and broadening student activities after school;
- (2) *Length*: leadership succession;
- (3) *Breadth*: distributive leadership. For China and Hong Kong, more could be thought about ways of empowering teachers while reducing teachers' workloads;
- (4) *Justice*: sharing knowledge and resources. More could be done to enhance the development of professional learning communities within and across schools;
- (5) *Diversity*: fostering and learning from diversity in teaching and learning.
- (6) *Resourcefulness*: recognizing and rewarding organizational leadership talent; and
- (7) *Conservation*: honoring and learning from the best of the past.

Chiang (2010) further argued that for sustainable curriculum leadership, it is imperative to promote teachers' curriculum leadership and beliefs of sustainability and renewal capacity among curriculum leaders and school principals in the context of curriculum reform.

In terms of curriculum studies research in Hong Kong, there has been a tendency to follow and adapt studies undertaken in the Western world. For the present and the future, there is a need to conceptualize, plan and implement a distinctive Hong Kong and Chinese approach to curriculum planning, curriculum implementation and curriculum research. As regards pedagogical and learning research, more should be funded and undertaken to understand students' voices and students' experiences in the formal and hidden curriculum

as well as to investigate longitudinal changes in teaching and learning effectiveness (Lee, 2009; Lee, Lu and Huang, 2009). A review of studies of basic education curriculum reform in China has revealed that there was a need to emphasize scientific, empirical studies, in-depth curriculum studies from multiple perspectives as well as localized and school-based studies (Liu, 2011).

There is considerable potential for investigating in detail the broadly Asian, and more specifically Chinese, cultural traditions, particularly Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism, (and to a lesser extent Islam in Western China and Christianity in Hong Kong) to identify their influences on contemporary curriculum scholarship in such fields as character education, moral and citizenship education and environmental education (Lee, 2010a). From a research perspective, this echoes the University Grants Committee's call for combining Asian and Western perspectives and the comment that "Hong Kong's universities have a remarkable opportunity to become principal locations for understanding modern China. They offer ideal facilities to foreigners (especially Westerners) for the interpretation of the rapid evolution of contemporary China and the roots of a powerfully rich culture" (UGC, 2010, p.68). Recently, Hayhoe (2011, p.25), for example, suggested "synergies between various strands in Confucian and Daoian thought and the British and American educational values that have been part of Hong Kong's historical experience". She referred to Zhang Huajin's (2010) concept of "inclusive individuality" which was inspired by the ideas of John Dewey and Liang Shuming that meant "...individuals gain their own vision of learning and are motivated to try their best to expand the boundary of the existent self and reach toward a more enriched self" (p.232).

Propositions for Sustainability of the Success of Curriculum and Teaching Reforms

In conclusion, I wish to advocate some fundamental propositions for sustainability of the success of curriculum and teaching reforms in the context of China and Hong Kong.

Firstly, it is important to pay close attention to teachers' receptivity to curriculum and teaching reforms and to teachers' emotions and fears as they engage in implementing reforms (Lee, 2000; Lee and Yin, 2011; Yin, Lee and Jin, 2011). Hallinger (2010, p.413) explained succinctly that the large power distance in Asian societies tends to create "respect for authority and a passive receptivity to change, at least at a surface level" but "this receptivity does not necessarily translate into higher engagement in real changes in practices at the school and classroom levels". A recent study in Hong Kong revealed that local school heads' and teachers' agreement with and support for curriculum reform tended to reflect good progress in the reform items on teaching and learning (Cheung and Wong, 2011).

In addition, it is also important to build up trust and partnerships not only between groups and individuals at various levels but also between various influential stakeholders. The former Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower Mr. Chris Waldlaw (2006) argued that the introduction of Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) and school-based assessment (SBA) as well as school self-evaluation/external school review (SSE/ESR), which could be considered ways of evaluating the curriculum, were based on trust. For trust, he quoted Michael Fullan who referred to trust involving "reaching shared understanding; assumptions of good faith; trusting yourself as well as others; and trusting processes as well as people" (p. 10) and cited Reina and Reina (1999)'s three forms of trust - competence trust, contractual trust and communication trust (p. 11). In the context of Hong Kong, it is important for all stakeholders (e.g. business community, special advocacy groups, parents, school sponsoring bodies, school principals and teachers) to address competence trust by involving stakeholders and seeking their inputs and helping people learn; highlight contractual trust by delegating clear responsibilities to schools, TEIs and setting mutual expectations of reforms and encouraging mutually-serving intentions; and emphasizing communication trust through sharing updated information, telling the truths including mistakes, and giving and receiving constructive feedback (Waldlaw, 2006, p.11). In future, it is desirable to listen to student voices for improving ways of curriculum development. In China, a study in Southwest China revealed that teachers'

