

**Political Context, Policy Networks  
and Policy Change:**

**Case Studies of Hong Kong  
during the Colonial Transition**

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## Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of policy and change in Hong Kong, primarily focusing upon the period 1984 – 1998. This was a period marked by the transition of Hong Kong to China, which triggered a great deal of challenge to the traditional structure of policy making. This study adopts the notion of policy networks, developed in liberal democracies, to examine public policy in Hong Kong. To evaluate the extent to which policy networks have affected policy outputs and change, two case studies are carried out.

In this work, it is argued that the policy network concept has an explanatory utility in Hong Kong. Compared to the traditional approaches to policy analysis, the concept offers a fuller understanding in three aspects: government and group relations; how policy was made; and how policy was changed. Within networks, government and group relations were of resource inter-dependence, negotiation and mutual advantage, varying across sectors. Networks affected not only the policy process but also policy outputs and policy change. Through the inclusion and exclusion of issues and groups, policy networks explain why policies were consistently made in favour of particular interests. However, the networks in this thesis were not completely static. They have changed to some extent due to the political transition. But even in the cases of change, the impact of this political pressure has depended on the structure/ types of the networks. Hence, the dialectical relationship between context and networks has been important in accounting for the trajectory of policy change in Hong Kong.

Three issues have also been highlighted for the development of network analysis in Asian authoritarian capitalist regimes: the need to examine the mechanisms allowing networks to develop and succeed; the need to demonstrate the importance of networks in explaining policy; and the integration of the concept with micro-level and macro-level analysis to understand the distinctiveness of networks.

## Abbreviations

ACD	Advisory Committee on Diversification
ACO	Association of Community Organisations (Hong Kong)
ADPL	Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (Hong Kong)
AIHK	Amnesty International Hong Kong
A-Level	Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDC	Curriculum Development Committee/ Council
CIC	Christian Industrial Committee (Hong Kong)
CMA	Chinese Manufacturers Association (Hong Kong)
CPCE	Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education
CTU	Confederation of Trade Unions (Hong Kong)
DAB	Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong
DP	Democratic Party (Hong Kong)
EAG	Education Action Group (Hong Kong)
EC	Education Convergence (Hong Kong)
EMB	Education and Manpower Branch/ Bureau of the Hong Kong Government
FEW	Federation of Education Workers (Hong Kong)
FHKI	Federation of Hong Kong Industries
FLU	Federation of Hong Kong and Kowloon Labour Unions
FTU	Federation of Trade Unions (Hong Kong)
GACOs	Government Approved Certification Organisations
HKAC	Hong Kong Association of Christianity
HKAS	Hong Kong Affairs Society
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination

HKCI	Hong Kong Christian Institute
HKGCC	Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
HKMAO	Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the Chinese Government
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
HYC	Hok Yau Club (Hong Kong)
JLG	Joint Liaison Office/ Group
JMP	Job Matching Programme
JPC	Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese
KMT	Kuomintang/ Chinese Nationalist Party (Taiwan)
LAB	Labour Advisory Board
LegCo	Hong Kong Legislative Council
MPF	Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme
NCNA	New China News Agency
NPC	National People's Congress of China
PADS	Port and Airport Development Strategy
PC	The Preparatory Committee
PRC	People's Republic of China
PTU	Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union
PWC	The Preliminary Working Committee
SEM	Secretary for Education and Manpower of the Hong Kong Government
SLS	Supplementary Labour Scheme
VTC	Vocational Training Council

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

This thesis is a study of policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong during the transition from colony to China. In the colonial past, change was limited because Hong Kong was regarded as a unique 'living fossil of imperial government'. Whilst other Asian countries underwent dramatic political transformation, which involved decolonisation or democratisation, Hong Kong remained politically unchanged until the early 1980s. It continued to function according to a 19<sup>th</sup> century constitution (Cheek-Milby, 1989, p. 1). Over the last two decades, however, profound and irreversible political and social changes have occurred in Hong Kong. The 1984 Sino-British Joint Agreement (also known as the Joint Agreement), which provided for the termination of Britain's sovereignty over Hong Kong, triggered these far-reaching changes. The Joint Agreement stated that on July 1, 1997, Hong Kong would become a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China (PRC) enjoying a high degree of autonomy. Under the widely publicised precept of 'one country, two systems', Hong Kong was allowed to preserve its form of capitalist system with executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication after 1997.

To a certain degree, the political future of Hong Kong was settled in accordance with the content of the Joint Agreement. However, the transition of Hong Kong to China and the 'one country, two systems' principle embodied in the Joint Agreement precipitated an intense search for new administrative and social structures for Hong Kong during the colonial transition (Perry and Tang, 1987, p. 113). This led to institutional reform and political restructuring, which saw the development of a representative system and the growing influence of China over Hong Kong politics. It also created new issues and problems to which traditional interests did not have available solutions.

This thesis has two aims. The first is to study how these changes in 'high politics' have affected policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. The second is to examine whether or not the policy network approach to policy analysis can help to understand policy outcomes and policy change in Hong Kong. In other words, this thesis will use the concept of policy networks to analyse a number of policy areas in Hong Kong when these areas were constantly under pressure from the colonial transition after 1984. Its focus is on how and why policy was made and changed in Hong Kong during the political transition.

## 1. Setting the Problem

From the early 1980s, the traditional policy-making structure and public policy in Hong Kong have been subject to increasing challenges. Most of these challenges arose as a result of the transition from colonialism in Hong Kong. The political transition included two fundamental trends – the return of Hong Kong to China; and the development of a representative system in Hong Kong.

The complexities of change in sovereignty over Hong Kong are well documented (see Buckley, 1997; Thomas, 1999). Suffice it to say that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Agreement provided for the termination of British rule over Hong Kong in July 1997, transforming Hong Kong into a special administrative region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC). According to the Joint Agreement, the Hong Kong SAR would have its own government, legislature and judiciary composed of local inhabitants, and would enjoy a high degree of autonomy except in foreign and defence policies, which were to be the responsibilities of the central government. Furthermore, the Joint Agreement promised that China's socialist system and socialist policies would not apply to Hong Kong after the handover. Whilst the Joint Agreement set the framework for post-1997 Hong Kong, a large number of political, legal, economic, social and administrative issues in relation to the colonial transition needed to be resolved prior and after the handover (Cheek-Milby, 1989, p. 2).

The other reason why the traditional structure of policy-making in Hong Kong was under increasing pressure to change during the 1980s and 1990s was that the British Hong Kong government restructured the political arena by initiating and subsequently accelerating the development of a representative system in Hong Kong. Many reasons have been advanced for this move by the British Hong Kong government to democratise the administration of Hong Kong during the transitional period. For example, the government claimed that the move was a sincere response to political demands made by the sophisticated local people. Others took a more cynical view on this issue. Tsang (1997, pp. 34-35) argued that the British withdrawal from Hong Kong differed from their withdrawals from other British colonies in that it required them to transfer power not to the local people but to socialist China. In order to secure the support of Parliament and the international community, the Conservative government decided to 'build up a firmly-based, democratic administration in Hong Kong'. In a similar vein, Cheung (1997, p. 82) argued that the British Hong Kong government set out to develop a representative system in Hong Kong during the transition 'not only for the sake of democratisation itself, but also to avoid letting the Communist Chinese Government and its appointed governing agents in Hong Kong inherit all the autocratic powers of the former British governor and his mandarins'. In any case, the process of democratisation had a major impact on the political system in Hong Kong.

Democratisation began in 1984 with the release of the White Paper entitled *The*



*Further Development of Representative Government in Hong Kong*, which set out the decision of the British Hong Kong government regarding political reform. The White Paper stated that the main aim of political reform was 'to develop progressively a system of representative government at the central level which is more directly accountable to the people of Hong Kong and is firmly rooted in Hong Kong' (Hong Kong government, 1984). As had been mooted in the 1984 White Paper, the Legislative Council (LegCo), a law-making body in Hong Kong, was expanded in 1985 to include indirectly elected members for the first time in Hong Kong's colonial history (Thomas, 1999, pp. 161-170).

Further changes occurred in the 1990s. The Legislative Council formed in 1991 was very different from its predecessors that had traditionally been regarded as little more than a 'bureaucratic' arm of the government. For the first time, 18 of its members were directly elected by the Hong Kong people in nine geographical constituencies. The members representing functional constituencies increased from 12 to 21. The members appointed by the Governor were reduced from 20 to 18, and the number of senior civil servants on the Council substantially dropped from 10 to 3. In all there were 57 members (out of 60) who were not civil servants, and the elected members for the first time held a majority of 39 votes to 21 (Miners, 1994, p. 233). Under Governor Patten the democratisation process gained pace. Patten's political reform further developed the representative system, which included: expanded direct elections to the Legislative Council in 1995 (20 seats); expanded functional constituencies (30 seats) to reflect a larger community; and an elimination of official and appointed members (Thomas, 1999, p. 225). Although the democratisation process came to a halt when Hong Kong was returned to China after 1997, elections and legislative politics had already become an important part of the political system and remained so.

The change in sovereignty over Hong Kong and the democratisation process provided the motors of change both within and outside the government. Most of the pressures on the traditional structure of policy-making were structural pressures ensuing from the changes in 'high politics' from the early 1980s. In general, there were two major ways in which the structural pressures arose. First, the changes in political environment created new issues and problems, to which traditional interests did not have available solutions. One of the biggest problems arising from the change in sovereignty over Hong Kong was how to facilitate the integration of Hong Kong into People's Republic of China (PRC), which was the territory's new sovereign (Segal, 1993, p. 2; Postiglione, 1992). Ironically, the integration itself courted other new problems besetting the traditional interests in policy-making. For example, the change in sovereignty set in motion and then accelerated the economic integration between Hong Kong and mainland China. In the 1980s and the 1990s, many manufacturing plants were relocated to the South China region where land and labour were much cheaper than in Hong Kong. The relocation of labour-intensive production to mainland China precipitated the problem of structural unemployment in Hong Kong (Chiu and Levin, 2000, pp. 96-97). Faced by the

deteriorating labour market and growing workers' grievances, the policy-makers came under immense pressure to change the traditional policies that often prioritised economic growth at the expense of labour protection (which will be discussed in Chapter 8).

Second, the change in sovereignty and the development of a representative system posed a major challenge to the traditional structure of policy-making and public policy because they have restructured the political landscape in Hong Kong. They affected the relative power of various actors, including domestic groups and the Chinese authorities, and active participants in the political arena of Hong Kong increased (Perry and Tang, 1989, p. 245). A number of groups or organisations, such as the organised labour, political activists and environmentalists that were previously at the margins or completely excluded from the policy process, gained political strength and penetrated the political arena of Hong Kong as a result of the contextual changes. Hence, they were able to bring more pressure to bear on the government to change policies inimical to their interests or values (Cheung, 1997, p. 98; Tsang, 1997, p. 32; King, 1988, p. 52).

The transition of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty has placed the issue of change at the very heart of policy analysis in Hong Kong. Actually, change in Hong Kong is not only a local but also an international concern. Given its status as one of the most important banking, financial and commercial centres of the world, any political or economic crisis concerning Hong Kong is very likely to destabilise the vital regional economy in East Asia and, therefore, destabilise international trade and finance (Segal, 1993, p. 1). As a result, a large number of foreign and local studies have been made and published of Hong Kong's colonial transition and its impact on Hong Kong's governance. In fact, many studies of Hong Kong's transition define the processes of decolonisation and democratisation as the key determinants of change in either the structure of policy-making, policy outputs or both (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2).

The underlying argument of this thesis is that too much attention has been paid to the possibility of policy change and to the importance of macro-level variables in the analysis of the policy process. Lui and Chiu (2000, p. 1) argue, excessive emphasis has been placed on 'diplomatic conflicts and their consequences' and on 'institutional politics, more precisely activities in the legislature' in explaining policy decisions. The major problem ensuing from this undue emphasis is that a number of policy changes these studies predicted would occur have not yet materialised. In this regard, this thesis suggests that more consideration needs to be paid to the meso-level factor – the structural relationships between the government and groups involved in the policy process in various policy areas or sub-sectors, i.e. the nature of policy networks. The important variables that influenced policy decisions in Hong Kong during the transition are the nature of policy networks (meso-level), and their interactive relationships with the processes of decolonisation and democratisation (macro-level). This thesis aims to investigate whether or not the policy network theory can supplement existing studies and thus provide a more sophisticated analysis of policy outcomes and policy change. As the

colonial transition of Hong Kong, which has begun since the signing of the Joint Agreement in 1984, is an ongoing process, this study may also help to make sense of current affairs that are related to the transition of Hong Kong.

## 2. Definition of the Policy Network Concept

Since the key focus of analysis is the nature of policy networks in Hong Kong and the impact they have had on policy outcomes and policy change, it is important to define policy networks. Generally speaking, policy networks are a concept that are used to analyse the relationships between government and groups having access to the policy process. A policy network is 'a group or cluster of organisations, or indeed sections of organisations, represented by individuals/ agents and aiming to achieve mutual advantage through collective action, which is distinguished from other groups or clusters by breaks in the structure of resource dependence' (Marsh and Smith, 1996, p. 30).

Groups and the government in a policy network are mutually dependent, as the government wishes to achieve specific policy goals with the help of incorporated groups, whilst the groups wish to influence policy. Policy-making is segmented, and thus decisions in a given substantive policy area are made within this group or cluster of interconnecting and interpenetrating organisations (Richardson and Jordan, 1979, p. 74). A policy network develops when there is an exchange of resources between groups and the government (or parts of the government) in the policy process. Resource exchange leads to the recognition by the government that it is useful to consult these groups on a regular basis in a certain policy area (Smith, 1993, p. 56). Groups not possessing significant resources for exchange are normally unable to gain recognition and to access the process of decision-making. Hence, a policy network is an entity in which there are institutional and non-institutional mechanisms for inclusion and exclusion. Policy networks are also a means of categorising the relationships that exist between the government and groups in the policy process. Networks vary in a number of ways, from the number of participants to the degree of consensus and the structure of power (positive-sum or zero-sum) (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992c, p. 251). Smith (1993, p. 8) argues that the types of policy networks are an important factor affecting policy outcomes and how policy changes (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3).

Discussions of policy networks are common in the analysis of public policy in Britain, Europe and the United States. However, as Marsh and Smith (1996) point out, there is little agreement as to whether or not the concept can be used to explain policy. Some authors use the concept merely as a heuristic device giving insights into the structure of policy-making, whereas others assert that the concept has explanatory power (see Chapter 3). It is the intention of this thesis to examine the explanatory utility of policy networks in the context of Hong Kong.

### 3. Applicability of the Policy Network Concept

The notion of policy networks has developed in Britain, Europe and the USA, and the policy network theory has been confined to policy analysis in liberal democracies. It is, therefore, important to examine if the concept has any applicability to the context of Hong Kong before we can go further to investigate how the policy network approach can supplement the existing studies and provide a more sophisticated analysis of policy outcomes and policy change in Hong Kong. This section will demonstrate that the colonial governance and administrative structures in Hong Kong facilitated the creation of policy networks. Therefore, in accounting for the applicability of the policy network concept, it is essential to examine the political structures in Hong Kong, and how these mechanisms prompted policy networks to develop.

#### 3.1 The Political Structures in Hong Kong

In order to define the political context in Hong Kong before the 1980s, it is necessary to look at its various aspects. First of all, Hong Kong was a British colony, but it was not a colony over which the British government had direct control. This is not to say that Britain, as the sovereign state of Hong Kong, could not directly impose policies on the territory. However, Hong Kong in truth enjoyed a high degree of administrative autonomy. As argued by Hook (1997, pp. 12-13), 'apart from the extension of British legislation chiefly to enable Hong Kong to function in the international arena, British policy towards Hong Kong was in fact the policy of the local administration... acting to all intents and purposes autonomously'. The administrative autonomy stemmed from the fact that Hong Kong was economically self-sufficient, with large foreign exchange gain from booming modern tourist industry, overseas investments, trade, manufacturing and other economic activities (Hook, 1997, pp. 12-13). The economic strength of Hong Kong meant that the British government did not have to interfere in the day-to-day management of Hong Kong, and that it could not influence Hong Kong's administration through the provision of financial assistance. As a result of the administrative autonomy, local politics was important in shaping its policy decisions. It is, therefore, crucial to analyse the administrative structures in Hong Kong.

Until 1997, Hong Kong was formally ruled by the Governor, who was appointed by the Crown and was the symbolic representative of the British sovereignty over the territory. Although the Governor's powers, as set out in a number of constitutional documents like the Letters Patent, were considerable, he was neither an autocratic ruler nor the most important actor in policy-making. His actual exercise of power was hedged in by a number of factors. First, the power of the Governor was circumscribed by the Executive Council, which was a decision-making body within the administration composed of top officials and co-opted unofficial members. The Executive Council was

able to limit the power of the Governor because, according to conventions, it had to be consulted by the Governor prior to any important decisions. Moreover, decisions of the majority within the Executive Council carried great weight with the Governor. Although the Governor had the right to take action counter to the advice of the Executive Council, he could not do so without good cause shown (Harris, 1988, p. 90).

Second, the power of the Governor was restricted by a complex cultural setting in Hong Kong. There was a distinctive Hong Kong method of interest articulation. Some groups launched their campaigns under the banner of what was good for the Chinese people and traditions, in order to extract concessions from the government. In normal circumstances, the Governor was 'not able to ride roughshod over these claims' (Harris, 1988, p. 48). The third and the greatest check on the Governor's influence in the policy process was the senior administrative civil service. It cannot be denied that directives from the Governor could affect decisions taken by the top officials. Yet the Governor still needed to secure the full cooperation and whole-hearted support of the policy secretaries and department heads if he wished to propel his agenda forward and achieve the policy goals. The civil servants had developed their routines, standards of behaviour, bureaucratic culture and values, which were usually incompatible with the Governor's agenda and difficult to change (Cheung, 1997, p. 88). In order to avoid policy or administrative dislocation, the Governor was generally prepared to seek consensus with the senior officials on policy issues (Miners, 1995, pp. 68-84).

The civil service was more than a check on the Governor's influence in the policy process. In fact, the senior officials were the ones who initiated and implemented policies (Perry and Tang, 1987, p. 116). Agenda-setting and policy initiation normally took place in policy branches or departments. Only if policy proposals including their goals, parameters and contents were completed would they be submitted to the Governor and the Executive Council for final approval. In other words, the senior civil servants were the chief policy-makers, whereas the Governor and the unofficial members of the Executive Council acted only as 'gatekeepers'. The Governor-in-Council had the power to amend the policy proposals or refer them back to the policy secretaries or department heads concerned for further consideration. Yet outright rejections of the policy proposals enacted by the senior civil servants were rare. This was because outright rejections of the policy proposals that had already gone through a lengthy process of deliberation and consultation carried out by the civil servants would cause further delays and rising costs. The possession of information, expertise and organisation resources by the senior civil servants also gave them certain advantages over the Governor and the unofficial members of the Executive Council in the policy process (Miners, 1995, pp. 68-84).

Moreover, the senior civil servants played a central role in policy-making by the fact that they were not only executive but also 'political' in their role orientation. In the absence of professional politicians in Hong Kong's political system, the senior civil servants took on the high-profile duties of representing the government, explaining and

defending government policies, mobilising and organising political support for the government and countering the critics of the government. They took up the role of political officers and acted like ministers in policy formulation and coordination. Therefore, according to Cheung (1997, p.90), they formed 'the *de facto* "governing party"' in Hong Kong. This is not to say that the Governor could not be directly involved in policy either by forcing new issues onto the agenda or by setting the central planks of policy. However, given the complexity of modern policy matters, there was clearly a physical limit to how often this could be done. As a result, the top civil servants were generally the most important actors in policy-making in Hong Kong.

Due to the importance of civil servants to policy-making, Hong Kong was a putative 'administrative state'. It was not 'devoid of legislative and judicial organs', but 'administrative organisations and operations are particularly prominent' (Harris, 1988, p. 70). Most of the decisions were made by a small number of senior civil servants who were only subject to limited check and balance by the appointed unofficial members of the Legislative Council (LegCo). The LegCo ostensibly established to debate government proposals and pass legislation was 'a "bureaucratic" rather than a "legislative" arm of the machinery of government'. The policy secretaries and department heads dominated the LegCo by having a majority of seats in the institution (Harris, 1988, pp. 91-92). Until 1985 other unofficial members were all selected by the Governor, and thus the LegCo 'was little more than an assembly of yes-men who were content to act like a rubber stamp, obediently signifying their approval to whatever proposals the colonial government put before them' (Miners, 1994, p. 224).

Nevertheless, the senior civil servants were not a single group of actors in policy-making. Pressure groups within policy networks also had the potential to shape policy. The remaining part of this section will provide an analysis of the applicability of the policy network concept to the context of Hong Kong. More specifically, it will examine the mechanisms leading to the development and success of policy networks in Hong Kong's administrative state.

### **3.2 Policy Networks in Hong Kong's Administrative State**

The concept of policy networks has barely been applied to Hong Kong's policy studies. However, this does not necessarily mean that the concept is not apposite to policy analysis in Hong Kong. In fact, the colonial governance and administrative structures in Hong Kong were highly facilitative of pressure group involvement in the policy process and the creation of policy networks that existed between government and groups. This is the case for a number of structural reasons. First, despite the evidence that the majority of policy decisions were made by a small number of top bureaucrats, Hong Kong had a political style that was highly consultative. Following the pattern set in Britain, the governance in Hong Kong was characterised by 'extensive consultation which occurs

among government officials, pressure groups and advisory committees' (Perry and Tang, 1987, p. 116). This approach was encapsulated by the term 'government by discussion' (Endacott, 1964, p. 229). The approach was important in forming policy networks in Hong Kong. Some groups having an interest in particular policy areas or sub-sectors were allowed access to the government, mostly through various ad hoc or advisory committees, and they were consulted continuously by sections of the government before any important decisions were taken.

Second, the idiosyncratic nature of pressure group politics in Hong Kong led to the creation and maintenance of policy networks. In the absence of any parliamentary modes of government and competitive party politics, interest groups were exceptionally active in Hong Kong's political life. The vast miscellany of interest groups articulated and voiced popular demands more effectively than political parties (Harris, 1988, pp. 45-46). This might not be so different from pressure group politics in liberal democracies. However, unlike pressure groups in democratic countries, the absence of parliamentary politics meant that direct access to the source of authority became a very important issue for the groups in Hong Kong. There were 'no parliamentarians or intermediaries between the interest groups and the central governmental organisation'. Until 1985 there was no election to the Legislative Council, on which members were appointed by the governor and had no constituents to whom they must address themselves. As a result, compared with interest groups elsewhere, the groups in Hong Kong did not have the alternative of advancing their interests by lobbying Parliament or Congress members. Instead, 'they must find access to decision-makers within the bureaucracy itself'. As some groups pulled it off and gained access to the government, policy networks developed. The 'institutionalisation of these concerns at the very heart of the machine constitutes formidable internal lobbies' (Harris, 1988, p. 47).

