Chapter 4
Teacher Professionalization in Hong Kong: Historical Perspectives

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Introduction

Professionalization, like localization, refers mainly to a process, a process, which, by implication, is incomplete. Eric Hoyle emphasized this aspect of its meaning over thirty years ago, deeming it worthy of reinforcement on several subsequent occasions (e.g., Hoyle, 1974, 1975, 1980, 1982, 1995, 2001; Hoyle and John, 1995). More specifically, he defined professionalization as "the process whereby an occupation increasingly meets the criteria attributed to a profession" (Hoyle, 1982: 161). The incompleteness of the process suggests that its history is of importance. And, even on the occasions when professionalization is considered complete, more as product than process, it is commonly viewed retrospectively, thus highlighting again the significance of historical perspectives.

Over the past decade, the decline, if not the demise, of the history of education has received several notices of regret (McCulloch, 1997; Aldrich, 1997; Robinson, 2001). Robinson, herself, makes a convincing case in favour of "finding" for historians of education "our professional niche", enlisting such unlikely bedfellows in this regard as Simon (1981), Fullan (1993), and Woodhead (1999). Although Aldrich, McCulloch, Robinson, and others are perfectly correct in emphasizing the more lip-service that is paid to historical perspectives in many policy documents issued by national governments, they might have also acknowledged the attempts made by several scholars in various countries to rectify this situation. In the field of teacher professionalization, for example, Hoyle, with and without co-authors, has not been alone in making such efforts. His work was slightly preceded, then succeeded and complemented by such publications as Eddy, 1969; Gooden, 1972; Ozga and Lawn, 1981; Herbst, 1989; Kam and Wong, 1991; Engwall, 1997; Hargreaves, 2000; Hall and Schultz, 2003; Sachs, 2000, 2003; Hyslop, 2004; and Farling, 2005. A major goal of the present chapter is to extend and supplement this research by applying it to the situation in Hong Kong.

The selection of Hong Kong depends partly on convenience, partly because of the multiplicity of influences on the development of its education and its teachers—Chinese, British, Asia-Pacific, and possibly cosmopolitan or World Systems-aware.
And, particularly in terms of Hong Kong’s most recent developments, mere lip-service to historical perspectives would serve only to exaggerate an already noticeably tendency – the emergence of a ‘tabula rasa syndrome’, by which the 1997 change in sovereignty is deemed to have wiped the slate of earlier educational developments clean (Sweeting, 2007: 105). Because another chapter in this Festschrift also tackles Hong Kong issues, focusing mainly upon the last few decades (Morris, 2008: pp. 119–138), the present author will pay special attention to more remote periods, convinced of their relevance to an understanding of teacher professionalization.

The concept of profession is, unsurprisingly, regarded as “contested” (Hyde and John, 1995: 9; Purlung et al., 2000: 4; Hargreaves, 2000: 152). It is a descriptive or normative term that applies variously – perhaps indiscriminately – to a broad range of occupations. Nowadays, it is commonly used about (and by) medical doctors, lawyers, architects, engineers, and the clergy; sometimes as an aspiration by teachers or as form of mollification about them. It is also, however, a term that is applied to sportsmen, artists, musicians, journalists, mercenaries and prostitutes. The breadth of usage is such that, although the usual antonym of professional is amateur, other possibilities include gentlemen, dilettantes, neophytes, line-workers, volunteers, lathy, and lovers. Adjectives used in association with professionals include “skilled”, “hard-working”, “thorough”, “earnest”, “true”, “complete”, “devoted”, and “wounded”, but also, if more rarely, “ruthless”, “selfish”, “hard-nosed”, “rule-bound”, and “narrow-minded”. Advocates of professionalization clearly support the positive epithets and disregard the negatives.

The initiative for professionalization may derive from different sources. There is commonly a passive sense of “the professionalization of teachers”, in which the process depend ultimately on agencies or forces external to teachers. It is something that happens to members of a particular occupation, characteristically involving the control of that occupation, rather than something done by them. It is this sense that Roger Soder emphasized when he made a preliminary analysis of the professionalization of medical doctors, focusing on a combination of economic and social factors (Soder, 1990: 62–63). Song and Wei (2005) used the same interpretation in their distinction between the concept of teachers’ professional development and that of their passive professionalization. One can infer, however, that medical doctors, as well as members of other occupations, have made various active contributions to their own professionalization. Endogenous, together with exogenous factors will have played some part in the processes. Moreover, bearing in mind historical contingencies, one should query the idea that a wide range of occupations achieved professional or quasi-professional status and improved their own knowledge and skills in essentially the same ways.

As far as several occupational groups are concerned, several factors complicated and often delayed the professionalization process. These include (not necessarily in order of importance) social class, gender, race, and fragmentation (Apple, 1980; Grovender, 1999). Most noticeably in past centuries, differences in working conditions, expectations, and rewards reflected social class, gender, and ethnic origin, together with the particular segment of the occupation to which the individual belonged (e.g., in the case of teachers, whether they worked in kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, or tertiary institutions). With teaching, more than with most of the other occupations, there was a distinct possibility that forms of professionalization would prove to have non-education-specific effects and, for example, encourage individuals to treat professional preparation as a stepping stone to other, more lucrative or prestigious employment. Alternatively, even if particular individuals remained involved in education, their “promotion” prospects, at least in some societies and for some periods, were typically away from the classroom and from the actual activities of teaching, towards administration, academic research, or even politics.