perceptions of trust in colleagues had a significant positive influence on their receptivity to, and perceptions of curriculum reform outcomes. It is suggested that trust could be seen as “both a “buffer of risk” and “catalyst for change” in curriculum reform” and policy leaders and school leaders are encouraged to get teachers involved in the curriculum reform process and actively build up trust relationships with teachers (Yin, Lee and Jin, 2011, p.43-44).

Secondly, it is important to preserve the merits and essence of Chinese pedagogy and explore ways of assimilating it with those Western approaches to teaching and learning that are judged after careful evaluation to be worthy of attention in a Chinese context. This proposition echoes what Ryan (2011, p. 3-4) rightly and succinctly pointed out, “They have led to major challenges ‘on the ground’ in terms of how to introduce reform into the educational system in ways that respect and retain the best aspects of traditional teaching and learning practices while simultaneously learning from the best educational practices and curriculum reform in other countries. The reforms are overlaid on conventional teaching and learning practices in ways that sometimes make for ‘hybrid’ models that draw from Western models but have ‘Chinese characteristics’, or at other times in ways that can cause tensions and challenges, especially in relation to ‘student-centred’ versus ‘teacher-centred’ classroom”.

Some scholars such as Ference Marton (2000, p.288) have argued that “...the pedagogy practiced in Hong Kong is surely an offspring of Chinese pedagogy, the oldest and maybe the most efficient pedagogy (in its more advanced forms) of which we know. Developing this pedagogy further seems to be a much better idea than doing away with it”. More could be done, on the one hand, to investigate the effectiveness of student-centered pedagogy in Hong Kong classrooms in the context of curriculum reform and explore ways of enhancing different forms of effective Chinese pedagogy on the other (Lee, Lam and Li, 2003, p.61).

Clearly, from a practical perspective, any moves towards assimilation must take into account the deep-seated influence of the Chinese traditional examination and competitive culture. From daily experience, we are aware that we can learn from lectures, reading books and drill and practice as well as from situated participation and active discussion. Duffy (2009) argued that traditional and constructivist approaches to learning differed in their views on the stimulus for learning. For the traditional [direct instruction] and the constructivist approach, the context and why we learn is “ ‘extraneous’ to learning” (p.364) and “learning is a process of the learners’ sense learning” respectively (p. 365).

In a recent case study of classroom innovation for the Chinese learner, two teachers were both didactic and constructivist. As described by Chan (2009,

p.202), “On the one hand, they used scaffolding to foster students’ abilities to articulate and express their views, to ask and to pursue questions while students worked on their ideas in knowledge building inquiry. On the other hand, they conducted teaching in a structured manner, a common approach in Chinese classrooms (Paine, 1990), which led the students to develop what they believed to be important to foster”. Teacher beliefs from interviews also revealed an intertwined combination of preparation for examination and knowledge-building inquiry as well as an integration of cognitive inquiry and values formation which encompass the benefit of knowledge building not only for the learner himself/herself but also for the community. It is also notable that while teachers adopted a transformed and innovative pedagogy, students also adapted their learning by being able to combine memorization and understanding as well as individual and collaborative learning. These results imply that while paradoxes exist, Chinese teachers and students may be able to transcend the dichotomies and adapt contradictory approaches to learning and teaching. Another example is the Action Education model, proposed by Professor Gu Lingyuan in Shanghai, that combines the traditional Chinese wisdom of “unity of learning and action or acting” (*zhī xíng tǒngyī*) with scholarship from the US and the former Soviet Union (Paine and Fang, 2006, p.287) and brings together concerted efforts among the insider classroom teachers and outsiders including “researchers, university professors, educational bureaucrats” (p.288).