Third, policy networks tended to develop in Hong Kong because the civil service needed routine relationships with certain groups to bolster the legitimacy of the colonial government and to build a consensus in support of its policies. The notion of legitimacy was particularly important for the government of Hong Kong. The status of Hong Kong as a colony and the undemocratic nature of the government contributed to an inherent legitimacy problem for the government. The Hong Kong government did not possess the legitimacy that would otherwise come through elections. Therefore, it tried to deal with this legitimacy problem through creating policy networks within different sections of the government (Cheng, 1992, pp. 98-99; Miners, 1996, pp. 251-252). In these policy networks, the civil servants exchanged access to policy-making for support of the incorporated groups in the policy process. Certainly, not all groups were able to gain entry to the government. But well-established groups on which the government relied for political support and legitimisation, or groups that could provide the government with assistance in policy-making and implementation, were allowed access to the process of decision-making. Consultation with the incorporated groups at all stages of

policy-making and implementation was firmly established throughout the civil service.

Fourth, policy networks developed in Hong Kong as a result of two trends: the rapid expansion in the scope of governmental responsibility, and the increasing complexity of public affairs. The scope and complexity of governmental responsibility has considerably increased as the economy has flourished and society has expanded after the Japanese occupation in 1945 (Miners, 1996, p. 248). The increase in the scope and complexity of governmental responsibility was also attributable to the precarious status of Hong Kong's colonial rule. There were cases in which the government decided to intervene in policy so as to contain the threats, either real or perceived, to the colonial regime in Hong Kong (which are discussed in Chapter 5). Expansion and specialisation meant that the government, which adhered to the principle of financial conservatism, needed to extend its infrastructural power to intervene in society and accurate information to design policy to achieve its objectives in the most cost-efficient manner. Therefore, policy networks were created within various branches and departments of government, through which officials could obtain from the incorporated groups the support and advice on which to base and implement their policy decisions (Miners, 1996, pp. 250-251).

The existence of mechanisms facilitative of networks means that it is justifiable to examine how the policy network approach can provide a better understanding of public policy in Hong Kong than the traditional approaches to policy-making and policy change discussed in Chapter 2. Of course, networks might develop between government and groups and influence policy in some areas but not in others. This is an empirical issue. What we have to accept here is that there is a natural tendency for the political structures in Hong Kong to encourage the formation of stable and regular relationships between government and groups in different policy arenas. This leads to the central questions of this thesis: were policy networks important in affecting policy outcomes? How did the changes in Hong Kong's political environment influence the pre-existing structure of policy-making? Could the traditional policy networks survive these contextual changes and affect the trajectory of policy change?

## **4. Chapter Outline**

Chapters 2 and 3 will establish the thesis's analytical framework. In Chapter 2, I shall outline the theoretical approaches that are popularly used to explain the process of policy-making in Hong Kong and, particularly, focus on how they deal with the issue of Hong Kong's transition. It will suggest that the general theories that focus on macro-level factors are inadequate for explaining policy and the course of change in Hong Kong. Chapter 3 will discuss the notion of policy networks as an alternative approach, and develop a number of propositions in order to provide a better understanding of Hong Kong's policy-making. The propositions will focus on three important aspects of policy analysis: government/ group relations in the policy process; how policy was made; and



how policy was changed in Hong Kong's transition. Chapter 4 will deal with the issues of methodology and research design. In order to examine whether or not the notion of policy networks explains the government/ group relations in Hong Kong and the extent to which policy networks affected policy outcomes and policy change, this thesis takes two case studies in Hong Kong. Chapter 4 will also justify the use of case studies. It will examine why the cases are selected and how the case studies are carried out.

The following chapters (5, 6, 7 and 8) are an empirical part of the thesis. They will turn to the case studies of policy networks and look at why networks developed, what features they had, how they affected policy, and whether or not they have survived the colonial transition and affected policy change. The final chapter will return to the central questions of this thesis. It will provide a comparison of the case studies and assess the extent to which the propositions outlined in Chapter 3 have been corroborated. Having established the utility of policy networks in understanding the policy process, policy outcomes and policy change in the context of Hong Kong, the chapter will also return to the theoretical discussion of the concept. It will highlight some issues for the future of policy network research, with particular reference to the development of network analysis in Asian authoritarian capitalist regimes.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Cooption, Elitism and Political Explanations of Change: Traditional Approaches to Policy-making and Policy Change in Hong Kong**

There have been a number of approaches to the analysis of policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong. These studies have been conducted within the confines of three theoretical perspectives: cooption, elitism and the political explanations of change. Undoubtedly, these perspectives have offered some useful insights into understanding how policy was made and changed in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. However, this chapter will demonstrate that each of these perspectives has important limitations and, therefore, does not offer a comprehensive account of policy in Hong Kong.

First, the perspectives, like cooption and elitism, offer general theories concerning policy-making in Hong Kong, but they do not provide an account of variations across sectors. Second, the elitist approach suggests that a small range of social and economic elites dominated the policy process in Hong Kong, but it says very little about how they actually influenced policy. Third, the elitist approach and the concept of cooption have difficulty in explaining policy change in Hong Kong during the colonial transition, because the processes of decolonisation and democratisation and the concomitant change in society have led to the decline of the elitist structure in policy-making. Meanwhile, the political explanations of change that merely focus on the changes in Hong Kong's political context, namely decolonisation and democratisation, are too simplistic, general and voluntaristic. They exaggerate the changes in Hong Kong's political context and the impact that they had on policy. They also ignore the pre-existing structure of policy-making within which the new political forces, such as the Chinese authorities and local politicians, had to operate.

This chapter will outline the traditional approaches to policy-making in Hong Kong. It will demonstrate that the general theories that focus on macro-level factors have important limitations in explaining policy and, particularly, the course of policy change in Hong Kong. It will highlight the need for an alternative approach. This chapter will begin by discussing the theoretical perspective of the administrative absorption of politics/cooption.

## 1. The Administrative Absorption of Politics/ Cooption

The theoretical perspective of the administrative absorption of politics has dominated much of the analysis of policy-making in Hong Kong. It has long been recognised 'as the key to the understanding of colonial governance in Hong Kong' (Cheung, 1997, p. 85). The concept, which was coined by King (1975) in the 1970s, primarily denotes 'the phenomenon by which business and grass-roots leaders are coopted into the administrative machinery in Hong Kong' in order to bolster the legitimacy of the undemocratic colonial government (Perry and Tang, 1989, p. 241). The government of Hong Kong has consciously and deliberately created hundreds of consultative committees at various levels of the bureaucracy, and these advisory committees provided a mechanism for integrating business and grassroots leaders into the policy process. More importantly, the Legislative and the Executive Councils acted as a further means of cooption. Through these institutions, 'the views and feelings of the industrial-business elites, professionals, and even ordinary citizens were fed back into the administrative decision-making processes' (King, 1988, p. 45).

On the whole, the concept of the administrative absorption of politics corresponds to the concept of cooption. Saward (1992, pp. 1-2) argues that cooption is 'a strategy more or less available to state actors in pursuit of their goals, and as such can involve groups and individuals from a variety of professional, producer or promotional standpoints'. State actors may use the mechanism to enhance legitimacy, take informed action and gain public support for contentious policies. In the context of Hong Kong, the government has long relied on the mechanism of cooption to shore up its legitimacy and to promote political stability. In terms of enhancing legitimacy and stability, the system of cooption was exceptionally efficient and effective in Hong Kong. The timely absorption of potential elites into the administration 'has made politics almost unnecessary outside of the government'. To a large extent, it has contributed to the political stability of Hong Kong (King, 1988, pp. 45-46; Lo, 1997, pp. 47-48; King, 1975).

Like cooption, the administrative absorption of politics also emphasises the simple, static and unidirectional relationship between the government and incorporated groups. It argues that access to the policy process was controlled by senior civil servants, who attributed the consultation status to groups that abided by the 'rules of the game' set by the government. The government agency was able to dominate or at least considerably shape policy if it wanted to do so, regardless of other interests and demands within the policy process. In other words, it sees the relationship between the government and groups as static. The flow of power was essentially unidirectional, from government officials to incorporated groups rather than the other way round. This nature of government/ group relations is encapsulated by Lau (1999) in his account of Hong Kong's politics. He argues that (Lau, 1999, pp. 49-50):

...the indigenous political leaders that appeared in colonial Hong Kong were the products of colonial political largesse. Their political influence was derived from their colonial masters. Their relationship with their political overlords was one of dependence, deference and supplication. In the eyes of the colonial regime, these indigenous leaders were employed primarily to legitimize colonial rule, to enhance its understanding of the colonial subjects and to serve as the transmission belt between the government and the governed.

This theoretical perspective highlights some important aspects of the policy process in Hong Kong. It focuses on the strategy of cooption that was used by the government to achieve its goals, be they enhancing legitimacy, promoting political stability or simply making informed policies. Thus only a small range of groups and individuals were allowed access to the government. The Hong Kong government has a strong tendency towards elitism. It also points out that the relationship between the government and groups in the policy process was asymmetric. Therefore, although in some areas policy was biased, the elite groups did not capture the government agency. Nevertheless, there are two major problems with this approach, which can be divided into a general problem and the one that relates particularly to the analysis of change.

First, it seems that in examining the policy process in Hong Kong this approach overemphasises the static and unidirectional relationship between the government and groups. Lau (1999, pp. 49-50) makes continual reference to the dependence of the social and economic leaders on the government that accorded limited political influence to the incorporated groups. This account of power may be too simplistic. Although it is obvious that power was not evenly distributed between the government and groups in the executive-led political system in Hong Kong, it does not necessarily mean that the groups were completely subservient to the government in policy-making and that their influence was the product of 'political largesse'. In fact, the government/ group relations in Hong Kong were more complex, intricate and dynamic than this theoretical perspective allows. The case studies of civic education and manpower policy in chapters 5 to 8 will show that in particular situations the government/ group relations were one of mutual dependence and resource exchange rather than one of dependence, deference and supplication.

Second, there are difficulties within this theoretical perspective in explaining policy change in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. It has offered useful insights into understanding policy in Hong Kong where the level of politicisation was very low in the post-war period. It is based on the premise that 'Hong Kong had been a politically inactive and economically dynamic city' in which 'the low and middle strata had been basically politically indifferent and apathetic' (King, 1988, p. 45). Since a large part of society was politically unorganised, the government could easily tell which interests should be incorporated in the policy process and seldom encountered opposition in society. In this

situation, the system of cooption worked effectively, and thus the concept of the administrative absorption of politics has been a useful tool for understanding policy in Hong Kong.

However, with the decline of cooptive politics in Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s when the processes of decolonisation and democratisation gained pace, this theoretical perspective seems to have difficulty in explaining policy in Hong Kong's transition. As Hong Kong went through the processes of decolonisation and democratisation, politicisation at the societal level accelerated and intensified. Pressure and political groups emerged one after another. It became increasingly difficult for the government to maintain the system of cooption and fail to take into account the views of the masses. In fact, as argued in Chapter 1 (Section 2), a number of middle-class and grassroots groups that had been excluded from the policy process managed to penetrate the political arena through elections to the Legislative Council and flexed their political muscles as never before. In short, the arrangement of cooption has declined since the early 1980s. The political reality of Hong Kong has become more complex than the theoretical account offered by the concept of the administrative absorption of politics/ cooption. Therefore, the utility of this approach has inevitably dwindled.

## **2. The Elitist Approach to Hong Kong's Politics**

Like cooption, the elitist approach also focuses on how a small range of groups were integrated into government. However, there is a major difference between the two approaches. Unlike cooption, the elitist approach does not see government/ group interaction as the relationship of dependence, deference and supplication. Rather, it emphasises the nature of synarchy or co-ruling in Hong Kong's politics.

Davies (1977, p. 69), one of the key elitist writers in the context of Hong Kong, argues that 'there is in Hong Kong a relatively small elite which controls the policy process'. This class of elites had 'almost exclusive control of the policy-initiating, policy enacting and policy-executing branches of the government', and they dominated 'the principle sources of information that feed the policy arms of the system'. Therefore, 'the interpretative perspective of the elite class overwhelms any other, and applies when policy is being formulated and executed and when its success or failure is being assessed' (Davies, 1977, pp. 46-47). Hong Kong's elite class contained two major components. On one side of Hong Kong's power elite were the civil servants in Hong Kong, especially the most senior government officials including the Chief Secretary, Financial Secretary, Attorney General, heads of government departments and their deputies or assistants. They 'occupy the very hub of the policy making process' and 'have the main voice'. Given that Hong Kong was an 'administrative state' in which the executive was particularly prominent compared to the legislature and judiciary (see Chapter 1), the importance of civil servants

was palpable. According to Davies (1977, p. 54), 'their key position in the policy process is maintained more by ubiquity than by numbers'. They controlled the administrative machinery and occupied the places on government committees, panels, boards and the Executive, Legislative and Urban Councils. They were well paid, well housed and economically and socially isolated from the average citizens of Hong Kong. They were only in close contact with other wealthy elements in the community that led recognisably similar lives and constituted the other part of the elite class (Davies, 1977, p. 61).

On the other side of Hong Kong's elite were business and business-related professional interests. These elites had great influence because they had a powerful voice in the appointed governing institutions. For example, in 1972, these business and professional elites constituted 95.4 percent of the members of the tribunal panels, 66.4 percent of the membership of the general committees, and 52.9 percent of the voices on the Executive, Legislative and Urban Councils. In short, they 'command a two-thirds voice in advice and policy ratification' (Davies, 1977, p. 63). In addition, their influence derived from their socio-economic background which was in common with that of senior government officials. They were in close social contact with senior civil servants who could afford to join recreational clubs whose membership was not open to the bulk of the population (Davies, 1977, p. 61). Therefore, the advice that the government received was heavily distorted towards the Hong Kong businessmen, especially towards the large and wealthy end of the business spectrum. Consequently, alternative views had little or even no chance of being raised at a level at which they might require serious consideration, and policies were generally biased. Davies (1977, p. 45) sees this phenomenon as 'a basic defect in the system which must be corrected before the ordinary people of Hong Kong can be said to enjoy real and substantial benefits from Hong Kong's phenomenal economic performance'.

Harris (1988, p. 57) also maintains that there has been an elite class in Hong Kong. For him, 'to say that Hong Kong has conspicuous elites is to state the obvious. They are in evidence in many areas of the society'. The apparent elites in Hong Kong were its officials and councillors (Executive, Legislative and Urban), who belonged to the formal governmental structure. Hong Kong is seen as an elitist conspiracy in which the business interests, both Western and Chinese, had a powerful voice in the Executive and Legislative Councils. There was 'an unholy alliance of businessmen and bureaucrats' that dominated the policy process. However, Harris distinguishes this apparent elite from other elites in society. He argues that 'Hong Kong's apparent elite is often only one of a number of elites which exist at a number of levels, both positional and reputational' (Harris, 1988, p. 58).

Harris broadens the concept of elite to include those in different areas of society. The elite class contained 'active persons by reason of the positions they occupy, the resources they command, the status they enjoy, the deference they are accorded by official policy-makers and constitute a sub-set that is distinguishable from the general population' (Harris, 1988, p. 57). The honours system was perhaps the most significant focus for Hong

Kong's various privileged groups. In the field of education, there were also many important elitist influences. Since the degree of competition to enter well-established schools and universities was fierce, graduating from one of the 'top ten' schools and the University of Hong Kong gave one special status. There was further evidence of elites in the area of salaries and earnings. The highest class in Hong Kong contained many extremely rich individuals and families, whilst the professionals like medical practitioners and lawyers who could earn over a million Hong Kong dollars per annum were also highly placed in the spectrum (Harris, 1988, pp. 58-61). In short, Harris regards elites as a class comprising people of widely different political, economic and social status. The problem with his definition of elite is that by stretching the concept so far it is difficult to evaluate to what extent such a class, either by position or reputation, held the reins of political power in Hong Kong. Moreover, Harris says very little about any disparities between the 'apparent' and other elites in terms of political influence.

Leung (1990), the other writer who examines the elite of Hong Kong, narrows the focus of concern and concentrates on business/ government interaction. For Leung, the business elites and business-related professionals traditionally had strong influence on policy, and such dominance was still evident after the political reform during the 1980s (Leung, 1990, p. 146). She explains the political strength and influence of these elites by referring to their organisation and financial resources that were not available to other groups. Professional groups, such as the Law Society and the Hong Kong Society of Accountants, were in a strong position to voice their demands to the government because they could claim monopolistic representation of their members' interests. For many professions, mandatory membership of their respective professional bodies was a requirement to practice in Hong Kong. Moreover, as most of the professional groups were self-regulating bodies, they could control their members through the systems of accreditation, qualification for registration, licensure to practice, professional conduct and discipline of their members. Similarly, business associations in Hong Kong could represent business interests authoritatively because there was interlocking and overlapping membership among various business associations. This means that they could effectively perform the role of aggregating and limiting demands and then speak with one authoritative voice (Leung, 1990, pp. 148-156).

Besides, Leung (1990, p. 163) argues that 'financial resources are another factor affecting the political strength and influence of an association'. Generally speaking, the financial condition of business chambers and professional bodies in Hong Kong was affluent, which accounts for their considerable influence in policy-making. They had some important sources of revenue that were not available to other groups in society. They were authorised to perform a number of quasi-government functions that generated hefty financial resources. For example, the major business chambers were designated as Government Approved Certification Organisations (GACOs) and responsible for issuing the Certificates of Origin. The fees collected from these certificates contributed up to 72.5

percent of their total incomes. Likewise, the professional bodies like the Law Society and the Hong Kong Society of Accountants were empowered to issue annual practising certificates to their practitioners upon payment of prescribed fees (Leung, 1990, pp. 163-169).

Certainly, the elitist approach can bring something to the understanding of policy in Hong Kong. It highlights the structural inequality in Hong Kong with the existence of an elite class that has dominated the policy process. It also points out that the business and professional groups had considerable influence on policy rather than seeing them as subservient to the government. Therefore, the government constantly acted in the interests of business. Nevertheless, there are four major problems with this approach in explaining policy in Hong Kong during the transition.

First, this perspective may not be a useful tool for explaining policy because there was the problem of cohesion among the business elites in Hong Kong. Even though we accept the argument that the elites of big business have been continuously over-represented in the government, it tells us little about the policy process and policy outcomes because the business voice was not necessarily unanimous. Although Davies (1977) and Leung (1990) emphasise the existence of a cohesive and homogenous elite class in Hong Kong, in reality the situation was more complicated and untidy. In the 1960s and 1970s, the business voice in Hong Kong was split between the European expatriate interests and the local business community. During the 1980s, however, this division became less conspicuous, as Hong Kong's local entrepreneurs were closely involved in the international economy. Since then, a new division has opened up between the large corporations and small businesses, with the large corporations preferring low tax rates and free market whilst small businesses preferring subsidies and low-interest loans provided by the government (Davies, 1989, pp. 36-37). Further divisions have existed between financial, commercial, industrial and property interests over a variety of issues (Miners, 1995, p. 193; Chan, 1998, pp. 21-24; Choi, 1997, pp. 160-162). In short, the business community was largely a community in name only. The business elites did not necessarily constitute a cohesive and homogenous ensemble in Hong Kong. This suggests that the elitist approach, which concentrates on the elitist structure rather than analysing the conflicts and interaction between various business interests, is not a very precise or useful tool for explaining policy in Hong Kong.

Second, the elitist approach is a general theory containing a presumption that the moneyed and professional interests have had substantial influence on policy. However, there are difficulties within the elitist approach in explaining how these elites actually influenced policy. It is often unclear about the mechanism that allowed these groups to transform their advantages of education, honours, organisation and financial resources into influence on policy. Elitists argued that the business and professional interests were integrated into the Legislative and Executive Councils. Yet they fail to demonstrate that their representation within the councils ensured that the government would act in their



interests. In fact, it is questionable how much influence this representation actually provided.

As argued in Chapter 1 (Section 1), Hong Kong was an 'administrative state' in which the Legislative Council was a 'bureaucratic' arm of the machinery of government. The policy secretaries and department heads dominated the council, and the council 'was little more than an assembly of yes-men who were content to act like a rubber stamp' (Miners, 1994, p. 224). Moreover, few business and professional elites managed to access the Executive Council, and they had far less influence on policy than some would argue (Miners, 1996, p. 248). The majority of policy decisions were made by the policy branches or departments within the government, only to be formally approved, in some cases, by the Executive Council. The possession of information, expertise and organisational resources by the senior civil servants also gave them certain advantages over the business and professional elites within the Executive Council in the policy process (Miners, 1995, pp. 68-84). Hence, business and professional representation within the councils did not necessarily equal influence. This means that the elitist approach does not explain policy. We need to be concerned with the mechanism whereby the business, professional and other interests were reflected in the government and then in policy outcomes, in order to have a better understanding of policy.

Leung (1990) has attempted to overcome this problem by using pluralist techniques. She focuses on the organisation and financial resources of business and professional groups, and argues that these factors account for their influence in Hong Kong. In doing so, she pays insufficient attention to the interests and activities of the civil service and the structural context in which the elites operated. She fails to recognise the ability of the civil service to make policy independently of groups in the executive-dominated political system of Hong Kong. In many cases only if the government decided to intervene in policy would groups be coopted into the policy process and then have substantial influence on policy (which are discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 7). In other words, the influence of groups derived not only from their resources but also from the interests and activities of the government. In addition, the influence of groups also stemmed from the organisation of the policy-making process, which privileged certain interests and ideas over others.

The third problem of this approach is that it is a general theory which cannot explain variations across sectors. The elitists depict a general picture in which the business and business-related professional groups were dominant in the process of decision-making in Hong Kong. However, in fact, their influence varied from sector to sector and from time to time. For instance, in education policy it was the school bodies, educational organisations and specialists that made most of the decisions, whilst in health policy the agents of the Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) and medical schools were important. This is not to say that the elitist approach, which puts so much emphasis on the over-representation of business in the government, is inaccurate. However, this approach is obviously inadequate, as the business groups were not necessarily important in

policy-making, let alone the key actors in various policy areas and sub-sectors. As a result, it is necessary to develop a meso-level theory that can supplement the elitist theory with an explanation of variations across sectors.