The two poles (“liberal” and “technical”), to which, according to Borrowman (1956), re-stated by Urban (1991: 59), most characteristic endeavours in the field of teacher preparation gravitate, may help to demystify the paradox between apparently increasing teacher professionalization and the commonly observed “teacher de-skilling” (Apple, 1979, 1986; Orza, 1988; Ginsburg, 1988; Ginsburg and Lindsay, 1995). In general, it is clear that many trends in teacher preparation practices during the past four decades – such as microteaching, competency performance-based teacher education, “teacher-proof” curriculum packages, externally-imposed “standards” for teachers, together with standardized curricula – have gravitated towards the technical pole. These developments may well be, as Bates (1986) suggested, in line with the evolution of industrial capitalism, in which control is based on “bureaucratic systems of role specifications, incentives and task evaluation”. Within such systems, the teacher’s task is likely to be perceived as delivering student achievements, which are measurable as a production function. Governments, especially those that reveal convictions that merit a “New Rightist” label (which, in England, include “New Labour” and, in Hong Kong, the post-colonial government), may conceptualize the “professional” teacher as someone who is technically competent, rule-compliant, and highly flexible in bending to the wishes of the educational planners. In this situation, technical discourse replaces ethical questions and, although teachers may not see themselves as having been proletarianized, their actual roles and working conditions have come to resemble more closely those of line-workers. On the whole, the more that teachers consider the process of their professionalization as something external to themselves, determined by, say, government policy, the more likely it is that their own de-skilling does not represent a genuine paradox with professionalization.

Especially with regard to the possibly passive nature of at least some aspects of teacher professionalization, it is interesting to note that the most common metaphors used about the process are “the struggle for ...”, and “the path (or march)” towards professionalism. Perhaps an historical observer of teacher professionalization in Hong Kong could maintain a more stable balance in his/her thought in terms of the “Long March towards ...” and “the survival of a series of Enrolment Campaigns”.
The Chinese Background

The traditional Chinese respect for teachers is closely related to their reverence of scholars. Indeed, it was taken (almost literally) as read, that scholarship was the goal of education, which was essentially text-based, male-specific (at least in its formal manifestations), and hortatory in style.

There is certainly authority to be cited from the classical Confucian canon to confirm not only the importance of teaching and teachers, but also the social dimensions of their role. For example, in the Analects, "the Master said, if a man hopes cherishing his old knowledge, so as constantly to be acquiring new, he may be a teacher of others" (II, XI). Mencius declared teachers to be of higher importance than ministers of state (Works, IV, II, XXXII) and urged them not to lower their standards simply in order to "cause learners to consider them attainable" (Ibid., VII, XI). The establishment of the central bureaucracy controlling education in China is usually associated the name of the Emperor Han Wudi and especially with the setting up of the Imperial University in 124BC, with a professorial chair for each of the classical books. At the provincial level, an earlier initiative by Wen Weng, Governor of Sichuan, created a department of education, administered by scholars he had trained himself. This has been considered the beginning of government education in China (Needham, 1954: 100). At a more quotidian level, the first book that countless Chinese children read (and/or had read to them) made it clear that Men at their birth are naturally good. Their natures are the same; their habits become widely different. If foolishly there is no teaching, their nature will deteriorate. The right way in teaching to attach the utmost importance to thoroughness (Sanjing ["Three Character Classic"] 1).

From the earliest days of formal schooling (normally seven years of age), children also learned to memorize the dictum that "The Emperor holds values of heroes and would have you learn writing. Other occupations are lowly in rank; study alone is high" (Koussevi, [Verse for Young Learners], 1; cited in Sweating, 1990: 95). High valuation of study, thorough ways of teaching, and the encouragement of writing would appear to indicate correspondingly high social status and at least an incipient sense of professionalism inhering in persons recognized as teachers. This, however, oversimplifies the situation.

In the various regions of Imperial, Republican, and Communist China, a range of educational institutions provided opportunities for different types of teachers, with different status, but often with little or no sense of (or occasion for) collegiality. In the case of the humblest institutions, such as the single-class, single-teacher shi (or private elementary school), the teachers were customarily disappointed candidates at the provincial civil service examinations. Formal, face-giving respect, therefore, may have sometimes been a substitute for good working conditions and satisfactory remuneration. The nature of the tasks fulfilled by shi-teachers ensured that they were isolated adults commissioned to be in loco parentis and expected to wield a marrow's discipline over their custodial charges, but with little or no room to take curricular initiatives. Unsurprisingly, they were frequently encouraged to assume other non-pedagogic roles, such as palm reading.

the interpretation of spirit-writing, and feng-shui consultancies. At more elevated institutions, such as the famous academies, teachers received a level of respect bordering on veneration. Again, however, they tended to be individuals lionized more because of their personal qualities of scholarship, refinement, and personal talents (especially as calligraphers and artists), than because of their pedagogic skills. And again, they had little chance to attend the curriculum. Instead, most of their energies were devoted to the interpretation of text and to exhortation. This remained largely true throughout Chinese history, although, of course, the particular texts and (sometimes) the styles of hortatory transmission changed. More fundamental change in the direction of professional cohesion, concern about control of entry into and exit from the profession, the analysis and questioning of professional ethics, the assumption of professional standards, and claims to participate in decision-making over curricular and other policy-related matters occurred only very slowly in China, including Hong Kong.

A complicating factor in the case of Hong Kong, of course, was the inclusion of other-cultural values. These included colonial British and, briefly, colonial Japanese attitudes towards individual teachers and towards teachers as a work force. On the whole, such historical forces did little positively to encourage the professionalization of Hong Kong teachers other than by providing initially rudimentary mechanisms to prepare teachers for their tasks. They had more impact as symbols of centralized (and alien) power against which teachers could protest, argue, organize, and begin to adopt some of the characteristics of a discrete group.

