

**Keynote Address for the Ministerial Roundtable and International Education Conference, July 14, 2011.**

**Education Reform and Human Resource Development: A Perspective on Hong Kong**

By Ruth Hayhoe

It is both a great honor and a pleasure to be invited to give this keynote address on Educational Reform and Human Resource Development at an important juncture in Hong Kong's history – just past the fourteenth anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China on July 1 of 1997 and at the culmination of what has probably been the most comprehensive reform of Hong Kong's education system to date. The full implementation of the curricular and structural reforms that have unfolded over these years will probably extend for years to come, and the results will be a richer development of Hong Kong's people – her human resources. This term has broader connotations than human capital, the concept often used by economists concerned with competition in the global knowledge society. It includes moral, aesthetic, emotional and social dimensions, alongside of the cognitive. In reviewing many of the reform documents, I found a recurring concern with the moral aspects of education and the need to strengthen connection to China's classical heritage, while learning lessons from all that is most advanced in global educational and scientific developments: "It is the society's expectation that education should enrich our moral, emotional, spiritual and cultural life so that we can rise above the material world...."<sup>1</sup> I was touched also by this mention of the spiritual dimension, and I will return to this in the conclusion of the paper.

I had the privilege of studying under Professor Brian Holmes at the University of London Institute of Education in the early 1980s, and one of his deep insights as a comparative education scholar related to the fact that education reforms are often carefully formulated and adopted at the policy level, yet fail to be fully or effectively implemented, because teachers and parents do not connect at a deep level to the values

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<sup>1</sup> Education Commission, *Learning for Life Learning through Life* (Hong Kong SAR: September 2000), p. 38.

expressed in the reforms. I have noted how extensive have been the consultations undertaken by the Hong Kong government at every stage of this reform process, with substantive input from teachers, parents and community groups as well as local and international experts. At the same time, in preparing this paper I felt it might be helpful to reflect on the resources of educational thought and culture that Hong Kong has to call upon, as it moves forward to implement and build upon the reforms that have been put in place.

We have now just completed the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and China's rise is becoming increasingly clear, as is the recognition that it has been achieved not only by the strategic policies and decisions of its leaders, but by the richness of its educational resources, rooted in a Confucian civilizational heritage that goes back 2500 years. Over its 155 years as a British Colony, Hong Kong had access to educational values that undergirded Britain's remarkable rise and extensive empire, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20th century. Much has been written about the parallels between the Chinese commitment to nurturing scholar officials and the British concept of the scholar gentleman, but probably only Hong Kong has had such a lengthy experience of the blending of these two traditions. Even though recent reforms have been mainly about fundamental changes in the structures left by British colonialism, positive elements in the values that have made Hong Kong such a dynamic city remain a significant resource for the future.

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been dominated by American educational ideas and values, which have an ongoing global influence. In the structural reform of HK's educational system, from 6-5-2-3 to 6-3-3-4, American influence can clearly be seen. Efforts to foster student-centred learning, to integrate different parts of the curriculum and encourage creative thinking also resonate with Deweyan educational values. Interestingly, this structural reform also makes the Hong Kong education system fully compatible with that of China. The reason for this goes back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when John Dewey's visit to China influenced China's educational reform legislation of 1922, which put in place a 6-3-3-4 structure that has persisted in Mainland

China until now.<sup>2</sup> Of even greater significance was Dewey's influence on Tao Xingzhi, one of modern China's most influential educators, as well as the resonances between Dewey's educational ideas and the educational thought of such progressive Confucians as Wang Yangming in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and Liang Shuming and James Yen Yangchu in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The point I am trying to make here is that as Hong Kong goes forward in implementing the courageous and visionary reforms undertaken over the past fourteen years, it has the possibility of drawing upon values and ideas from classical China, Britain and America that have already demonstrated their capacity for the enrichment and enlargement of human potential in a range of historical settings, both singly and in various combinations. Hong Kong is in the unique position of being able to build upon these three influential traditions at a deep level and create an approach to education that integrates best practices from China, Europe and North America. This will make it possible to optimize the potential of each and every child, enabling them to live fulfilled lives and contribute to the Hong Kong community, the Chinese nation and the world.

In this paper, I will first sketch out my personal experience of Hong Kong's educational development, from the perspective of a Canadian whose education was also profoundly influenced by the British tradition. Then I will look at some of the expressed goals of the reform in terms of the full development of each individual in a student centred learning environment, effective communication in Cantonese, Putonghua and English, responsible citizenship at the local, national and global levels and creative contributions to fundamental knowledge that will enable Hong Kong to remain competitive in the global knowledge economy. I will also discuss the ways in which structural changes in the educational system and curricular reforms have addressed these concerns.

From there I will focus on potential areas of synergy between Chinese, British and American educational values and ideas. First, the dynamic educational reforms under Song Neo-Confucian ideas of moral transformation are compared with Renaissance English ideas of civility to develop the concept of humane talent. Then a parallel is drawn

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<sup>2</sup> R. Hayhoe, "The Evolution of Modern Educational Institutions," in R. Hayhoe (ed.) *Contemporary Chinese Education* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 37-40. Barry Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977).

between the educational thought of John Dewey and the progressive ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Confucian Liang Shuming, to introduce the idea of an inclusive individuality. Finally, a new way of thinking about childhood in a Chinese context, based on Daoist thought, suggests Chinese roots for a radical creativity. My conclusion will try to show how these deep rooted values, which are all a part of Hong Kong's rich heritage, could be drawn upon in implementing an approach to education that integrates Chinese and Western educational ideas and has the potential to enrich global educational discourse.

### **Personal Reflections, from 1967 to the Present**

My personal perspective on Hong Kong education reform goes back just over forty four years, to June 30 of 1967, when I got off an airplane at Kaitak Airport and began to look for my first job as a novice teacher in a Hong Kong secondary school. I had just completed an honors degree in Classics at the University of Toronto, which my professors boasted was identical in curricular content to Greats at Oxford. My secondary school had been similar to a British grammar school. Much more attention was given to English literature and history than that of Canada, let alone the nearby United States. And I had written Grade Thirteen examinations similar to British A-Levels, a structure that only disappeared in Ontario in the 1990s. Efforts at building Canadian identity through education and influences from American progressive education came along with the student radicalism that unfolded in the late sixties, shortly after my departure for Hong Kong. I thus felt comfortable with the ethos and curricular patterns of a fairly traditional Anglican girls school, Heep Yunn, where I taught from 1967 to 1978, while setting myself to master Cantonese and Mandarin.