A study in Hong Kong exploring the relationships between two classroom factors, student learning community including teacher support and involvement, on the one hand, and students’ motivational beliefs and their use of learning strategies, on the other, found that teacher support and involvement could significantly enhance students’ self-regulated learning especially with regard to intrinsic value and strategy use. It was also found that student learning community “significantly facilitate their intrinsic value..., self-efficacy... and strategy use..., indicating close peer relationship with the purpose of mutual learning and support is of great help in improving students’ ability of self-regulation in classroom learning” (Yin, Lee and Zhang, 2009, p.695). The peer support and collaboration in that study echoed the preference of Hong Kong students for a collaborative learning environment as one of the key dimensions of the classroom environment scale (Lee, Lee and Wong, 2003). Another, similar, study exploring the classroom environment of junior secondary schools and its relationship with students’ motivation and use of self-regulated learning strategy found that while high teacher support and involvement was a salient feature of the classroom environment in Hong Kong, the findings revealed that it was teachers exhibiting teacher-centredness in classroom rather than student-centredness who were more influential on students’ self-regulated learning. In addition, compared with student

collaboration, the factor of classroom order and student involvement in the classroom was a more significant predictor of self-regulated learning. From a Chinese perspective, “teacher-centredness” does not necessarily imply a negative cultural connotation, even when teacher authority or exclusive control is highlighted in classroom activities. It is argued that “the teacher-centred approach can create a respectful and comfortable working relationship between teachers and students, though it may seem hierarchical in the eyes of Western researchers (Biggs and Watkins, 1996; Ho, 2001)” (Lee, Yin and Zhang, 2009, p.229). It is desirable to explore the development of an “activating teaching” approach for Hong Kong and Chinese teachers in which students are actively engaged in classroom activities, teachers ask questions related to students’ responses, and students are encouraged to interact and collaborate with each other on learning (Bolhuis and Voeten, 2001). With due recognition of possible cultural influences on teaching and learning in Chinese classrooms, it is thus postulated that close attention should be given by policy makers to the following measures to enhance teacher involvement and support for student learning (e.g., Braine, 2003; Lau and Lee, 2008; Lee, Yin and Zhang, 2009; Schuh, 2004; Young, 2005):

- provision of motivating learning tasks with diversity, variety and meaning; arrangement of student choices of activities and tasks and autonomy support for planning and application of appropriate strategies;
- highlighting mastery orientation and provision of positive feedback to students; enhancing social connections between teachers and students; and
- addressing individual student needs.

Zhang (2009) argued that in addition to curriculum reforms, there is a need to re-examine the philosophical foundations underlying the reform. He advocated telling life stories as aesthetic pedagogy in which life experiences facilitate necessary learning and possible teaching. He pointed out that:

“...it requires both students and teachers to open the self to unknown challenges and to realize a more inclusive self-transformation. But both teachers and students should be voluntarily involved in learning activities, not by imposition. Particularly, it requires teachers to be fully aware of the task to engage the self into learning and guide students in this manner...Teachers serve as role models and as the source of inspiration rather than authorities in this process. In this teaching and learning relationship, authorship is built from inside the individual mind rather than outside” (p.163).

Alternatively, Ng (2009) advocated “Learning for achievement” as a legitimate collective goal for learning within the Chinese culture which “is about fulfillment of important social obligations such as showing filial piety, seeking social approval and meeting parental expectations...The actualization of this

collective motive or any of the goals derived from it requires a high level of comprehension and understanding in the process of learning” (p.270). He suggested that, based on this approach, combining mastery and learning orientations and generating positive wash-back effect of assessment, students should be guided to accomplish learning and assessment tasks with clear standards of performance.

Thirdly, it is essential to give more support to the professional development of principals and teachers, and especially to the promotion of professional learning communities (PLCs) in schools. A recent study in Hong Kong found that three clear components could be extracted from the scale of Professional Learning Communities Assessment (PLCA) (Hipp and Huffman, 2003): “shared and supportive leadership, collective learning and application and supportive conditions. The findings of school-level regressions indicated that all three factors of PLC and faculty trust in colleagues could significantly and positively affect teachers’ collective efficacy on instructional strategies. Nonetheless, only the PLC factor collective learning and application and faculty trust in colleagues could significantly and positively affect teachers’ collective efficacy on student discipline” (Lee, Zhang and Yin, 2011). These findings revealed that student discipline management, which is partly related to the obedience to and respect for authority, is an important issue in the Chinese classroom and should be emphasized in PLCs. In the context of Hong Kong, both pre-service and novice teachers have been found to have a relatively low level of efficacy in classroom management and student engagement (Chan, 2008), which implies the need for strengthening teacher development activities and teacher education programmes.