In terms of organization, one can detect efforts in Hong Kong mainly during the second half of the twentieth century to enhance both solidarity and a sense of professionalism among teachers "from above" and from somewhere near the grassroots. The top-down approach, although compatible with much in Chinese cultural tradition and certainly favorable itself of exhortation techniques, was almost as futile as futile as trying to force people to take initiatives. Ultimately more fruitful bottom-up efforts tended to achieve clarity of purpose by adopting the attributes of one or other of the set of historical analogies (e.g., interest groups, pressure groups, friendly societies, trade unions, and closed shops). In order to reach firmer conclusions about the significance of the historical trends, however, and, in doing so, to see whom the teachers in Hong Kong have been and from where, in literal and metaphorical terms, they have been coming, one needs to take a more comprehensive view of the various developmental phases. The remainder of the chapter attempts to do this.

Gestures Towards Professionalization in Pre-colonial Hong Kong

In what became the known as the Hong Kong region, as elsewhere in China, teachers even in the most elementary of shi were accorded respect (Luk, 1984), sometimes in ways very important to the local life-style, by gifts of the most succulent chicken and other treats. There were, however, times when the outward show of respect
provided scant consolation for failed ambition, poor working conditions, and modest remuneration. As was to happen on many later occasions, appeals to the “higher valuations” (Myrdal, 1944) of a teacher’s sense of vocation diverted attention from basic “nur-bowl” considerations. Vocationalism was an uneasy precursor of professionalization, serving at times as a substitute and even as an obstacle to be overcome.

Further up the educational ladder, the “Hong Kong” region could also boast of a college that gained quite a widespread reputation from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. A member of the scholar-gentry, Deng Fuxie, having recently retired from government service, moved his family to the Kam Tin district in what is now the New Territories. There, he not only founded Liiying College and provided it with a library of many thousands of scrolls, but also occasionally lectured in the college himself and paid for full-time teachers to be employed, taking an interest in their training. In this sense, Deng was following the model earlier set by Wen Weng. There is plenty of evidence to show that colleges and study halls continued to exist in the region through the Sung, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, though inevitably their fortunes fluctuated and there was even a temporary halt to their activities during the Qing-inspired evacuation of coastal villages during the 1600s. Their teaching staff comprised scholars who had experienced Imperial Civil Service Examination successes, up to and including the chenjuan degree, and who might have originated from the locality, neighbouring districts, or further afield in China (Lo, 1963; Sung, 1974; Hayes, 1983; Ng, 1984; Fauve, 1986). At the humblest level of the shiba, the family-centred jiehua, and the charitable yivian, teachers were less highly qualified and usually, but not invariably, from the locality, itself. One might conclude that, on the whole, professionalism as it is understood nowadays, especially in contradistinction to amateurism, was not a feature of education in the Hong Kong region before the arrival of the British, although some of the prerequisites for its development, including concern over standards, already existed.

**Gestures Towards Professionalization in Early Colonial Hong Kong**

The arrival of the British and their occupation of Hong Kong from the early 1840s made little difference in the short term to teacher professionalization. The early missionary schools were actually run by the missionaries themselves (and, often, by their wives). Some of these were charismatic, but few were professional teachers. One of the few for whom this status could be claimed was Samuel Brown, the American headmaster of the first western-style school to be established in Hong Kong. His training and earlier experience teaching the deaf and dumb in New York was considered suitable preparation for his stint in Asia by the president of his alma mater, Yale College (Chinese Repository, pp. 568-569). Chinese teachers quickly took up the opportunity of a growing population in the new colony of Hong Kong to set up their own schools, but, at the outset at least, they were not essentially different in terms of professionalism or professionalization from teachers elsewhere in China.

Grounds for differences became firmer in 1848 when the Hong Kong Government set up a small Committee of Superintendence to ensure that its recently approved “modest” support for three Chinese village schools was money well spent. The new committee was empowered to satisfy itself about the standards of teaching and learning in the Government-supported schools. Eventually, it drew up rules for the conduct of these schools (Lobscheid, 1859; Sweeting, 1990: 27) and made proposals about their curriculum (Committee for Superintending Chinese Schools, 1851; Sweeting, 1990: 180), as well as about half-yearly examinations, the use of prizes as incentives to study, and the supply of “reliable” teachers for the future via a new pupil-teacher scheme (Committee for Superintending Chinese Schools, 1853; Sweeting, 1990: 147). This top-down approach did little to enhance the professionalism of local teachers, but it does serve as an early example of a move towards what has been earlier described as “passive teacher professionalization” and is explainable in the context of an insecure colonial government at a time of deteriorating Sino-British relations.

The urge towards parsimony combined with an instinct to control what seemed unfamiliar and a possible threat to motivate further moves in the direction of the closer supervision of local teachers. Initially, supervision of teachers had been vested in the part-time and amateur Committee of Superintendence, comprising a few missionaries and one or two government officials. In 1857, at the height of the Second Anglo-Chinese (“Arrow”) War, the responsibility was handed over to the first full-time Inspector of Schools, a German missionary, Wilhelm Lobscheid. Although more sustained inspection might have increased possibilities for the professionalization of the local teaching force, in fact, both Lobscheid and his successor as inspector, Frederick Stewart, expressed themselves forcefully about the compromising nature of local teachers and were more involved in criticism than they were in training. Lobscheid, for example, reported that “they are so lazy and useless that the corruption of teachers has become proverbial” (Lobscheid, 1839: 14); Stewart, that “A Chinese Schoolmaster is truly an object of pity. He is simply a drudge” (Stewart, 1865: 280).