Lastly, like the concept of cooption, the elitist approach seems to have difficulty in explaining policy change that occurred in Hong Kong during the transition. Due to the processes of decolonisation and, especially, democratisation, the elitist structure of policy-making declined. The influence of business flagged and became less significant after 1984. Since then, politicisation at the societal level has accelerated and intensified. The people in Hong Kong became less lukewarm towards political participation. Demonstrations clamouring for popular policies were frequent. Pressure groups were formed and active in lobbying the government. Middle-class and grassroots political parties developed to contest elections to the Legislative Council, in which they embarked on an attack of policies favouring the business interests. In a number of cases, such as the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme and the expansion of welfare provision, the government was compelled to accept policies unpalatable to business (Miners, 1996, p. 254). As the colonial transition has vitiated the elitist nature of policy-making, the elitist theory becomes a less useful tool for understanding policy change in Hong Kong.

In order to deal with the policy change in Hong Kong's transition, two theoretical perspectives have been advanced. Both of them focus on macro factors and emphasis the importance of political change in Hong Kong.

### **3. Political Explanations of Change: The Politics of Decolonisation**

Despite the promises from China of 'one country, two systems' and a high degree of administrative autonomy, many writers (Li, 1997; Hook, 1997; Newman, 1985; Segal, 1993; Wang, 1995) maintain that the interests and power of the Chinese authorities are the key focus of analysis in understanding policy change in Hong Kong. For them, since Hong Kong has not followed the usual path of decolonisation to become an independent state, the analysis of China's policy towards Hong Kong is pivotal. Li (1997a, p. xv) argues that 'as a non-sovereign political entity, Hong Kong's political destiny has been shaped mostly by exogenous, rather than endogenous, political forces'. Thus it is important to incorporate China's policy towards Hong Kong in the analysis of policy change. 'By doing so, the readers should be better able to comprehend the complex process of power transition'. Segal (1993, p. 2) also argues that as the sovereign state of Hong Kong after 1997, the interests and actions of China 'have always been the single most important determinant of the fate of Hong Kong'. For him, 'in any case, the evolution of Chinese policy towards Hong Kong must be the starting point for any assessment of where Hong Kong is going' (Segal, 1993, p. 3).

Hook (1997) examines the importance of China's influence on Hong Kong's policy from a historical perspective. The People's Republic of China (PRC), as a mighty state bordering tiny Hong Kong, traditionally had massive influence on its governance. To this geo-politics was added the fact that China after 1949 repeatedly refused to accept the status of Hong Kong as a legitimate British colony and asserted that it would resume its sovereignty over Hong Kong in due course. This caused anxiety within the British and Hong Kong governments about imminent China's 'liberation' of the territory (Hook, 1997, pp. 6-7). Consequently, 'the preoccupation with the need to avoid unnecessarily provoking China remained as a major criterion in the formation of policy for Hong Kong in London and in policy formation and implementation by the administration in Hong Kong' (Hook, 1997, p. 9). Policy 'was formulated with the expressed views of the leadership of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in mind' (Hook, 1997, p. 4). This preoccupation existed throughout the post-war period and became more intense during the colonial transition.

The role of China was important in the course of policy change in Hong Kong because the Chinese authorities had a keen interest in influencing Hong Kong's policy during the colonial transition. It is argued that 'from China's point of view, the transitional period serves the purposes of preparing Hong Kong to be retroceded to China and of enhancing the interests of China as defined by the leadership in Beijing. It has no other value'. As a result, 'Beijing feels entirely justified to call the shots in the politics of transition in Hong Kong', and had the intention of intervening in Hong Kong's policies if it was deemed necessary to defend or advance its interests (Tsang, 1997, p. 32).

In fact, during the colonial transition, there was a wide range of new issues and problems that were seen by China as important to its interests in Hong Kong, which prompted the Chinese government to push forward its plans for policy change in Hong Kong. For Segal (1993), the basic approach of the Chinese government to Hong Kong was resuming sovereignty and, particularly, promoting the integration of Hong Kong into the mainland China. Hong Kong was 'part of an unfinished agenda of an unsatisfied great power'. Therefore, the Chinese authorities promoted policies in Hong Kong to encourage Hong Kong to 'grow closer to the rest of the Chinese people' (Segal, 1993, pp. 77-79). By the same token, the Chinese authorities intervened in Hong Kong's policies, especially on political reform, in order to preclude Hong Kong from being a base for undermining the communist party's control over the territory and its hegemony in mainland China (Sing, 2000, p. 23). Related to the goal of enhancing sovereignty and convergence was China's intervention in Hong Kong's local affairs in an attempt to increase its influence in the territory. According to Wang (1995, p. 176), the Chinese government planned to participate in Hong Kong's local affairs in order to 'increase China's influence in the region, to win support from the Hong Kong people, and to prepare for resuming sovereignty'.

In addition to the symbolic issues of sovereignty, convergence and influence, the Chinese government also acted to defend its practical economic interests in Hong Kong.

Mesquita, Newman and Rabushka (1985, p. 139) argue that since the late 1970s the Chinese government has been committed to economic modernisation and has regarded the dynamic and stable economy in Hong Kong as vital to the economic growth in China. As a result of this belief, the Chinese government intervened in Hong Kong's fiscal and economic policies in order to maintain Hong Kong's pragmatic value for China (Sing, 2000, p. 23). One of the clearest examples of this intervention is the Port and Airport Development Strategy (PADS). As Segal (1993, p. 93) indicates:

More specifically, Chinese officials worried that the project was so grandiose and poorly costed that it would eat into the colony's financial reserves. Peking always had a tendency to fret that Britain was seeking ways to drain the colony before 1997, and the major building projects were seen by some as a way in which British firms might be paid Hong Kong money which might otherwise be left to the post-1997 Chinese rulers. It was not so much that China did not want a new airport to be built as a way of promoting confidence in the colony; it was a case of China demanding that Hong Kong's accumulated reserves should be kept at roughly stable levels until 1997.

This perceivable threat to China's economic interests in Hong Kong galvanised the Chinese government into openly challenging the plans for the PADS. The Chinese government demanded that it must be more closely consulted over the plans in the Joint Liaison Group (JLG), which was set up under the Sino-British Joint Agreement to discuss matters relating to the smooth transfer of government.

Segal (1993), among others, argues that the Chinese authorities not only had the intention of participating in Hong Kong's politics, but also had the ability to make a major impact on, if not dominate, policies in Hong Kong. As Segal (1993, p. 3) elaborates:

...this study sees China as the primary determinant of the fate of Hong Kong. If China, whether in reforming mode or not, feels that Hong Kong can only be safely incorporated into China if it is sufficiently slowed down to a pace where it can converge with the mainland, then there is little that the people of Hong Kong, the government of Britain or, indeed, the government of any other state can do about it.

A number of reasons have been advanced to understand China's influence on Hong Kong. First, in Segal's view, China's policy towards Hong Kong has become a dominant factor in Hong Kong's political scene because China, as the new sovereign state, had the ultimate say in what would be permitted in Hong Kong after 1997. In some cases the British Hong Kong government tentatively threatened China with the suggestion that they would press ahead with major policies without China's support. However, the Chinese authorities were determined and able to pursue their own agenda after the handover, although protests were made by the governments of Britain and Hong Kong. In other

words, China held a trump card in Hong Kong's transition, and 'was in charge of the fate of Hong Kong' (Segal, 1993, p. 92). Indeed, after 1997, the Chinese government had the authority to influence policy within the confines of Hong Kong's administrative autonomy. It could do so by re-interpreting or even amending some equivocal sections of the Basic Law, which was a 'mini-constitution' governing the behaviour of both the Chinese and Hong Kong governments. Yet this would be a very grave matter.

Second, Tsang (1997, pp. 42-47) argues that, ironically, the convergence policy adopted by the British Hong Kong government for a smooth political transition strengthened the ability of the Chinese authorities to intervene in Hong Kong policy during the colonial transition. The rationale behind the convergence policy was to ensure that major arrangements in government during the transitional period would remain in force beyond the handover. For example, Chapter 5 will demonstrate that officials in the Education Department wished to formulate a curriculum policy on civic education that would be used by the post-1997 government. Guided by this principle, the British Hong Kong government was 'in general terms prepared to be sensitive to the wishes and needs of China, the prospective new sovereign'. The convergence policy seemed to have an equally significant impact on the post-1997 government, which was sensitive to any challenges by the Chinese authorities to its decisions. In doing so, it effectively gave tacit consent to China's influence on Hong Kong's local affairs, although these affairs were often within the confines of Hong Kong's administrative autonomy after 1997.

Third, Wang (1995, p. 163) points out that the Chinese government was able to influence Hong Kong policy because its attitude affected the financial market and was crucial to the success of any major infrastructural projects straddling 1997. As many projects would not be completed until 2006, bankers would not provide loans to the Hong Kong government if the Chinese government did not endorse these plans, which sharpened their suspicions that their loans might not be repaid after 1997. In this situation, the Hong Kong government had to reach agreement with the Chinese authorities. This, together with the change of sovereignty and the convergence policy, enabled the Chinese authorities to influence the policies in Hong Kong. Hence, China not only participated in Hong Kong's local affairs, but also had a major impact on its policy change.

It might be reasonable to argue that since 1984 the Chinese authorities have had significant influence on Hong Kong's policy by virtue of the asymmetric power relationship between the Chinese and Hong Kong governments (Emmons, 1988, pp. 123-124). However, such an explanation of change is too simplistic. One of the major problems of this approach is that, to a certain degree, it exaggerates the intention and power of the Chinese government to affect the policies in Hong Kong. Of course, the Chinese authorities could directly influence policy and effect change in Hong Kong through diplomatic means or by raising the disputable issues in the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) (see Chapter 1). Yet there was clearly a political limit to how often this could be done. This was because the primary objectives of the Chinese government were to benefit

from Hong Kong economically and to use Hong Kong's successful integration into China as an example to persuade Taiwan into unification, rather than simply taking over the territory. This meant that the Chinese government had to work within the political environment that it found in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. As Cheng (1984, pp. 12-13) indicates, the vast majority of people in Hong Kong wished to preserve their freedom, way of life and standard of living after 1997, and were worried that China would meddle in the territory's domestic activities. A successful unification, therefore, largely depended on the ability of the Chinese government to convince the local people that China would fulfil its promise of 'one country, two systems' and not interfere in their affairs. In other words, it had to 'win the hearts and minds of the local people in order to ensure a smooth transition' (Tsang, 1997, p. 43). Consequently, the delicacy of China's position tempered its interest in intervening in Hong Kong's policy and hobbled its power over the territory's fate.

Second, this explanation of change tends to be general and highly voluntaristic. Many studies contain the presumption that the Chinese government was bound to get its way if it participated in Hong Kong's local affairs. They see policy change occurring because of the will of China. However, they do not identify clearly the strategies that the Chinese authorities followed to influence Hong Kong's policy. They fail to recognise the distinction between the strategies of 'repossession' and 'penetration', and pay little attention to the context in Hong Kong as a whole and its structure of policy-making in particular, within which the Chinese authorities have operated. Therefore, in many areas the political explanations of change overestimate the ease with which the Chinese authorities could change Hong Kong's policy. They have difficulty in dealing with the subtleties of policy change.

One of the strategies that the Chinese authorities used to influence Hong Kong's policy was 'repossession', which means 'taking overt control of formal institutions' in Hong Kong (Emmons, 1988, p. 118). Although the Chinese government did not send cadres down from Beijing to rule Hong Kong, it could determine Hong Kong's policy through diplomatic means, the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) or directives. 'Repossession' was a direct strategy on which many writers focus, but there was clearly a political limit to it. In fact, it was not frequently used as China, in the face of its delicate position, flinched from scaring away capital and professionals and thereby turning Hong Kong into a liability. Therefore, we need a more sophisticated evaluation of China's influence.

As Emmons (1988, pp. 118-119) points out, many writers fail to recognise that China's influence on Hong Kong was not only a matter of 'repossession', but also a matter of 'penetration'. 'Penetration' was an increase in China's personnel, organisations and activities in Hong Kong, which were intended to influence its policy informally. Since the early 1980s, the activities of penetration or informal influence have occurred. For example, in 1983 the New China News Agency (NCNA), China's de facto diplomatic mission in Hong Kong, was substantially upgraded with the appointment of Hsu Chia-t'un, who was

an important political figure in China's communist party, as its new director. Moreover, the Chinese officials assigned to or recruited from Hong Kong became more outspoken in various fields of Hong Kong's policy. In terms of quantity (frequency of being used), if not quality (influence), 'penetration' was a more important strategy than 'repossession'.

Perhaps, as the writers fail to recognise the importance of 'penetration', they pay little attention to the context in Hong Kong within which the Chinese authorities had to act. However, 'penetration' was an indirect and informal measure, and so its influence heavily depended on Hong Kong's policy-makers, enthusiastically or grudgingly, taking on board the concerns of the Chinese authorities. Therefore, China's ability to achieve its goals was clearly affected by the structural context of policy-making in Hong Kong. This was where policy networks in Hong Kong came into play. Policy networks were an important part of the structural context (see Chapter 1). In particular situations they were able to mediate the effect of China's participation, and thus they affected the speed and extent of policy change. This demonstrates that the purely political explanations have difficulty in dealing with the subtleties involved in changing policy.

In short, there were two types of intervention, which have different implications for policy analysis. If the Chinese government was prepared to bear the costs of 'repossession' and took overt control over the policy process in Hong Kong, the China factor might be sufficient to explain policy change, and the neglect of the context in Hong Kong by the purely political explanations might be justifiable. Yet the participation of the Chinese authorities in Hong Kong's local affairs rarely took the form of 'repossession' or direct control. Rather, to a larger extent, China intervened through 'penetration' or informal influence. It pursued its agenda by pressurising the policy-makers in Hong Kong, who were also influenced by the structure of policy-making. Therefore, in many areas the purely political explanations cannot explain policy change. They also do not deal with the question of why policies in certain areas were changed relatively easy and others were not. Hence, it is essential to develop a more sophisticated view of change that analyses the context within which the Chinese authorities operated. Policy networks were an important part of this context, and thus need to be examined.

Lastly, it is often difficult to use the political authority of China to explain policy change in Hong Kong because there was no single and homogenous '1997 effect'. Whilst China served as a motor of change in some policies like education and aviation, it also scuppered the local attempts to initiate change in other areas like social welfare and financial management. As Lui and Chiu (2000, p. 17) point out, 'China's intervention into Hong Kong's social and public affairs, while no doubt always bring about the politicisation of social issues, does not necessarily create more opportunities for social movement organisations'. The '1997 effect' varied from sector to sector, and even from issue to issue. The China factor should not be used as a blanket term to understand change in Hong Kong. To evaluate the impact of China on policy outcomes, we need to examine the nature of China's intervention in particular policy arenas, and how it actually

interacted with the policy networks concerned. In other words, we need a meso-level theory that can supplement the political explanations of change. The next section will examine the other political explanations of change in Hong Kong.

#### **4. Political Explanations of Change: Democratisation and Electoral Politics**

Like the last approach, the main concern of this explanation of change is with the broader political environment in Hong Kong. It sees policy change occurring as a result of the development of a representative system and electoral politics in Hong Kong. It is undoubtedly the case that Hong Kong has gone through some major political-institutional transformations in the last two decades. Chapter 1 (Section 2) has shown that for a number of reasons the British Hong Kong government in the 1980s and 1990s initiated an array of political reforms aimed at developing a democratic political system in Hong Kong. The government introduced and expanded indirect elections based on functional constituencies and direct geographical elections to the Legislative Council. In 1995, official and appointed members of the Legislative Council were eliminated, and all members were directly or indirectly elected (Thomas, 1999, p. 225). It is argued that the development of a representative system and electoral politics had a major impact on domestic politics and policy change because it affected the relative power of various groups in Hong Kong (Chiu and Levin, 2000; Cheung, 1997; Miners, 1994; Lau, 1999; Yukari, 1996).

For Lau (1999, pp. 51-54), the development of representative system 'drastically changed Hong Kong's political landscape' and enlarged the political arena. It 'provided a great impetus to mass political participation' and precipitated the decline of the elitist structure of policy-making. A number of individuals and groups that had been excluded from the policy process formed political groups for the purpose of contesting elections to the Legislative Council. They appealed vigorously to the public as anti-communists, democratic activists, social welfarists, labour-rights advocates or plain populists (Chiu and Levin, 2000, p. 129). Consequently, they managed to access the expanded political arena through elections to the Legislative Council, in which they became major political forces and forged alliances with each other for the control of legislative power (Chiu and Levin, 2000, p. 108). Of course, some previous outsiders did not manage to access the Legislative Council through elections. Yet the newly elected politicians could play an intermediary role which provided them with important access points to policy-making.

Until the 1980s only a small range of groups were able to participate in the policy process. It is argued that electoral politics has substantially changed the policy-making process and policy outcomes in Hong Kong. The development of a representative system enlivened and strengthened the political groups that represented the middle-class or grassroots interests, and these groups capitalised aggressively on their newly acquired



legislative muscle to break up the elitist structure of policy-making. Cheung (1997, p. 98) argues that:

On the other hand, newly emerging elected politicians, particularly pro-democratic forces, are demanding a say in the way the government is being run, on the basis of their popular mandate gained through elections. To them, political reform is not just constitutional change *per se*, to suit Hong Kong's new post-1997 status, but also an important process of redistribution of political power, from the business and professional elite sectors to the less endowed middle-class and working class. In the course of political reform, elected politicians demand the same form of political accountability from the civil servants as that which exists in established democracies.

Miners (1994, p. 224) also argues that in the course of the last two decades, the Legislative Council 'has changed from a wholly appointed body subservient to the executive into an obstreperous assembly with an elected majority where government proposals are frequently defeated'. Hong Kong 'is no longer a simple cosy arrangement which allows for dialogue and decision between the bureaucracy and strongly entrenched elites and interest groups' (Harris, 1988, pp. x-xi).

Hence, it is claimed that the development of a representative system and electoral politics has redressed the balance of power from the groups that previously had special access to the government to the groups representing middle-class and working class interests. This political restructuring has led to policy change. Generally speaking, the newly elected politicians acted as a motor of change. They took up new issues and problems that arose from the colonial transition, such as those in civic education (discussed in Chapter 6) and unemployment (Chapter 8). Often these issues bumped against the pre-existing policies and vested interests. They delivered what they had promised their constituencies by means of their legislative power. They amended government proposals, tabled motions and introduced private member's bills (Miners, 1994, p. 239). For instance, in 1995, the alliance of the Democratic Party (DP), the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) and several trade unions in the Legislative Council succeeded in compelling the government and business groups, which traditionally refrained from involvement in the field of retirement pensions, to accept the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme (MPF) (Yukari, 1996, p. 11).

Despite the fact that there has been significant political reform in Hong Kong, this approach has a number of limitations. It seems that this approach exaggerates the degree of change in the political system and policy. It also underestimates the importance of the context within which the newly elected politicians have operated. As King (1988) suggests, although there has been change in the political system of Hong Kong, the political reform did not lead to a new political order. Both the Hong Kong and Chinese governments were half-hearted towards democratisation and political re-structuring. They clung to the belief

that 'capitalists and professionals are the pillars of the economic market of Hong Kong and with their participation and involvement in the political market, the spirit and inner logic of capitalist economy can be guarded against the possible distortion by democratic sentiments and welfarist ideologies'. There was a paradox that whilst the Hong Kong government opened up and expanded the political arena through a series of political reforms, it tried hard to avoid the tendency of mass-oriented democratisation that it and the Chinese government believed would mar Hong Kong's prosperity and economic stability (King, 1988, p. 47). Therefore, the political reform was manipulated in a way that balanced the interests between traditionally privileged groups and outsiders, rather than leading to a new political order.

Leung (1990) also disputes the extent of change in the political system. She argues that whilst an increasing number of outsider groups managed to penetrate the political arena through elections to the Legislative Council, the introduction of functional representation in effect reversed the trend. The demarcation of functional constituencies consolidated and institutionalised the elitist structure of policy-making that had previously existed between the government and a small range of business and professional groups (Leung, 1990, p. 144). Moreover, the penetration of the Legislative Council did not necessarily equal access to the policy process. Despite the political reform, Hong Kong still had the executive-dominated system in which the legislature was relatively weak. The relationship between the executive and the legislature was not structured in such a way as to enhance the executive's accountability to the latter. The majority of policy decisions were still made by the government in consultation with insider groups. These decisions were only to be formally approved, in some cases, by the Legislative Council (Li, 1997b, p. 71). All of this indicates that this approach has exaggerated the extent of change in Hong Kong's political system.

This approach, by exaggerating the extent of change in the political system, overestimates the extent of change in some areas of policy. One of the clearest examples of this exaggeration is the pension policy. To return to Yukari's argument that the alliance of elected legislators succeeded in compelling the government to approve the MPF scheme, it is clear that this scheme was a compromise agreement rather than a resounding victory. Facing concerted opposition from the government and business groups, the alliance failed to push through its pay-as-you-go Central Provident Fund scheme (CPF) in the Legislative Council. Instead, it had to accept the watered-down MPF bill proposed by the government because it was regarded as the last chance to introduce a pension system in Hong Kong before 1997 (Chiu and Levin, 2000, p. 118). The curriculum policy on civic education is another case in point. Although many pressure groups made a great deal of noise on the issue and a number of legislators also supported the idea of mandatory political education in schools, the curriculum-makers have so far refused to give in and accept their demands (which is discussed in detail in Chapter 6). Hence, in some areas of policy the newly elected politicians might not achieve what they wanted.

This demonstrates that this approach fails to explain the subtleties of policy change because it over-emphasises the importance of electoral politics. It does not explain why in some areas the extent of policy change was smaller than in others. More importantly, it does not pay enough attention to the context within which the newly elected politicians had to operate. These politicians accessed the Legislative Council and faced the pre-existing structure of policy-making and government/ group relations. Although they wanted to change policy and had a popular mandate, their interests and demands did not occur in a vacuum. Their influence was mediated by the structure and relationship that existed in particular areas of policy. The pre-existing structure and relationship were particularly significant because the political reform in Hong Kong neither overhauled the executive-led system nor enabled the elected legislators to substantially vitiate the executive power in policy-making. Therefore, in order to have a better understanding of policy change in Hong Kong during the colonial transition, we need to pay more attention to the interactive relationship between the political reform, as a macro factor, and the pre-existing meso-level policy networks.

## 5. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the traditional approaches to policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong. When analysing policy in Hong Kong, the theoretical perspective of the administrative absorption of politics/ cooption entirely concentrates on a particular arrangement by which a small range of groups were integrated into the government. The elitist approach also focuses on the system of cooption, but it emphasises the elitist nature of policy-making. A generally cohesive and homogenous group of elites, including senior civil servants and a small range of business and business-related professional leaders, dominated the policy process. Thus the policies were constantly biased towards business interests in Hong Kong. The political explanations of change, which were advanced to understand the policy-making in Hong Kong during the transition, see policy change occurring either because of political reform or because of the change of sovereignty. It is argued that the processes of decolonisation and democratisation had a major impact on Hong Kong's politics. They gave rise to new issues and political forces like the Chinese authorities and newly elected politicians that threatened the interests and policies that were seen as important.