With the Cultural Revolution raging in China in 1967, a third wave of refugees was finding its way to Hong Kong, following the influx after the revolution of 1949, and the flow escaping from the Great Famine of 1959-61. I was impressed at the efficiency of the colonial government in building six story resettlement estates to provide basic housing as quickly as possible, with rooftops that served as schools for the children. Since I had family connections to two elderly Christian missionaries, one of whom ran a rooftop school in Wong Tai Sin and the other a mission school in Diamond Hill, I had the opportunity to get to know some of the families and children. A patchwork of such

schools filled in the gaps left by the government system, and made it possible for most children to have access to primary education. Secondary schooling was a different matter, however, and the majority of the children from the refugee areas and resettlement estates went to work in factories for plastics, toys and electronics by the time they reached their early teens. In 1978, the year that I left Hong Kong to pursue graduate education in London and university teaching work in Shanghai, the colonial government initiated a reform that ensured nine years of compulsory education for all children, six years of primary and three years of lower secondary.

The story of one refugee family whose children attended my cousin's school gave me some insight into the human resources that could not be developed in those years. This family had five young children, all of whom attended Yan Kwong or Grace and Light, my cousin's school in Diamond Hill. The father worked as an orderly in a local hospital, and through a church connection, he got the opportunity to immigrate to Canada and work as a personal assistant to an elderly man with Alzheimers. Within a year, his family followed him and settled in Toronto. His oldest daughter found a job as a bank teller, but the other four children completed secondary education and subsequently studied at the University of Toronto. All of them had successful professional careers. This would have been impossible, had they remained in Hong Kong of the 1970s.

The introduction of compulsory nine year education for all children in Hong Kong coincided with the dramatic reform and opening up of China under Deng Xiaoping in 1978. As China's economy began its rapid revitalization, many Hong Kong factories moved inland and Hong Kong's landscape changed noticeably. The expansion of a diverse yet largely public higher education system that thrived under the British modeled University Grants Committee (UGC) has been one of the important stories of reform. As I pursued an academic career that involved periods of teaching, diplomatic work and higher education development in China, it was always a pleasure to pass through Hong Kong and see how it was transforming itself. I followed the negotiations for Hong Kong's historic return to China with interest, and reflected on the consequences for education, but never expected to be personally involved.

It was a surprising turn of events that brought me back to Hong Kong in September of 1997, nineteen years after I had left in 1978 and at the historic juncture of

Hong Kong's return to China on the first of July of that year. As the newly appointed director of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, I had to think through the consequences of Hong Kong's new identity for teachers at all levels. I also served as a member of the Education Commission that drafted the first major reform document, *Learning for Life Learning through Life*,<sup>3</sup> and chaired the sub-committee for early childhood education. While higher education had blossomed, with 18% of the age cohort entering universities, teacher education had lagged behind and the majority of teachers for basic education were still being trained in two-year certificate programs. What kind of content should our new Bachelor of Education courses have in order to ensure teachers who could be well prepared to carry out the reforms that were being planned?

Our first task at HKIEd was to develop a vision that went to the heart of the reform's purpose. It took immense focus and intellectual effort to formulate this in a concise and clear way, using twelve words in English and twelve Chinese characters: "Optimizing each child's potential through the shared joy of learning and teaching" 共享學教喜悅盡展赤子潛能.<sup>4</sup> This was the vision we hammered out over a year of deliberation, with a committee consisting of colleagues, students and community representatives. It goes to the heart of educational reform and human resource development, the theme of this meeting. We also developed guiding values that touched upon core areas addressed in the reforms, including civic and moral education, language policy and effective communication, an approach to educational quality that called for the integration of academic excellence with social and professional practice, as well as the importance of a strong foundation in early childhood education.

### **Major Achievements of the Reform**

Since I left Hong Kong in the spring of 2002, I have not had the opportunity to observe, at close hand, the unfolding of the various stages of the reform movement, culminating in the implementation of four year undergraduate programs in Hong Kong's public

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<sup>3</sup> *Learning for Life Learning Through Life: Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Education Commission, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, September 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Hayhoe, "Creating a Vision for Teacher Education between East and West: the case of the Hong Kong Institute of Education," *Compare* Vol. 31, No. 3, 2001, p. 337.

universities. It has thus been a moving experience for me to read or re-read the major reform documents, beginning with *Learning for Life Learning through Life* (2000) and *Learning to Learn: Life long Learning and whole-person development* (2001),<sup>5</sup> then going on to *The New Academic Structure* (2005)<sup>6</sup> and finally *Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong Kong* (2010).<sup>7</sup> In this process I have been struck by the determination to effect major reforms that will open up opportunities for all of Hong Kong's people to fully develop their potential and talent, while at the same time preserving and building upon the heritage of the past: "Our Education system is infused with the essence of eastern and western cultures, preserving the basic elements of traditional Chinese education while absorbing the most advanced concepts, theories and experiences from modern western education."<sup>8</sup>

The reason I put emphasis on this is that I believe it provides conditions for Hong Kong's reformed education system to contribute to the global community in unique ways. There is an increasing awareness globally that China's rise owes a great deal to its educational values and patterns, and that these have much to offer to the world. In spite of its newly developing cultural diplomacy and the proliferation of Confucius Institutes around the world, there are few educators who can articulate the relevance of these values clearly. Fewer still can demonstrate the ways in which they can effectively integrate the dominant streams of educational influence in the Western world within a Chinese framework. That is precisely where a successful approach to reform in Hong Kong may be important not only for Hong Kong and Mainland China, but also for a wider world.

Let me begin with a consideration of the structural reforms that have been put in place. I remember vividly the sense we had when deliberating during the first phase of the reform plan that there was a need for space to be created, in which children could stretch their minds, open their hearts and learn freely and with joy. There was a need to

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<sup>5</sup> Curriculum Development Council, *Learning to Learn: Lifelong Learning and whole-person development* (Hong Kong SAR, June, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Education and Manpower Bureau, *The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong SAR, 2005)

<sup>7</sup> University Grants Committee, *Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong SAR, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> *Learning for Life Learning through Life*, pp. 3-4.

lift the high stakes examination barriers, which had led to a culture of constant testing and teaching to the test.