Thus, cultural distance between government and governed emphasized the need to monitor what was happening in classrooms where, of course, teachers could act as powerful forces on the minds of the younger generation. It is in this context that one can view Stewart’s abandonment of Bible reading at the Government Central School mainly on the grounds that Chinese teachers tended to make comparisons between classical Chinese texts and the Bible, to the detriment of the latter — itself, a possible indication of the growing independence and, perhaps, incipient professionalism of some local teachers (Sweeting, 1990: 220). And it is a similar context that surrounds the 1883 report by the government’s Surveyor-General of “class-rooms arranged as requested by Mr. Wright [the second headmaster of the Central School] in such a manner that each large classroom opens into two smaller class-rooms with glass doors to enable one European teacher to supervise two Chinese assistant teachers” (cited in Sweeting, 1990: 36).
Moves Towards Professionalization in Colonial Hong Kong

Driven by perceptions of a shortage of competent and reliable teachers, the government, as mentioned briefly above, approved the introduction of pupil-teacher schemes of "professional" preparation, similar to those in contemporary Britain, initially at the Anglican St. Paul's College as early as 1853 and eventually at its own showpiece establishment, the Central School, from 1865. As Stewart, then also headmaster of the Government Central School, reported, however, the latter faced major implementation problems. This was because many of the youths selected as pupil-teachers left the school for more lucrative employment (mainly as translators and interpreters) as soon as they felt that their fluency in English warranted the change (Stewart, 1866: 279–280). The pupil-teacher scheme at the Central School continued, as evidenced by examinations in "Pupil Teachers' Theory" set for the school's senior class (Sweeting, 1990: 37). It was, however, probably more significant in Hong Kong's social history as a stepping-stone for young Chinese and Eurasian men who had aspirations to serve as middle-men — in the context of commerce, administration, and diplomacy — between colonizers and colonized.

In the early 1880s, the new Inspector of Schools and former German missionary, Ernst Eitel, was largely responsible for launching a different experiment in teacher-preparation and incipient professionalization. It illustrated the progressive nature of some educational thought in Hong Kong, but its abandonment after only two years also indicated that these specific signs of embryonic professionalization had been abated. This was the Wanchai Normal School, established in 1881 through Eitel's enthusiastic advocacy. The support of the maverick governor, Sir John Pope Hennessey, and the work of its headmaster, A.J. May. It was, however, deemed "unnecessary" by the Education Commission (1890–1892), which considered that, "when the Central School had been put on a proper footing, the Headmaster would be able to make all the necessary arrangements for the training of the limited number of teachers required" (Sweeting, 1990: 212). And the British Colonial Office had only reluctantly permitted the scheme to continue, pending a full report on the vacancies expected for teachers, the total cost, and the nature of any "bond" demanded of students in return for their grants (Sweeting, 1995: 338). The actual demise of the Wanchai Normal School was precipitated by May's insistence that the students agreed to a bond to teach for five years, on their completion of the course, at a modest salary rate. The immediate result was that four of the ten students left for the medical college at Tientsin, three joined commercial firms, one became a government interpreter, and only two of the original intake eventually became teachers (Sweeting, 1995: 339).

For the next couple of decades, the rather elderly, but cheap, type of apprenticeship scheme again became the only institutionalized source for the preparation and possible professionalization of local teachers. This was reinforced by Hong Kong's adaptation of a "Payment by Results" approach, as exemplified by the Grant-in-Aid Codes (initiated in 1871, with significant revisions in 1879 and 1903).

The opening of evening "extension classes" for in-service teachers at the new Technical Institute in 1907 was justified on grounds of value for money. In the atmosphere of the early years of the century, when Chinese nationalism was spreading and strengthening, it is likely that political considerations played a part in securing the support of the Hong Kong Government. The fact that the new classes were held in Queen's College, as the Government Central School had been renamed, and that instructors for the extension classes comprised teachers from this school probably also facilitated support. The establishment of the "Department for the Training of Teachers" in the Arts Faculty of the fledgling University of Hong Kong was clearly related to early forms of manpower planning, especially the employment of school leavers from Queen's College as masters in Government and Grant-in-Aid schools. However, the political ramifications of "serving China" (as well as Hong Kong and territories in Southeast Asia) through supplying graduate teachers who might be pro-British also contributed to its motivation (Sweeting, 2002: 68–69). In the cases of both the in-service courses at the Technical Institute and the pre-service courses run concurrently with other undergraduate studies at the University of Hong Kong, much of the professionalization that was achieved was initiated by sources external to the teachers themselves. It merits description, therefore, like many of the students, themselves, as "passive." On the other hand, student-teachers took some extra-curricular initiatives. For example, in the University, they supported their "Education Society" (formed in 1919), which eventually established a "Free Night School", opening in 1931 for the benefit of impoverished children (Sweeting, 2002: 83–84).

Catering for the teaching force needed to man (or, more likely, woman) the increasing number of vernacular primary and secondary schools in the interwar period, two small Vernacular Normal Schools (for Men and Women) opened in 1921. These derived mainly from the initiatives of voluntary societies organized by Chinese residents of Hong Kong, particularly the Tung Wah Hospital Committee, the Confucian Society, and the District Watch Committees. They received the blessing of the government, but very little financial support (Sweeting, 1995: 339). Much the same can be said of the Government Ta Po Vernacular Normal School, although, as its name implies, the financial support of this institution, catering for schools and teachers in the newly stabilized New Territories was more generous.