Undoubtedly, these approaches have offered some useful insights into understanding how policy was made and changed in Hong Kong. For example, the theoretical perspectives like the administrative absorption of politics/ cooption and elitism point out that there has been a fundamental defect in Hong Kong's political system, as the government's policy process was dominated by a small range of groups. In addition, the political explanations of change have demonstrated the impact of contextual changes.

Nevertheless, there are also fundamental problems. The perspective of the administrative absorption of politics concentrates on the system of cooption in order to understand policy in Hong Kong. When emphasising the static and patron-client relationships between the government and groups, it ignores the fact that government/group relations in policy-making could be far more complex, intricate and dynamic. In particular situations, the relations were of mutual dependence and negotiation rather than dependence and deference. Moreover, there are difficulties within this theoretical approach in explaining policy in Hong Kong during the transition. In the face of decolonisation and democratisation, the cooptive arrangement that had existed at the macro level became less significant in the 1980s and 1990s. As a result, the utility of this approach inevitably diminished.

Elitists' main concern is with a small range of business and business-related professional interests in particular areas of policy. They see the policy process being dominated by senior civil servants and business elites, but seem unable to explain how the business elites actually influenced policy. Although the business elites were integrated into the Legislative Council, the Executive Council and a number of advisory committees, it is questionable how much influence this provided in the context of Hong Kong, where the executive power was paramount. Even if it was true that the business elites had a significant impact on policy, it tells us little about policy in Hong Kong, because the business voice was not necessarily unanimous. Like the theoretical perspective of cooption, this approach also has difficulty in explaining policy change in Hong Kong's transition as the processes of decolonisation and democratisation weakened the elitist structure of policy-making.

The important limitation of the political explanations of change is that they exaggerate the extent of contextual and policy changes. They overemphasise the intention and power of China to intervene in Hong Kong's policy. But they ignore the fact that the Chinese authorities also had to work within the political environment of Hong Kong, which allowed China to recover Hong Kong smoothly and benefit from it in both economic and political terms. By assuming that China had the intention and power to intervene, they do not clearly identify the strategies adopted by the Chinese authorities to influence Hong Kong's policy. In other words, they fail to distinguish between the strategies of repossession and penetration that frequently led to different policy outcomes. Similarly, the explanations that concentrate on the democratisation process in Hong Kong overemphasise the degree of change in its political system. In doing so they exaggerate the extent of policy change, and ignore the fact that in many areas of policy the newly mandated politicians were unable to achieve what they wanted. As has been argued, this demonstrates that the purely political explanations of change are too simplistic and voluntaristic.

Perhaps the most significant limitation is that they are all general theories which focus entirely on macro factors. As has been seen, the theoretical perspectives of cooption

and elitism are concerned with the macro-level features of Hong Kong's political system, and the political explanations of change focus on the changes in Hong Kong's political environment. Whilst these theoretical perspectives can offer a general picture of how policy was made and changed, they have difficulty in dealing with variations across policy sectors. The concept of cooption and the elitist approach are concerned with the political system in which power was concentrated in the hands of a few groups. Yet they ignored the fact that in various policy arenas there were different structures, groups involved and policy outcomes. Likewise, the political explanations of change that concentrate on Hong Kong's political environment can account for the growing pressures for policy change, but they do not explain why the degree of change was greater in some policy areas than in others.

The political explanations of change also fail to pay sufficient attention to the subtleties of policy change. Their main concern is with the macro-level contextual factors. They see policy change occurring as a result of the changes in Hong Kong's political environment. However, in many areas the Chinese authorities and newly elected politicians did not achieve what they wanted. This demonstrates that the purely political explanations of change fail because they do not take account of the role of government/group relations and their structural arrangements in the course of policy change. They do not recognise that the processes of decolonisation and democratisation did not occur within a vacuum. The Chinese authorities and new legislators had to operate within the pre-existing structure of policy-making, which affected their ability to propel forward their agendas of policy change, especially when the Chinese authorities adopted the strategy of penetration rather than coercion. All of this demonstrates that we need a meso-level approach in order to have a fuller understanding of policy in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. Hence, in the next chapter I shall examine the policy network concept in order to develop a more sophisticated view of policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong.

## Chapter Three

### **Government, Groups and Policy Networks: Reconceptualising Policy-making and Policy Change in Hong Kong**

Chapter 2 demonstrated that in order fully to understand how policy developed and changed in Hong Kong during the transition, it is important to shift the focus of concern from general theories to the analysis of the structure of policy-making and the government/ group relations involved. In this regard, this chapter will examine the notion of policy networks and demonstrate how it can reconceptualise policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong. It will argue that the concept has a number of advantages over the traditional approaches to policy analysis in Hong Kong.

First, the traditional approaches offer general theories concerning policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong. However, there is no account of variations across sectors. By contrast, the notion of policy network is more flexible. It is a meso-level concept that is concerned with explaining policy within particular areas or sub-sectors. Therefore, it allows analysis of variations in the structure of decision-making, policy outcomes and policy change that exist in different policy arenas. Second, in the theoretical perspectives of cooption and elitism, it is assumed that only a small range of groups are able to access the policy process. However, they say very little about how the integrated groups actually influence policy. The notion of policy network provides a mechanism for explaining why policy has constantly served the interests of certain groups at the expense of others in particular policy arenas. It introduces the concept of structural power, which means that the interests of dominant actors might be built into the structure of policy networks in Hong Kong. This structure has a great impact on policy outcomes.

Third, the network approach offers a better understanding of policy change in Hong Kong than the traditional approaches. The political explanations of change are too simplistic and voluntaristic. They see policy change occurring as a result of the changes in Hong Kong's political environment during the transition. However, they exaggerate the contextual changes and the impact they have had on policy. By contrast, the dialectical approach to policy networks provides a more sophisticated view of policy change. It allows analysis of the interactive relationship between the context and networks in explaining the trajectory of policy change. With the concept of policy network, the pace and degree of changes that have occurred might have been mediated by the nature of policy networks. In the light of these advantages, this chapter will use the notion of policy network to re-conceptualise policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong.

This chapter will begin by outlining the development of policy network approach. It will then demonstrate how the approach can supplement and modify the traditional approaches to policy analysis in Hong Kong. It will focus on three aspects of policy analysis: government/ group relations in policy-making; how policy was made; and how policy was changed in Hong Kong's transition. Finally, it will develop a number of propositions about policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong.

## **1. The Development of Policy Network Theory**

A brief summary of the development of policy network theory will suffice here as the process has been well documented in many writings (see Marsh, 1998, Chapter 1; Rhodes, 1997, Chapter 2; Marsh and Rhodes, 1992a; Marsh and Rhodes, 1992b; Marsh and Smith, 1996), and some of the key elements of this theory will be discussed in detail in other parts of this chapter.

### **1.1 The American Literature**

Jordan (1990, pp. 319-320) suggests that the idea of 'policy network', although not the term itself, sprouted in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. The American usage emphasises constant contacts between individuals representing interest groups, bureaucratic agencies and government that provide the basis of a sub-government. Freeman (1965, p. 5), one of the key writers on the policy network approach, looks at patterns of policy-making within sub-systems. He focuses on the 'relations among sub-system actors from the bureaucracy, from congressional committees, and from interested segments of the public'. He argues that these sub-systems tend to take over the task of decision-making officially allotted to the government as a whole, and thus they have a major impact on policy. According to Freeman, many of the decisions reached in subsystems may be regarded as minor or detailed, but they are 'collectively the stuff of which a large share of our total public policy is made'. Hence, the cumulative importance of their decisions cannot be disregarded (Jordan, 1990, pp. 322-323).

The policy network approach is a critique, sometimes implicit, of the pluralist model of interest group intermediation, i.e. of government/ group relations in policy-making (Marsh, 1998, p. 4). Writers like Ripley and Franklin (1984) emphasise that there are problems with the pluralist view of the world, which exaggerates the dispersal of power in society and the ease of access to government. They argue that in particular policy areas, policy-making is not open but is made within sub-governments (Smith, 1993, p. 57). They characterise the sub-government phenomenon as follows:

Subgovernments are clusters of individuals that effectively make most of the routine

decisions in a given substantive area of policy...A typical subgovernment is composed of members of the House and/ or Senate, members of Congressional staffs, a few bureaucrats and representatives of private groups and organisations interested in the policy area (Ripley and Franklin, 1984, p. 10; quoted in Jordan, 1990, p. 321).

According to Ripley and Franklin (1984), only a small range of actors manage to access the sub-governments, which are:

...small groups of political actors, both governmental and non-governmental, that specialize in specific issue areas. Subgovernments are in part created by the complexity of the national policy agenda, and they help sustain that complexity (Ripley and Franklin, 1984, p. 8; quoted in Jordan, 1990, p. 321).

The policy network approach is also different from the pluralist model because it argues that the state is not impartial. State actors have interests and often need to exchange resources with private groups or organisations within policy networks in order to achieve their interests. In policy networks, the relationships between government and groups are regarded as resource dependent or symbiotic. For example, Lowi (1969) emphasises the triangular nature of relationships involved, with the central government agency, the Congressional Committee and the interest group enjoying symbiotic interaction (Rhodes, 1997, p. 34). This insight gave rise to the label of 'iron triangle' within the American literature. Peters (1986, p. 24) describes an iron triangle as follows:

Each actor in the iron triangle needs the other two to succeed, and the style that develops is symbiotic. The pressure group needs the agency to deliver services to its members and to provide a friendly point of access to government, while the agency needs the pressure group to mobilise political support for its programs among the affected clientele (quoted in Rhodes, 1997, p. 34).

This approach represents an attempt to shift the focus of policy analysis away from institutional arrangements into the relationships between government and groups in policy-making. Griffith's work (1939), which is an important part of the intellectual pre-history of network analysis in the United States, focuses on the relationships between legislators, administrators, lobbyists and scholars who are interested in a common problem. He claims that 'instead of studying the formal institutions', a person 'may possibly obtain a better picture of the way things really happen if he would study these 'whirlpools' of special social interest and problems' (quoted in Jordan, 1990, p. 321). As has been shown, Freeman (1965) also stresses disaggregating the study of policy-making to sub-systems in which bureaucrats, Congressmen and interest groups interact and make policies (Rhodes, 1997, p. 33). Overall, the American literature emphasises the



micro-level analysis that examines the personal relations between key actors rather than the structural relations between groups or organisations within the policy process (Marsh, 1998, p. 6).

## 1.2 The British Literature

Although this section will not discuss the European literature on policy networks, it needs to point out that most British and American literature is narrower in focus. Generally speaking, the German and the Dutch literature is more ambitious. It views policy networks as a new form of governance, and in this sense as an alternative to markets and hierarchies. As Mayntz (1994, p. 5) puts it, 'the notion of policy networks does not so much represent a new analytical perspective but rather signals a real change in the structure of the polity'. In contrast, most British writers on policy networks have a narrower focus. They regard policy networks as a model of interest group intermediation, and concentrate on the role networks play in the development and implementation of policy (Marsh, 1998, p. 8; Marsh and Smith, 2000, p. 4).

Although many agree on this focus of network analysis, there are major distinctions in the approach to policy networks within the British literature. The European literature has influenced many British authors, but there have been some important American contributions. Both Richardson and Jordan (1979) and Wilks and Wright (1987) were strongly influenced by the work of Heclo and Wildavsky (1974) on public expenditure decision-making within the British government. Evans (1997) categorises their work as the anthropological approach to policy networks. Heclo and Wildavsky (1974) focus on a policy community that refers to 'the personal relationships between major political and administrative actors – sometimes in conflict, often in agreement, but always in touch and operating within a shared framework' (Heclo and Wildavsky, 1981, p. xv). In explaining the budgetary decisions, they examine the cultural bonds, kinship and common calculations among insiders within the community, which 'help political administrators deal with a complex world but also separate them from the laymen' (Heclo and Wildavsky, 1981, p. 2).

Richardson and Jordan (1979) adopt Heclo and Wildavsky's idea of a policy network and suggest that such arrangements are vital to understanding most policy-making in stable liberal democracies. For them, policy-making in Britain takes place within policy communities in which government agencies and pressure groups interact, and access to these sub-systems is generally restricted. They argue that (Richardson and Jordan, 1979, p. 74):

The policy-making map is in reality a series of vertical compartments or segments – each segment inhabited by a different set of organised groups and generally impenetrable by 'unrecognised groups' or by the general public.

They emphasise disaggregation. There are many divisions within government and society is fragmented with the growing number of interest groups. Policy-making is segmented and policy is made within a variety of policy communities characterised by close relations between particular interests and different sections of government. Like Heclo and Wildavsky, they stress the interpersonal rather than the structural nature of these relations within policy communities in order to understand policy-making (Marsh, 1998, pp. 6-7).

Wilks and Wright (1987) examine the relations between government and industry in Britain. Influenced by Heclo and Wildavsky's work, they also place considerable emphasis on interpersonal relations as a key aspect of policy networks, within which there is an unwritten set of values and culture that guides the behaviour of actors and thus shapes policy. Moreover, they emphasise the disaggregated nature of policy networks in the industrial policy sector, and suggest that such disaggregation exists in all policy sectors. For them, industry is 'neither monolithic nor homogenous', and government is 'fragmented, differentiated and fissiparous'. Therefore, they argue that the key to understanding government-industry relationships is to disaggregate analysis to sub-sectoral policy networks, and that any analysis ignoring the sub-sectoral level would be incomplete (Rhodes, 1997, pp. 40-41).

The anthropological approach offers many useful insights into understanding the policy process and policy outcomes. However, it has three major limitations. First, it overemphasises the interpersonal relations between the government and groups, and thus it pays little attention to the structure within policy networks. Second, it says virtually nothing about the way in which the culture, trust and values within networks and the resultant network behaviour interact with exogenous factors or the environment of networks. Therefore, it cannot explain the origins of the culture and values that dominate the networks, and how the networks actually change (Marsh and Smith, 1996, p. 11). Third, as Smith (1993, p. 57) points out, this approach is very much within a pluralist framework. Although Richardson and Jordan (1979) suggest that there are closed and regularised policy networks in Britain, they see most policy networks as being relatively open. Heclo (1978) emphasises the importance of issue networks, and asserts that there is a tendency for closed policy networks to break down into issue networks (Marsh, 1998, p. 5).

Rhodes (1981) develops his model for a study of British central-local relations. He takes a different approach to policy networks by drawing on the European literature on inter-organisational relations, rather than on the American literature on sub-governments. Therefore, he emphasises the structural relationships between actors representing various organisations as the crucial element in policy networks rather than the interpersonal relations between individuals within these organisations (Marsh, 1998, p. 6). For him, networks are rooted in the structure of power dependence and resource exchange (Rhodes, 1986, Chapter 2). He, after Benson (1982), defines a policy network as:

a cluster or complex of organisations connected to each other by resource dependencies and distinguished from other clusters or complexes by breaks in the structure of resource dependencies (Benson, 1982, p. 148).

In the initial version of Rhodes' model, central-local relations are a 'game' in which both central and local actors are interdependent. They deploy their resources, be they constitutional-legal, organisational, financial, political or informational, to maximise influence over outcomes, while trying to avoid becoming dependent on others (Rhodes, 1981, Chapters 1 and 5). One of the major problems of this model is that it seems to blur the boundaries between micro-, meso- and macro-levels of analysis and so the links between different levels of analysis are not adequately explored (Rhodes, 1997, p. 36).

Hence, Rhodes in his later work (1986) distinguishes clearly between the three levels of analysis. The macro-level analysis involves an account of the changing characteristics, structures and processes of British government during the post-war period. The meso-level of analysis is where the concept of policy network is located. It focuses on the patterns of linkage between the centre and sub-central political and governmental organisations, or between government and groups. The micro-level of analysis stresses the behaviour of particular actors, be it individuals or organisations (Rhodes, 1997, p. 37). In other words, policy networks are a meso-level concept as opposed to other concepts in macro- or micro-level theories (Daugbjerg and Marsh, 1998, pp. 53-54). This thesis adopts Rhodes' definition of policy network, and this definition is also followed by other writers like Marsh and Rhodes (1992a; 1992b) and Marsh and Smith (2000). However, being a meso-level concept does not mean that a policy network can operate independently of macro or micro factors. It has more utility as an explanatory concept if it is integrated with macro-level and micro-level analysis (Marsh, 1998, p. 15). Hence, Marsh and Smith (2000) develop the dialectical approach to policy networks that focuses on the interaction between networks and the other levels of factors, which will be discussed in Sections 3 and 4.

Rhodes (1986; 1988) also attempts to make the concept of policy network more theoretically informed. He suggests that networks vary across five key dimensions (see Smith, 1993, p. 58):

- Constellation of interests – the interests of those involved in a policy network, which can vary according to service/ function/ territory/ client group.
- Membership – who are the members? Are they public or private groups? Is the membership stable and highly restricted?
- Vertical independence – to what extent is a participant dependent on the actors above or below it?
- Horizontal independence – to what extent is a network insulated from other networks and the public?

- The distribution of resources – what resources do participants have to exchange, and how important are their resources?

By using these criteria, Rhodes identifies five types of policy networks. First, policy communities are characterised by the stability and continuity of a restrictive membership, vertical interdependence, and insulation from other networks and the public (including Parliament). Policy communities are normally based on the major functional interests in and of government, such as education and fire service. Second, professional networks express the interests of a particular profession. They have a substantial degree of vertical interdependence whilst insulating themselves from other networks and the public. Third, intergovernmental networks are the networks in which the local government is represented at national level. They have limited vertical interdependence but extensive horizontal articulation. Fourth, producer networks are distinguished by: the prominent role of economic interests, including both the public and private sectors, in policy-making; their fluctuating membership; dependence of the centre on economic organisations for delivering the desired goods and for information; and the limited interdependence among the economic interests. Finally, issue networks are loosely integrated and volatile. They are characterised by their large number of participants and limited degree of interdependence (Rhodes, 1986, Chapter 2).

Perhaps the most important weakness in this typology is that it conflates two separate dimensions. Clearly, policy networks differ according to their degrees of integration, stability and exclusiveness, and thus there is the distinction between policy communities, policy networks and issue networks. However, in Rhodes' typology, networks also differ according to which interest dominates them. As Rhodes indicates, networks may be dominated by professional interests (professionalised networks), economic interests (producer networks) or government (intergovernmental/ policy communities). In combining these dimensions, Rhodes' model suggests that there is no such thing as a professional or producer dominated policy community. In addition, Rhodes' model suggests that, by definition, a producer network is necessarily less integrated and cohesive than a professional network. Yet these matters are best regarded as empirical questions (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992a, p. 184). In fact, Chapter 7 will demonstrate that a closed and cohesive producer network developed and dominated manpower policy in Hong Kong in the 1970s and 1980s.

Given this weakness, Marsh and Rhodes (1992a; 1992b) have revised Rhodes' model. In Marsh and Rhodes' typology, the term 'policy network' is used as a generic term encompassing all types of networks. They distinguish between different types of networks according to the closeness of the relationships within them, whilst leaving open the question of the interests served by a particular policy network. This approach will be discussed below. Moreover, unlike Wilks and Wright (1987), they argue that policy networks exist at both the sectoral and sub-sectoral levels (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992a, p.

203). The remaining parts of this chapter will examine how the policy network theory can be used to supplement the traditional approaches to policy analysis in Hong Kong.

## 2. Government/ Group Relations in Policy Networks

The last chapter argued that there are major problems with the traditional approaches to policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong during the transition. This section will examine how the policy network theory can be used to reconceptualise government/ group relations in policy-making. By using the policy network theory, it is possible to develop a more sophisticated view of policy-making in the context of Hong Kong.

The last chapter showed that in examining the policy process in Hong Kong, the theoretical perspective of cooption overemphasises the static and unidirectional relationship between the government and groups. Power is regarded as a zero-sum. It maintains that the incorporated groups were completely dependent on the government and their influence was the product of governmental political largesse. However, this account of government/ group relations is too simplistic and rarely borne out by evidence.

In contrast, the policy network approach offers a more dynamic and sophisticated view of government/ group relations in policy-making. It includes the concepts of resource dependence and resource exchange in policy analysis. In policy networks, the government/ group interaction is not a patron-client relationship; instead, the relationship is one of mutual dependence. As Smith (1993, p. 58-59) points out, 'any organisation is dependent on another organisation for resources'. Of course, in some cases the government and groups can survive without each other. However, in particular situations when the government wishes to achieve specific policy goals and groups need to influence policy, the government and groups are mutually dependent. In the context of Hong Kong, which is characterised by its administrative state, the government has the potential to be autonomous. Yet, if it does intend to achieve specific policy goals with the minimum of conflict and political reverberation, it needs the assistance of groups in the development and implementation of policy. In order to gain the political and practical support of groups, resources have to be exchanged. The government can exchange access to the policy process for cooperation, and thus establish a policy network. This phenomenon of resource dependence has been elaborated in Chapter 1, which argues that the administrative state in Hong Kong was highly facilitative of the development of policy networks.

Power is not a zero-sum in networks, especially in highly integrated policy communities. If mutual dependence develops between the government and groups in policy-making and a cohesive network is created, policy is developed through negotiations rather than supplication or gimmicky consultation. In this situation, power is

not something that belongs either to the government agency or to the groups involved. A policy network does not involve one group or agency sacrificing power and interests to others. Moreover, by working together, the groups and government agency can actually increase each other's power over policy in relation to other parts of the government and society. A policy network allows the government agency and groups to de-politicise and seal off the policy process from other agencies, pressure groups and networks (Smith, 1993, pp. 53-54). Therefore, if a policy network develops, it can 'involve each group in a mutual expansion of power as each increases its influence over policy' (Smith, 1993, p. 64).

In addition, the notion of policy network has an advantage over the traditional approaches to policy analysis in Hong Kong. This is because the policy network theory allows analysis of variations across policy areas and sub-sectors. It has been shown that the analytical perspectives of cooption and elitism are general theories concerning the nature of Hong Kong state. They see most policies in Hong Kong being shaped by the government officials and a small range of economic/ professional elites. This might be the general pattern of policy-making in Hong Kong. However, the influence of these elites has varied from sector to sector and from time to time. There have been cases in which the relations between the government and groups differed from the overall pattern (see Chapter 2). In this regard, the meso-level notion of policy network is much more flexible. It pays more attention to these variations in government/ group relations that exist in a range of policy arenas.

