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Portrays of pro-Beijing Workers' Night Schools in Hong Kong from 1946 to post-1997

Chui Shan Lau

Abstract This study focuses on the transformation of the pro-Beijing labour education in the socio-political context of Hong Kong. It explores the reasons that Hong Kong pro-Beijing educators initiated Workers' Night Schools for adults; the organisation of schools in many locales and the transformation of labour education that workers received in these educational settings. The history of the development of this organization is deeply intertwined with the politics of education and the social transformation of that period. That development provides an understanding of how the pro-Beijing educators constructed an alternative culture that opposed the colonial government, and was later transformed to service as a pro-Hegemonic force in the post-1997 era. In addition, rapid and widespread changes were taking place through-out Hongkongese life. Labour education was once viewed as a radical project to enhance working-class's anti-hegemonic consciousness, socialist practices and political activism in the colonial Hong Kong. The introduction of international standards, global benchmarks for career and technical education and the transfer of sovereignty have created a new situation forcing these pro-Beijing educators to respond quickly. This article aims to see how the pro-Beijing educators related to international standard for vocational training and how the schools transforms itself to fit into the industrialized, market-oriented and globalized society of HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region).

Keywords Pro-Beijing labour education in capitalist society History of education The politics of education

1. Introduction

This paper examines labour education in Hong Kong over the period from 1949 to post-1997, as provided by the pro-Beijing educators in Hong Kong. The Workers' Night Schools of The Hong Kong Kowloon Labour Education Association (HKKLEA) have developed into the Hong Kong College of Technology, the largest private tertiary vocational training institute in Hong Kong. The history of the development of this organization is deeply intertwined with the politics of education and the social transformation of that period. That development provides an understanding of how the pro-Beijing educators constructed an alternative culture that opposed the colonial government and was later transformed to serve as a pro-hegemonic force in the post-1997 era.

A considerable proportion of the literature produced in the field of history of education in Hong Kong has forced on official policy-related issues. For instance, Ng-lun (1984) describes the interactions of the East and the West through the development of public education by the British Government in nineteenth and early twentieth century Hong Kong. Sweeting (1993) analyses the emergence of a distinctive education system in a period of uncertainties, tensions and conflicting influences by examining the social history and the policy-process in post-war Hong Kong. Luk (1991) was the first to detect the colonial government's use of Chinese culture in the curriculum. Vickers (2000, 2003) and Kan (2007), give a macro overview of the curriculum of colonial Hong Kong in relation to British strategies of state formation. Wong (2002, 2003, 2007) analyzes the historical process through which ruling elites struggle to build a local identity, amend or pre-empt social fragmentation, and win support from the ruled. There has been little academic research on the local pro-Beijing forces, despite the fact that a few books on related topics have been published in recent years, including *Underground Front The Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong* (Loh 2002), *May Days in Hong Kong Emergency and*

Riot in 1967 (Bickers and Yep 2009) and *Chinese Communists and Hong Kong Capitalists: 1937-1997* (Chu 2010). However, none of these books deal with the connection between Hong Kong pro-Beijing schools and their change towards new state-formation strategies of the People's Republic of China (PRC) during the transitional period.

There were two major changes in the history of Hong Kong during this period. The first coincided with the notion of lifelong education, which came to prominence in the education world in the late 1960s. International standards, global benchmarks and national targets for career and technical education were introduced into Hong Kong, as they were in many parts of the world. The enhanced mobility of the labour force, the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies and the introduction of international training standards created a new situation.

The second major change came with the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong from a British colony to a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China, and this brought about profound changes in the ambience in which education is conducted and discussed.

These two changes produced difficulties for the pro-Beijing educators, who wished to use labour education as a political force to disseminate views favourable to the Beijing government. At the same time, it was important for them to retain popular support in the population of Hong Kong.

