

# Challenges to Implementing an Independent Subject of Moral and National Education for Hong Kong Schools

Greg Fairbrother  
Department of Social Sciences

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# December 8, 1976

- “Will the government state the extent to which courses concerning civic consciousness and public affairs are included in school curricula ... [and] whether these courses are compulsory in primary and secondary schools”  
--Legislator Kwan-Ko Siu Wah

# May 12, 1994

“I would like to ask, Mr. Governor, whether the Government could expeditiously make civic education (including national education and political education) one of the compulsory subjects in the secondary curriculum so as to instill into our young generation a stronger sense of belonging ...”

-- Legislator Alfred Tso Shiu-Wai

# October 15, 1997

I think, for the Government, the immediate strengthening of civic education is a pressing matter of the moment. As is known to all, foundation has to be laid properly before a democratic government can be developed, and this foundation is built on civic education. The Chief Executive's policy address also states that our long-term goal is to elect the Chief Executive and all Members of the Legislative Council by universal suffrage. In view of this, we have to urge the Government to stipulate that civic education courses must be compulsory from primary school onwards ...

--Legislator Kennedy Wong

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## Policy Address

160. Based on the current curriculum, the Education Bureau (EDB) will improve students' understanding of the Basic Law, step up the teaching support relating to the Basic Law and “One Country, Two Systems” in the primary and secondary school curricula and compile a learning package in this school year. We also propose to increase study hours on the Basic Law and related topics. Furthermore, the EDB will develop a database of questions on the Basic Law for students to attempt online and for schools to use in examinations.

161. The EDB will invite the Curriculum Development Council to review the curriculum framework for moral and civic education at primary and secondary levels, and to develop an independent subject on “moral and national education”. This initiative is expected to be implemented in the 2013-14 school year to further enhance the elements of national education.

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# Citizenship Education

- Moral education
- Civic education
- Civic and moral education
- Moral and civic education
- National education
- Moral and national education
- (Patriotic education
- Education in the national spirit
- Ideological and political education)

# Overview

- The cross-curricular approach to citizenship education in Hong Kong
- Three challenges to implementing an independent subject of citizenship education
- Conclusions

# Moral and Civic Education in Hong Kong

- Guidelines on Moral Education in Schools (1981)
- Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools (1985)
- Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools (1996)
- Basic Education Curriculum Guide (2002)
  - Moral and Civic Education
    - One of Four Key Tasks
- Liberal Studies



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# Three Challenges

- Will the public view an independent subject as a form of indoctrination?
- Will significant questions and concerns among the educational community as to the effectiveness and resource implications of an independent subject be addressed?
- Will an independent subject enhance citizenship learning outcomes?

# The challenge of avoiding an impression of indoctrination

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## **Suen says no brainwashing in morals class**

Elaine Yau and Fanny W. Y. Fung  
Updated on *Oct 16, 2010*

Education secretary Michael Suen Ming-yeung yesterday said the new national education subject to be introduced in 2013 was not a brainwashing exercise, but declined to say if Liu Xiaobo winning the Nobel Peace Prize should be included in the curriculum.

# Citizenship Education in the Rest of China

- 1994 Action Plan on Patriotic Education (愛國主義教育實施綱要)
- 2004 CCP Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving the Development of Ideology and Morals among Minors (中共中央國務院關於進一步加強和改進未成年人思想道德建設的若干意見)
- 2004 Action Plan for Implementing in Primary and Secondary Schools Education for Cultivating the National Spirit (中小學開展弘揚和培育民族精神教育實施綱要)



# Hong Kong 1952

- There remain, however, some schools which, under the guise of education, attempt to instil in the minds of their children political ideas that are entirely alien to those of the free world and gravely prejudicial to the best interest of the children themselves, as well as to the peace and security of this Colony
    - Director of Education, Douglas Crozier
- Education Regulations prohibiting politics in schools

# 1985 Civic Education Guidelines

“Political Education vs Political Indoctrination”

“In dealing with civic education, if free and informed discussion is encouraged and pupils are given the opportunity to reach conclusions based on balanced, objective appraisal of the evidence of views presented, the approach is less likely to be misconstrued as indoctrination than would be the case if one person’s conclusions were imposed on others.”