The policy network approach demonstrates that government/ group relations vary across sectors. For Marsh and Rhodes (1992a), policy networks is a meso-level concept that can vary along a continuum according to the closeness of the government/ group relations within them. They treat policy networks as a generic term. On the other hand, policy communities and issue networks are types of relations that exist between interest groups and government. Policy communities are at one end of the continuum and distinguished by close relations; issue networks are at the other end and involve loose government/ group relations (Rhodes, 1997, p. 43).

Marsh and Rhodes (1992a, pp. 186-188) outline a number of dimensions that determine a network's position on the policy community-issue network continuum (see Table 3.1). First, a network depends on the number of participants. A policy community contains a limited number of participants with some groups deliberately excluded, whereas there are a large number of participants and a wide range of interests within issue networks. However, the issue of exclusion is sometimes complicated because a policy community can have two tiers, a core and a periphery or a primary and secondary community. The primary/ core contains the key actors who set the rules of the game, determine membership and set the main direction of policy. In the secondary community are the groups that are occasionally consulted on particular issues and have to abide by the rules of the game (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992b, pp. 255-257; Smith, 1993, p. 61).

Second, the frequency of interaction determines a network's position on the continuum. In a policy community, there is frequent interaction between all members on matters related to the policy issues. In contrast, there is fluctuating interaction within an issue network. The third dimension is continuity. A policy community involves consistency in values, membership and policy outcomes over time. In an issue network, access fluctuates significantly and so do values and policy outcomes. Fourth, the nature of a policy network depends on the degree of consensus. If a network is to develop into a highly integrated policy community, there has to be a high degree of consensus on the rules of the game, values, policy goals and broad policy preferences among the actors within it. A policy community may even have a shared ideology that influences the community's 'world-view'. On the other hand, it is unlikely that there is a consensus within an issue network. The sheer number of groups and fluid membership mean that consensus is almost unachievable. There is no shared understanding either among groups or between the groups and government.

The fifth dimension which determines the nature of a policy network is the nature of relationship and interaction. In a policy community, it is likely that the relationship is one of exchange with all members having some resources. Therefore, the interaction involves bargaining between members with resources. In an issue network, although some members may have resources to exchange, their resources are limited. In fact, most of the groups do not have significant resources. Therefore, an issue network involves policy consultation rather than shared decision-making. Sixth, in a policy community the participating groups are hierarchically structured so that their leaders can guarantee the compliance of their members. In contrast, the integrated groups in an issue network have little ability to regulate members. Finally, a policy network depends on the distribution of power among participants. There is a balance of power in a policy community, not necessarily one in which all members equally benefit but one in which they see themselves as involved in a positive-sum game. However, power can be a zero-sum in an issue network. Despite these characteristics, Marsh and Rhodes (1992a, p. 190) stress that issue networks remain networks as the relations between government and groups are ordered. In other words, even issue networks are different from usual pressure group politics where a large number of groups compete against each other for access to the government and political influence.

The implication of this typology is that it sees government/ group relations in policy-making varying from sector to sector. The relations also differ across sub-sectors and even around particular issues (Smith, 1993, p. 58 and 65). Hence, it is important to use the dimensions outlined above to identify the differences between policy arenas. Marsh and Rhodes (1992a, p. 187) and Smith (1993, p. 65) emphasise the diagnostic role of this typology. They argue that these characteristics are ideal types at either end of a continuum. It is seldom, if ever, the case that a network conforms exactly to the dimensions outlined above. Nevertheless, these dimensions have important empirical

relevance. By comparing the actual government/ group relations with these dimensions, we can gain a better understanding of the nature of these relationships that exist in particular policy arenas.

Table 3.1 The Nature/ Types of Policy Networks

Dimension	Policy Community	Issue Networks
<b>1. Membership</b>		
(a) Number of participants	Very limited number, some groups consciously excluded	Large
(b) Type of interest	Economic and/ or professional interests dominate	Encompasses range of affected interests
<b>2. Integration</b>		
(a) Frequency of interaction	Frequent, high quality, interaction of all groups on all matters related to policy issue	Contacts fluctuate in frequency and intensity
(b) Continuity	Membership, values and outcomes persistent over time	Access fluctuates significantly
(c) Consensus	All participants share basic values and accept the legitimacy of the outcome	A measure of agreement exists but conflict is present
<b>3. Resources</b>		
(a) Distribution of resources (within network)	All participants have resources, basic relationship is an exchange relationship	Some participants may have resources, but they are limited and basic relationship is consultative
(b) Distribution of resources (within participating organisations)	Hierarchical, leaders can deliver members	Varied and variable distribution and capacity to regulate members
<b>4. Power</b>	There is a balance of power between members. One group may be dominant but power is positive-sum	Unequal powers, reflects unequal resources and unequal access. It is a zero-sum game

Source: Marsh and Rhodes (1992b, p. 251)

The policy network approach not only allows for variations in government/ group relations across sectors, but also suggests a number of reasons for these variations. For Smith (1993, p. 59), although the government always has an interest in creating closed policy communities to facilitate resource exchange, the type of network that develops is not always determined by the government. Instead, 'the type of network that develops often depends on the groups involved, the interests of various actors within government, the nature of the policy and the institutional arrangements that are available'. A policy community is likely to develop if the integrated groups have significant resources and



there is a single decision-making centre within government. In addition, there has to be a strong consensus on policy and institutional arrangements that allow the participants to exclude other groups and issues from the policy process. Policy communities often develop in areas that are salient to the government. Of course, these meso-level factors are by no means exhaustive. Marsh and Smith (2000, p. 7) argue that the structure of networks is also likely to 'reflect the broader pattern of structured inequality within society'. The structural positions of groups, for example, based on class, gender or ethnicity, are reflected in networks' membership and structure.

### 3. Policy Networks and Policy Outcomes

The policy network theory can provide a more sophisticated explanation of policy outcomes in Hong Kong than the other approaches discussed. The last chapter argued that with the elitist approach it is often unclear how the economic and professional elites actually influenced policy. It contains presumptions about the distribution of power in Hong Kong, but it says very little about the mechanism that allowed the elite groups to influence policy. Leung (1990) tries to overcome this problem by concentrating on the financial resources and organisation of business and professional groups. However, as argued before, there is no real reason why these resources should necessarily lead to high influence.

Contrary to the elitist approach, Smith (1993, pp. 72-73) emphasises the concept of structural power in order to explain policy. For him, some integrated groups are able to influence policy not because they have more resources than other groups but because their interests are built into the structure within a policy network, and this structure privileges their interests in the policy process. Within the policy network the structure is a set of rules, standard operating procedures, values, consensus and formal and informal institutions. The structure creates a certain range of policy options and as such it represents the interests of the key actors within the network. This range of policy options is routinised within the policy process, and thus only particular decisions will be made. Consequently, the government's policies constantly favour the interests of these groups. Moreover, the establishment of a closed policy network means that alternative groups, issues and policy options are routinely excluded from the policy process through the consensus and institutions within the network. As a result, any challenges to the policies biased in these groups' favour are minimised.

But again, policy may vary from sector to sector and from time to time. The policy network theory offers an explanation of these variations. For Smith (1993, p. 71) and Marsh and Rhodes (1992a, pp. 197-198), various patterns of policy outcomes are the consequences of different types of policy networks. Where a policy community exists, it is likely that policy will reflect the goals of the key actors within the community. As we

have seen, the interests of the key actors are built into the structure within a policy community, and thus they have substantial control over the issues that are raised and the response to them. Policy is limited to what is acceptable to the consensus within the policy community. By constraining the policy agenda and excluding certain groups and policy options from the policy process, the policy community is also a cause of policy continuity.

On the other hand, issue networks mean that the potential policy outcomes tend to be more varied. Since agreement is difficult to achieve between various actors within an issue network, it is much easier for insider or outsider groups to get alternative issues and policy options onto the agenda. Even if agreement is temporarily achieved, there are likely to be groups within the network who will attempt to resist the implementation of policy. The absence of a strong mechanism for exclusion makes it much easier for outsider groups to penetrate the network and challenge the status quo. Hence, 'the consequence of an issue network is policy inertia, a policy mess, or constantly changing policy as different actors gain the upper hand and attempt to implement a policy that suits their goals' (Smith, 1993, p. 71). In short, the policy network approach demonstrates that in Hong Kong the networks as a structure within the policy process might have a major impact on policy. Policy networks are an independent variable, whilst policy outcomes are a dependent variable.

However, Dowding (1994; 1995; 2001) examines the causal relationship between policy networks and policy outcomes from a different theoretical perspective. He seeks to explain policy by adopting a micro-level rational choice approach to policy networks. For him, policy networks are a metaphor or a typology void of any explanatory utility. He maintains that in order to understand how policy networks affect policy outcomes, 'we need to investigate the processes by which groups become excluded, the processes by which issue consensus often emerges, the processes by which network characteristics are transformed'. Yet 'policy network language does not explain these processes, rather it identifies characteristics in need of explanation' (Dowding, 1994, p. 68). He argues that different types of networks are likely to be associated with different policy outcomes, but the independent variable is not policy networks per se. Instead, the components within the networks are important in explaining policy outcomes:

...the driving force of explanation, the independent variables, are not network characteristics per se but rather characteristics of components within the networks. These components explain both the nature of the network and the nature of the policy process. Truly general theory may be developed by concentrating upon those characteristics (Dowding, 1995, p. 137).

Hence, any explanation of policy lies in the resources that various agents within a policy network possess and the way in which they use or can no longer use these resources.

Policy networks only reflect the patterns of interaction and resource exchange between agents (Marsh, 1998, p. 12). Furthermore, Dowding (1995, pp. 143-145) suggests that the bargaining model and game theory can be fruitfully applied to understand the nature of policy networks and policy outcomes. Policy can be explained by analysing the bargaining strategies and resource powers of various actors within networks. 'Policies emerge through power struggles of different interests, both within zero-sum and variable-sum contexts'.

Perhaps the central problem of Dowding's approach to policy networks is that when explaining policy it privileges agents, including their preferences, resources, decision-making schemes and actions, over structure and assumes these agents' preferences. In other words, it plays down the characteristics of policy networks whilst overemphasising the characteristics of agents within the networks. However: 'although structures don't exist independent of agents, neither can they be reduced', as Dowding implies: 'to the preferences and actions of agents'. Although the structure of networks does not determine policy outcomes, it is important because it affects: 'the process of bargaining, who bargains and what is bargained over' (Marsh and Smith, 1996, p. 7).

To overcome the dichotomy between structure and agents and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of policy, Marsh and Smith (2000) have recently developed a dialectical approach to network analysis. In their usage, a dialectical relationship is: 'an interactive relationship between two variables in which each affects the other in a continuing iterative process' (Marsh and Smith, 2000, p. 5). For them, 'any approach which stresses exclusively either structure or agency has severe limitations' Therefore, their approach concentrates on the dialectical relationship between the structures and agents within policy networks in order to explain policy.

On the one hand, networks are structures that constrain and facilitate agents and then affect policy outcomes. They argue that (Marsh and Smith, 2000, p. 6):

Networks involve the institutionalization of beliefs, values, cultures and particular forms of behaviour. They are organisations which shape attitudes and behaviour... They simplify the policy process by limiting actions, problems and solutions. Networks define roles and responses. In doing so they are not neutral, but, like other political institutions and processes, they both reflect past power distributions and conflicts and shape present political outcomes'.

On the other hand, the structure of networks does not determine policy outcomes. Outcomes also depend on the actions of strategically calculating agents. Although the agents do not control the structural context within a policy network, they do interpret that context, and this interpretation mediates the effect of the structural context on policy outcomes. Moreover, the agents 'can, and do, negotiate and renegotiate network structures' in order to advance their interests. Therefore, any explanation of policy and its

change needs to analyse the dialectical relationship between the role of agents and the structural context within policy networks (Marsh and Smith, 2000, pp. 6-7).

However, it needs re-emphasising that the major aim of this thesis is to examine whether or not policy networks affected policy outcomes and policy change in Hong Kong during the colonial transition rather than to offer a comprehensive understanding of this change. Hence, although the relationship is dialectical and intertwined, it is necessary to isolate the characteristics of networks from other variables like agents, so that I can deal with the central question of this thesis. In other words, this thesis focuses on the first part of the dialectical relationship between structure and agents, i.e. the effects of policy networks as structures on policy outcomes. It will examine the extent to which the structure within networks privileged certain interests and affected policy in Hong Kong. To put it another way, this thesis investigates the structural power of networks. In addition, it will also analyse whether the nature/ types of networks were important or not.

Apart from the dialectical relationship between the structure of networks and the agents within them, Marsh and Smith's dialectical model also emphasises the interactive relationship between networks and the context within which they operate. The following part will discuss this dialectical relationship between networks and context, and how it may re-conceptualise policy change in Hong Kong during the transition.

#### **4. Political Change, Networks and Policy**

Chapter 1 highlighted that the processes of decolonisation and democratisation in Hong Kong put pressure on the policy networks to change. This section will consider the impact that the policy networks might have had on the course of policy change when they were subject to increasing challenge as a result of the changes in Hong Kong's political environment. How did the networks interact with Hong Kong's political environment? What did this interaction mean for the trajectory of change in policy?

As we have seen in Chapter 2, the political explanations of change primarily focus on macro-level factors like the political reform and the transfer of Hong Kong to China. They see policy change occurring as a result of these changes in Hong Kong's political environment. However, such explanations of change are too simplistic and highly voluntaristic. They exaggerate the degree of contextual changes and overemphasise their impact on policy change. They pay little attention to the structure of policy-making like policy networks within which the Chinese authorities and the newly elected politicians have operated. Therefore, they have difficulty in dealing with the subtleties of policy change and cannot explain why change occurred in particular policy areas but not others.

The policy network theory offers a more sophisticated view of policy change. Marsh and Rhodes' (1992a; 1992b) model and, especially, Marsh and Smith's (2000) dialectical approach to policy networks recognise the role of both networks and context in

the course of policy change. When trying to explain policy change, they do not entirely concentrate on the contextual factors. Rather, they stress the interactive relationship between networks and the broader context within which they are located. Through this interactive relationship, highly integrated policy networks are able to mediate the external pressures for change and then shape policy outcomes.

Marsh and Rhodes (1992a; 1992b) suggest that both networks and context are important factors that affect policy change. On the one hand, they emphasise the role of context. The broader context within which networks operate is important because any substantial change in the context is likely to destabilise the networks, which may result in policy change. 'No network is ever wholly closed' and 'totally impervious to outside forces' (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992a, p. 195). Based on a range of case studies in Britain, Marsh and Rhodes have identified four broad categories of exogenous or network-environment change that have a major impact on policy networks and policy change. First, economic changes, such as the change in the economic cycle, are an important source of instability in networks and policy. Second, political factors like party ideology can provide initiatives for challenging the existing policy networks and policy. To put this into the context of Hong Kong, the political explanations of change are right to an extent. The politics of decolonisation and democratisation was one of the significant factors that affected policy change in Hong Kong. In the third broad category is knowledge/ information. Any change in the knowledge/ information about a particular issue can be the catalyst of policy change. Finally, the developments within institutions like the European Community can create new threats and possibilities for various networks (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992a, pp. 193-195; 1992b, pp. 257-259).

On the other hand, policy networks are also important. Marsh and Rhodes agree with Stones (1992) who emphasises that 'the analysis of change cannot be reduced to a simple environmental stimulus – policy network response model'. Policy networks are part of the process of change. Whilst there are growing challenges to a particular network and its policies, the participants 'in the network shape and construct their "world", choosing whether or not, and how, to respond' (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992a, p. 195). Certainly, exogenous or network-environment changes often result in policy change, both in the shape of networks and in policy outcomes. Yet the existence of a policy network or, particularly, a closed and cohesive policy community frequently 'acts as a major constraint upon the degree of policy change'. A range of case studies in Britain indicates that 'the policy networks have been very successful in resisting policy changes'. Policy changes, for example, in health and dietary education and regulations on nutritional and fat-content labelling were minimised. In short, 'policy networks foster incremental outcomes, thereby favouring the status-quo or the existing balance of interests in the network' (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992a, pp. 197-198).

Although Marsh and Rhodes are less forthcoming on the way in which networks affect policy change, the basic outline of their view is clear. It is suggested that policy

change is associated with network change. Marsh and Rhodes (1992b, p. 257) argue that:

...most (network) change is explained in terms of factors exogenous to the network, although the extent and speed of the change is clearly influenced by the network's capacity to minimise the effect of such change (quoted in Marsh, 1998, p. 11).

Obviously, highly integrated policy communities have a greater ability than loose issue networks to minimise the effect of contextual change. Therefore, if the network-environment changes that leads to growing challenges to the networks, policy continuity will be the likeliest outcome of tight networks, whereas policy discontinuity will be more likely in weaker networks. The implication of all this is that in order to understand and explain policy change, we need to understand and explain how the networks react to the changes in their environments (Marsh and Smith, 1996, p. 15; Marsh, 1998, p. 11).

Marsh and Smith's (2000) dialectical approach to policy networks is clearer about the interactive relationship between networks and context. In order fully to understand how policy changes, we need to move beyond the distinction between exogenous (context) and endogenous (network) factors, and recognise that 'there is a dialectical relationship between the network and the broader context within which it located' (Marsh and Smith, 2000, p. 7). By the 'dialectical relationship' they mean that there is an interactive relationship between the network and the context in which each affects the other in a continuing iterative process, and this interactive process affects the course of policy change. If the dialectical relationship is unravelled, two closely related dimensions can be identified.

First, changes in the network-environment can have a major impact on networks and the interests and policies that are seen as important. In fact, most network change results from the changes in the network-environment which may undermine the certainties and values within particular networks. Like Marsh and Rhodes (1992a; 1992b), Marsh and Smith (2000, p. 8) argue that political, economic, ideological and knowledge-based changes are important factors that create new issues and challenges to the existing policy networks. To these four categories of exogenous change is added another important external constraint on networks: other networks. These are a significant part of the context within which a network operates, and 'this aspect of the context has a clear impact on the operation of the network, upon change in the network and upon policy outcomes'. Moreover, the relationship between sectoral and sub-sectoral networks is also important.

Overall, changes in the network-environment are important in the course of policy change because they 'can affect the resources, interests and relationships of the actors within networks'. They may give rise to a number of new issues and political forces that threaten the consensus and ideology within the networks. These exogenous factors can

also produce tensions and conflicts that may either substantially weaken or destroy the networks. As the networks become weaker or even break down, they no longer have the ability to control the policy arenas and agendas. This makes it easier for opposition groups to penetrate the networks and raise new issues and alternative solutions in the policy process. In this situation, the development of new policies is the likely outcome. In short, 'networks are often faced by very strong external uncertainties and that does affect network structure, network interactions and policy outcomes' (Marsh and Smith, 2000, p. 8).

However, such exogenous changes do not determine policy change. The networks are equally significant in the course of policy change. This is the second dimension of the dialectical relationship between networks and context. The networks affect policy change because the extent and speed of change is clearly influenced by the networks' capacity to mediate, and often minimise, the effect of contextual changes. Marsh and Smith (2000, p. 9) argue that:

All such exogenous change is mediated through the understanding of agents and interpreted in the context of the structures, rules/ norms and interpersonal relationships within the network. So, it is important to re-emphasize that any simple distinction between endogenous and exogenous factors is misleading.

Hence, the external changes do not have an effect independent of the networks. The networks can mediate the effect of contextual changes and then affect the degree and pace of policy change.

Although Marsh and Smith's dialectical model recognises that networks may have the ability to mediate or minimise the effect of contextual changes, it does not go into details about how the networks manage to pull it off. Nevertheless, this aspect of network analysis is elaborated in Smith's (1993, pp. 76-98; pp. 230-233) earlier work. There are three major ways in which networks can withstand the external pressures for change. First, if the contextual change occurs in a policy area where a tight policy network exists, the network may have the ability to move new issues and demands off the agenda and prevent opposition groups from accessing the policy process. Second, the activities of opposition groups may lead to new issues being raised on the systematic agenda. These are 'issues subject to widespread general political debate'. The opposition groups may even seize on the contextual change and make enough noise to compel the network to launch a consultation exercise on a particular issue. Yet this does not mean that these issues become part of the institutional agenda, which requires the serious consideration of decision-makers and further actions. After a period of general debate and consultation, the momentum to change the existing policy will lapse (Smith, 1993, p. 89). This scenario is more likely than an outright rejection of change.

The third possibility is that the actors within the network may recognise the external

pressures for change and follow the strategy of damage limitation. They take new issues on board and make superficial changes in policy to indemnify the network against increasing challenges. As a sop to the opposition, some groups may be allowed to penetrate the outer circle of the network and propel forward some changes in policy. However, this does not mean a breakdown in the network. Rather, these groups have to abide by the rules of the game set by the key actors within the core of the network, and they cannot exert a continuous influence on policy. Consequently, policy change is likely to be tardy and limited (Smith, 1993, p. 90).

In addition, the nature of networks must be included in the analysis of how networks mediate the effect of contextual changes and influence policy change. As Smith (1993, p. 98) argues, the ability of a network to withstand the external pressures for change depends greatly on the nature of the network. A policy network: 'can survive a great deal of pressure for change if it contains a very few actors with a strong consensus and has a high degree of control over the implementation process'. Therefore, in the face of contextual change, a tightly integrated policy network tends to produce policy continuity. On the other hand, if there are a large number of actors who have a weak consensus, the external pressures can create internal tensions and politicise the policy arena. This then leads to substantial changes in the network and policy.

The notion of dialectical relationship can be used to reconceptualise policy change in Hong Kong. In order fully to understand the trajectory of change in Hong Kong during the colonial transition, we need to recognise the role of both context and networks. However, as the role of context has been thoroughly analysed in other studies, this thesis focuses on how the networks affected policy change. The argument of this thesis is that the relationship between the political transformation in Hong Kong, including the processes of decolonisation and democratisation, and the pre-existing policy networks was dialectical. The networks were as important as the changes in Hong Kong's political environment in the course of policy change. Whilst these exogenous changes created new issues and political forces that threatened the networks and their policies, these challenges were mediated by networks that might have had the ability to minimise the contextual effect. If the challenges occurred in areas where the networks were able to minimise the external pressures for change, the degree of policy change tended to be smaller than anticipated.

In addition, this thesis argues that the speed and extent of policy change in Hong Kong depended on the nature/ types of networks, and thus policy change varied from sector to sector. A tight network had a greater ability to survive the contextual changes, and thus minimal and superficial changes in policy were the likeliest outcome. On the other hand, substantial changes in policy were likely to happen in areas where the networks were rather loose and weak. In other words, different nature/ types of networks had different impacts on the course of policy change, even though these networks were subject to similar exogenous pressures resulting from the changes in Hong Kong's



political environment. Hence, it is significant to examine the role of networks in the course of policy change.