Initially, the ideological position of the pro-Beijing educators was relatively straightforward; they opposed both British rule and the institutions of capitalism in line with the teachings of Mao Tse Tung and the Chinese Communist Party. After the communist-inspired riots of 1967 in Hong Kong, the pro-Beijing forces lost a lot of popular support, as there was a widespread backlash against the violence, and the educators had to be more subtle in their attempts to spread pro-Beijing views. This situation was further complicated in the post-Cultural Revolution period, when China embraced the idea of an economic opening, and it became clear that Hong Kong would play a pivotal role in the future economic success of the country after the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong back to China in 1997. This made earlier opposition to capitalism look outmoded, and forced the pro-Beijing educators to be more nuanced in their approaches to labour education.

To survive in the new era, these pro-Beijing educators had to come to grips with a broad social function and to adopt a role of some political importance in Hong Kong. The goal of convincing a large number of Hong Kong residents to give their allegiance to the government of China is important, but it was necessary to decouple this from opposition to capitalism as such and to develop a new position within the transitional process leading to the recovery of sovereignty by China.

With these changes in the political and socio-economic setting, and the impact of neo-liberal globalization, the interplay of social factors and education has altered the features of Hong Kong society. In this article, the way in which pro-Beijing educators related to the development of international standards for vocational training and how the schools transformed

themselves to fit into the industrialized, market-oriented and neo-liberal globalized society of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region are examined.

2. Research methods

This inquiry focuses on the complex process of change. There are three important sources of data for this research on pro-Beijing education. The first source is interviews with thirty nine informants. These were drawn from four groups involved: (1) government officials; (2) educators and sympathizers or affiliates of the pro-Beijing forces at the time; (3) administrators of the pro-Beijing primary and secondary schools and the Hong Kong College of Technology; and (4) teachers and students of these schools. Although their individual experiences are not explicitly described here, their recollections provided important elements of the practice of pro-Beijing education. The reactions of the individuals in the processes of transformation and accommodation are investigated insofar as these reactions affected the implementation of the curriculum. The second source is contemporary reports, biographies, school journals and government records of Hong Kong. A number of visits have been made to the Public Records Office in Hong Kong and the National Archives in London during the period between 2003 and 2010. The third source is my own observation. My interest in the social history of the pro-Beijing forces was aroused by my 4 years of work experience in two pro-Beijing schools in the 1990s and 2000s. I experienced the culture, practices, the ways of thinking, norms and values of these pro-Beijing schools.

3. Pro-Beijing focuses in Hong Kong

The communists took over China in late 1949. Beijing's decision not to wage either a military or diplomatic campaign to regain Hong Kong did not imply that the colony would co-exist with China in a harmonious atmosphere: The establishment of a strong communist regime on the mainland alarmed both the Hong Kong government and London. In early 1949, tighter restrictions were placed on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its activities, whether they could be proved to be subversive or not (Grantham 1965). Legislation was passed making it illegal for any society in Hong Kong to affiliate with a political organization, except with the permission of the Governor. However, in spite of the closure of several schools and the de-registration of a few schools, there remained dozens of pro-Beijing schools in Hong Kong throughout the last 50 years of the colonial era. Pro-Beijing papers and trade unions continued to function. While the government suppressed some socialist organization, they allowed some others to continue. The government crackdown was selective. This implies the British Hong Kong government recognised and perhaps to an extent tolerated the existence of certain institutions that were affiliated to the CCP over the years, despite retaining considerable legal powers to interfere in the administration of these organizations.

China's objections to British colonial rule and the dominance of the British bureaucracy in the politics of Hong Kong were sources of conflict from time-to-time. These pro-Communist groups started to form a broad based United Front with support from some businessmen and sympathetic newspapers to ensure they would not be out of touch from the masses in the 1940s.

It was only in 1946 that the South China Bureau of the CCP was established in Hong Kong (Tang 1994, p. 115). Although there were about 5,000 party members in Hong Kong in 1947, many of these members were sojourners, who had no plan to stay in Hong Kong. Connections with party cells in non-party loyalist groups were maintained by means of functions, namely, education, labour and propaganda committees (Catron 1971).