# Legislative Council Debates

- 1990 Bill to Amend the Education Regulations
- 1996 Debate on Civic Education Policy
- 1997 Bill to Amend the Education Regulations
- Post-1997 Debates on the national flag and Basic Law
- 2004 Discussion of the CPCE's National Education API
  - Negative reaction among members of the public
    - Government move to promote patriotism viewed as a form of brainwashing



# Legislative Council Debates

- Fears
  - Citizenship Education
    - Compulsory instillation
      - Biased, specific, particular, rigid, established views, ideologies, or political thinking
    - Brainwashing
    - Political Censorship
    - Japanese militaristic education
    - Kuomintang party-oriented education
    - CCP socialist education
    - Propaganda
    - Poisonous biased views and opinions

# Legislative Council Debates

- Students
  - Stuffed
  - Spoon-fed
  - Manipulated
  - Their thinking limited
  - Exploited for the purpose of electioneering

# Legislative Council Debates

- Warnings
  - Civic Education must be distinguished from
    - Patriotic education
    - Chinese socialist education
    - CCP-loving education
  - Patriotism should not be
    - A hard-sell by the authorities
    - Parochial, hollow, narrow-minded, blind
  - National pride should be clearly distinguished from supporting the state in infringing human rights

# Legislative Council Debates

- Suggestions for Moral Education
  - Permeate the whole school
    - Extracurricular activities
    - Community service
  - Moral values and attitudes
    - Example
    - Practice
    - Influence of the environment
  - Teaching
    - Conflicting views
    - Moral dilemmas
    - Thinking about moral issues
    - Moral problem-solving

# Legislative Council Debates

- Suggestions for Civic Education
  - Schools should expose students to
    - Different political thoughts, opinions, activities
      - Balanced, objective, and rational
  - Schools should teach students to
    - Critically analyze different beliefs
    - Identify the beliefs behind different political positions
  - Students should be allowed and encouraged to
    - Develop their own judgment
    - Form their own opinions
    - Choose whatever political, economic, and social lifestyle they feel appropriate
    - Think independently and critically

# Legislative Council Debates

- National identity + critical thinking
- “Provided that the younger generation is capable of thinking independently, they will be in a position to differentiate between ‘loving the country’ and ‘loving the party’ ”
- Education for national identity + Education on human rights and democracy

The challenge of addressing questions  
and concerns among the education  
community

# Interviews (April-August 2009)

- Sixteen education leaders
  - Government bodies
  - Education concern and advocacy groups
  - Teachers' unions
  - Citizenship education-related teachers' associations
  - Student associations
  - Political parties
  - Academia



# Questions of Interest

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of current citizenship education practice?
- How could citizenship education be improved?
- What would be the potential for an independent, compulsory subject of citizenship education

# Detractors of the Permeation Approach

- Permeation approach is
  - Empty talk
  - Unfeasible
    - Lack of room within existing subjects to infuse further citizenship education content
- Independent, compulsory subject is needed
  - On par with other school subjects
  - Comprehensive, systematic delivery
  - Well-structured curriculum, clear guidelines and targets

# Detractors of the Permeation Approach

- Independent, compulsory subject
  - Similar to Mainland China and Taiwan
  - Focus on core principles of citizenship
    - National identity, Rights and responsibilities, Rule of law, Ethics, Family values, ...
  - Classroom teaching plus
    - Games, field trips, project learning, dialogue, enquiry, discussion, debate, drama, exchange programmes
- Formalize the subject of Chinese History?

# Detractors of the Permeation Approach

- Government should take the lead
  - Others will follow
    - Textbook publishers
      - Textbooks and teaching materials
    - Teacher training institutions
      - Specialist training
    - Assessment
      - Extrinsic motivation for students' learning
      - Knowledge
      - Moral attitudes and behavior

# Obstacles to Overcome

- Hong Kong's examination culture
  - Emphasis on
    - knowledge acquisition
    - Memorization
    - Recitation of facts
- Related concerns of
  - Indoctrination
  - One-sided national education
  - Value standardization

# Overcoming the Obstacle

- Hong Kong's examination culture and potential for indoctrination
  - Emphasis on developing students' critical thinking skills
  - A variety of pedagogies and activities
- Government planning and support for teacher training
  - Specialist knowledge
  - Ability to make use of non-traditional pedagogies

# Obstacles to Overcome

- Lack of space in the curriculum
  - Time for other subjects to be reduced
  - Certain subjects to be eliminated
- Slippery slope
  - Other integrated and permeated subjects wanting independent status
- Doubts about the rationale
  - Objective criteria for mandating
  - Teachers' and students' understanding of the subject's purpose
  - Resentment at and resistance to yet another shift in education policy