One problem that persisted in the case of both pre-school and in-school teacher education related to the political reliability of the teachers. This was particularly true as the May Fourth Movement (1919) in China influenced nationalism, feminism, anti-colonial and, especially, anti-British sentiments and actions, eventually culminating in the 1925–1926 General Strike and Boycott of British Goods, the proselytizing of the Kuomintang's New Life Movement, and the activities of its Overseas Chinese Education Committee (Sweeting, 1990: 231–233). Partly as a result of these political pressures, partly as the outcome of recognition that the existing forms of teacher preparation and professionalization were, at best, rudimentary, by the late 1930s the climate of opinion, even the opinion of some government officials, became more favourable to change. The consequence of this, as reinforced by the hyper-critical Burney Report on Education (1935), was the formation of a committee under Justice R.E. Lindsay and its report (1939). This report recommended that the University of Hong Kong should introduce a more rigorous and "consecutive/postgraduate teacher education programme and that the various normal schools should be replaced by a fully-fledged teacher training college. The Government Teacher Training College (soon to be renamed, after the current
Governor, Northcote Training College and, from the 1960s, Northcote College of Education) opened in 1939 (Sweeting, 1990: 357–359). At about the same time, the first signs of teacher unionization appeared, with the Hong Kong Teachers' Association established in 1934. This body was, however, more accurately comparable with a Friendly Society, being largely preoccupied with such matters as Widows' and Orphans' benefits and very much under the influence of the government's Education Department (Sweeting, 1990: 355, 361). Other signs of professionalization of a more active form include the formation of subject associations to enhance developments in a number of curriculum areas. In practice, however, the overwhelming concern of most members for the details of various public examinations tended to make the subject associations very susceptible to influence and direction from examination (i.e., largely government-paid or appointed) officials.

Teacher Preparation and Status During the Japanese Occupation

Both the Northcote College and the University of Hong Kong closed down for the duration of the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong. Despite several promises, the Japanese authorities made no provision for university level education throughout the three years and eight months of the Occupation. They considered the questions concerning school teaching important enough, however, to merit special crash-courses for teachers – mainly in an attempt to ensure some facility in the Japanese language and a degree of anti-colonial political correctness – before they permitted some schools to reopen in May 1942. Similar concern about the influence of teachers persuaded them to arrange further short courses and to insist that one of the principal functions of the Toa Gakuen (East Asia Academy), which they opened in the grounds of a girls' secondary school in 1943 as a pule substitute for the University, was to offer "normal school education," focusing on the training of elementary school teachers (Sweeting, 2002: 91–92). As conditions deteriorated towards the end of the Occupation, the Japanese reinforced their acknowledgement of the importance of teachers by paying them in rice, rather than in drastically devalued Military Yen. This, together with discussions held at the end of 1943 between Japanese officials and Chinese heads of the new District Bureaux about the possibilities of introducing compulsory education, might, of course, have encouraged their sense of distinctiveness and professional status.

Limitations to Teacher Professionalization During Postwar Reconstruction

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that Hong Kong Government officials formally acknowledged the importance of teacher professionalism and, by implication, their professionalization during the first couple of decades following the end of the Japanese Occupation (Sweeting, 1993: 142–149). Teachers, themselves, however, as well as later policy analysts, could find grounds for believing that this acknowledgement represented little more than lip service. For example, the first postwar Director of Education, T.R. Rowell, who had earlier been principal of the Northcote Training College, ostensibly called for cooperation between the College and the Department of Education (the more modern name for the Department for the Training of Teachers) at the University of Hong Kong. It seems likely, however, that, in actuality, he was proposing that the training college should take over at least some of the Department's responsibilities and was quite happy to try to delay the latter's reopening (Ibid., p. 144). Moreover, the government's reliance on very brief, emergency or "crash" training courses and its readiness to use the services of completely untrained teachers also suggests that the main factors influencing policy and practice about teacher preparation were financial constraints and supply considerations (Ibid., pp. 50, 70). In years that witnessed enormous pressures on school places caused by demographic factors, it is hardly surprising that government commitment to teacher professionalization was limited and did not reflect an urgent priority. The results included an ever increasing number of untrained teachers, particularly but not only in Hong Kong's private schools, problems concerning teacher morale, and a conspicuous lack of teacher participation in education policy making, particularly as it related to the school curriculum and their own training. Even so, some progress was made, both in terms of new institutions or courses and in terms of the nature and aspirations of teachers, themselves.

Progress Towards Teacher Professionalization During the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

Basic considerations related to teacher supply in a time of rapid school expansion influenced the creation of new teacher training institutions and courses. New institutions included the Rural Training College (1946–1954), replacing the Government Tai Po Normal School, Grantham Training College (1951), Sir Robert Black Training College (1961), the School of Education at the newly established Chinese University of Hong Kong (1966), and the Technical Teachers' College (1974). Potentially of even greater importance was the establishment of what might seem to be the significantly named "Professional Teacher Training Board" in June 1952, officially to coordinate the various efforts in the field. As a purely advisory body without any executive powers, however, this soon became recognized as a mere "talking shop" and fell into desuetude. New courses included the already mentioned emergency measures. The new In-service Courses of Training for Teachers (ICTT), offered from 1953 by the government-run Training Colleges for unqualified non-graduate teachers during the time of very rapid growth in student numbers (Lai, 2002), University in-service courses for unqualified graduate teachers, starting at the University of Hong Kong in 1956, and technical teachers' training courses, starting in 1970 and organized by the Morrison Hill Technical Institute with help
from the Colleges of Education offered sustained training (Sweeting, 2004: 169, 260). Accompanying these various top-down initiatives and several examples of rhetoric espousing teacher professionalization, officials typically remained quite dismissive of teacher quality, especially in Hong Kong’s private schools (Sweeting, 1993: 156-157).