The consolidation of the pro-Beijing forces was not sudden, but arose in the course of development and evolution. The pro-Beijing movement can be considered as a living organism that could languish in difficulties or grow and bloom in more favourable times. The organization and composition of the pro-Beijing forces were arranged through different institutes which provided the necessities of welfare in daily life, such as education, entertainment and medical services (Interview records dated 2 March 2004, 1 May 2005, 14 March 2005 and 24 December 2007).

During the period from 1967 to 1977, members of the pro-Beijing forces by and large were confined to a restricted style of life and kept in a small circle of people. Graduates from pro-Beijing schools always worked in the affiliated companies of the PRC government, such as CRC department store, Bank of China, New China Agency, Ta Kung Pao and so on. Some lived in the staff quarters of the company, shopped in CRC department store and went to the few pro-Beijing cinemas which showed communist films. Examples of these cinema included Po Hing Theatre, Ko Sing Theatre, Sunbeam Theatre and Silver Theatre. The films that were screened were mainly produced and supplied by Great Wall, Silver, Nan Fang and Phoenix (Interview records dated 2 March 2004, 1 May 2004, 15th February 2005, 14 March 2005 and 24 December 2007). In this sense, the pro-Beijing forces in Hong Kong had a self-sufficient system that regulated the *modus vivendi* of the members. This included their careers, their studies and their style of life and retirement.

Labour education serves to reinforce and legitimate the division of labour and the relationships of power in the capitalist mode of production. The pro-Beijing forces in Hong Kong were nevertheless established to challenge the ideology and culture of capitalism and to develop the general knowledge and foster Chinese socialism in order to re-organise production and society along socialist lines. This was the main line of the pro-Beijing forces' development and the purpose for their existence from the immediate post-war period to the late 1970s (FCO 1974). In short, they aimed to upset the ideology and social practices which legitimated and perpetuated the capitalist social order at the same time as they developed the differentiated intellectual capabilities, attitudes and skills that were required by the established hierarchical structure of the capitalist market.

4. Workers' Night Schools: historical overview

The world-wide expansion of government-funded education for the young took root in Hong Kong in the 1970s. Education before this period was largely left in private hands (Luk and Wu 1983). The political implications for labour education were rarely addressed in Hong Kong. With the rapid changes in Hong Kong's economy, society and politics, it is appropriate to consider how the pro-Beijing labour education contributed to social transformation. Can their schools be

viewed as more than a historical example of deliberate human agency and of the socialist project to foster working-class, anti-hegemonic and anti-colonial consciousness, solidarity and activism? To what extent did pro-Beijing labour education serve as a force for social change? Or did it serve as an agent for reproducing the status quo?

The organizational structure of labour education was very diverse in Hong Kong during the post-war era. With the inflow of immigrants from the Mainland, the population of Hong Kong expanded fourfold from about 600,000 in mid-1945 to nearly 2.5 million in 1954 (Sweeting 1993, p. 2). Education for the children and young people was in very short supply. The school population of Hong Kong (presumably the island only) was estimated at 4,200 and for the whole territory it was estimated at 7,000 (Sweeting 1993, p. 14). In these circumstances, little effort was made to provide education for adults because there was a great shortage of teaching staff with the increasing demand for technicians during the post-war era (Sweeting 1993, p. 20). In fact, labour education stretched far beyond government control, and involved commerce and industry, trade unions, political parties (Kuomintang and Chinese Communists Party), voluntary organizations other social organizations. The Chinese type of apprenticeship was common and it was seldom compulsory. Usually it was part-time and in many cases occurred in contexts which responded to particular interests (Interview records dated 11 August 2009).