## 5. Propositions

With the consideration of how the policy network theory supplements the traditional approaches, it is possible to develop a number of propositions about policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong, which are illustrated in figure 3.1:

### Government/ Group Relations

1. Although it might be asymmetric, the relationship between the Hong Kong government and integrated groups in policy-making was one of mutual dependence and resource exchange. The government, or sections of it, needed the assistance of groups in the development and implementation of policy. In order to gain this assistance, the government exchanged access to the policy process for cooperation and thus established policy networks.
2. The nature of government/ group relations, or the types of policy networks, varied across policy areas and sub-sectors. This was due to the differences in the groups involved, the interests of various actors within the government, the nature of policy, the degree of consensus and the institutional arrangements available.

### Networks and Policy Outcomes

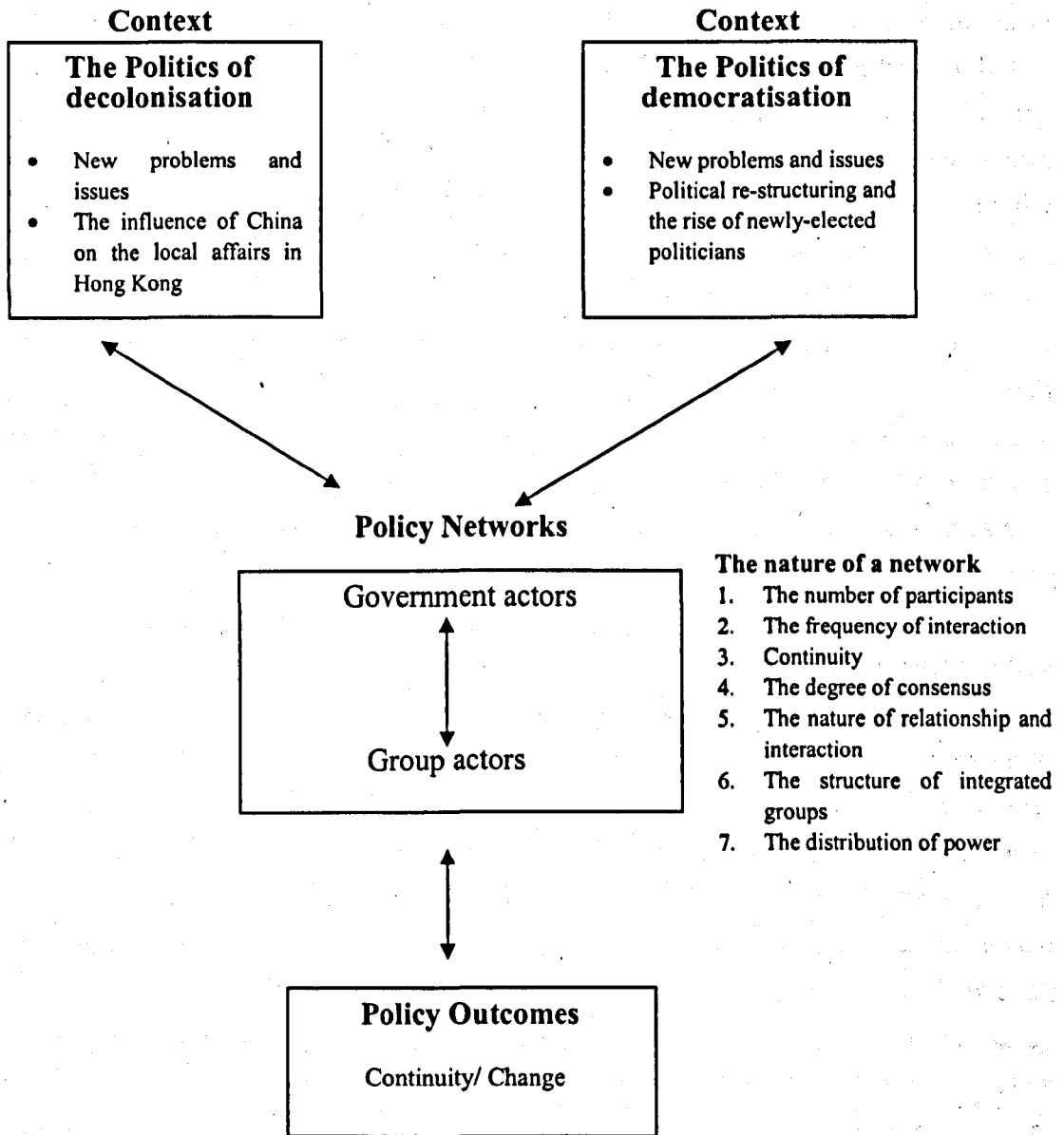
3. The structure of policy networks affected policy outcomes. Within a network there was the mechanism for exclusion. The network also privileged certain issues and solutions over others within the policy process. In doing so, it ensured that the interests of the dominant actors within the networks were served.

### Political Change, Networks and Policy

4. The nature/ types of networks were vital in understanding how policy changed in Hong Kong during the colonial transition, because the relationship between the changes in Hong Kong's political environment and the pre-existing policy networks was dialectical. Whilst the processes of decolonisation and democratisation precipitated and strengthened the external pressures for change, the pace and degree of policy change were influenced by the nature/ types of policy networks. Consequently, the grand theories of change that primarily focus on the contextual factors are insufficient, and the external pressures for change were likely to produce

various outcomes in different policy arenas.

Figure 3.1 Policy-making, Networks and Policy Change in Hong Kong



## 6. Conclusion

The traditional approaches to policy analysis in Hong Kong have focussed on macro factors, such as the nature of the Hong Kong state and its broader political environment. However, they neglect variations across areas of policy, and they have difficulty in dealing with the subtleties of policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong during the

transition. This chapter has argued that the policy network theory can provide a more sophisticated approach to policy analysis in the context of Hong Kong. It can supplement the traditional approaches and reconceptualise policy-making and policy change in Hong Kong in three important aspects of policy analysis: government/ group relations in policy-making; how policy was made; and how policy was changed.

The policy network approach demonstrates that government/ group relations in policy-making in Hong Kong might not have been of deference and supplication but of mutual dependence and resource exchange. Despite the fact that in the executive-dominated system of Hong Kong the relations were likely to be asymmetric, the government still needed the assistance and support of particular groups in the development and implementation of policy. In order to gain their support, the government established networks and resources had to be exchanged. If mutual dependence developed between the government and groups in policy-making and a cohesive network was created, policy was made through negotiations, and thus power was not a zero-sum in networks. The policy network approach also demonstrates that the nature of government/ group relations, or the types of networks, might vary from policy sector to policy sector in Hong Kong. This was due to the differences in the groups involved, the interests of various actors within the government, the nature of policy, the degree of consensus, and the institutional arrangements available.

This chapter suggests that policy networks were a significant factor affecting policy outcomes in Hong Kong. The policy network approach emphasises the concept of structural power. It demonstrates that in Hong Kong particular groups might be able to influence policy not because they had more resources but because their interests and ideas were built into the structure of policy-making. Within a policy network the structure was a set of rules, procedures, values, consensus and institutions, which privileged certain groups, issues and policy options over others. As a result, in particular areas the government's policies constantly favoured the interests of certain groups. However, policy might vary from sector to sector and from time to time. The notion of policy network allows analysis of these variations. It suggests that various patterns of policy outcomes were the consequences of different nature of government/ group relations or policy networks. Where a policy community existed, it was likely that policy was stable and reflected the goals of the key actors within the community. On the other hand, issue networks meant that the potential policy outcomes tended to be more varied. In other words, policy communities and issue networks in Hong Kong might have had different impacts on policy contents.

In addition, this chapter suggests that policy networks were also an important variable in affecting the trajectory of policy change in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. This chapter has not denied the importance of political factors in changing policy networks and policy outcomes. Indeed, Chapters 1 and 2 have demonstrated that the changes in Hong Kong's political environment were vital in understanding policy

change because they gave rise to new issues and political forces that increasingly challenged the pre-existing networks and policy. Nevertheless, policy change differed across sectors. The new issues and political forces did not occur in a vacuum. Policy change did not happen independently of policy networks. The dialectical approach to policy networks demonstrates that in order fully to understand policy change in Hong Kong, we need to recognise the role of both context and networks. In particular areas or sub-sectors the relationship between the contextual changes and policy networks might be dialectical or interactive. Whilst the contextual changes created new issues and political forces that threatened the networks and their policies, these challenges were mediated by networks that might have had the ability to minimise the effect of contextual changes. If the challenges occurred in areas where the networks were able to minimise the external pressures for change, the degree of policy change tended to be smaller than expected.

Hence, in accounting for policy change, it is essential to examine the nature of government/ group relations or the types of policy networks. The speed and extent of policy change in Hong Kong depended on the types of networks, and thus policy change varied from sector to sector. A tight network had the greater ability to weather the contextual changes, and thus marginal changes in policy were the likeliest outcome. On the other hand, substantial changes in policy were likely to happen in areas where the networks were rather loose and weak. In short, the types of networks had an important impact on the course of policy change, even though these networks were subject to similar exogenous pressures resulting from the changes in Hong Kong's political environment. All in all, this chapter suggests that policy networks, in which the government agencies and groups exchanged resources, were an important factor that affected policy outcomes and policy change in Hong Kong during the transition. The next chapter will examine how this research is designed to evaluate the truth or otherwise of these propositions.

## Chapter Four

### Research Issues, Methods and Methodology

In the previous chapters I have argued that the traditional theoretical approaches to policy-making in Hong Kong has difficulty in explaining policy outcomes and policy change in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. Therefore, this thesis seeks to respond to such explanatory limitations by examining the causal relationship between networks and policy in the context of Hong Kong. The last chapter suggested that policy networks have affected policy outcomes and policy change, and that different nature/types of networks were important in explaining various patterns of policy change. Clearly, though, explanation is not a straightforward process. As Sayer (1995, p. 232) indicates, 'difficulties arise from an interplay between the nature of the object of study, on one hand, and our aims, expectations and methods on the other'. Hence, in this chapter particular attention is paid to the research methods to ensure that they fit the nature of research issues under investigation.

This chapter is concerned with both describing and justifying the methods that are employed to address the research issues and theoretical propositions outlined in the last chapter. It will be argued that, given the nature of research issues, a comparative case study approach based on qualitative methods will be of considerable importance in terms of developing the extent to which policy networks have affected policy outcomes and, particularly, policy change in Hong Kong. This chapter will begin by describing the overall research design of this thesis. It will then justify the use of intensive case studies and discuss how the cases are selected. Finally it will examine how the research is conducted and highlight some problems with the case studies.

#### 1. Research Issues and Research Design

In order to explain how policy was made and changed in Hong Kong, this thesis focuses on two causal processes. First, it examines if the structures of policy networks, by privileging certain groups, issues and solutions over others, affected the behaviour of policy-makers and then had a significant impact on policy outcomes. Second, it concentrates on the dialectical relationship between networks and context in explaining the course of policy change. It investigates whether or not networks of varying natures/types had different abilities to mediate the effect of exogenous change, leading to variations in the trajectory of policy alteration (see Chapter 3). Obviously, this theoretical

framework is complicated as it involves a variety of variables like networks, government, groups, issues, policy options, context, policy outcomes and the degree of policy change. To this complexity is added the fact that this thesis not only examines a simple and uni-dimensional relationship but also dwells on the dialectical/ interactive relationship between networks and context.

The complexity and subtlety of these causal processes requires an intensive research design. That is a research design which analyses a limited number of cases exhaustively in terms of history, network-environment, networks, the policy process and policy contents. In this thesis there are two broad case studies, which concentrate on the curriculum policy on civic education and manpower policy in Hong Kong from the 1970s. Here emphasis is placed on examining qualitative rather than quantitative factors. In doing so, the importance of context and structure rather than the observable variables like resources and individuals' behaviour is incorporated into the explanation of policy.

A case study approach contrasts with an extensive research design based on surveys. Generally speaking, there are two types of survey research. One type examines a limited number of properties associated with a wide range of cases, and the other investigates a wide range of properties associated with many cases. In the former instance, the utility of the explanation would be limited because of the possibility of overlooking variables and relations that are important in developing a model of explanation. In other words, it would only examine a snapshot of a political picture. In the second instance, as a result of many cases and a wide range of variables to be examined, it would be difficult to identify truly causal relations (Sayer, 1992, pp. 241-242). By focusing on a large number of cases and properties, a correlation among many variables may be found. However, this relationship may not be causal, and thus inevitably requires intensive case studies to verify its validity (Smith, 1993, p. 25). An extensive research design is, therefore, better placed to generalise research findings but less useful than a case study approach in this thesis that aims at developing an in-depth explanation of policy outcomes and policy change.

The research methods used to conduct case studies in this thesis are critical literature review, documentary study, archival study and semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are used to enhance the level of direct contact between the researcher and interviewees. This close contact allows the researcher to probe and, where necessary, ask the respondents to clarify points of interest. It also allows the researcher to follow up new issues that had not previously been identified. Moreover, as the respondents are able to respond to open-ended questions in their own words, the researcher has greater access to their interpretation of events and the level of significance that they attach to these events (Bryman, 1988, pp. 95-96; May, 1997, pp. 111-112). All of this indicates that the semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with a better instrument for addressing the complex 'how' and 'why' questions raised in this research.

## 2. The Justification for Using Case Studies

For a number of reasons, a comparative case study approach is considered an appropriate strategy for this research. First, it fits the objective of this thesis, which attempts to examine if policy networks affected policy outcomes and policy change in Hong Kong. The problem of generalisation has been taken into account when conducting the case studies in this research. Case study research has often been criticised for its lack of representativeness and generalizability to a wider population (Robson, 1993, p. 168; Burton, 2000, pp. 224-225). As Bryman (1988, p. 88) points out, 'for many people, this reliance on a single case poses a problem of how far it is possible to generalise the results of such research'. Obviously, two cases are not sufficient to form a general picture of how policy was made and changed in Hong Kong from the 1980s.

However, it is important to emphasise that the objective of this thesis is not to make generalisations about a wider population. Rather, a limited number of cases are studied in detail so as to illustrate that in Hong Kong policy networks affected policy outcomes and that, in order to understand how and why policy was changed, we need to appreciate the dialectical relationship between policy networks and context. Therefore, the focus here is on the operation of policy network theory that postulates the causal relationships between networks and policy rather than on the issue of statistical generalisation. In other words, this thesis is concerned with 'the generalizability of cases to theoretical propositions rather than to populations or universes' (Bryman, 1988, p. 90). To evaluate the truth or otherwise of the propositions outlined in the last chapter, this thesis takes two case studies in Hong Kong.

Second, a comparative case study approach fits the nature of questions being addressed within this thesis. Yin (1994, p. 9) argues that a case study is an appropriate research strategy where 'a "how" or "why" question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control'. The research questions and theoretical propositions within this thesis are directly concerned with 'how' and 'why' policy was made and changed in particular areas in Hong Kong. In addition, the government/ group relations and the course of policy change in Hong Kong during the colonial transition represent fairly contemporary phenomena over which the researcher has no control. This nature of research issues means that case studies are essential. Third, a case study approach is important because it allows the researcher to incorporate the contextual factors, including the broader political context of Hong Kong and the context within which policy was made, into the analysis of policy. For these reasons, this thesis will address the research questions and theoretical propositions outlined in the last chapter through the use of case studies.

An in-depth comparison of two cases serves two major purposes in this thesis. First, comparative case studies allow the researcher to examine whether or not policy networks

in Hong Kong have affected policy outcomes and policy change. As Marsh (1998, p. 15) argues, comparative case studies are 'essential in order to establish both the effect of networks and, more specifically, the relative effect of networks and context, on outcomes'. This thesis will compare the decision-making processes (networks) and policy outcomes (and change) in different policy areas in a single country (Hong Kong) over the same period. Using this comparative analysis it is possible to hold at least some elements of the context constant, so that any evidence of different network structures and different policy outcomes would suggest that the networks did actually influence the course of policy change in Hong Kong. Second, an in-depth analysis of two cases provides a test for the transferability of policy network theory. As indicated in the last chapter, the policy network theory developed in the United States, Britain and Europe, and so far case studies have been primarily confined to policy-making in liberal democracies. A comparison of two cases allows the researcher to explore the extent to which the notion of policy network offers a better understanding of interest group intermediation and policy-making in the undemocratic administrative state of Hong Kong. Therefore, a conclusion can be reached with regard to the transferability of policy network theory.

Whilst the use of comparative case studies offers the potential for a more robust investigation, it is necessary to select cases that provide useful and systematic comparisons in terms of examining whether or not policy networks affected policy outcomes and policy change. The following section will examine how and why the two cases in this thesis have been selected.

### **3. Selection of Cases**

The lack of published material on policy networks in Hong Kong meant that it was necessary to conduct basic documentary and archival researches prior to selecting two cases. The aim of these initial documentary and archival researches into policy-making in Hong Kong was to guide the selection of cases for further investigation. In order to select these cases, it was essential to identify the policy areas in which networks have existed. The literature on policy networks indicates that networks normally develop where the government wants to achieve particular goals and needs to exchange resources with groups (Smith, 1993, p. 56). Therefore, the initial documentary and archival researches targeted those policy areas that were most important to the Hong Kong government, such as education, economy, labour, social welfare, transportation and housing. They examined whether policy networks have existed and the characteristics of those networks. Consequently, two case studies were taken, which were civic education policy and manpower policy.

In order to draw any systematic and worthwhile comparisons, it is essential to have a clear understanding of why each case has been selected. Given the concern with policy



networks and change, it is necessary to select cases where policy networks have existed and were subject to increasing challenges as a result of Hong Kong's colonial transition. Whilst these similarities between cases are prerequisite for selection, it is also important to select cases that are markedly different in terms of the nature/ types of policy networks involved. The juxtaposition of contextual commonality and differences in networks enables the researcher to establish the effect of networks on policy change. By holding the contextual factors constant, it is possible to comment, with a greater degree of certainty, on the extent to which the form and speed of policy change were greatly affected by the nature/ types of policy networks. Marsh and Rhodes' typology (1992a; 1992b) was used as a benchmark for identifying different policy networks in the cases initially investigated. Hence, a number of dimensions concerning the network structures were considered in the selection of cases. They were membership, continuity, the degree of consensus, the nature of interaction and the distribution of power.

Following these criteria, civic education policy and manpower policy in Hong Kong have been selected for detailed investigation. It is significant to provide a brief description of each case so as to demonstrate why these cases were selected. The two cases were selected because they provide useful and systematic comparisons in terms of analysing the relative effect of networks on policy. There are a number of important similarities between the cases. In both cases there are policy networks that came into shape during the 1970s because the government intended to intervene in the curriculum on civic education and manpower management. Since then both networks have dominated the policies. In addition, the processes of decolonisation and democratisation in Hong Kong had a major impact on both cases. They created new problems, such as economic restructuring, unemployment, political participation, national integration and the need for political education, and influenced the public attention that was paid to these problems. They also strengthened the groups and organisations that were opposed to the pre-existing policies. Consequently, in the 1980s and 1990s, both cases became politically charged and the two networks were increasingly confronted with external pressures for change. Due to these similarities, it is feasible to hold the major contextual factors constant in this research.

Despite these similarities in history and network-environment, there are a number of significant differences between the two networks, which will be discussed in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. In short, the manpower policy network was significantly weaker in terms of integration and organisation than the curriculum policy network. These differences between the two cases in network structures, coupled with the similarities in network-environment, allow the researcher to examine whether or not the nature/ types of policy networks affected how policy has changed in Hong Kong.

In addition, the two cases were selected because this selection covers two policy domains with different nature. Manpower management or labour is a broad policy area, whereas civic education is a narrower policy sub-sector. Manpower policy is traditionally

regarded by Hong Kong's political scientists as an area where economic groups play a key role. On the other hand, civic education is a professional area not closely associated with business interests. Given these differences, the comparative case studies provide a more robust testing of the policy network theory and the theoretical propositions outlined in the last chapter, which suggested that the government/ group relations are based on resource exchange and tend to vary from sector to sector. Finally, there is another reason for the two cases being selected for detailed analysis. During the initial contacts, some key actors inside and outside the networks were willing to participate in interviews. Consequently, this thesis took the case studies of civic education policy and manpower policy in Hong Kong. The remaining sections will examine how the case studies were conducted and the problems with the case studies.

#### 4. Conducting Case Studies

Generally a case study involves a degree of flexibility and exploration. Yet this does not mean that an unstructured approach to research is adopted. The case studies in this thesis are informed by the policy network theory and, particularly, the theoretical propositions outlined in the last chapter. The case studies begin by examining the historical background of the curriculum policy network and the manpower policy network. The discussion then turns to the nature of the two networks and examines how they affected policy outcomes. Following this phase of research, the case studies investigate the changes in Hong Kong's political environment from the 1980s and the course of policy change in civic education and manpower management. Here the focus is on how the macro-level factors affected the networks and, especially, how the networks mediated the effect of contextual factors and then influenced policy change.

As Yin (1994, pp. 91-92) indicates, case studies can draw on more than one source of data and the use of these multiple sources of data can improve the construct validity through a process of triangulation. Therefore, in order to enhance the validity of research findings, the following sources of data were used in each case study:

- Documentary evidence (including newspaper articles, journal articles, letters, minutes and official publications produced by the government agencies and groups or organisations involved in policy-making);
- Archival evidence and;
- Semi-structured interviews with the key actors inside and outside the policy networks.

Documentary and archival evidence was gathered through a number of institutions. They were university libraries (Sheffield, Leeds and Hong Kong), the Public Records

Office of the Hong Kong Government, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), the Education Department, the Federation of Education Workers (FEW) and the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE). With the passing of the Open Information Act in Hong Kong, it became easier for researchers to access the government documents and archives. Documentary information was also obtained from interviewees immediately after interviews were conducted.

Interviews were the other important method of data collection in each case study because there were problems with the documentary and archival evidence. Official secrecy meant that a great deal of government documents and archives such as the minutes of the Curriculum Development Committee/ Council (CDC)'s meetings still remained confidential. As a result of poor record keeping, some government documents and archives could not be retrieved. In spite of the fact that an increasing number of government documents and archives have been put into the public domain, they rarely showed the full picture of how and why policy was made. Rather, they tend to either brag about what the government has done for the people or demonstrate that the government acted in consultation with all interests. This gap in information needed to be filled by other sources of data that included newspaper articles, journal articles and publications produced by integrated groups and organisations. Interviews, therefore, were the other important means of identifying the nature of networks and how policy was made. They offered insights into the policy processes that were not available in documents or archives. The data provided from interviews was also used to verify the data from other sources.