This has now been done at two crucial junctures in the structure. At the interface between six years of primary education and the beginning of secondary education, schools have been encouraged to create a “through train”<sup>9</sup> in order that the majority of children would move smoothly through their nine years of compulsory education, before entering a three year senior secondary program.<sup>10</sup> The purpose of testing was changed from a mechanism for allocating life chances to a tool for analyzing learning difficulties and facilitating effective diagnosis and assistance.<sup>11</sup> I am not able to judge how far this has been successfully implemented in the complexity of the Hong Kong school environment but the vision is a compelling one and a model for progressive education everywhere.

The second change, which has been even larger and more consequential, was the decision to develop a single Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education and benchmark it to parallel university entrance examinations in other jurisdictions. Hong Kong students no longer face two sets of high stakes examinations in their upper secondary years at Form Five and Form Seven, but one common examination for all school leavers.<sup>12</sup> Given the fact that only about 35% of Form Five graduates had had the opportunity to study in Forms Six and Seven and compete for university entrance in the past, this has been a dramatic opening up of space and opportunity for all young people on an even playing ground. It is also a step that brings the Hong Kong system in line with that of Mainland China and most jurisdictions in North America.

This has in turn created the need for a four year university system in which students have greater latitude in their first two years for general studies and a range of electives while still being able to focus on an academic or professional major. In addition a large number of new programs at diploma and associate degree level have opened up, with an opportunity for articulation to the public university system for high achieving

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 74-87.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 67-69.

<sup>12</sup> Education and Manpower Bureau, *The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education*.

students. I could not agree more with the proposals in the recent UGC document on the higher education system that the number of transfer places should be doubled and a qualifications structure developed that facilitates full system integration of all the different types of program, with mutual recognition of credits and qualifications. This would ensure the “no-loser” principle that is envisaged, with opportunities for early and late bloomers, for students from disadvantaged backgrounds alongside those from more privileged families.<sup>13</sup>

The new structure has in turn opened up space for a whole different approach to curriculum, as learning experiences rather than fixed bodies of knowledge to be transmitted. The reform documents are replete with phrases such as “life-wide learning” and “student focused learning.” A curriculum framework has been put in place for the nine years of compulsory education that sets forth eight key learning areas, generic skills to be mastered and values and attitudes to be nurtured. An element that I found particularly significant was the place of Chinese history and culture within this new curriculum. The first of six strands within general studies in the primary curriculum, history is an independent subject in junior and senior secondary education. A crucial decision was made to teach history as one subject, with Chinese history providing the frame from which world history is to be examined!<sup>14</sup> This may be proving difficult to implement, but it expresses a new and more integrated way of looking at the world from Asia.

The new curricula for senior secondary education continues with a focus on the three core areas of Mathematics, Chinese and English, with the addition of a fourth core area called Liberal Studies and the requirement for all students to take two or three elective subjects to fill out their program, either from such traditional disciplines as physics, chemistry, biology and geography, or from more applied and career oriented areas. There have been many debates over the development of liberal studies, with its three broad areas relating to the human condition and the contemporary world: Self and Personal development, Society and Culture, Science, Technology and the Environment. Clearly, Liberal studies aim to give students a sound foundation in basic knowledge that

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<sup>13</sup> University Grants Committee, *Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong Kong*, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> Curriculum Development Council, *Learning to Learn*, p. 23.

will enable them to be responsible citizens at the local, national and global levels. Most recently a decision has been made to enhance moral and national education by making it an independent subject.<sup>15</sup> Extensive guidance is given for the use of project and inquiry oriented learning that ensure the curriculum is truly student focused and engaging.

The intention of these curricular documents is to provide a common core of education for all of Hong Kong's children and young people. It will give them a strong foundation in Mathematics, Chinese and English, an opportunity to build their own well founded understanding of current personal, social and environmental issues, to master several other basic or applied subject areas and gain an examination qualification that is recognized in Hong Kong and abroad. All will be given the opportunity for some form of further or higher education that will enable them to find employment and contribute to their community. Making this happen constitutes a huge ongoing task, but what one can see clearly is an educational structure and curricular philosophy that should make it possible for the potential of each and every child and young person in Hong Kong to be optimized and for learning to be so enjoyable that it becomes a lifelong habit.

A third part of the picture in Hong Kong's educational reform is that of language and the issue of medium of instruction. While Mandarin or Putonghua is mandated as the medium of instruction for all of China, Hong Kong made the firm determination at the time of reunification to maintain and strengthen the role of Cantonese, a local dialect of Chinese, as the main medium of instruction for most primary schools and also at the secondary level. Research showed that Hong Kong young people learned subjects such as chemistry and geography more effectively when teaching was done in their mother tongue, and many secondary schools were required to change from English to Cantonese medium, with exceptions for those that could demonstrate high standards in English.

While I understand well the parental opposition and the many related community concerns, it seemed absolutely clear to me, as a scholar of education, that this was a wise policy and one I should support. It was amusing to be filmed speaking in Cantonese in support of the policy by the then Education Department, and subsequently find the clip was repeatedly shown on local TV over several months. Twice I had the experience,

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<sup>15</sup> Legislative Panel on Education 2010-2011 Policy Agenda: New Initiatives on Education, 21 October, 2010. This applies not only to senior secondary education, but primary and junior secondary as well.

when going through immigration at the airport, of having one of the young immigration officers, who had seen me on television, address me in rapid fire Cantonese, then laugh and say “I just wanted to try out your Cantonese and see if it was for real!”

On a more serious note, I believe Hong Kong’s language policy is one of the great strengths of the educational reforms. English remains an important language, indeed the language of global engagement, yet the role of Cantonese, the mother tongue, has been maintained and enhanced, while measures have also been put in place for all children to become fluent in Mandarin or Putonghua, the language in common use throughout Mainland China. A further intriguing angle to this trilingualism is the notion of bi-literacy, in English and Chinese. Given a history of the use of traditional Chinese characters in Hong Kong, contrasting with the simplified characters used throughout Mainland China, this has its own complications. It was most interesting for me to observe Hong Kong people becoming more comfortable with China’s simplified characters, once they realized that the total number of characters that had been simplified was relatively small and about half of those had been adapted from short forms used in handwriting.