In China, there are good examples of teacher professional learning communities both in rural China, such as Gansu Province, and in major cities. In rural China, there is evidence to show that teachers engaged in professional development activities ranging from short-term training activities to “teaching and research activities”. Sargent and Hannum (2009) found that the development of PLCs in Gansu primary schools was shaped by institutional support and strong principal leadership. At the individual level, teacher agency in engaging in PLCs could be enhanced by a school’s incentive of granting teachers excellent teacher status and encouraging them to publish articles. A case study of PLC in a secondary school in Shanghai showed that while policy and structural support are conducive to PLC development, some socio-cultural factors could have shaped its development such as the examination-driven values and collectivism serving as “the foundation of collective responsibility and practice”, directive and authoritarian-oriented leadership style leading to less conflict and the importance of interpersonal relationships (*guānxi*) (Wong, 2010, pp.634-635).

The development of professional learning communities could also be fostered through international collaboration. Ryan, Kang, Mitchell and Erickson (2009) discussed a collaborative research and development project called “Learning Development Community” (LDC) involving Chinese, Australian and Canadian academics who collaborated as partners to help build PLCs for teachers and school district leaders in both urban, rural and remote areas of China. Despite the challenges, such as large class size and traditional teaching approaches as well as the strong influence of Confucianism on teachers, teachers in project schools attempted to develop “ ‘hybrid models’, where the Chinese teachers construct new pedagogical and curriculum approaches based on a weaving together of new ideas from the ‘outside’ ...with those that have been developed locally” (Ryan, Kang, Mitchell and Erickson, 2009, p.436).

Fourthly, it is essential to acknowledge that all reforms come with a cost and in the calculation of this cost, teachers’ workloads and extra-school and intra-school resource support must be emphasized. As regards external support, it is desirable to consider offering additional support to students from lower class families where there may be a lack of parental care, financial support to life-wide learning and project learning activities and access to information and communication technology (Leung, 2008). Teachers’ workload has been an entrenched issue of concern particularly in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong government set up The Committee on Teachers’ Work (2006) which published a report with eighteen recommendations. Amongst these recommendations, it is notable that there were calls for enhancing the professional image and standing of the teaching profession, promotion of a whole-school approach to teacher wellbeing, enhancement of self-management and personal growth in teacher education programmes, enhanced administrative support and possible increase in the teacher to student ratio to reduce teachers’ workload and enhance teachers’ work.

Last but not least, in future curriculum and teaching reforms it is essential to explore ways of enhancing students’ self-directed learning and socio-emotional learning. A comparative study of the influence of school climate on middle students’ socio-emotional and academic adjustment in China (Nanjing) with those in United States (New York City) found that higher levels of teacher support, peer support and opportunities for autonomy in the classroom were prevalent in China. It was noticeable that, compared with peer and parental support, “teacher support was a stronger predictor of self-esteem for boys and girls and Chinese and American students” (Jia *et al.*, 2009, p.1526). A study of middle school adolescents in Hong Kong showed that, compared with perceived parental support, perceived teacher support was identified as “the most total (direct and indirect) contribution to student achievement” (Chen, 2005, p.77). This raises the question that in the context of China, in addition to

the quantity of time teacher spent with students, what else can be done to enhance teacher support and teacher-student relationships for enhancing both academic and socio-emotional student learning.

The recently announced national plan for education reform in China (2010-2020) proposed that,

“Schools should reduce students’ schoolwork burdens so as to give students enough time to learn about the society, think deeply, practice more, and do exercises and amuse themselves. It is imperative to improve teachers’ professional quality, their teaching methods and efficiency, while cutting down on homework and classroom examinations. Students’ interest in studies and hobbies should be nurtured” (Ministry of Education, 2010, p.15).

In Hong Kong, an adaptation of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) identified two factors: extrinsic learning in the motivation section and peer learning in the learning strategy section. In addition, it was found that extrinsic and intrinsic motivations were highly correlated, which might be partly explained by the influence of the Chinese context where education is perceived to be important for both personal development and social mobility (Lee, Yin and Zhang, 2010; Lee, 1996). In addition, the prevalence of extrinsic motivation in learning might be partly explained by the notion of “perceived instrumentality” – an individual’s understanding of the future instrumental value of a present behavior – which was found to be an important reason for Hong Kong student learning (Lau and Lee, 2008). It seems plausible to suggest a “safe” and balanced approach to adopting “a combination of strategies for enhancing both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations such as giving praise and reward to students and inculcating them with the meaning and joy of learning” (Lee, Yin and Zhang, 2010, p.161).