Perhaps understandably, at much the same time a relatively new trend towards teacher activism developed, at least amongst some of the teaching force, including private school teachers who resented their exploitation by profit-making school operators. The 1960s and 1970s witnessed a growth in subject associations, education-related pressure groups, and a more interventionist trade union, the Professional Teachers’ Association (PTU), which soon became the predominant representative of teachers’ interests. As far as specific events are concerned, one should note the contributions made by teachers and principals of the “Patriotic” (i.e., China-oriented schools) to Hong Kong’s 1967 “Disturbances” (Sweeting, 2004: 254-255, 324-325), as well as the “Certificated Masters’ dispute” of 1971-73. The latter galvanized an alliance of “educational groups” and facilitated the formation of the PTU in 1973 (Sweeting, 2004: 68-70, 247, 263-264). Growing in confidence, the PTU played a major part, supporting a group of dissident teachers and pupils at a government-assisted secondary school, in the 1977-1978 “Precious Blood Golden Jubilee School Affair”, which was eventually resolved at the cost of face-loss by the government Education Department (Sweeting and Morris, 1993: 208-211). In the latter case, however, although the government made overt efforts to improve its channels of communication with teachers (and parents), it also established a special, monitoring committee on pressure groups and did little to counteract a backlash against progressive teaching methods and curricular proposals in schools controlled by conservative principals (Sweeting, 2004: pp. 326-327). Thus, it might be concluded that the struggles of the teachers, either as individuals or in groups, to make significant progress on their “Long March” towards professionalization continued to be hampered by “Enriment Campaigns” organized by the Hong Kong Government and its allies. On the other hand, teachers’ support for activist unions is not necessarily compatible with self-motivated professionalization. And, in the case of Hong Kong, despite the PTU’s title and its rhetoric espousing the professionalism of teachers, the new trade union soon gave the impression of being more concerned with political and economic issues than it was with ethics, the enhancement of teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge, service to clients, or collegiality.

In the early 1980s, a visiting panel of educationalists and administrators, appointed to create an overview of educational developments in Hong Kong, issued its report, which recommended, inter alia, the establishment of a “Teaching Service” to promote enhanced professionalism within the workforce and to remove disparities in qualifications and conditions of employment within the teaching force (Llewelyn, 1982: 96-101). Unsurprisingly, especially in view of the growing strength and political clout of the PTU, this was one of the panel’s recommendations that the government balked at implementing. In its place, the new “Education Commission”, itself a watered-down version of another proposal by the visiting panel, approved one rather general and another specific innovation. The former involved the “fostering of a sense of professionalism by encouraging teachers, principals, school managements and sponsors to cooperate, through the coordination of the (government’s) Education Department, in the “writing of a ‘code of practice’ for the teaching profession”. The latter adopted a less radical suggestion of the Panel to set up “regional teachers’ centres” (Education Commission, 1984: 65). As it happened, a “Code for the Education Profession in Hong Kong” was eventually produced (as a revised edition in October 1990). It was, however, generalized, platitudinous, and difficult to “police”, being the outcome of hard bargaining among pressure groups, educationalists, and administrators and, ultimately, of inevitable compromises (Sweeting, 2004: 379). The first teachers’ centre was opened in June 1989 and, together with others set up in subsequent years, it probably played a small, practical part in teacher professionalization, by providing some resources, less isolation, and more interaction. However, the remark by Leung Siu-long, who alternated as Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Hong Kong Teachers’ Centre for several years, that the Centre (and the Code) represented “garners” played by the government are particularly significant (Interview with Leung Siu-long, cited in Sweeting, 2004: 517). Leung and others regarded both the Teachers’ Centre and the Code as ploys to divert attention away from the Teaching Service idea. Similarly, officials’ support in 1992 for the Education Commission’s proposal to set up a “Council on Professional Conduct in Education” (Education Commission, 1992: 93) is open to different interpretations. One is that the government was sincere in its focus on teachers’ conduct (or more frequently, misconduct). Another is that it was an attempt to distract teachers and their unions from campaigns to establish a “General Teaching Council”, comparable in functions, powers, and status with the General Medical Council (see, for example, Cheng, 1993; Lee, 1993; Sze, 1993).

In the meantime, relatively new social and political developments had interesting, but by no means simple, effects.

By the late 1980s, a new type of demographic factor began to affect opportunities for at least some aspects of teacher professionalization. Political considerations, especially as provoked by the Sino-British Agreement on the Future of Hong Kong (1984) shaped this new factor. Towards the end of 1987, for example, there was sustained public discussion, largely anxious, about the educational comutations of the journalistically emphasized “brain drain”. This phenomenon was beginning to affect Hong Kong as growing numbers of the well educated sought to obtain foreign passports or immigration permits as a form of insurance against a worst-case scenario regarding the forthcoming resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong by China. The outflow of well-qualified, often relatively young people from Hong Kong, including increasing numbers of teachers and newly qualified graduates, had a marked impact on both Hong Kong’s schools and on the recruitment of teachers in institutions of teacher education. In the latter case, motivation to undertake full-time study in particular was drastically reduced by the fact that opportunities for employment as teachers without professional qualifications were increasing as a by-product of the brain drain. Furthermore, for an aspiring emigrant, professional teaching qualifications were not valued since they tended not to improve an
Education Reforms and Teacher Professionalization