Nevertheless, in spite of this heterogeneity, it can be seen as one of the organized processes in society which systematically shaped consciousness, developed knowledge, imparted skills, and formed attitudes. It is within this context that the role of the pro-Beijing labour schools in Hong Kong should be analyzed. The Hong Kong Kowloon Labour Education Association (HKKLEA) was initially called the Hong Kong Kowloon Worker Children Education Association (HKCT 1997). Later, it was to be integrated into the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (HKCT 1997), which is a pro-Beijing political party in Hong Kong.

Under the administration and the umbrella of the HKKLEA, 12 Workers' Children Schools (day schools) and five Worker's Night Schools were established in the 1950s (HKCT 1997, p. 6). In 1947, an evening school was set up for the women textile workers in Shum Shui Po (later renamed the Shamshuipo Workers' Night Schools), and another for women textile workers was set up in To Kwa Wan shortly afterwards (HKCT 1997). In the spring of 1948, a third Worker's Night School was opened for metal workers. And in 1949 Shaukeiwan Workers' Night School was established to serve the workers of Taikoo Dockyard. The last workers' night School established was Mongkok Workers' Night School. It was later renamed as the Hong Kong College of Technology in 1987 (HKCT 1997).

Before the communist takeover of China in 1949, there had been no threat to British rule in Hong Kong. Certain conditional cooperation between the Hong Kong government and the pro-Beijing forces could exist. For example, several Workers' Children's Schools of the HKKLEA were established with the support and cooperation of the Anglican Church, Hong Kong Chinese Communists and two senior government officials, Major H.F.G. Chauvin and L.G. Morgan in 1946 (Sweeting 1993). Although both Chauvin and Morgan stated that they were participating in a purely personal capacity, their involvement nevertheless involved a certain degree of official recognition. Furthermore, financial support was provided by the colonial government in the first

few years after their establishment (Sweeting 1993, p. 198). However the rapport with local pro-Beijing forces deteriorated in the 1950s, when the United Kingdom realized that they were facing a united and potentially hostile China (Grantham 1965).

In response to the newly established communist regime, the Hong Kong government banned the infiltration of any political parties into Hong Kong, attempting to control the spread of Chinese influence in education from the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s (Sweeting 1993, Grantham 1965). Different administrative means of control were introduced. An Amendment of Education Ordinance 1931 was approved, giving the Director the right to shut down schools and rescind teacher qualifications. In September 1948, a list of approved textbooks was promulgated by the government (Sweeting 1993; Wong 2002). Immediately after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the colonial government introduced the Special Bureau of the Education Department (SBED) (Sweeting 1993). Together with the Special Branch of the police, the SBED kept close watch on the few socialist schools. In August 1950, topics related to the CCP KMT and contemporary China were removed from the curriculum of Civics (Wong 2002). Another amendment of the Education Ordinance was made in December 1948 to prohibit schools from using pernicious textbooks (Wong 2002). A new Education Ordinance was also introduced in 1952, which stated that no textbook should be used without the Director's approval (Wong 2002).

The Worker's Night Schools were the site of struggle between the local pro-Beijing educators and the British colonial government. In these schools, they were trying to demonstrate and transmit their pro-Beijing socialist values to the young working class in an educational setting. On the one hand, the government suppressed some socialist organizations, while on the other they allowed some to continue. The government crackdown was selective. This discrepancy in treatment suggests that the existence of these pro-Beijing workers' schools was an area where the authorities exercised discretion. Such decisions were made and adjusted in response to the considerations of administrative strategy, politics and socio-economic conditions.

This wave of harsh government measures directed against the pro-Beijing schools helped to hold the local pro-Beijing groups together. In the context of the suppression of the Hong Kong government, differences between various branches, organizations and societies of the pro-Beijing forces were not seen as particularly significant. Exogenous pressures from the government and the society pushed them together and consolidated the organization and composition of their forces (interview records dated 1 December 2006, 15 February 2007 and 24 March 2007).

