

# A Study on Mainland and Hong Kong College Education Teaching Environment

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**Abstract:** After the reunification of Hong Kong to the mainland, the two places have strengthened communication and cooperation in the field of education. More and more students from mainland go to Hong Kong for further study. Although the higher education systems in the two places are becoming more mature, they are still different, especially in the teaching environment. Teaching environment consists of physical environment and social environment, and both have far-reaching impact on teaching efficiency of teachers and learning potential of students.

**Keywords:** Mainland Colleges; Hong Kong Colleges; Tertiary Education; Teaching Environment

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## 1. Introduction

Due to different social systems and culture background, there are substantial differences in mainland and Hong Kong tertiary education. Through the comparative study on teaching environment of mainland and Hong Kong college education, we can understand major strengths and weaknesses of the two places. This will help students make wise choice for their further study according to their own preference.

## 2. Comparison of Mainland and Hong Kong Teaching Environment

With a lot of mainland students applying for places in Hong Kong universities, questions are being asked about how the mainland and Hong Kong teaching environment compare. How will the teaching environment of the two places be any different?

### 2.1 Physical Environment

#### 2.1.1 Curriculum Setting

Hong Kong is a fascinating place for the study of curriculum. Hong Kong colleges attach great importance to self-regulated learning. This consists of two aspects. The first is freedom of curriculum time. They can choose subjects according to their time management and personal interests. The second is freedom of curriculum study. Students can select courses across school and grade as long as he or she earns all the required credits.

In mainland colleges, students' selection and compilation are strictly consistent with national examination grades and college curriculum. Prior to curriculum reform in mid 90s, China had been adopted Soviet Union college curriculum setting. With the economic development in China, college curriculum transformed into "three sections" system, that is general course, basic major course, and professional course. And the elective course of most mainland universities are less than that of Hong Kong's. Over a long period of time, an urgent issue exists in great gap between students' theoretical knowledge and practical ability. The further reform shall be implemented in curriculum design for the sake of boosting both teaching-learning process and the overall quality of graduates.

#### 2.1.2 Library Book Resources

In Hong Kong colleges, academic libraries typically identify research support as a central pillar in their mission. Hong Kong universities have an advantage in libraries over mainland schools in the following aspects:

- Access to up-to-date and generous collections of both print and electronic resources;
- Access to archives and special collections;
- Quick document delivery services; and
- Specialist help and advice in tracing resources.

However, a few gaps emerge between mainland libraries and Hong Kong libraries. Some library functions are obviously in danger of becoming redundant in the online environment. Some implications for libraries are clear. For example:

- Increasing research income, recruiting high quality and motivating librarians;
- Develop service culture and strong research collections;
- Establishing online research portals, which offer quick access to the vast array of e-resources
- Adopting more database searching especially foreign language database.

### *2.1.3 School Incentives*

Hong Kong colleges provide many kinds of incentives to attract talented students. The most rewarding one may be the scholarship. Besides healthy scholarships, there are student exchange programmes between local and overseas universities, which are being expanded rapidly. And Hong Kong universities will provide stipends when students participate in overseas exchange programs. Unlike Hong Kong colleges whose scholarships are come from both Hong Kong government and famous alumni. Most mainland colleges are funded by local government. The government couldn't take good care of all the universities, so they are currently unable to compete with Hong Kong universities in terms of financial aids.

## **2.2 Social Environment**

### *2.2.1 Education Policies*

The resumption of Chinese sovereignty did not immediately have a major effect on the administration of Hong Kong education because they were allowed to continue to operate their education systems independently of the rest of China. Therefore, education in Hong Kong still followed that of the United Kingdom, particularly the English system.

In the 1980s, the most important initiative from the central government was to change the State Ministry of Education to the State Education Commission in order to strengthen the ties between the central government and the education sector. In the 1990s, the State Education Commission was changed back to State Ministry of Education. The 14th Central Communist Party (CCP) Congress in 1992 announced that “to develop education is the first priority to the realization of the four modernizations.” The 15th CCP Congress in 1997 reemphasized the strategy of reinvigorating the country with science and education and the strategy of sustainable development should be the two most important means for China to build a socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics. And in 1998, the announcement of building world-class universities further emphasized the importance of knowledge and education nationally.