The curricular goal is for Hong Kong students to be able to “engage in discussion actively and competently in English and Chinese (including Putonghua).”<sup>16</sup> My personal observation while at the HKIEd was that Hong Kong students were enthusiastic about gaining proficiency in Putonghua and excited by the new frontiers it opened in their lives. One of my proudest moments was when HKIEd students came second in a national university debating competition in Shanghai, using fluent Putonghua to argue some complex and controversial propositions. On the other hand, there has been some concern as to whether the added emphasis on mastery of Putonghua would influence levels of English language competency. Trilingualism and bi-literacy in two very different kinds of written language sets a high bar for Hong Kong young people.

The preservation of local and national languages in the face of globalization has become a major concern for many educational jurisdictions around the world. Long ago, in the 1970s, Ali Mazrui wrote eloquently about his native Kenya, and the need for education reforms that embraced local tribal languages, the East African regional

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<sup>16</sup> Curriculum Development Council, *Learning to Learn*, p. 6.

language of Swahili and the colonial language of English.<sup>17</sup> With the sweep of globalization English is becoming more and more dominant, giving Hong Kong an advantage with the strengths of English in its educational history, but also an opportunity to model a balanced approach to language policy in education. Local culture is preserved and enhanced by the use of Cantonese as the main medium of instruction in the early years and fluency in Putonghua is promoted, along side of English.

When we were putting together the guiding values for HKIED's vision in 1998, we decided on a somewhat broader language vision, and expressed it as follows: "We support multilingualism to encourage flexibility of mind and access to the wisdom of the world's diverse cultures."<sup>18</sup> There are many statements in Hong Kong's curricular reform documents that endorse this value and indicate that the learning of other languages, beyond Chinese and English, will also be encouraged.

Before concluding this section on the major achievements of the reform, something should be said about the areas of early childhood education and higher education, which might be seen as bookends of the reform. Although my expertise has largely been in the area of comparative higher education, I found myself passionate about the importance of reforms in early childhood education during my Hong Kong years and was pleased to be entrusted with chairing a subcommittee in this area. One of the constantly recurring themes of the reform documents is the importance of lifelong learning, and this was endorsed in one of HKIED's guiding values, which stated "We affirm early childhood education as the foundation of lifelong learning."<sup>19</sup> While most early childhood educational provision is in the private sector, a crucial aspect of the reforms has been the provision of much more substantive and academically demanding teacher formation for the early childhood sector. This indicates a recognition of how important are a child's earliest years, when the patterns that take shape in the brain set the parameters for a lifelong capacity to learn.

It is not surprising that the rethinking of higher education at the other end of the spectrum of reforms has taken some time, and the recently published report of the

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<sup>17</sup> Ali Mazrui, "World Culture and the Search for Human Consensus," in Mendlovitz, S. (ed.), *On the Creation of a Just world Order: Preferred Worlds for the 1980s* (New York: Free Press, 1975), pp. 1-37.

<sup>18</sup> Hayhoe, "Creating a Vision," pp. 340-341.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 339.

University Grants Committee, *Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong Kong*, lays out the contours of a higher education system that seeks to maintain a considerable degree of diversity while promoting the highest possible standards of excellence in teaching and scholarship. Plans for a fully integrated framework of qualifications and a unified approach to quality assurance are notable. Also of note is the high priority given to internationalization, an internationalization rooted in the “deeply embedded character” of Hong Kong’s history as “a point of encounter between different cultures and influences and ways of thought.”<sup>20</sup> To be brief, this document lays out the promise that fully 65% of Hong Kong’s young people will be able to benefit from some form of higher education in future. This diverse higher education system will also embrace an increasing number of students from Mainland China and from the international community, and emphasis will be given to developing “curricula that combine Western and Asian problems and responses, experiences, sources and cultural roots.”<sup>21</sup>

“Teaching without any discrimination’ has been a cherished concept since ancient times. We should not give up on any single student but rather let all students have the chance to develop their potentials,” stated the first of the reform documents.<sup>22</sup> “The concept that everyone is educable, everyone can become a sage, and everyone is perfectible forms the basic optimism and dynamism towards education in the Confucian tradition,” commented Lee Wing On.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, Brian Holmes has noted how the Platonic view of human beings as having innate intelligence passed on by heredity resulted in long persisting structures and patterns of education in Europe that nurtured a limited elite to a high level, while creating barriers impassable for the majority.<sup>24</sup> I mentioned earlier the four children from a refugee family who had no chance for secondary education in colonial Hong Kong of the 1970s, but managed to graduate from

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<sup>20</sup> University Grants Committee, *Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong Kong*, p. 68

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p.60.

<sup>22</sup> *Learning for Life*, p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> Lee Wing On, “The Cultural Context for Chinese Learners: Conceptions of Learning in the Confucian Tradition,” in David A Watkins and John B. Biggs (eds.), *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual Influences*, (Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong, 1996), p. 38.

<sup>24</sup> Brian Holmes, *Comparative Education: Some Considerations of Method* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), p. 135-141.

the University of Toronto after immigrating to Canada in those same 1970s. I believe the purpose of today's event is to celebrate the completion of the major stages of education reform in Hong Kong over the past fourteen years, and surely this return to a foundational Chinese belief in the potential of each and every child and the creation of a system with no losers is something worth celebrating!

On the other hand, I think there is a realization that the full implementation of these reforms will be a challenging process. We live in an era of globalization that emphasizes intense competition on the part of individuals and nations for a fuller share in the global knowledge economy. There is a concomitant tendency to see human resources in a one dimensional way as human capital:- highly skilled individuals who are able to obtain a personal return on their investment in education through high paying jobs and good social status. Furthermore, some of the progressive ideas of inquiry and project based learning in the curricular reform documents are premised on a Western assumption of the autonomous rights bearing individual that does not fit comfortably with the Chinese idea of the person as a social being, deeply connected to family and community. And finally, the task of nurturing global citizens who have a balanced and critical understanding of national identity and a commitment to social justice remains elusive. The definition of the nation state that arose in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe still tends to dominate global discourse and realist conceptions of national interest often take precedence over genuine commitment to a peaceful and sustainable global community.