Tension between the pro-Beijing schools and the Hong Kong Government soared with the increasing pressure of Cold War politics, and this exacerbated the usual tone of anti-colonialism. The turning point for the connection of the pro-Beijing forces with the British government of Hong Kong and mainstream Hong Kong society was 1967 (interview records 8 August 2004). After the communist-inspired riots of 1967, the pro-Beijing forces were isolated as they lost the sympathy of the public. Although the 1967 riot originally arose from workers' grievances and labour disputes, the confrontations between the pro-Beijing forces and the British-Hong Kong government were intensified by spasmodic violence and bombing. Hundreds of bombs, genuine and fake, were placed in the streets with signboards proclaiming the pro-Beijing and anti-colonial stance of the people who placed them (Zhou 2002). Students and teachers were found to be involved in printing and distributing inflammatory leaflets, 37

communists schools teachers and 217 students were arrested and the headmaster of certain pro-Beijing schools detained under the Emergency Regulations. When a student was injured while making a bomb in the Chung Wa Middle School, the Government closed and deregistered the school (FCO 1974). The resentment of the population to the local pro-Beijing forces was aroused.

Since of the 1967 riots, the majority of the local inhabitants was alienated from the socialist Chinese government and popular support for the Hong Kong government increased (Bray 2001; interview records 8 August 2004). The government claimed that the teachings and the education provided by these pro-Beijing schools were political and full of communist indoctrination (CO 1949). After 1967, such accusations and the suppressive measures imposed were accepted by the public and considered just.

5. Teaching and learning in Worker's Night Schools

Labour education played a significant role in establishing the cultural and ideological conditions for socialist revolution. Over the years the Workers' Night Schools attempted to build an alternative to the dominant models of education and to fill the gap in socialist education in the history of Hong Kong. Their efforts represented the Chinese communists' influence in Hong Kong, as they attempted to challenge the practices and culture of capitalism and colonialism. They aimed to develop the knowledge and anti-hegemonic forces necessary to reorganize production and society of the colonial and capitalist Hong Kong. Their target group was the working class and the masses on whom a successful revolution depended. In these circumstances, worker education was to be used as a weapon of struggle within a capitalist social formation.

In these pro-Beijing Workers' Night Schools, students were encouraged to, "Love the PRC, love the school and the labour union" (HKCT 1997, p.7). Strong social and political awareness were promoted. Students were organised to join political protests against the capitalists. For example in 1974, students were arranged to participate into two political campaigns of The Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions: the One Dollar Donation Campaign and the Anti-rent Movement (HKCT 1997, p. 14). Concepts such as "strengthening a unified China under the rule of the communist regime" and "sacrificing oneself to support the building of a new mother country" were highly praised in these schools (HKCT1997, p. 7). National flags were made by students for hanging around the city (HKCT 1997, p. 7).

Special projects were organized with two goals. The first goal was to consolidate the relationship among members of the schools and the pro-Beijing forces. The second was to promote the CCP's ideology in the community and to strengthen the students' faith in their shared norms and doctrine. The first goal was achieved through activities such as home visits, the establishment of the "counselor system" (HKCT 1997, p. 9) and similar activities. In many districts, there was concerted effort to develop pro-Beijing communities, where parents, students, teachers, staff and alumni could gather and feel part of a supportive group of likeminded people (HKCT 1997, p. 29-30). Home visits were considered a tradition that could enhance the connection between the school and the student's family in pro-Beijing schools, and Workers' Night Schools were no exception (Lau 2008). This approach would nurture an atmosphere in which allegiance to the CCP was natural and enjoyable. Class teachers were expected to pay

regular home visits to students in their classes. The counselor system was developed when graduate students stayed on to teach the junior students. In 1969, there were 118 counselors in the five Workers' Night Schools (HKCY 1997, p. 9).