### *2.2.2 Sources of Teachers*

Many teachers in Hong Kong colleges are world-famous scholars, some of whom are leaders in their fields. According to Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics 2009, non-Asian teachers occupy 50%, and the overwhelming majority of them have doctor degrees. Compared with Hong Kong colleges, the quality of mainland teaching staff is less optimistic. Two main historical factors contributed to the problem of lacking qualified faculty in colleges and universities. First, after Deng Xiaoping's visit to the United States in 1978, many young Chinese went to study abroad. Between 1980 and 1998, there was the phenomenon called *chu-guo-re*. Second, due to the disparity between low salary policy and open market economy, many young men and women in the 1980s and 1990s left their faculty positions to look for opportunities in business and international trade. A new term for describing the phenomenon called *xia-hai* was used.

### *2.2.3 Sources of Students*

As for Hong Kong colleges' enrollment procedure, it consists of both online application and subsequent on-site interview of application. The selection process may last for several months, but it guarantees Hong Kong institutions enroll the brilliant students with good comprehensive skills.

Relatively speaking, mainland enrollment procedure is more monotonous. College entrance examination is the only way that can lead students to almost all higher education institutions. Many parents and students believe that “Exams decide all your life”, it not only decide the achievements of one's life, but a life-time job.

## **2.3 Downsides of Mainland College Teaching Environment**

### *2.3.1 Contradictions between Exam-Oriented and Quality-Oriented Education*

Exam-oriented education once dominated education systems in China for a long period of time. China has a strict education system and usually the exams are used to show a student's ability while in Hong Kong, the instructors graded a student according to his or her multiple ability.

Massive reforms have been undertaken in the education system in mainland at national level since early 1980's. In essence, "quality education" is education aimed at improving fundamental qualities of all people of the nation. It focuses on matching of university education with employment needs.

But new education ideas touched off firestorm of controversy. Skeptics believe that Tests are one of the ways of evaluating learning and teaching efficacy, and help teachers and students realize their strengths and weaknesses. Advocates, however, pose that quality education is comparatively free so that students won't lose their imaginations and creativities.

### *2.3.2 Disparity in Distributing Educational Resources*

The distribution of education resources has great regional disparity in mainland. The first is inequality between rural and urban areas. A lack of quality teachers for rural schools, those in underdeveloped, remote and mountainous areas in particular, has become a major obstacle that prevents rural students from receiving the same quality of education as their urban counterparts.

The second disparity goes to eastern and western regions. With the implementation of opening up policy, several cities were set up as Special Economic Zones (SEZ). These cities showed the most rapid growth. Schools in these regions were equipped with advanced teaching facilities and high quality teachers, which are quite impossible to access in inland cities.

## **3. Enlightenment to Mainland College Teaching Environment**

In addition to comparing Hong Kong and mainland tertiary education, the present paper demonstrates three possible solutions expected to put into action shortly.

### **3.1 Educational Philosophy**

On the base of mutual benefits and equality, mainland can establish communication and cooperation in education field with Hong Kong. Government can encourage more students from overseas and the mainland to come to Hong Kong for further study, thereby adding a greater international dimension to Hong Kong's tertiary education. Increased interaction between mainland and Hong Kong education will seek ways to enhance cooperation and jointly tackle common challenges.

### **3.2 Political Measures**

The Second Plenum of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China held last year outlined a roadmap for China's future development. It again set priority in education in today's China. The committee put great emphasis on government role: Education is a public good, a collective asset that cannot be left only to market forces. And a series of strategies are established for change in the higher education subsector because higher education could best serve socialist construction and meet the need of an opening market.

### **3.3 Economic Measures**

The provincial and local governments in poorer and more remote areas tend to allocate a smaller portion of their budget to education than that mandated by the central government. Improving the budget system is an effective measure to improve the efficiency of financial capital. Stronger supervision prevents corruptions and help officials to carry out their duties. Widen investment channels could improve asset allocation and collect more money for remote areas.

## **4. Conclusion**

Teaching environment is necessary for school teaching activities. People receive different education have different ways of thinking and analyzing things, which makes the views completely differently towards one thing.

There remain some deficiencies which should be noticed in further studies. Firstly, the research is still confined to a certain scope and lacks of research methodology. Secondly, the present paper just observes two aspects of teaching environment, which may not cover all

characteristics of mainland and Hong Kong tertiary education.

In view of the limitation above, the future relevant studies should pay attention to theoretical framework and be more comprehensive and systematic. It is hoped that more perspectives of teaching environment can be introduced in further studies, which can enlarge definition of teaching environment and provide different angles of research.

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