Hong Kong's educational reforms have taken on a courageous commitment to the blending of the essence of East and West. The determination to teach one history, rather than Chinese history and world history as separate subjects, is a significant though difficult task. It means integrating Western values and achievements into a Chinese frame and searching for a deep level of connection between the two sides. It might be seen as a reversal of the longstanding practice of interpreting China's historical development through a Western lens. Ironically, because of its lengthy experience of a British colonial regime, Hong Kong may be somewhat better situated to undertake this task than China, given the speed and scale of change that is unfolding there.

Let me return to the triangle of influences in global education – British, American and Chinese – that were mentioned earlier in this paper. Hong Kong's reform documents

have asserted over and over again the determination to build upon core Chinese values and equip her young people to be able to articulate these effectively in Cantonese, Putonghua and English. At the level of higher education, there is an explicit commitment to a “fusion” between Chinese and Western approaches to knowledge. The structural aspects of the reform give evidence of a determination to move away from the British legacy, yet reforms in curriculum and pedagogy reflect awareness of significant innovations in both Britain and America for the improvement of teaching and learning. The most demanding task, in my view, is finding a deep foundation for connecting Chinese and British values, on the one hand, and Chinese and American values on the other. The end goal is to build a Chinese educational approach that absorbs the best values from these Western systems while carrying the global education discourse forward, and enabling it to move “beyond the Enlightenment,” to use a phrase from Harvard Confucian scholar Tu Weiming.<sup>25</sup>

In the next part of this paper I would like to take you on a journey with three young women scholars, who felt compelled to dig into comparative history and philosophy in order to explore the ways in which China’s educational heritage might contribute to the global educational community and enable humanity to move beyond the Enlightenment heritage, while absorbing and building upon its crucial contributions to human history. The first deals with issues of higher education and economic development, proposing an ideal of nurturing “humane talent” in place of the notion of human capital.<sup>26</sup> The second takes up the notion of quality at the level of basic education, one of the oft repeated words in Hong Kong’s reform discourse, and suggests the possibility of education fostering an “inclusive individuality,” rooted in progressive Confucian thought.<sup>27</sup> The third explores the Chinese world of childhood in order to uncover a radical source of freedom for human creativity in Daoist ways of thinking about human

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<sup>25</sup> Tu Wei-ming, “Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality,” in Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong, *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth and Humans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, distributed by Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 13-14.

<sup>26</sup> Bai Limin, “Human Capital or Humane Talent? Rethinking the Nature of Education in China from a Comparative Historical Perspective” *Frontiers of Education in China*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2010, pp. 104-129.

<sup>27</sup> Zhang Huajun, “Cultivating an Inclusive Individuality: Critical Reflections on the Idea of Quality Education in Contemporary China,” in *Frontiers of Education in China*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2010, pp. 222-237.

nature.<sup>28</sup> All three scholars had the problems of China's educational reform in mind, when writing their papers. I am sharing them with you today as I feel Hong Kong's remarkable reform efforts have created conditions for a genuine synthesis between Chinese and Western educational values that has much to offer global educational circles.

### **Human Capital or Humane Talent? Synergies in Chinese-British educational thought**

The move to mass higher education in Hong Kong has taken place over a longer period of time than in the Mainland, with less serious consequences for graduate unemployment. Nevertheless, Hong Kong education is subject to pressures of globalization and intense competition for recognition in global ranking systems that tend to turn education into a competitive exercise in the production of human capital. The strongly instrumentalist ethos that easily results can lead to neglect of the moral, spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of education in favor of drilling for examination success. While Hong Kong has eliminated two sets of high stakes examinations, as we have seen, the examinations for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education university entrance examinations are now taken by the majority of young people, and there is still intense competition for entry into those programs most likely to yield status and attractive employment opportunities. Many of those who do not make the grade for university entrance and turn to associate degree programs find it hard to gain employment. They thus eagerly seek opportunities to complete a university level qualification, as noted in the UGC report discussed above.<sup>29</sup>

In both Hong Kong and the Mainland, the global atmosphere of neo-liberalism with its focus on human capital has combined with the firmly engrained belief in meritocracy through written examinations that is part of the Chinese tradition. In her research on higher education massification in the Mainland, Bai Limin has been deeply concerned about the dilemma of an increasing number of university graduates viewing

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<sup>28</sup> Zhao Guoping, "Chinese Cultural Dynamics and Childhood: Towards a New Individuality for Education," *Frontiers of Education in China*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 2010, pp. 579-595..

<sup>29</sup> University Grants Committee, *Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong Kong*, p. 40.

higher education as an investment for personal advancement, that has left them facing a similar disappointment to that of Hong Kong youth in associate degree programs.

Bai uses the ideas of British Asianist Ronald Dore, in his celebrated book, *The Diploma Disease*, to analyse the difference between education as a process of learning for pleasure and schooling as a process of certification with career advancement as a primary goal. She goes on to question the basic assumption of human capital and neo-liberal ideology that the primary purpose of education is an investment promising high economic returns. Through an insightful comparative analysis of the educational ideas of Song dynasty Neo-Confucianism and English Renaissance thought, she uncovers a historical synergy between a much broader set of British and Chinese educational values. She notes the expansion of the examination system in 12<sup>th</sup> century China to include many who were not from aristocratic families, yet who were enabled to join a ruling class in which “moral and intellectual qualities were more important than good birth.” In the same era, she comments, “newly risen social groups in Renaissance England led to a redefinition of nobility and gentility on the basis of people’s own virtue and wisdom, not of hierarchy.”<sup>30</sup> Neo-Confucian scholars emphasized “learning for the sake of the self...and self-cultivation became the basis of a good government and a harmonious society.”<sup>31</sup> English scholars emphasized civility in place of nobility. There are striking parallels between civility as a model of behaviour and the Chinese notion of “li” or rites of conduct.

The aim of humanist teachers in the subsequent centuries was to “mould the complete citizen,” with a liberal education that included the study of morals, history, law, ancient and modern languages, mathematics and astronomy. That of neo-Confucian teachers, as expressed in *The Great Learning*, was to combine self-cultivation with keeping good order at home and dealing with the affairs of state as a whole principle. The notion of talent was thus much broader than the narrowly economic concept of human capital or even the somewhat wider term human resources. It embodied all of the five core concepts that undergird curriculum in the Chinese context: – the moral, cognitive, physical, social and aesthetic (德智體群美 de zhi ti qun mei). It could be summed up in

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<sup>30</sup> Bai, *Human Capital or Humane Talent?* p. 112.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

the term “humane talent.” Bai noted how the core Confucian term “ren” (仁) or “benevolent” is very close to the English word “humane.” Etymologically, both terms arise from the word human, (人 ren) , with the addition of an “e” in English and the character for two added to the human person in Chinese!