The second goal was mainly supported by numerous community service activities for the working class. The Workers' Night Schools were not isolated educational institutions, but were closely linked to the local political worker activities. The pro-Beijing educators believed that the schools could lend immediate and long-term support to their activities, and they generally welcomed the opportunity to have more worker members enter their classrooms (HKCY 1997; interview records dated 7 May 2008). They were constantly concerned that they might miss such opportunities. For example, at least four surveys were conducted of the working class in 1969, 1972, 1974 and 1977 (HKCT 1997) investigating the needs of the working class. The curriculum was adjusted accordingly to meet the needs of the workers after each survey. Regular visits were made to disadvantaged workers' families (HKCT 1997) with the aim of recruiting new members and strengthening the connection with working class people.

This concern to establish responsive connections to the needs of working class people, especially after the loss of support after the 1967 riots, can be contrasted with the rest of Hong Kong society, where mainstream education was characterized by its responses to the needs arising from the capitalist economy during the same period. Mainstream education was intended to serve industrial and commercial needs, and it was also expected to promote social stability and to maintain the status quo. On the surface, the education provided by these Workers' Night Schools fitted well with the rise of industrial society and the economic take-off, by providing technical and vocational training for new migrants from mainland Chinese. These schools served the needs of the capitalist labour market. However, a separate identity was fostered amongst the members of the schools. The pro-Beijing educators enabled and encouraged the working class to realize the possibility of labour education becoming a force for social change. What was different about the pro-Beijing educators' efforts was their exclusive appeal to the working class and the children of the workers and the socialist ideological perspective that infused their teaching.

6. Changing socio-economic landscapes in Hong Kong

In the industrialized Hong Kong, economic restructuring, technological development and demographic changes are among the factors which have led to the greater involvement of labour in educational activities. During the post-war period, a high percentage of the migrant adult population had not had the chance to study and had to engage in basic learning after they moved to Hong Kong. The aims of pro-Beijing worker education were twofold: first, to challenge the culture and ideology of capitalism and to create counter-hegemonic forces (FCO 1974), and second, to raise the literacy rate and to develop the technical expertise necessary to reorganize production and society (HKCT 1997).

However, when the notion of lifelong education came into prominence in the educational world in the late 1970s, international standards, global benchmarks and national targets for career and technical education were introduced into Hong Kong. The enhanced mobility of the

labour force, the rapid advancements in information and communication technologies and the introduction of international career training standards create a new situation, which forced these pro-Beijing educators to respond quickly. The orientation of society and the pro-Beijing forces were also challenged with the introduction of the Open-Door Policy in the People's Republic of China, the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 on the future of Hong Kong and the impact of the neo-liberal globalization.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the pro-Beijing forces desperately sought a strategy to secure appropriate human resources. Intentionally, social and economic change was proceeding at an accelerating rate. The growth in finance and the economy were the culmination of a process which commenced when Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta started to develop as keen competitors to Hong Kong, which is no longer as strong as it was in secondary industry. Both the HKKLEA and the Workers' Night Schools were forced to adopt dramatic changes in order to face the challenges ahead.

In addition to the pressure to respond to the shifting neo-liberal economic-political conditions, change was also impelled by internal needs. The transfer of sovereignty gave the pro-Beijing forces an opportunity to prepare students for transforming post-1997 Hong Kong society in line with the political agenda that they had nurtured for decades, but socialism is no longer practiced in China. With the aim of coming to grips with a broader social function and with the expansion of tertiary education, HKKLEA and the Worker's Night Schools were the first among all the pro-Beijing schools to reform their educational provision.

This specific change makes pro-Beijing school an interesting case to study in the light of a Gramscian perspective. When Gramsci (1971) developed the theory of hegemony, he understood ruling power in society as being more than a one-way force. Hegemony is not a simple imposition but an active incorporation of the subordinate groups' ideas and interests. The ruling class seeks to address the concerns of the ruled and assimilate the indigenous culture to Apple (1990) in intercepting the connections between education and power. Apple points out that schools help to preserve social control by a process of cultural incorporation, through which the dominant group's preferred meanings, values and practices form the mainstream, or dominant, culture, and alternative, or subordinate culture is remade into a "dominant-effective culture" to serve the existing power relations (Apple 1990; Wong 2002; Tse 2007).