# Obstacles to Overcome

- Schools' loss of autonomy in choosing citizenship education curricular approaches
  - Only a minority of schools have chosen the existing civic education subject
  - Less flexibility in implementation
    - Potential for differential understanding of the subject
      - Different backgrounds
      - Different sponsoring bodies
  - Going against worldwide trend towards curriculum integration



# Obstacles to Overcome

- Lack of societal consensus
  - Value
  - Content
- Potential for heated public debate
- Difficulties in reconciling diverse opinions
- Continuing societal contention over delivery
  - Differential understandings of citizenship and related concepts

# Overcoming the Obstacles

- Need for concerted government effort, determination, and support for implementation
  - Extended consultation on content
  - Cooperation to decide on delivery
    - Government
    - Schools
    - Teachers
- Reflection on government's success at mandating Liberal Studies

# A few questions

- Will a compulsory, independent subject enhance current citizenship education strengths?
  - Strengths exist regardless of curricular approach
  - Some identified strengths are the opposite of an independent subject
    - School curricular autonomy
    - Permeation and integrated subject approaches
  - Would the strength of an independent subject outweigh the strengths of other approaches?

# A few questions

- Will a compulsory, independent subject resolve current citizenship education weaknesses?
  - More systematic, uniform, focused, balanced
  - Treated more seriously by schools, teachers, students
- Compulsory: yes, with clear and firm guidance
- Independent: ?

# A few questions

- Will a compulsory, independent subject improve citizenship education?
  - Suggestions for improvement
    - Stronger organization, direction, balance, support, and resourcing
  - Compulsory: Contribution to improvement
  - Independent: ??

# A few questions

- Could the benefits of a compulsory, independent subject be achieved through other curricular approaches?
  - Probably not without a mandate of compulsory citizenship education
    - But this would not necessarily require an independent subject

# Sub-conclusion

- The primary insurmountable obstacle to a compulsory, *independent* subject:
  - Schools' desire for autonomy in curriculum delivery decision-making
- Compulsory, Yes
- Independent Subject, Not necessarily
  - Decisions on form of delivery left to schools

The challenge of evidence that a compulsory, independent subject would not necessarily improve citizenship learning outcomes



# Research Questions

1. Do students in societies where civic education is compulsory have higher achievement with regard to civic knowledge, knowledge of democracy, and patriotism than those in societies where it is not?
2. Do students studying an independent subject of civic education have higher achievement with regard to civic knowledge, knowledge of democracy, and patriotism than those experiencing other curricular approaches to civic education?
3. What are the effects of different policy and curricular approaches on citizenship outcomes when controlling for a variety of related education factors?



- IEA 1999 Civic Education Study database
  - 90,000 14-year olds in 28 societies
  - Test of civic knowledge and survey of various attitudes and learning experiences
  - Added two variables:
    - Not compulsory / compulsory
    - Not independent / independent subject
  - Dependent variables
    - Civic knowledge scaled score (25 items)
    - Knowledge of democracy scale (10 items)
    - Patriotism / Positive national attitudes scale (5 items)

# Comparison of Means

- Students in societies where civic education is compulsory
  - score higher on
    - Civic knowledge (10% of a standard deviation)
    - Democracy (7% of a standard deviation)
    - Patriotism (57% of a standard deviation
      - than those in societies where it is not compulsory

# Comparison of Means

- Students studying an independent subject of civic education
  - score higher on
    - Civic knowledge (7% of a standard deviation)
    - Patriotism (42% of a standard deviation
      - than those not studying an independent subject
- There is no statistically significant difference between the two groups with regard to knowledge of democracy

# Regression Models

- 1: ‘compulsory’ and ‘independent’ only
- 2: ‘compulsory’, ‘independent’, and seven ‘learning’ factors
- 3: ‘compulsory’, ‘independent’, and 12 ‘classroom’ factors
- 4: ‘compulsory’, ‘independent’, and 15 ‘participation’ factors
- 5: ‘compulsory’, ‘independent’, and 10 ‘action’ factors
- 6: ‘compulsory’, ‘independent’, and all factors from Models 2-5.