What we see here is a deep concurrence between English and Chinese views of the purposes of education in historical periods of significant transition – leading to the industrial revolution and the building of Empire in Britain, to a period of flourishing in the Ming and early Qing, that was subsequently followed by decline in China. Ronald Dore sums these up in his concept of “productive self-fulfillment” and his distinction between two different sets of intelligence-linked qualities: “qualities expressed in self-fulfilling activities that include curiosity, creativeness, productiveness and craftsmanship” and “acquisitive achievement” which he associated with “cunning and the ability to manipulate things and other people in order to acquire for oneself wealth or power or prestige.”<sup>32</sup>

Mainland Chinese educators are struggling to counter tendencies towards a highly competitive exam-oriented culture that provides significant material and social rewards to the few who make it into elite institutions and leaves the rest demoralized. They are using the term quality education in this effort. Hong Kong’s education reforms have put in place a structure and set of curricular patterns that have also been inspired by the idea of quality as one of five major underlying principles,<sup>33</sup> and a commitment to learning that encompasses moral, aesthetic, physical and social elements alongside of the cognitive tasks that are measured by examinations. At the higher education level, the recent UGC report deals with this in a balanced and sensitive way: “It would be a mistake to regard universities exclusively in terms of a direct utility to the Hong Kong economy..... Students should acquire a greater sense of the wider world and the moral or ethical tools with which they can contribute to that world.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Dore, *The Diploma Disease, Education Qualification and Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 177-178.

<sup>33</sup> *Learning for Life*, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> University Grants Committee, *Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong Kong, 2010*, pp. 15-16.

These thoughts on comparative history suggest that Hong Kong has a set of educational resources arising from the British heritage and its synergies with neo-Confucian values which could be extremely valuable in the implementation of the reforms. These resources are not just words found in public documents but deeply held beliefs passed down through the family and community. Hong Kong has the heritage of Christian churches, both Catholic and Protestant, that continue to provide education for many, and that exemplify the British notion of civility in their ethos. In reading the early history of education in 19<sup>th</sup> century Hong Kong, for example, I was touched by the leadership of James Legge, the great missionary, professor and translator of the Confucian classics into English, who labored long ago to lay a foundation in which all students would learn Chinese as well as English, so they could benefit from the richness of both these heritages.<sup>35</sup>

If Hong Kong is serious about a genuine integration of the essence of East and West, as expressed numerous times in the reform documents, reflection on the British educational heritage and its synergies with Song neo-Confucian educational values may be of particular importance. In short, can Hong Kong's educational reforms enable all of its people, its human resources, to become humane talent? Can Hong Kong nurture the kind of Confucian or Christian humanity that includes a high level of moral and spiritual capacity, alongside of the scientific and social knowledge necessary to contribute effectively to all around development in an increasingly globalized world?

### **Inclusive Individuality – Synergies in Chinese-American Educational Thought**

Probably the most fundamental curricular change in HK's educational reforms is the view of curriculum as experience, something that changes and evolves, rather than fixed documents outlining the knowledge that is to be mastered. This notion of curriculum as experience goes back to the celebrated American educator, John Dewey and his book, *Experience and Education*.<sup>36</sup> It has been noted earlier that Dewey spent two

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<sup>35</sup> Gillian Bickley, *The Development of Education in Hong Kong 1848-1896, as Revealed by the Early Education Reports of the Hong Kong Government 1841-1896* (Hong Kong: Council of the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust, 2001), pp. viii, 60-64, 91-92.

<sup>36</sup> John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Collier Books, 1938).

years in China around the time of the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement.<sup>37</sup> Before going to China in 1919, Dewey had supervised a number of influential Chinese students, including philosopher Hu Shi and educator Tao Xingzhi. Through these and others, his educational ideas had a considerable impact on China's emerging modern educational structure, as well as experimental efforts with progressive school curricula in some urban settings.

Dewey's writings were translated into Chinese by a number of enthusiastic followers, including Tao Xingzhi. Deeply influenced by Dewey's view that knowledge arose from problem solving in the process of life experience, and in turn should be tested in action, Tao adopted a name that means "knowing through action." After returning to China, he came to believe that an even more radical version of this progressive epistemology could be found in Ming neo-Confucianism, particularly the writing of the 16<sup>th</sup> century scholar, Wang Yangming. Wang had turned his back on book learning in favor of a "learning of the mind and heart" (心學 xinxue), to be achieved through a four step process of reflection on experience.<sup>38</sup> This progressive thread in Ming Neo-Confucian philosophy might be seen as an indigenous foundation for a student-centred pedagogy.

While Hong Kong has not had the historical connections with Dewey's ideas that can be seen in Mainland China, efforts to reform the curriculum towards progressive child-centred practices go back several decades, and can be seen in projects such as the "target-oriented curriculum." Also remarkable resources have been available through the support of the Curriculum Development Council to support the implementation of pedagogical reforms towards experiential learning. Now that a much larger space has been created, through the changes in structure and the reduction in the number and character of the examinations, we may hope for a real unfolding of curriculum as a progressive series of learning experiences that expand the child's knowledge and understanding of the self, the community, the nation and the natural world.

However, fundamental differences between Chinese and Western views of the human person persist. While the West tends to think in terms of the autonomous rights bearing individual, Chinese philosophy tends more towards social being, the person

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<sup>37</sup> Barry Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment in China*.

<sup>38</sup> Ruth Hayhoe, *Portraits of Influential Chinese Educators* (Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong and Springer, 2006), pp. 33-34.

defined by family and community as having both obligations and rights. If the curricular reforms are to take deep root in the Hong Kong context, where the majority of children and families are fundamentally Chinese in mindset and heritage, there needs to be a way of conceiving individuality that fits this context.

Here the concept of inclusive individuality, developed by Zhang Huajun, may be helpful. Zhang has found inspiration in the resonance between the ideas of John Dewey and Liang Shuming, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Confucian whose signature work was entitled *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies* (1921).<sup>39</sup> Dewey's view of education might be summarized as the pursuit of genuine interest in ways that develop a sense of the self, suggests Zhang. Dewey saw interest as developed through activities that the individual is engaged in, and education as a change process that continues to open up new possibilities for young people to gain broader perspectives and create connections between the past and ongoing experience. This process demands that the learner be willing to face uncertainties and unexpected challenges, which require a strong self-identity. Individuality is developed when genuine interests are identified and unknown or unfamiliar others are drawn into the inclusive self.