Against these theoretical bearings, this study offers a more nuanced account of the practices of hegemonic struggle with regard to pro-Beijing labour education in Hong Kong from the colonial to the post-colonial eras. On the one hand, the pro-Beijing schools can be considered an example of the autonomous forces in the school system, which opposed the hegemonic strategies of the British Hong Kong Government. On the other hand, the school can also be considered an agent of the hegemony across the border, fostering another set of pro-hegemonic (PRC) consciousness, values and identity. In order to construct a "dominant-effective culture" to increase its influence in the society, the pro-Beijing groups have reacted and transformed themselves to accommodate different subordinate groups' interests.

7. Pro-Beijing labour education in the new era

Although not easily separated from each other, three major changes can be highlighted in the development of the pro-Beijing labour education, as they attempted to adjust to these new political and social circumstances. These were the de-politicalisation of the teaching and learning, the internalization of the programmes provided, and the secularization of the educational institutes. These adjustments were emphasized from the late 1970s onwards. While the emphasis placed on each varied from time to time, they were all present in the overall direction of the pro-Beijing labour education movement throughout the period. An explanation of each of the three strands will be offered here.

7.1 The de-politicalisation of the teaching and learning

After the 1960s, public support for the pro-Beijing forces sank to an all-time low as the public condemned their violent disruption of public security in the 1967 riot. Pro-Beijing forces were blamed for turning a labour dispute into large scale demonstrations, strikes and terrorist-like attacks against British colonial rule. Public declaration of support for the Hong Kong government were outspoken at the time, and millions of dollars were donated to the Police Welfare Fund and advertisements of support were posted in newspapers by different social groups (Bray 2001; Mathews et al. 2008). In the end of the credibility of the local pro-Beijing groups was severely damaged.

At the same time, the aging of their leadership and membership, financial insolvency and lack of community connections started to damage the Worker's Night Schools. To cope with some of these difficulties, the pro-Beijing educators restructured their five Workers' Night Schools, leaving the only one in Mongkok in 1979.

After reorganization of the HKCT, the intention of focusing on offering professional and profit-making courses for the working population to obtain internationally recognized qualifications outside of the formal education system was explicit. With the impending transfer of sovereignty, from the mid-1980s onwards, the original agenda of overthrowing the colonial capitalist government became pointless. Indeed, no records of organizing anti-colonial campaigns or promoting political doctrines are found in the HKCT's publications after 1979. As tertiary education places for the working class were inadequate, these pro-Beijing educators realized the need to transform their institutions by adopting international standards in the courses provided. Instead of putting resources into "junior level courses and craftsmanship courses for the grassroot worker who has not had the benefit of primary or secondary education" (HKCT 1999, p. 3), the HKCT started to cooperate with edubusinesses and corporations based in Britain, the United States, Australia and other western countries, in order to introduce professional diploma courses in the fields of computer studies, accountancy and electronic technology.

7.2 The internalization of the programmes provided

As early as in 1979, when China's open-door policy was launched, HKCT started to have classes in collaboration with the City and Guilds Institute of London (HKCT 1998). The City and Guilds Institute is a United Kingdom examining and accreditation body for vocational, managerial and

engineering training. Through this cooperation, HKCT was able to offer courses leading to internationally recognized professional qualifications. Although many of these HKCT courses only spanned from entry level to certificate level, it was a breakthrough in the development of pro-Beijing education in Hong Kong. HKCT has been expanding rapidly in this direction. In 1997, HKCT started delivering internationally recognized overseas programmes at bachelor and master level.

7.3 The secularization of the educational institute

Collaboration with the Hong Kong Government after 1997 needs to be highlighted, as it provides evidence of the change in position of the patriotic school movement from an anti-hegemonic stance to a pro-hegemonic stance. Government subsidized programmes were started from April 1998 onward (HKCT 1999), only nine months after the hand-over. With the subsidies of the Education Department of the Hong Kong Government, two programmes, “Induction programme for newly arrived children from the mainland” and “English extension programme for newly arrived children from the mainland” for new migrants from mainland China were initiated (HKCT 1999).