These five propositions hopefully provide some possible pointers for future curriculum reform and implementation in Hong Kong and China. They call for theoretical exploration of the possibility of blending Chinese and Western thoughts in curriculum and pedagogical reforms, empirical studies to tease out the critical conditions for sustaining and enhancing the quality of our reform as well as practical and contextual solutions for local adaptations of reform features and overcoming the challenges. The realization of these propositions also necessitates a partnership approach which builds on trust and teachers’ receptivity to change, provides support to teachers and other stakeholders, and focuses on student learning in future.

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Keynote and Invited Presentations

1. **Lee, J.C.K.** (2011, November). *Strategies for sustainable development and environmental education in Hong Kong*. Keynote speech presented at the 2011 International Environmental Education Forum. November 4-5, Taiwan.
李子建 (2011, 11): 香港可持續發展及環境教育之策略, 主題演講於新北市「行動與改變 - 2011 國際環境教育論壇」, 台灣。
2. **Lee, J.C.K.** (2011, October). *Teacher education in Hong Kong: Status, contemporary issues and prospects*. Keynote speech at the 1st Global Teacher Education Summit – How to prepare teachers in the 21st century: The Dialogue between the East and the West. October 28-31, Beijing, China.
3. **Lee, J.C.K.** (2011, October). *Practice of and reflections on curriculum and teaching reforms: Hong Kong experiences*. Invited speech for “New Classroom, New Education” Summit Forum. October 14-15, Beijing, China.
李子建 (2011, 10): 課程與教學改革的實踐與反思: 香港的經驗, 論文發表於「新課堂、新教育」高峰論壇, 北京。
4. **Lee, J.C.K.** (2011, April). *Curriculum development in Hong Kong higher education and education for sustainable development: Issues and challenges*. Keynote speech presented at the 4th Forum on Education for Sustainable Development across the Straits. April 1-2, Macao.
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20. **Lee, J.C.K.** (2006, November). *Hong Kong Geographical Education: Issues and Challenges*. Keynote address at 2006 Cross-Strait regional conference on geographical education reform and effective teaching. November 4-7, Hong Kong.
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28. Lee, J.C.K. (2004, July). *Ideas and practices of green schools in Hong Kong*. Paper presented at the International Seminar on Green Schools in China & Teenagers Forum on Environment. July 29-31, China.
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35. Lee, J.C.K. (2001, May). *Accelerated Schools for Quality Education: Initial experiences of school change*. Keynote paper presented at the International Conference on Rejuvenating Schools through Partnerships. May 22-24, Hong Kong.

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Services on Editorial Boards and Editorship

<i>Period</i>	<i>Capacity</i>	<i>Publication</i>
2011 –	Editorial Advisory Board Member	<i>International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education</i> (IJMCE) Emerald Group Publishing Limited http://www.emeraldinsight.com/products/journals/editorial_team.htm?id=ijmce&PHPSESSID=qbpu7cgbeavg3h5pgl5tmnq704
2011 –	Editorial Board Member 編輯委員	<i>Journal of Educational Theory and Practice</i> National Taichung University of Education, Taiwan 《教育理論與實踐》學刊 台中教育大學教育學系
2011 –	Consulting Editor	<i>International Review of Education</i> published by Springer on behalf of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning http://www.springer.com/education+%26+language/journal/11159?detailsPage=editorialBoard
2010 –	Associate Editor	<i>Teachers and Teaching: Theory and practice</i> (official journal of International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching (ISATT)) published by Taylor and Francis http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/journal.asp?issn=1354-0602&linktype=145
2010 –	Editorial Board Member	<i>Educational Research International</i> Hindawi Publishing Corporation http://www.hindawi.com/journals/edu/editors/
2010 –	Advisor Board Member 編輯顧問	<i>Journal of Curriculum Studies</i> Taiwan: Higher Education Publishing 《課程研究》 台灣：高等教育文化事業有限公司
2010 – 2012	Co-Editor 共同主編	new <i>Education Journal</i> organised by Hong Kong Institute of Educational Research, CUHK 《教育學報》 主辦機構為香港中文大學香港教育研究所 http://hkier.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/journal/?page_id=119