Resonating with this idea of Dewey's, Liang Shuming identified an inner self, which is not autonomous or essentialist yet provides continuity as the child learns through interactive experience with the world. It is described as the "deep self" (深心 shen xin) and might be compared with the deep water at the bottom of a river. Liang's conception of the inner self is seen as developing through social interaction and the integration of others into the self. The individual reaches an independent capacity for self-reflection wherein the inner self is built up and a consistent self can be maintained, even in conditions of radical social change. Liang Shuming's notion of inclusive individuality may thus provide a strong foundation on which parents, teachers and students can build, as they embrace the new curricular practices promoting learning through experience in the classroom, the home and the community.

"The conception of inclusive individuality...responds to the call of the quality education reform movement for the development of the individual's full potential. By

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<sup>39</sup> Guy Alitto, *Liang Shuming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

understanding their own mission in life, 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.”<sup>40</sup> When it comes to the teachers, who are to implement the curricular reforms, “to discover the richness of students’ individuality, teachers first need to discover the richness of their own lives.”<sup>41</sup> Teacher education is thus crucial to the full implementation of the reforms, and Hong Kong is to be congratulated for its foresight in this regard. The vision of creating a purpose built campus for teachers in a beautiful part of the New Territories under the hills of the eight immortals indicates a realization that teachers need the fullest possible experience of a liberal and progressive education themselves, if they are to be capable of optimizing the potential of each child in their class and creating conditions for “the shared joy of learning and teaching.”<sup>42</sup>

If Song neo-Confucian ideas have significant synergy with the values of Christian humanism that blossomed in the centuries before Britain’s industrial revolution, Ming Neo-Confucian values connect well to progressive ideas of the American educational tradition, and indeed have been seen by Chinese educators as pre-dating them. Thus there are real possibilities of an authentic indigenous notion of educational quality emerging in the Hong Kong context, and absorbing into itself these two streams of Western educational thought, while carrying them forward in ways that could revitalize global educational thought.

Recent years and the repeated results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) testing have shown children in Confucian heritage societies as being in advance of many other parts of the world. Shanghai’s stunning debut as Number One in the world has reinforced this sense, and it is noteworthy that Hong Kong has maintained a position of fourth, behind Korea and just ahead of Singapore.<sup>43</sup> Given that PISA tests give attention to problem solving skills and social and emotional as well as

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<sup>40</sup> Zhang, “Cultivating an Inclusive Individuality,” p. 232.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> This phrase constitutes the second half of HKIEd’s early vision statement. See . Hayhoe, “Creating a Vision for Teacher Education between East and West, p. 337.

<sup>43</sup> Andy Hargreaves, “Content to be Canadian,” *Toronto Star*, January 26, 2011, p. A21.

intellectual capacity,<sup>44</sup> these results are interesting. Hong Kong's wonderful series about "The Chinese Learner" sheds considerable light on the reasons for this success.<sup>45</sup> The full implementation of Hong Kong's recent reforms could constitute a vivid demonstration of them in action! Here I am trying to suggest that Hong Kong has a unique capacity to integrate the strong threads of educational progressivism from Britain and America into a new vision for global education that is rooted in China's rich educational heritage.

One more piece to this puzzle may illuminate a part of the philosophical heritage that has challenged while also strengthening the unfolding Confucian tradition. That is Daoism and most particularly the radical educational ideas of the philosopher Zhuang Zi. To reflect on this possibility, I turn to a third scholar, who has recently written on Chinese childhood in a way that belies the common stereotypes about conformity and filial piety and gives insight into a significant source of energy for the implementation of educational reform from this part of China's rich heritage.

### **Chinese Childhood and the Roots of a Radical Creativity**

If Confucianism has provided a remarkable continuity in China's educational culture, this has been largely due to its openness and ability to absorb impulses and ideas coming from the opposite values of the Daoist tradition. Historically, these provided a context that enabled Buddhism to make the transition from a foreign to an indigenous religion in China. Thus Wang Yangming developed his "philosophy of the heart," Ming neo-Confucianism, after a period of experimentation with both Daoist and Buddhist philosophy. Similarly, Liang Shuming was deeply influenced by Buddhist ideas in developing his 20<sup>th</sup> century version of Confucian educational thought.

In a recent article on Chinese Cultural Dynamics and Childhood, Zhao Guoping has suggested the possibilities of this alternative tradition for the development of a truly radical creativity in education. She notes that there is "a hidden side that contradicts and

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<sup>44</sup> Karen Mundy and Joseph P. Farrell, "International Education Indicators and Assessment," in K. Mundy, K. Bickmore, R. Hayhoe, M. Madden and K. Madjidi, *Comparative and International Education: Issues for Teachers* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2008), p. 202.

<sup>45</sup> For an impressive recent volume in the series, see Carol Chan and Nirmala Rao, *Revisiting the Chinese Learner: Changing Contexts, Changing Education* (Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong and Springer, 2009).

undermines the dominant cultural project (of Confucianism) and because of it, the precious root for the development of individuality is preserved.”<sup>46</sup> Highlighting the “unity of heaven and humanity” (天人合一 *tianren heyi*) she identifies a Chinese notion of transcendence that does not seek to confront or overcome the world but rather connects the divine to humanity. From this comes the principle that it is possible to embrace all experiences unconditionally and positively, and to preserve and accommodate individual needs and interests, no matter whether or not they fall within the range of the cultural project. The philosopher Zhuang Zi was the ultimate defender of individual freedom and creativity in Chinese culture. His lively poetic approach to depicting the integration of the person with the larger whole opens up a radical freedom from all social and political constraints.