Prior to commencing interviews, the documentary and archival evidence relating to the policy network and its policy in each case was examined. In addition, a critical review of relevant literature was also carried out. This information helped the researcher to identify the key persons to be interviewed. They provided an important guide to those questions that were to be put forward in interviews. Furthermore, the documentary and archival evidence, where possible, was used as a means of corroborating information provided from semi-structured interviews.

After the reviews of documentary and archival evidence, the interview schedules were written up and a trip to Hong Kong was arranged. Letters were sent out to the key actors inside and outside the curriculum policy network and the manpower policy network. These letters outlined the broad aims of the research and asked for permission to conduct interviews as part of the case studies. Two weeks after each letter was sent out, the potential respondents were contacted by emails in order to ascertain whether or not they were willing to participate in the case studies. Once each respondent had agreed to participate, a date, time and a venue were arranged for conducting the interview. Consequently, 17 respondents, including senior civil servants and leaders of insider and outsider groups, agreed to give interviews that were conducted from September to November 2002.

Semi-structured interviews were used in the two case studies. This was because

they allowed interviewees to respond to questions on their own terms whilst allowing data to be collected in an ordered way. In the semi-structured interviews, the researcher basically followed the interview schedules and brought up specific issues for discussion. The researcher, where necessary, also probed on specific questions and asked the interviewees to elaborate on key points. In addition, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed for the identification of issues that had not previously been identified in the preceding documentary and literature reviews (Robson, 1993, pp. 237-240). Where interviewees indicated that they were willing to afford as much time as necessary, interviews lasted longer than an hour. In most instances, however, interviews were limited to 60 minutes.

## 5. Problems Encountered with the Case Studies

To evaluate the validity or otherwise of the theoretical propositions outlined in the last chapter, the case studies of Hong Kong's civic education policy and manpower policy from the 1970s were conducted. Although these case studies were important in developing how policy networks influenced policy outcomes and policy change in Hong Kong, there were a number of problems. Firstly, as most of the writers on policy-making in Hong Kong have concentrated on macro-level factors, such as the nature of Hong Kong state, the distribution of power and the political system, there was a shortage of literature on the subtleties of policy process in Hong Kong. This meant that the researcher almost had to start the case studies from scratch. Consequently, they took longer to complete than had been expected.

Secondly, despite the careful selection of the two cases, each case is, to a certain degree, unique in terms of its context. Although both the curriculum and the manpower policy networks were subject to similar challenges stemming from the processes of decolonisation and democratisation in Hong Kong, the combination of these exogenous pressures slightly varied. The Chinese authorities did not participate as actively in Hong Kong's manpower policy as in its curriculum policy on civic education. This difference meant that the manpower policy network was likely to be under less pressure for change than the curriculum policy network, and thus the case studies might not compare like with like. However, given the analytic purpose of this thesis, there is a way around this methodological problem of uniqueness. The major purpose is to establish whether or not policy change in Hong Kong depended on the nature/ types of policy networks. If policy change in civic education, where the network was stronger and confronted with more ferocious attack, proved to be tardy and less substantial than the changes in manpower policy, it would be reasonable to argue that policy networks had a major impact on the course of policy change. Any evidence of a greater intensity of external pressures associated with less change would only indicate that the nature/ types of policy networks

were important in affecting policy change.

Finally, it is obvious that two cases are not sufficient to generalise how policy networks have affected policy outcomes and policy change in Hong Kong. Here it is important to point out that only through more case studies can the utility of policy network theory be fully established in the context of Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the case studies of civic education policy and manpower policy did provide a rich source of data from which the research issues in this thesis could be addressed.

## 6. Conclusion

This chapter has described the methods that are employed to deal with the research issues and theoretical propositions outlined in the last chapter. To assess the truth or otherwise of these propositions, this thesis takes two case studies. The case studies are curriculum policy on civic education and manpower policy in Hong Kong. These cases provide useful and systematic comparisons because there are significant similarities between the two cases in network-environment and differences in network structures. In addition, the case studies cover two policy domains with different nature. Therefore, they provide a more robust testing of the theoretical propositions which suggested that the government/ group relations were based on resource exchange and tended to vary from sector to sector. Multiple sources of data, including documentary evidence, archival evidence and semi-structured interviews, are used to conduct the case studies and enhance the accuracy of research findings through the process of triangulation.

It is clear from this chapter that, given the nature of research issues, comparative case studies are a favourable approach to the research. First, the complexity of the theoretical framework, which involves a range of variables and a dialectical relationship between networks and context, requires in-depth case studies. Second, comparative case studies fit the objective of this thesis, which is concerned with the generalizability of cases to the theoretical propositions outlined in the last chapter. Third, comparative case studies fit the nature of 'how' and 'why' questions being addressed within the thesis.

Despite their usefulness, there are a number of methodological problems with the case studies. However, this chapter has demonstrated that these problems do not militate against the importance of this research. The use of a limited number of case studies has often been criticised for their lack of representativeness and generalizability to a wider population or world. Yet the objective of this research is to illustrate that in Hong Kong policy networks did exist and have influenced policy outcomes and policy change rather than to make statistical generalisations. Besides, despite the careful selection of cases, each case is, to a certain degree, unique in terms of its context. However, given the analytic purpose of the thesis, this methodological problem of uniqueness is not fundamental. Any evidence of a stronger network associated with more external

pressures and less change would indicate that the nature/ types of policy networks significantly affected policy change.

The remainder of the thesis is concerned with the case studies of civic education policy and manpower policy in Hong Kong. It will examine the nature of policy networks and the impact they had on policy outcomes and policy change.

## Chapter Five

### **The Politics of Civic Education in Hong Kong: Curriculum Policy Network and Historical Development of School Curriculum before 1984**

This chapter will examine the development of the government policy on civic education in Hong Kong during the post-war period. It will also study how a well-integrated, highly institutionalised and closed policy network developed and succeeded in curriculum policy from the 1970s. The curriculum policy network was a professional network, which included the Education Department of the Hong Kong government and the mainstream teaching profession in Hong Kong, that is, the representatives of colleges of education, school bodies, school head associations and teachers' unions. Although the number of participants in the network was relatively large, they were united by the shared concerns and values in the teaching profession. The curriculum policy network was distinctive in terms of its development and its nature. According to Marsh and Rhodes' typology (1992a; 1992b), it can be regarded as a stable policy community. This chapter will also demonstrate that, since the early 1970s, the policy network has been important to curriculum policy-making in Hong Kong. As a consequence, civic education was marginalised in school curricula.

The chapter will begin by defining the concept of civic education, which is politically centred. In the second section, it will examine why civic education was such a major controversial issue in Hong Kong during the post-war period. This section is important because it is unusual for governments and pressure groups in other countries to make civic education an issue. However, the anti-colonial political education and the precarious circumstances of Hong Kong's colonial regime, in which civic education in schools was perceived to be detrimental to the government, meant that the Education Department had to intervene in civic education. This indicates that the historical-political conditions of Hong Kong had an impact on civic education policy.

In terms of pressure group influence, professional groups such as teaching experts and schools are always seen to be in a stronger position than the majority of groups because they have, through their professional knowledge, a resource that is not available to other groups. Moreover, the educational groups were particularly significant in Hong Kong because they were responsible for the provision of most schooling. However, in the third section, I shall argue that the curriculum policy network did not develop as a result of the intrinsic power of the teaching profession. Rather, it was created because the bitter controversy over civic education meant that the government had to intervene in school curricula. The Education Department failed in its initial attempts to influence school curricula. In order to extend government intervention in school curricula, the cooperation

of the teaching profession was perceived as essential. Therefore, in the early 1970s the teaching profession was co-opted into the process of curriculum making and the network developed. In other words, it was not until the government wished to influence school curricula that the network was created.

In the fourth section, I shall outline the nature of the curriculum policy network. The network was distinctive because it was close to the policy community end of the continuum. There were four major components central to the network. First, although it contained a relatively large number of participants, it was stable and had a high degree of continuity. This was because within the network there was a clear state-led view of education and a single decision-making centre provided by the Education Department. Second, contrary to cooptive arrangements, within the network there was the structure of resource inter-dependence, negotiation and mutual advantage, which contributed to the stability of the network. Third, the network was highly integrated. There was a strong consensus between the Education Department and the teaching profession within the network on a centralised curriculum system and the apolitical and academic nature of the curriculum. Fourth, access to the network was highly restricted. There was a conscious exclusion of groups that were opposed to the consensus. The consensus on the parameters of school curricula acted as an effective means of exclusion. In addition, the network was highly institutionalised, which provided it with a further means of excluding opposition groups from the network.

Finally, this chapter will go on to examine how the curriculum policy network affected the curriculum policy on civic education. It will argue that the network was significant in explaining why civic education was deliberately and consistently neglected on the academic-oriented curriculum, despite pressures to the contrary. First, the network, through the mechanisms of consensus building and resource exchange, enhanced the government's ability to influence curricula in schools. As its infrastructural power increased, the Education Department achieved uniformity of school curriculum. In the 1970s, it succeeded in formulating and implementing a common core curriculum without a great deal of difficulty and political disruption. Second, there was general agreement between the Education Department and the teaching profession within the network on the apolitical and academic nature of the curriculum. Therefore, the network defined what was included in the curriculum. Third, radical groups, such as the groups representing pro-China schools and social interests opposed to this consensus, were thrown out of the policy process, and thus the network was impervious to their challenges. Consequently, the common core curriculum was markedly apolitical, and civic education was deliberately marginalised.



## 1. What is Civic Education?

Any consideration of the development of civic education in Hong Kong requires a clarification of what ought to be included in civic education, or education for citizenship. However, Carr (1991) argued that 'citizenship' is a controversial concept and, therefore, there is no unambiguous account of civic education (Carr, 1991, p. 373). To tackle this problem, Porter (1996), one of the pioneers of UK civic education (Lee, 1987, p. 244), argued that the education for citizenship must comprise three basic and essential constituents: citizenship as 'status', citizenship as 'volition', and citizenship as 'competence' (Porter, 1996, p. 3).

- Education for 'citizenship as status' – it is important for pupils to understand the relationships between the individual and the state, which are conferred by the state and defined by law. Moreover, pupils should be aware of their national identity (Porter, 1996, pp. 3-4).
- Education for 'citizenship as volition' – civic education should develop among pupils 'feelings of identity, a sense of togetherness, of belonging to a community, of belonging to a geographic region, of sharing a common culture and a history, feelings of respect, approval, loyalty, pride and honour'. It also includes the development of 'a sense of responsibility and obligation' (Porter, 1996, p. 4).
- Education for 'citizenship as competence' – one of the important dimensions of civic education is to develop among pupils the political literacy and a shared set of dispositions so that they can be 'active, involved and effective citizens'. In other words, pupils should have a basic understanding of 'the structure of power, of how resources are distributed and how the affairs of an institution are normally conducted', and they have the competence to consider 'possible alternative arrangements for organizing society, making decisions and settling disputes' (Porter, 1996, pp. 5-6). It was argued that this element of civic education must be given prominence, otherwise civic education would be fruitless and could easily become the training of docile and compliant subjects (Porter, 1996, p. 8).

Therefore, it is important to note that the concept of civic education is politically centered, as it concerns the pupils' understanding of, attitudes towards, and competence in the political life within a state. Porter's definition of civic education is adopted for empirical purpose. The three dimensions help in understanding the development of civic education in Hong Kong from the post-war period. Within the three dimensions, it is possible to consider what was included or, more importantly, missed in the government policy on civic education. However, civic education might not be a politically-charged issue for governments and groups in other countries. In this regard, the next section will

examine why civic education was so vital in the context of Hong Kong.

## 2. The Historical-Political Conditions of Hong Kong and the Controversy over Civic Education

Civic education was a controversial and significant issue in Hong Kong in the post-war period because the government regarded civic education as a potential threat to the legitimacy and stability of British colonial rule in Hong Kong. Moreover, it was associated with the interest of Chinese authorities, be they the Kuomintang (KMT) / Chinese Nationalist Party or the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), in pursuing anti-colonial propaganda through schooling in the territory (Morris and Chan, 1997, p. 101). Hong Kong, as a tiny British colony, was distinctive because it had a strong state, China, as its closest neighbour. This meant that political, social or economic events in China frequently threatened the stability of the colonial regime in Hong Kong. In addition, there was a strong cultural link between Hong Kong and China, with over 97 percent of Hong Kong residents being Chinese. Despite one and a half centuries of colonial rule, the local Chinese culture was largely intact (Tse, 1997, p. 4). This delicate position of Hong Kong led to the government to be concerned over China's interest in Hong Kong's civic education. This unease galvanised the government into intervening in school curricula, and aimed at squeezing civic education out of school curricula.

Immediately after the Second World War, the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) was active in running schools and promoting political education in Hong Kong. The nationalistic and anti-colonial tone of the KMT's political education led to the wariness of the colonial government towards their activities. It was estimated that in the 1940s and 1950s, the KMT had some 35 private schools under its influence in Hong Kong (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, pp. 252-253). These schools endeavoured to 'hold ceremonies on Chinese national occasions, at which there is a ritual observance towards the picture of Dr. Sun, and "community" shouting of party "slogans".' Therefore, in 1946, the Acting Secretary for Chinese Affairs and other officials in Hong Kong expressed unease at the interference in Hong Kong schools by the KMT. The Secretary commented that 'the Kuomintang has always put the education of Chinese youth in its political tenets, which are, of course, those of its founder, Dr. Sun Yat Sen, in the forefront of its programme of propaganda' (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p. 251). In response to the KMT's political education in schools in Hong Kong, the Education Department of Hong Kong required amendments to sections of KMT-sponsored History, Civics and Geography textbooks in 1948. Subsequently, the threat from the activities of the KMT in local schools gradually diminished along with the growing success of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in China. The CCP's activities in schooling in Hong Kong presented the government with a more urgent need to control and de-politicize education (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p.

254).

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the fleeing of people from the political turmoil in China to Hong Kong created massive social demands for the extension of schooling opportunities. Due to the shortage of school places, trade unionists of leftist persuasion established a number of workers' children's schools in Hong Kong. As a consequence, Hong Kong saw the rise of so-called patriotic, leftist or pro-China schools (Morris and Chan, 1997, p. 102). What distinguished these schools was that they traditionally supported the Beijing government and had the strongest links with the Chinese authorities and schools in mainland China (Postiglione, 1992, p. 35). Under the sponsorship of the CCP, they did not represent Hong Kong's colonial status in a favourable light in their curricula, which was regarded by the Hong Kong government as a detriment to the legitimacy and stability of the colonial regime.

With the success of the CCP in the Chinese Civil War and the intensity of the Cold War, the Hong Kong Government increasingly felt a sense of its own insecurity and was especially concerned about the activities of the CCP in local schools (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p. 254). At the end of 1948, the Governor, Sir Alexander Grantham, warned of the insidious dangers of political education in schools, stating that:

...there are those, and to my mind they are the most evil, who wish to use schools as a means of propaganda and poison the minds of their young pupils with their particular political dogma or creed of the most undesirable kind... This deforming and twisting of the youthful mind is most wicked and the Hong Kong Government will tolerate no political propaganda in schools (*South China Morning Post*, 16 December 1948).

In order to curb the Communist anti-colonial education in schools, the Director of Education amended the Education Ordinance that provided him with the power to refuse the registration of any school teacher, de-register a registered teacher and close any school. With the new legislation, the Education Department took direct action to suppress the Communist anti-colonial education in schools. For example, it closed some leftist schools and de-registered some teachers linked to the pro-China schools. When schools were closed, government schools were quickly constructed in the vicinity as substitutes (Morris, 1997, pp. 331-332). The Communist political propaganda in schools also meant that the Education Department had to intervene in school curricula. In the 1950s it adopted a new approach to curriculum matters, by drawing up model syllabuses that were highly apolitical in nature for use in schools. The intention was to use these syllabuses to counter the anti-colonial education in schools (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p. 258). The next section will examine how government intervention in school curricula eventually led to the development of a curriculum policy network in Hong Kong.

### 3. The Development of the Curriculum Policy Network

In spite of the fact that the Education Department, with the amended legislation and the model syllabuses, made some progress in controlling and depoliticising school curricula, it became increasingly evident in the 1960s that the initial interventions were insufficient. This meant that the Education Department had to strengthen its influence over school curricula. In order to develop and implement a centralised curriculum, the cooperation of teacher educators, schools, principals and teachers was essential. Therefore, they were incorporated into the process of curriculum making, and a curriculum policy network developed. In other words, this curriculum policy network was created, not because of the intrinsic power of the teaching profession, but because the colonial nature of Hong Kong and the anti-colonial political education in schools meant that the government had to assert its influence on school curricula.

The initial interventions of the Education Department in school education suffered several setbacks. First, although the Education Department devised model syllabuses for use in schools, in reality it had limited influence over school curricula. These model syllabuses were not compulsory and, thus, their implementation depended heavily on the decisions of school bodies and individual schools. The Annual Report for 1952 – 53 elaborated that:

It has been made clear that it is not the intention to compel schools to follow these syllabuses; schools may use them if they wish, but are free to make any reasonable modifications to meet their own particular needs (Education Department, 1953; cited in Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p. 259).

In fact, a large number of schools were not willing to follow the model syllabuses. The expansion of public schooling in the 1950s and 60s was largely through the work of non-government schools. These non-government schools were established either by the missionary groups that fled the political uncertainties in China to Hong Kong or by other school bodies (Education & Manpower Branch and Education Department, 1991, p. 11). Although these schools were not as hostile to the colonial regime as the KMT's or CCP's schools were, they were unwilling to follow the model syllabuses because they insisted on the freedom to teach their beliefs on their own curricula. This placed limits on the government's influence on school curricula. The Education Department saw it as a loophole for pupils to be exposed to materials that might be viewed by the government as sensitive or controversial (Morris, Kan and Morris, 2001, pp. 167-168).

The second setback to the government's initial interventions was the continued political education in pro-China schools in the 1950s and 60s. Although the Education Department succeeded in closing some pro-China schools sponsored by the CCP, it

became evident that public opinion and the media in Hong Kong were against a direct and wholesale attack on these schools (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p. 256). Moreover, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies was concerned with the possible damage to the international image of Hong Kong, if the Director of Education launched comprehensive sanctions against these pro-China schools in the territory (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p. 255). As a consequence, many pro-China schools survived the initial government interventions. They rejected the model syllabuses offered by the Education Department (Postiglione, 1992, p. 9; Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p. 257). Perhaps the most direct blow to the government occurred in the mid-1960s, when anti-colonial riots that paralleled the Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China (PRC) broke out in Hong Kong. A large number of staff and students in these schools took part in the civil disturbances. Hence, the government criticised them for being involved in political indoctrination (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p. 257).

According to Morris and Chan (1997, p. 103), the civil disturbances in Hong Kong in the mid-1960s were a blunt warning to the Education Department of the insufficiency of its initial control over school education. They underlined 'Hong Kong's sensitivity to events in the PRC, the tenuous legitimacy of the colonial government and the substantial gulf between the government and the populace'. Therefore, the Education Department had to strengthen its influence on school curricula. During the early 1970s, it decided to unify curricula that were adopted in all sorts of schools by identifying and formulating a common core curriculum, which was equivalent to the national curriculum in other countries (Education Department, 1975, p. 8). Furthermore, by formulating the common core curriculum, the Education Department wanted to depoliticise education and foster a curriculum that primarily concentrated on the academic needs of students (Morris and Chan, 1997, p. 103; Education Department, 1972, p. 17).

In order to strengthen its influence on school curricula without excessive difficulty and political disruption, the cooperation of schools and teaching experts was essential. Therefore, the Education Department allowed them access to the regular process of curriculum making (Morris, 1995, p. 92). In this sense, the curriculum policy network was state-centred. The cooperation of the teaching profession was important for a number of reasons. First, the formulation and regular revisions of a common core curriculum for all primary and secondary levels were an enormous educational project, particularly under the circumstances where few educational systems in the world have matched the rate of growth of educational provision in Hong Kong. The Education Department perceived that the involvement of the teaching profession in curriculum making was important to the development of a well-balanced and high-quality curriculum plan (Morris, 1990, p. 2).

Second, the cooperation of the teaching profession was essential because it would avoid political disruption. As most schools in Hong Kong were privately operated and these non-government schools traditionally had a high degree of autonomy in setting their own curricula, the government needed the cooperation of non-government schools,

principals and teachers in implementing a uniform curriculum across different sectors of schools (McClelland, 1991, p. 109). The government's initiative to enact a common core curriculum meant that schools had to relinquish part of their inherent autonomy in curriculum matters. In order to acquire their support, the Education Department had to offer the teaching profession, not only from government schools but also from non-government sector, an access to the policy process (Morris, McClelland and Wong, 1997, p. 31). Consequently, a policy network in curriculum was created in the early 1970s. Curriculum making became more complex, with the teaching profession entering into the policy process (Postiglione, 1992, p. 13).

The curriculum policy network was a professional network, which encompassed the Education Department and the mainstream teaching profession. The teaching experts who were incorporated into the curriculum-making process were the mainstream as opposed to the groups representing pro-China schools. They were the representatives of teacher educators, school authorities, principals and teachers. Colleges of education, school bodies (Hong Kong Private Schools Association, Catholic Board of Education, Hong Kong Pre-vocational Schools Council, Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council, Vocational Training Council), school head associations (Association of Principals of Government Secondary School, Hong Kong Aided Secondary School Vice-Principals Association etc.) and the two largest teachers' unions (Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union, Hong Kong Aided School Teachers' Association) nominated the representatives of teacher educators, schools, principals and teachers to the curriculum policy network (Cheng, 1983, pp. 134-145). Their nominations needed confirmation by the Education Department. On the other hand, the Director of Education might directly appoint the members who could represent the teaching profession to the government (Cheng, 1983, p. 104). Ostensibly, the representatives were appointed in a personal capacity. This was because, as argued by a curriculum officer, it would damage the neutral image of curriculum making if the Education Department named the teaching experts as representing particular groups (interview with a senior curriculum officer). However, in fact, they performed the role of channelling the views of the teaching profession into the process of curriculum making (Cheng, 1983, p. 109).

So far, I have argued that the curriculum policy network that covered the Education Department and the teaching profession developed because the colonial nature of Hong Kong and the anti-colonial education in schools galvanised the government into intervening in school curricula. In order to develop curriculum policy, the Education Department created the network with the teaching profession. The next section will examine the nature and characteristics of this network.

## 4. The Nature of the Curriculum Policy Network

The curriculum policy network that covered the Education Department and the teaching profession was distinctive. Generally speaking, it was stable and highly integrated. There was regular interaction between participants and a high level of exclusion. According to Marsh and Rhodes' typology (1992a; 1992b), it can be regarded as a stable policy community. Central to the network were four major components, which will be discussed below.