2010	Executive Editor-in-chief 主編	<i>Journal of Curriculum Studies</i> (2010 August special issue) Taiwan: Higher Education Publishing 《課程研究》2010年8月(香港特刊) 台灣: 高等教育文化事業有限公司
2009 –	Co-editor	Book series on <i>Schooling for Sustainable Development</i> Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer http://www.springer.com/series/8635
2009 – 2010	Guest Co-editor	special issue on educational leadership for <i>Frontier of Education in China</i> co-published by Springer, The Netherlands and Higher Education Press, Beijing
2008, 2010 –	Executive Co-Editor and Editorial Board Member (Area of Curriculum and Instruction)	Special Issue on “Teaching” (2008) and Volume 6 (2010), <i>Journal of Educational Research and Development</i> published by National Academy for Educational Research, Taiwan 《教育研究與發展期刊》
2007 –	Overseas Corresponding Editor	<i>Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning</i> published by Taylor and Francis http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/journal.asp?issn=1361-1267&linktype=145
2007	Editorial Board Member	<i>International Journal of Management in Education</i> (IJMIE, ISSN Online: 1750-3868 and hard copy) published by Inderscience Enterprise Ltd.
2006 –	International Advisory Board Member 國際顧問編輯委員會委員	<i>Journal of Quality School Education</i> organized by Hong Kong Primary Educational Research Association and Hong Kong Institute of Education 《優質學校教育學報》
2006 –	Editorial Committee Member 編委	<i>Hong Kong Teachers' Centre Journal</i> organised by Hong Kong Teachers' Centre 《香港教師中心學報》 主辦機構為香港教師中心
2005 –	International Advisory Board Member.	<i>School Leadership and Management</i> published by Taylor and Francis (UK) http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/boards/c-boards/slm-edb.html .

2005 –	Advisory Board Member	Canadian Journal of Environmental Education supported by the Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM), Lakehead University, Yukon College, Environment Canada, and the TD Financial Group http://www.edu.uleth.ca/ICTRD/cjee
2005 –	Overseas Editorial Board Member 國外編輯顧問	Contemporary Educational Research Quarterly (originally named as <i>Educational Research & Information Bimonthly Journal</i>) organized and published by Center for Educational Research of National Taiwan Normal University 《當代教育研究》 (原刊名為《教育研究資訊雙月刊》) 國立台灣師範大學教育研究中心出版
2004 –	Regional Editor (Asia)	Educational Research and Evaluation: An International Journal on Theory and Practice published by Taylor & Francis (UK) http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/journal.asp?issn=1380-3611&linktype=145
2004 –	Editorial Board Member and Reviewer	Transnational Curriculum Inquiry an international journal of the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (IAACS) http://nitinat.library.ubc.ca/ojs/index.php/tci/about/editorialPolicies#custom1
2004 –	Editor 編輯委員	Curriculum & Instruction Quarterly organized by Association for Curriculum and Instruction, Taiwan 《課程與教學季刊》 主辦機構為中華民國課程與教學學會
2002 –	Board of Editorial Consultants (Member)	Asia-Pacific Education Researcher organised by College of Education, De La Salle University-Manila http://www.philjol.info/philjol/index.php/TAPER/about/editorialPolicies#custom-0
2002 – 2004	Executive Editor 編輯委員會執行編輯	Hong Kong Teachers' Centre Journal organised by Hong Kong Teachers' Centre 《香港教師中心學報》 主辦機構為香港教師中心

2001 –	Advisory Editor 編輯顧問	<p><i>Journal of Environmental Education Research</i> (JEER) published by Wu-Nan Book Co. Ltd., organized by Chinese Society for Environmental Education 《環境教育研究》 五南圖書出版公司出版，主辦機構為環境教育學會</p>
2001 – 2010	Chief Editor 主編	<p><i>Journal of Basic Education</i> organised by Hong Kong Institute of Educational Research, CUHK 《基礎教育學報》 主辦機構為香港中文大學香港教育研究所</p>

Research excellence is characterised by systematic inquiry, scholarship, and knowledge transfer that supports innovation and development. With this philosophy, The Hong Kong Institute of Education endeavors to create space for dialogue and exchange to promote research in key areas relating to education and human development. This Lecture Series aims to share with the community together research issues that are relevant for the future. It will also identify areas where further effort is needed to strengthen the evidence base that informs policy and practice.