Zhao notes a fascination with the revival of subjectivity (主體性 *zhutixing*) in recent Chinese educational scholarship. While some have interpreted this as reflecting the influence of Western ideas of individualism she counters this by saying “the remarkable Chinese dynamic that rejects and yet embraces individual needs and experiences has helped preserve and nourish individualistic sentiments and thus makes individual flourishing possible.” She sees this as quite distinct from the search to emulate the kinds of individualism that have emerged in Western capitalist culture, which “has mostly resulted in a shallow market-oriented and one-dimensional individual self, that is only marked by the person’s monetary success or failure.”<sup>47</sup>

Zhao introduces some interesting literature from the writing of poets, which gives insights into the lives of children in Chinese society that are quite different from the official literature. Since this genre was not intended for moral or historical purposes, it provides vivid affectionate descriptions of young children and their relationships with their parents that indicate how far children’s individuality and creativity were nurtured. Zhao ends her article with a challenge to persist in the search “for a new concept of human beings and a new individuality.” She suggests that “an understanding of the potential as well as the problems of the Chinese understanding of men and women may

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<sup>46</sup> Zhao, *Chinese Cultural Dynamics and Childhood*, p. 583.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p. 584.

contribute to the emergence of a new concept of humanity that not only centers on social harmony, but also nurtures individual flourishing and self-realization.”<sup>48</sup>

### **Conclusion: Cultural and Spiritual Resources for the Implementation of a Courageous Reform**

I come to the end of this lecture with a strong sense of my own limitations. I stand in awe at all that has been achieved in the educational reforms unfolding in Hong Kong, and have little to offer in the way of new pedagogical or curricular patterns or ideas, more effective approaches to testing or more exciting ways of using educational technology in the classroom. You are already so remarkably good in all of these areas! All that I can bring you is a deep sense of the significance of the new structures and patterns you have created and a kind of anticipation of the immense possibility of an educational approach emerging that may carry us “beyond the Enlightenment.” What I love about Tu Weiming’s emphasis in this expression is the affirmation of the many positive contributions of Enlightenment science and individualism, combined with a recognition of certain limitations, and a conviction that humanity cannot stop here.

I have tried to identify synergies between various strands in Confucian and Daoist thought and the British and American educational values that have been part of Hong Kong’s historical experience. It is my conviction that a deep understanding of these values, as they exist in the hearts and minds of Hong Kong people and as they inform the work of teachers, the learning patterns of children and the attitudes of parents, is the key to an effective implementation of the reform.

I am heartened by the suggestion in the UGC report on the Future of Higher education that a small number of centres should be given public support to “develop research and graduate programmes that bring together Western and Asian perspectives.”<sup>49</sup> Let me take this opportunity to propose that one of these centres should focus on the development of an educational approach that is consciously rooted in values from Song and Ming neo-Confucianism as well as Daoism, and that identifies synergies with various Western values and patterns that may serve to enlarge or enhance this

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* p. 593

<sup>49</sup> University Grants Committee, *Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong*, p. 66.

Chinese frame. This new approach will offer the fullest possible support for optimizing the potential of children and young people in a balanced way across five major human dimensions: the moral, cognitive, aesthetic, social and physical, while also recognizing the importance of the spiritual dimension.

Thinking about this in terms of a deep level of bridging between East and West, I felt I could not bring this paper to a conclusion on my own. So I went back to the three young scholars whose work I have used and asked for their thoughts. I also turned to an older colleague and mentor who has built his rich contributions to education in North America on the work of John Dewey, among others. Respected as the father of narrative inquiry in education and an inspired academic leader in the areas of teacher development and curriculum theory, Michael Connelly surprised me with a quotation from the final paragraph of John Dewey's educational credo, first published in January of 1897: "I believe that every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling; that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth. I believe that in this way the teacher always is the prophet of the true God and the usherer in of the true Kingdom of God."<sup>50</sup>

This brought me face to face with the reality that we cannot ignore the connection between humanity and the Divine, in reflecting on how educational reforms are to be implemented – the kinds of moral responsibility, cognitive brilliance, aesthetic beauty, social capacity and physical ability we hope to optimize through education may all be understood as a gift of grace. We could begin with the Confucian relationship between Heaven and Humanity, and reflect on how the Chinese word for Heaven (天 *tian*) was used by Jesuit missionaries to convey the Christian message in a way that could be understood in China. The fact that *Tian* "expresses an order that is both divine and natural, both social and cosmic"<sup>51</sup> made it possible to accommodate Christianity into Confucianism, and Western learning into the Chinese system. There is also a resonance between the egalitarian spirit of Renaissance Christianity, the notion of all being equal before God, and the Confucian idea that in education there should be no distinction by

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<sup>50</sup> Personal communication, Professor Michael Connelly, March 1, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact*, translated by Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 194

class. There is a further connection between physics and metaphysics in the Confucian concept of “extending knowledge through the investigation of things.” One’s mind and the world meet in self-cultivation, learning for the sake of the self, whether it be the mastery of physics, or the development of morality.<sup>52</sup>

Next there is the fundamentally different nature of the individual-society relationship in Chinese and Western cultures. Hong Kong reforms could be viewed as an embodied experiment of the “unification of knowing and action,” the motto shared by Dewey, Tao Xingzhi and Wang Yangming.<sup>53</sup> Dewey saw the self as being made through education; his focus was on the democratic social order and interaction with the changing environment. Liang’s focus was more on the importance of the inner self. The great contribution which the Chinese concept of the inclusive individual might bring to global society is the capacity to develop an individuality that warmly embraces the other while still maintaining strong individualism. It stands in contrast to the Western notion of the individual, which divides the self from the other and objectifies the other, making encountering the other peacefully a great challenge. This may be at the heart of the realist concept of international order, with each nation primarily concerned with defending its interests against external encroachment. Somehow there is a need to integrate Chinese and Western views in the acknowledgement of a self that is both related and separate, and moving from there to nurturing the kinds of international and global relations envisioned in China’s ancient ideal of the Great Harmony (大同 datong).<sup>54</sup>

In this paper I have shared some of my personal experience of Hong Kong’s educational development over a 44 year period, reviewed and commented on the major reforms carried out since 1997, and suggested three core concepts which I believe could be developed into a unique educational approach rooted in Chinese civilization, open to the world and capable of moving us beyond the Enlightenment: humane talent, inclusive individuality and a radical creativity rooted in Daoist naturalism. I believe Hong Kong educators are uniquely capable of creating such an educational approach in the spacious environment that has been provided through the reform process.

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<sup>52</sup> Personal communication, Dr. Bai Limin, Feb. 15, 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Personal communication, Dr. Zhang Huajun, February 11, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Personal Communication, Dr. Zhao Guoping, Feb. 12, 2011.