As was true, contemporaneously, of several other societies, the education reform movement comprised mainly top-down initiatives. Typical of the Hong Kong Government, some of the early "reforms" were confined to quantitative expansion. These included the "blister programme" at the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, which commenced in September 1984 and was completed in June 1987, to be succeeded by a "second blister", which lasted from 1987 to 1990. As early as 1982, government officials had reached the conclusion that the situation with regard to the supply of qualified graduate teachers was so critical that it should provide special earmarked grants to the two Schools of Education in the two universities. The basic purpose of these was so that the Schools of Education (later renamed Faculties) could deal with the backlog of untrained graduate teachers in secondary schools via appointing additional staff on short-term contract terms. Together, the two programmes did facilitate a radical reduction in the proportion of untrained teachers in secondary schools. However, the intense nature of the training and the temporary nature of the appointments also caused disruption organizationally and, for some staff, in personal terms (ibid., pp. 283, 388).

The establishment of a new Institute of Language in Education (ILE) in 1982 to train or re-train non-graduate teachers of Chinese and English in specialist language skills at least partially represented another instance of expansion. In addition, in 1992 the government approved the opening of a Faculty of Education at the Open Learning Institute (later, the Open University of Hong Kong) which began its first course, a B.Ed. for Primary School teachers in 1994 and both a Department of Educational Studies, which started its part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) in 1993, and a School of Continuing Education, which ran a B.Ed., at the Baptist College (later, the Baptist University) in 1994. In 1992, the Education Commission Report No. 5 (BCRS) recommended that the Colleges of Education and the ILE should be combined into a new Institute of Education, with its own governing body and eventually its own custom-designed campus. The new Institute would be empowered to offer some courses at degree level, but suggestions in favour of a fully-fledged Teacher Training (or "Normal") University or alternatively, an institution comparable with the earlier Area Training Organizations in the UK (i.e., with universities as leading members) were rejected (Education Commission, 1992: 25-62). These and other government initiatives, when implemented, led to some improvements, both in quantitative and in qualitative terms. However, it is more than likely that the government's main motivation related to teacher supply and control, rather than teacher professionalization, and that the various initiatives were significant as typical instances of "bureaucratic incrementalism" (Sweeting, 2004: 24-25, 371). This encouraged territorially disputes, together with a typical government strategy to divide and rule. Other innovations stimulated by BCRS included the government appointing in 1993 a Committee on Home-School Cooperation and an Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications. In the former case, although several chairpersons and members were well-intentioned, the committee was under-resourced and focused more on general exhortations than on practical coordination; in the latter, business tended to concentrate on credentials, rather than on teacher education quality. In both cases, the new committees resembled distractions and possibly "encirclement campaigns".

Despite official rhetoric concerning its contribution to the enhancement of teachers' status, Hong Kong's new Institute of Education had a shaky start. The most media conveyed critical comments about the first President's lack of qualifications and experience related to school-based teaching (although similar ignorance was also typical of all Education Commission chairpersons, most Secretaries of Education and Manpower, and several other senior education policy makers). As importantly,
large numbers of College of Education lecturers resented their loss of privileges and security consequential on the fact that transfer to the Institute would mean that they would no longer be government employees. Eventually, about half of the 400 lecturers initially seconded to the Institute decided to reject a permanent transfer, preferring to return to government service (Ibid., 428-429). Moreover, although new staff soon solved the most obvious problems, the resignation or non-renewal of the contracts of its three most senior staff followed a visit and enquiry into the Institute by Sir William Taylor and the non-validation of its PGDE course. The Presidential tenures of Professors Ruth Hayhoe (1997-2002) and Paul Morris (from 2002) certainly helped to rehabilitate the Institute. Hayhoe consolidated the institute and Morris was especially successful in upgrading both its teaching and research profiles (largely via the clearing away of residual “dead wood”) and the appointment of new, internationally reputable academics (as full-time staff or visitors). Unfortunately, however, Professor Arthur Li Kwok-cheung, initially as Vice-chancellor of CUHK and, allegedly, later as Secretary of Education and Manpower, pressed the Institute to merge with (and be submerged by) the CUHK’s Faculty of Education. Morris resisted these efforts and his own advocacy of university status for the Institute, a prospect that Li rejected on the grounds that the Institute was a monolithic body, the Institute led to unpleasant consequences. The Institute’s Council, the members of which were predominantly nominees of the Education and Manpower Bureau, refused to renew Morris’s own contract and almost all of the internationally renowned academics announced that they planned to leave the Institute (South China Morning Post, 30 January 2007). Thus, although the Hong Kong Institute of Education undoubtedly contributed to the professionalization of large numbers of local teachers, continuing problems have tended to distract attention from these contributions.

Similarly, the Council on Professional Conduct in Education, although it provided some teachers and academics with some experience and despite the official rhetoric about its purposes and importance, was under-funded and under-employed. On his resignation from the body, its chairman, Professor Cheng Kai-ming, described it as “useless” (Sweeting, 2004: 534). As already noted, it almost certainly represented a strategy by the government to deflect attention from the campaign to secure the creation of a General Teaching Council (GTC) supported by, amongst others, Cheng Kai-ming as well as the PTU. Although the GTC was clearly promised “within two years” by Mr. Tung Chee-hwa in his Policy Address of October 1997 (cited in Sweeting, 2004: 601), to date it has not materialized – presumably because of official anxieties that it would be dominated by the PTU.