# Learning Factors

	<i>strongly disagree</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>strongly agree</i>	<i>don't know</i>
	1	2	3	4	0
K1. In school I have learned to understand people who have different ideas.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
K2. In school I have learned to co-operate [work together] in groups with other students.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
K3. In school I have learned to contribute to solving problems in the community [society]....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
K4. In school I have learned to be a patriotic and loyal [committed] citizen of my country.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
K5. In school I have learned how to act to protect the environment.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
K6. In school I have learned to be concerned about what happens in other countries.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
K7. In school I have learned about the importance of voting in national and local elections.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Classroom Factors

<i>never</i>	<i>rarely</i>	<i>sometimes</i>	<i>often</i>	<i>don't know</i>
1	2	3	4	0

N1.... Students feel free to disagree openly with their teachers about political and social issues during class<sup>k</sup>.....

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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N2.... Students are encouraged to make up their own minds about issues<sup>k</sup>.....

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------

N3.... Teachers respect our opinions and encourage us to express them during class<sup>k</sup>.....

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------

N4.... Teachers place great importance [stress, emphasis] on learning facts or dates when presenting history or political events.....

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------

N5.... Students feel free to express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from most of the other students<sup>k</sup>.....

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------

# Participation Factors

**Have you participated in the following organisations?**

*Tick the appropriate box in each row.*

	<i>no</i>	<i>yes</i>
	1	2
a) A student council/student government [class or school parliament].....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) A youth organisation affiliated with a political party or union.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) A group which prepares a school newspaper.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) An environmental organisation.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) A U. N. or UNESCO Club.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) A student exchange or school partnership program.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) A human rights organisation .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) A group conducting [voluntary] activities to help the community.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) A charity collecting money for a social cause.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



# Action Factors

**How often do you have discussions of what is happening in international politics?**

	<i>never</i>	<i>rarely</i>	<i>sometimes</i>	<i>often</i>	<i>don't know</i>
	1	2	3	4	0
L4... With people of your own age [peers].....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L5... With parents or other adult family members...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L6... With teachers.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**How often do you ...**

	<i>never</i>	<i>rarely</i>	<i>sometimes</i>	<i>often</i>	<i>don't know</i>
	1	2	3	4	0
L7... read articles (stories) in the newspaper about what is happening in this country?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L8... read articles (stories) in the newspaper about what is happening in other countries?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>
L9... listen to news broadcasts on television?.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Model 6: All Factors

- Civic Knowledge
  - Discuss international politics with parents ( $\beta=.14$ )
  - Participate in a student council ( $\beta=.13$ )
- ... 14 other factors
- Study an independent subject of civics ( $\beta=.03$ )
- Compulsory civic education (n.s.)

# Model 6: All Factors

- Knowledge of Democracy
  - Discuss international politics with parents ( $\beta=.08$ )
  - Discuss international politics with peers ( $\beta=.07$ )
  - Study an independent subject of civics ( $\beta= -.07$ )
  - ... 10 other factors
  - Compulsory civic education (n.s.)

# Model 6: All Factors

- Patriotism
  - Learn to be patriotic ( $\beta=.32$ )
  - Compulsory civic education ( $\beta=.15$ )
  - Read news of this country ( $\beta=.14$ )
  - ... 4 other factors
  - Study an independent subject of civics ( $\beta=.05$ )

# Summary

	Compulsory	Independent
Civic Knowledge		Small +
Knowledge of Democracy		Small –
Patriotism	Small +	Small +

# Variance Explained by Model 1

	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Civic Knowledge	.002
Knowledge of Democracy	.002
Patriotism	.07

# Sub-conclusion

- Curriculum organization alone has a small and differentiated influence on learning outcomes
  - Some of which is negative (independent subject x democracy)
- What does enhance civic knowledge?
  - Discussing politics with parents, adults, peers
  - Watching the news on TV
  - Reading the newspaper
  - Participation in student government
  - Feeling free to disagree with teachers
  - Informal civic learning outside class and school

# Sub-conclusion

- What does enhance knowledge of democracy?
  - Discussing politics with significant others
  - Open classroom climate
  - Participation in organizations and associations
    - Including art, music, and drama
- What does enhance patriotism?
  - Learning in class to be patriotic
  - Learning to cooperate in groups
  - Reading the national news (↔)



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# Conclusion

- Meeting the third challenge
  - Put effort on extracurricular learning in addition to the new subject
- Meeting the second challenge
  - Address schools' potential concerns about curriculum autonomy
- Meeting the first challenge
  - Incorporate significant elements of critical thinking

# Acknowledgements and References

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