In the following years, hundreds of the HKCT’s courses have been supported by the Employee Retraining Board and the government funded Youth Pre-employment Training Programme (HKCT 2009), Project Yi Jin represents a major source of income for HKCT. This is a new programme of continuing education sponsored by the Government and delivered by the member institutes of the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions, which includes HKCT. It provides a bridging programming for youths who leave school after five years of secondary education and adult learners, so that they can acquire a qualification which is comparable in standard of a full school leaving certificate in Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) for continuing education purpose. Students joining the programme may apply for assistance under the non-means-tested loan scheme to pay for the tuition fee. The government will reimburse 30% of the tuition fee to students who have achieved 80% or more attendance and passed the standard assessment. Without all this direct and indirect support from the government, HKCT would be on the verge of collapse in the face of keen competition in the provision of tertiary and vocational education.

8. Conclusion

Research concerning the history of Hong Kong education exploring the impacts of changing socio-political landscapes on the development of school systems in Hong Kong has burgeoned over the past two to three decades. With numerous academic debates and discussions on the ways in which the school system was erected amid the handover and the decolonization (or re-colonization), our understanding of mainstream education in the different socio-historical context of Hong Kong is greatly enhanced. Yet, educational endeavours made by the alternative state-promoting forces are overlooked.

The discussion here first illuminates the existence of an alternative in the Hong Kong education system during the colonial era. Those involved in this alternative system therefore experienced conflicts concerning their identity as Hongkongers and as purveyors of pro-Beijing

education. Instead of resisting elements attached to the Hong Kong identity, these pro-Beijing educators have accommodated elements from the mainstream society. The ways in which the pro-Beijing labour education changed its orientation and design reflect fundamental changes of the relationship between the pro-Beijing groups and wider Hong Kong society over the post-war period and into the post-1997 era.

One of the key characteristics of the Workers' Night Schools was that they were grass-roots anti-hegemonic institutions functioning as integrated elements of the radical pro-Beijing groups. They opposed the mainstream, pro-capitalist pedagogy, which aimed to promote social stability, market values, apolitical attitudes and non-nationalist ideas. Serving as an autonomous force against the hegemonic strategies of the British Hong Kong Government, the pro-Beijing Workers' Night schools aimed to be part of the state-building strategy of the PRC, fostering students' patriotism, socialist sense and anti-colonial and capitalist determination. Firmly divided from the mainstream schools by culture and socialist influence, these pro-Beijing schools created a social category with cultural and social traits and outlooks sharply different from other educational institutions.

With the transfer of sovereignty, their political functions were lost. We can witness how the socialist Workers' Night Schools transformed themselves into the Hong Kong College of Technology (HKCT), indicating changes taking place in the pro-Beijing groups that reflected changes in the politics of education. There were explicit attempts made by the pro-Beijing educators to incorporate the indigenous values by adopting a three-pronged reform of the curriculum, involving the de-politicalisation of the teaching and learning, the internalization of the programmes provided, and the secularization of the educational institutes. Surveys were conducted to respond to the working class, who were potential members. Efforts were made to meet the utilitarian and apolitical culture of the society and to reach the international standards and global benchmarks for career and technical education.

From a Gramscian perspective, the implementation of pro-Beijing education in the case of the HKCT is no longer a one-way imposition of idea, but certain conciliatory approaches were adopted. This pro-Beijing education institute has transformed to accommodate mainstream values and practices as an integral part of the education system. This scenario may occur when the subordinated (non-Pro-Beijing groups) are both resourceful and determined enough to safeguard the culture and the value that may not be preferred by the hegemonic pro-Beijing groups during the post-1997 era. The pro-Beijing groups make concessions because this move can help the group bargain for greater influence in society. However, whether the pro-Beijing forces can be strengthened and enlarged with have to be tested in the days to come.

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