Quite recently launched exercises that ostensibly facilitated teacher professionalization and professionalization included the “Accelerated Schools Project,” an alliance formed in 1998 between the CUHK and HKied, which amongst other objectives, aimed to enhance teaching of staff at certain secondary schools, and its contemporary “Unified Professional Development Programme” at the University of Hong Kong, with similar aspirations. The Hong Kong Government’s Quality Education Fund (QEF) funded both of these, the former more generously than the latter, but a member of its advisory committee alleged that the main motive was to be seen to “share the spoils” between the two principal stakeholders in graduate teacher education. Despite QEP pressure to ensure positive evaluation, especially of the Accelerated Schools Project, the results of the evaluation exercise and of the projects themselves were mixed.

Mixed feelings and a sense of less than constructive impact on teacher professionalization also apply to the various schemes whereby native-speakers of English, usually from abroad, were deployed to teach the English language in Hong Kong’s schools. These began as a part of the “Language Enhancement” measures during the 1980s. The first scheme was run by the British Council and termed the “Expatiate English Teachers Scheme”. Some local teachers expressed dissatisfaction with a system that offered foreign teachers, unfamiliar with the culture and problems of local pupils significantly better terms of employment and the PTU, which had criticized the scheme from its outset, supported the local teachers. Despite this, a renamed “Native English Teachers” (NETs) scheme was implemented in the 1990s. It was extended even after the assumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong by China in 1997 and in following years. Although some individual NETs probably contributed to the more efficient and idiomatic learning of English by local pupils, others expressed criticisms, if not contempt, of the local teachers and certainly did not contribute to their professionalisation (Sweeting, 2004: 18-19, 584, 622).

Indeed, it is likely that, in any educational “balance of payments” that can be envisaged, greater benefits accrued to the NETs than to local teachers.

Largely because of pressures from commercial enterprises, which influenced the government about alleged failings in English by Hong Kong’s students, local English language teachers began to face and be upset by “benchmark tests” recommended by ECRR (1995) and implemented with apparently increasing rigor after the 1997 change in sovereignty. These, together with other “Managerialist” techniques in Hong Kong, as elsewhere tended to hold back teacher professionalization. Moreover, the whole package of education reforms, branded together by the Education Commission from 1999 to 2001 (including, as it did, top-down proposals about pedagogy, curricula, assessment, parent-teacher relations, and, especially, the “mechanics” of schooling) also did little to advance teacher professionalization, other than as a focus for opposition. Most teachers were and are dissatisfied with the reforms, as the PTU and a series of surveys has made clear (Lee, 2001; Sweeting, 2004: 627-628). Because of the non-cooperation of many teachers, the reform movement has remained, in practice, scantily implemented. Even so, it has clearly placed new pressures or threats of pressures on the teachers’ already heavy workload and added to their stress. Several teachers have committed suicide during the past few years and alarming statistics about depression and anxiety disorders have emerged from various surveys (Lo, 2004). According to recent polls, about a third of the teaching force were seriously considering leaving the “profession” (Law, 2006; Tong, 2005).

According to some observers, Hong Kong needs further reform at both policy and school levels for genuine professional autonomy to be actualized (Lai and Lo, 2002).
On the other hand, during the summer of 2006, teachers massively subscribed to professional development courses run by the various local universities. For example, over 2,500 teachers registered for the “update” courses at the City University on “embracing change”, designed to assist their adaptation to reforms, particularly the new 3 + 3 + 4 structure of secondary and tertiary education to be introduced in 2009 (Chen, 2006). Since most courses were either commissioned or at least approved by the government’s Education and Manpower Bureau, these reactions suggest that its stick and carrot approach is having some impact on teacher professionalization. Moreover, Elizabeth Cheung’s research into the career patterns of local teachers provides convincing evidence about grass-roots level developments in professionalism and professionalization (Cheung, 2000).

Conclusions

This very last point, which shows that at least some teachers are making efforts to professionalize themselves, creates the firmest grounds for optimism about the prospects for teacher professionalization in Hong Kong. The whole long history of gestures or even actual efforts on its behalf have ranged from developments in the basic economic and pragmatic domains, through the enhancement of teachers’ social and institutional coherence, all the way to a self-motivated and/or client-oriented concern for quality and professional ethics. There are now signs that individuals who resemble what Judith Sacks calls the “activist professional” are emerging in Hong Kong (Sacks, 2003: 181) and that some of them are beginning to operate together in what Wenger terms “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998).

As many of the details outlined above have shown, the nature of teacher professionalization in Hong Kong comprised both a (very) Long March and a series of Enrichment Campaigns. In Hong Kong, as elsewhere, professionalization and unionization may have been uneasy bed-fellows, but they have been bedfellows. Likewise, professionalization, especially in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has benefited significantly from newer, classroom skills and reflection oriented, teacher education programmes. However, the professionalization of teachers, with the higher priority many of them now place on research and publications, has not invariably improved the quality of the training that teachers receive. It may also be of some significance that the actual usage of the term “professional” and its derivatives has increased markedly over the past decades — with the high-sounding, but soon moribund, Professional Teacher Training Board (1952), the Professional Teachers’ Union (from 1973), the Professional Code for Educational Workers (1990), and the non-statutory Council on Professional Conduct in Education (1994) serving as illuminating examples. It is more than possible, however, that this form of terminological inflation, like other forms, leads inevitably to devaluation. In Hong Kong, as Whitty appears to expose for the United Kingdom (Whitty, 2006), it is the concept of professionalization, itself, that is being devalued.

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