### 4.1 Number of Participants and Single Decision-making Centre

Unlike typical policy communities, the curriculum policy network contained a relatively large number of participants. Through nominations by the recognised educational groups and organisations, about thirty teaching experts were provided with access to the network (McClelland, 1991, p. 112). These teaching experts represented a variety of organisations, including colleges of education, schools, school head associations and teachers' unions.

Nevertheless, the network was stable and had a high degree of continuity because there was a clear state-led view of education. It has been shown that in the post-war period, the Hong Kong government as a whole saw civic education as detrimental to the legitimacy and stability of the colonial regime. This apprehension was sharpened by the anti-colonial political education in pro-China schools. There was clear agreement within the government over the direction of curriculum policy. The government agencies, such as the Governor and the Secretary for Chinese Affairs that were able to affect the curriculum policy, agreed with the Department of Education that it was politically expedient to intervene in school curricula and marginalise civic education (Sweeting, 1989; *South China Morning Post*, 16 December 1948). In these circumstances, other government agencies were unlikely to encroach onto the turf of the curriculum policy network. Therefore, the network had a high degree of stability and continuity.

In addition, the network was stable because there was a single decision-making centre provided by the Education Department. Although within the network there was a relatively large number of participants, the Education Department was able to provide policy leadership. The Education Department could influence the teaching experts in curriculum-making by careful control of the agenda, careful selection of members and, sometimes, ignoring recommendations which are not consistent with the government's view (Morris, 1995, p. 100). In other words, the Education Department was significant in setting agendas and initiating policy within the network. Interaction between the Education Department and the teaching experts in the network was highly institutionalised. The senior civil servants from the Education Department normally chaired the meetings

with the teaching experts, whilst the Advisory Inspectorate Division of the Education Department was the secretariat. This allowed the Education Department considerable influence over agenda-setting and policy-initiation (CDC, 1993, p. 2). Changes often emanated from the Education Department and were responses to problems identified by the education officials who 'played the key role in both the identification of a problem and the selection of a solution'. As a result, the Education Department was unlikely to be captured by various interests within the network. Moreover, with the Education Department providing policy leadership, the large number of participants neither destabilised the network nor resulted in policy inertia or policy mess.

## 4.2 Mutual Dependence and Positive-Sum Game

The single decision-making centre demonstrates that the relationship between the Education Department and the teaching profession within the policy process was asymmetric. It was the Education Department which created the routine relationship and considerably influenced the educational agenda and policy proposals. However, it is important to note that the network relationship between the Education Department and the teaching profession was essentially different from cooptive arrangements. This was the case for a number of reasons.

First, the relationship was not one of dependence and deference. Rather, it was characterised by the structure of mutual dependence and resource exchange. As we have seen, the teaching profession needed access to the curriculum-making process to defend its interests and values. On the other hand, it was difficult, if not impossible, for the Education Department to formulate and implement a common curriculum without the cooperation of schools, teachers and teacher educators. The government needed their professional skills and information in the development and regular revisions of the common curriculum. Perhaps more importantly, as most schools in Hong Kong were non-government schools over which the Education Department could not exercise direct control, it was essential for the Education Department to seek their support for the common curriculum in order to avoid policy dislocation and political reverberation.

Second, in the Education Department and teaching profession relationship power is a positive-sum. In order to gain the support of the integrated teaching representatives, the government had to accord them legitimacy and power in the policy process. In fact, the teaching experts played more than a token role in making and revising curriculum plans. Despite the fact that an outright rejection of government's proposals was herculean, there were norms within the network enabling the teaching experts to affect curriculum policy by modifying the proposals put before them. According to an ex-member of the network, there was a reciprocal understanding within the network that:

The Education Department had the responsibility to take into account our opinions to



revise original curriculum plans. After doing so, the revised curriculum plans had to go through the discussion once again. It was necessary for the Education Department to implement a curriculum proposal with the consent of the integrated teaching experts in the network. Generally speaking, the Education Department had to follow the recommendations made by the incorporated teaching experts. If the educational officials genuinely thought that our recommendations were inappropriate or impractical, they needed to return to the committee and give a detailed explanation (interview with an ex-member of the CDC).

These norms shaped the interaction between the Education Department and the teaching profession within the network. There was frequent and regular interaction between the Education Department and the teaching profession. It was difficult for the Education Department to completely ignore or reject the policy recommendations made by the teaching profession in the policy process. Hence, contrary to the arrangements of cooption, the Education Department and teaching profession relationship was not a zero-sum, with the latter sacrificing entire power to the former. Instead, the influence of the teaching profession, which derived from the structure of resource inter-dependence, was secured. In this situation, curriculum policy still reflected the goals of the educational officials. However, their goals were modified by their relationship with the teaching profession (Morris, McClelland and Wong, 1997, pp. 35-39).

Third, the structure of the relationship, through the inclusion and exclusion of certain issues and groups, served the interests and demands of both parties, which will be discussed later. All of this demonstrates that, unlike cooption, the network relationship between the Education Department and the teaching profession was one of resource inter-dependence, negotiation and mutual advantage.

Although the norms within the network enabled the teaching experts to modify the government's curriculum proposals, it did not bring about many disputes in curriculum making during the 1970s. This was because within the network there was a strong consensus between the teaching profession and the Education Department on the system and parameters of school curriculum, which I shall examine in the next part.

### **4.3 The Consensus and Integration of the Network**

The relatively large number of participants did not lead to the perpetual conflicts over curriculum policy within the network. The integration of the network was achieved by the consensus between the Education Department and the teaching profession on the system and parameters of school curriculum. First, there was clear agreement within the network on a centralised system of curriculum. The teaching profession agreed with the Education Department that a common core curriculum made by the Education Department in close consultation with the teaching profession should be imposed on all types of

schools (interview with a senior curriculum officer).

As discussed above, the Education Department in the 1960s and the 1970s pursued the uniformity of school curricula. The government drive to devise a common course of education was certain to dilute the non-government schools' traditional autonomy in designing, adjusting and implementing their own curricula. Nevertheless, the Education Department managed to reach a consensus with the teaching profession. This consensus was an outcome of compromise in which the government controlled which subjects were available on the common core curriculum. It also determined the content of school subjects and the textbooks used. On the other hand, 'schools were allowed to decide which subjects were selected, the time devoted to them, the nature of the informal and spiritual curriculum, and the selection of pupils' (Morris, Kan and Morris, 2001, p. 167). In other words, under the consensus the teaching profession gave up part of their inherent autonomy in curriculum matters in return for being allowed to retain their right to select subjects available and the language of instruction.

Second, within the network there was also a strong consensus on the direction and parameters of school curriculum. Both the Education Department and the teaching experts believed that school curricula should be apolitical and academic-oriented. It has been argued that the historical-political conditions of Hong Kong were delicate and peculiar because Hong Kong did not have the prospect of attaining political independence and was sensitive to politics in China (Morris and Marsh, 1992, p. 258). Hence, the government, in general, and the Education Department, in particular, wanted to ensure 'that the Hong Kong government's own status was not threatened, that a society which comprised mainly refugees from China could focus on their own economic advancement, and that the political leaders of the People's Republic of China were not embarrassed by the activities in Hong Kong of groups sympathetic to the Guomindang (KMT)' (Sweeting, 1995, p. 244). In effect, the Education Department 'placed a premium on the conscious pursuit of a school curriculum which strived to avoid political issues'.

Likewise, the mainstream teaching profession supported the apolitical and academic orientation of the school curriculum. It is interesting in this case that the consensus between the Education Department and the teaching profession on the direction and parameters of school curriculum had already emerged before the policy network developed in the early 1970s. In the 1940s, the heads of schools expressed their support for avoiding sensitive political issues in schools because of their concern about communist activities and, particularly, its political propaganda in Hong Kong. They were aware that 'schools were targeted by teachers and / or students planted in them "with a definite aim in view"'. In a confidential meeting called by the Education Department officials, although some school heads felt sympathy for a new Chinese Government, they held that 'the mental regimentation, the imposition of political tests, and the exploitation of immature minds must offend us all as educators' (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, pp. 256-257). The common anxiety about the communist political education stimulated an initial consensus

between the Education Department and the teaching profession on avoiding political issues in the curriculum.

The rapidly growing modern sector of the Hong Kong economy from the mid-1960s, to which educational qualifications served as the primary source of access, and the elitist education system reinforced the consensus on apolitical and academic-oriented education. Here, the term 'academic' refers to the study that was: 'geared to the goals of tertiary education' and its content was: 'derived from the conventional academic disciplines', such as English, Chinese, Mathematics and Science (Morris and Marsh, 1992, pp. 254-255). In the 1960s, the rapid industrialisation of Hong Kong placed the territory in the forefront of the Asian economies. As the economy grew, educational qualifications ensured access to well-paid employment: 'in a transient society where mobility was based on achieved rather than ascribed criteria'. This: 'placed a premium on the selective and allocative role of schooling' (Morris and Chan, 1997, p. 104).

However, the education system was exceptionally elitist and examination driven (Morris, McClelland and Wong, 1997, p. 33). Entry to secondary schools was managed through a publicly examined academic aptitude test. Accordingly, the highest achievers were assigned to popular schools. The transition from form 3 to form 4 at the end of compulsory schooling was managed through a Junior Secondary Education Assessment System. At this juncture, 70 percent of pupils obtained subsidised places in form 4, and many left schools (McClelland, 1991, p. 111). At the end of form 5, pupils sat for the all-important Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), which determined who could enter the sixth form. Likewise, pupils at the end of form 7 took the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (A-Level). For every 1,000 pupils who entered primary schools in 1968, 660 took the HKCEE in 1978, 130 entered the sixth form, and 22 went to local universities (Morris, McClelland and Wong, 1997, p. 33).

The highly elitist and examination driven school system brought about immense pressure from parents and students on schools to pursue an essentially academic-oriented curriculum, or so-called high-status knowledge, because it was directly linked to the access to the elitist school system, matriculation requirements and employment opportunities. Civic education, which did not enhance the pupils' opportunities for higher education and better employment, was generally neglected (Morris and Marsh, 1992, p. 256). Under these circumstances, schools were drawn towards stressing primarily the importance of academic knowledge for pupils, regardless of their academic ability or civic and cultural needs. Whether or not this emphasis on academic knowledge fitted well with their professional judgement did not matter. This was because they strongly believed that it was their duty to prepare pupils for higher education and well-paid employment. Moreover, they were well aware that: 'their school's reputation and, hence, its ability to recruit high-band pupils, [was] more intimately associated with its examination results than with other measures of success', such as effectively transmitting social and political knowledge and values (McClelland, 1991, p. 119). Consequently, the teaching profession

generally supported the government's plan to depoliticise the common core curriculum.

In addition, colleges of education and other tertiary institutions in Hong Kong were content with the apolitical, academic and abstract nature of the school curriculum, especially at senior secondary levels. To boost their academic reputations domestically and internationally, they focused on the performances of pupils in traditional academic disciplines in their matriculation requirements. By doing so, they could also maximise the academic standard and prospect of success in higher education of their intake. A senior curriculum officer argued that: 'the tertiary institutions had to consider their own interests and, thus, were not supportive of any progressive move to introduce political, social or cultural knowledge into the curriculum for matriculation' (interview with a senior curriculum officer).

The consensus on an apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum united not only the curriculum policy network but also the teaching profession as a whole. As there was an absence of conflict over the direction and parameters of curriculum policy, the large number of participants from the teaching profession did not destabilise the policy network. A member of the network pointed out that on many curriculum matters the teaching experts in the network were united, because: 'there were shared concerns and values in the local educational community' (interview with a member of the CDC). A senior curriculum officer also argued that: 'although the organisation of many educational groups was loose, schools and the teaching experts were united by the shared interests and values of the profession' (interview with a senior curriculum officer). In short, within the network there was a clear and firm consensus that privileged a centralised system of curriculum and apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum policy. In doing so it ensured that their interests and ideas were served.

Moreover, this consensus also had the support of the general public because it fitted the political culture of the Chinese society in Hong Kong. In other words, the network was quite successful in winning what Gramsci called 'a war of position' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 235). As Morris and Chan (1997, p. 103) argued, the de-politicising strategies employed by the government was reinforced by: 'the character of Hong Kong Chinese', which they portrayed as: 'utilitarian, materialistic and family-oriented'. On the political culture of Hong Kong Chinese, Leung (1996, p. 13) elaborated:

As refugees, mostly from pre-modern rural parts of China, who had arrived seeking a safe haven in a borrowed time and place, the population's traditional apathy was reinforced by their quest for stability and quick material gains in the Colony...It bred an attitude of indifference and aloofness to society, resulting in low civic consciousness and low social participation.

This widespread political apathy in society led to the public support for the minimal role of politics and maximum role of conventional academic disciplines in schooling (Morris and

Chan, 1997, p. 104).

#### 4.4 The Isolation and Institutionalisation of the Network

The curriculum policy network was also distinctive because it had a high degree of isolation from the educational groups that were radical in their demands and from other social and political interests. Although there was a large number of participants in the network, it did not include diametrically opposed interests. Access to the curriculum-making process was highly restricted to the educational organisations that shared the consensus on the system and parameters of school curriculum. The consensus between the Education Department and the mainstream teaching profession acted as an important means of exclusion. Any groups that did not share the consensus on the apolitical and academic tenor of curriculum were automatically thrown out of the domain of curriculum making. The leader of an educational group representing pro-China schools argued:

I think that we cannot use the term 'depoliticisation' to capture the characteristics of the mechanism of curriculum making in Hong Kong. Quite the opposite, the mechanism was markedly ridden by political motives. Obviously the government did not want our politics to be present in the mechanism. Since we were a pro-China educational group, the government did not invite us to participate in the process of curriculum making. Hence, the traditional view of the curriculum-making mechanism as 'depoliticised' should be changed in the light of the government's exclusion of the pro-China groups from the process of decision-making (interview with the leader of an educational pressure group).

The pro-China groups in Hong Kong were not the only ones to be excluded from the curriculum policy network. Groups like the Education Action Group, which frequently challenged the deliberate neglect of civic education in schools, alerted the suspicions of educational officials and so could not access the process of curriculum making (Sweeting, 1997, p. 30). Moreover, political and social interests also could not access the professional network (Cheng, 1983, pp. 134-145).

The curriculum policy network also had an institutional basis that provided a further means of exclusion. In 1972, the Education Department established the Curriculum Development Committee (CDC), which was central to the network and the process of curriculum making. It institutionalised the professional nature of the network and the privileged position of teaching experts in curriculum decision-making. According to the rules of the CDC, members involved in the detailed curriculum planning and compilation of syllabuses consisted of: 'principals and teachers from all types of school, both government and non-government, university and college of education lecturers, members of the Examinations Division and inspectors of schools' (Education Department, 1975, p.

6). Membership of this institution ensured access to the network, and thus the CDC provided the network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession with an institutional cover. Consequently, it was easy for the curriculum policy network to exclude groups that did not belong to the category of teaching profession.

In addition, the institution of the CDC ensured frequent interaction between the Education Department and the teaching profession in curriculum making. In the past, the Education Department did occasionally consult with teacher educators, principals and teachers on curriculum issues, but the consultation was neither regular nor guaranteed (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, pp. 56-57). However, the CDC transformed this amorphous pattern of consultation. A member of the network told me that as enjoined by the rules of the CDC, all of the government's curriculum proposals had to go through the meetings with the representatives of the teaching profession before they were finalised. There was no occasion on which the Education Department implemented a curriculum proposal without consulting with and gaining the support of teaching experts in the CDC (interview with a member of the CDC).

So far, it has been argued that the network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession in the area of curriculum policy was distinctive in a variety of dimensions. First, it was stable, because there was a clear state-led view of education and a single decision-making centre provided by the Education Department. Second, the network was highly integrated, because there was a strong consensus between the Education Department and the teaching profession on a centralised curriculum system and apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum policy. This consensus united not only the network but also the education community as a whole. Third, despite the large number of participants, there was a high degree of exclusion. The network did not include diametrically opposed interests. Rather, access to the network was highly restricted to the educational groups and organisations that accepted the consensus on the system and parameters of curriculum. The consensus and the institution of CDC acted as effective means of exclusion. In short, the network can be seen as a stable policy community. The next section will examine how it affected the curriculum policy on civic education from the 1970s.

## **5. The Impact of the Network on Civic Education Policy**

This section will argue that the curriculum policy network significantly affected the curriculum policy on civic education from the 1970s. It influenced the curriculum policy through the mechanisms of consensus building and resource exchange that substantially enhanced the government's ability to intervene in school curricula. Therefore, a common core curriculum was implemented across different sectors of schools without a great deal of difficulty and political disruption. Moreover, the network defined the parameters of

school curriculum and constantly excluded the groups that challenged the apolitical and academic-oriented orientation of curriculum policy. As a result, civic education was deliberately and consistently neglected in the common curriculum.

Firstly, the network was important in shaping the curriculum policy on civic education because it affected the government's ability to intervene in school curricula. By establishing the mechanisms of consensus building and resource exchange, the network increased the infrastructural power of the government and provided it with a means to influence the curricula that were actually adopted in schools. On the one hand, non-government schools traditionally had a high degree of autonomy in designing and selecting their own curricula, which constrained the government's influence on curriculum matters (Morris, Kan and Morris, 2001, p. 167). Therefore, the government's initial attempts to manipulate school curricula by offering model syllabuses were not successful. In order to develop a curriculum policy, the cooperation of the teaching profession was essential. On the other hand, the Education Department dominated the curriculum decision-making at the central level. It drew up and disseminated, but could not ensure the implementation of, model syllabuses in schools (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p. 258). In other words, both the Education Department and the teaching profession possessed significant resources for curriculum development.

As the curriculum policy network was created in the early 1970s, the mechanisms of mutual dependence and resource exchange developed between the teaching profession and the Education Department. The Education Department allowed the representatives of the teaching profession a privileged position in curriculum making and to retain their decisions on the combination of subjects available, teaching timetable, the nature of informal curriculum and the language of instruction. In return, the Education Department gained their support for a centralised curriculum system. The teaching profession agreed to relinquish part of their traditional autonomy in curriculum matters and approved of a common core curriculum, under which the Education Department controlled subjects available and their content (Morris, Kan and Morris, 2001, p. 167). In terms of curriculum development, Morris and Marsh (1992, p. 253) described the result as 'a compromise between a *laissez-faire* system and one that is centrally controlled'.

This structure of resource exchange was important because it increased the infrastructural power of the government in curriculum matters. It cleared the way for the Education Department to directly intervene in school curricula. It was a major step towards the uniformity of school curricula. With the support of the mainstream teaching profession, the Education Department was able to propel forward its agenda for a common curriculum smoothly, which accorded the Education Department strong influence over curriculum issues. For example, in the common curriculum (Education Department, 1971):

'No instruction may be given by any school except in accordance with a syllabus approved

by the Director.' [Education Regulations, 1971, S92 (1)]

'No person shall use any document for instruction in a class in any school unless particulars of the title, author and publisher of the document and such other particulars of the document as the Director may require have been furnished to the Director not less than fourteen days previously.' [Education Regulations, 1971, S92(1)]

Therefore, the network allowed: 'those in power to control the formal curriculum' and provided: 'a means for working towards uniformity of provision and for protecting schools from the demands of various pressure groups' (Morris and Marsh, 1992, p. 258).

The network also increased the infrastructural power of the government because it legitimised the common core curriculum. The issue of legitimacy was particularly significant for the government of Hong Kong, due to the fact that the colonial status of Hong Kong contributed to a built-in legitimacy crisis in the Hong Kong polity (Cheng, 1992, p. 98). Moreover, a legitimacy problem also arose from the non-democratic nature of Hong Kong Government. The government was: 'in a state of legitimacy deficit because it [did] not possess the necessary legitimacy which would otherwise come forth through election' (Cheng, 1992, p. 99). Lack of legitimacy created difficulties for the Education Department in making and, particularly, in implementing its curriculum policy. Teacher educators, schools, principals and teachers: 'carry with them an inherent suspicion of government and an opposition to its policies' (Postiglione, 1992, p. 13). To avoid this legitimacy deficit and political disruption, it was important for the Education Department to secure popular support in curriculum making.

The curriculum policy network provided a mechanism for resource exchange in terms of legitimacy between the Education Department and the teaching profession. On the one hand, the teaching experts and the organisations they represented gained: 'legitimacy for being involved in the policymaking process' (Cheng, 1992, p. 101). The network also provided the teaching representatives with a chance to voice their concern within the mechanism of curriculum making. In return: 'having the chance to be heard by government increases the satisfaction of groups, which thereby yields a threshold level of legitimacy to the government policies' (Postiglione, 1992, p. 13). By incorporating the representatives of the teaching profession into the network, the legitimacy of curriculum-making process at large and curriculum policy in particular was greatly enhanced. Given that, the Education Department was better placed to defend and sell its curriculum policy to schools and the wider educational community.

Within the network, curriculum policy was made through negotiations. The representatives of the teaching profession involved in the process of curriculum making could then assist in implementation. In fact, they helped the Education Department to defend and sell the agreed policies to schools and the educational community. A member of the network pointed out that the integrated teaching experts had the responsibility to



defend in public the curriculum policies that were made within the network (interview with a member of the CDC). Normally, the teaching experts realised their responsibility by explaining the logic and pinpointing the strengths of official syllabuses or other curriculum innovations in conferences, seminars and workshops organised by the Education Department and attended by principals or teachers. This made it easier for the Education Department to muster support for its curriculum policy.

Consequently, with the increase in the government's infrastructural power in terms of influence and political support, the Education Department by the mid-1970s managed to formulate and implement an official curriculum across different sectors of schools without a great deal of difficulty or political repercussion. In 1974, the Education Department published the *White Paper on Secondary Education* and introduced a common curriculum. A document of the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) stated that:

In the development of the junior secondary curriculum, one milestone was the introduction of the concept of a common-core curriculum. The 1974 White Paper 'Secondary Education in Hong Kong over the Next Decade' recommended, *inter alia*, that all children should follow a common course of general education throughout the nine years of free and compulsory education (CDC, 1993, p. 3).

Subsequently, the common curriculum was extended to the whole secondary education. By the mid-1970s the vast majority of schools adopted the recommended syllabuses made by the network and their associated textbooks (McClelland, 1991, p. 114).

The new system of common curriculum also brought the teaching activities at pro-China secondary schools under the government's supervision. As almost all schools followed the common course of curriculum, the pro-China schools found themselves in an awkward predicament. It was difficult for them to compete with other schools in recruiting students and ensuring their students' access to higher education. Thus, the Education Department, together with stronger legal powers, eventually forced these schools, that had previously rejected the model syllabuses, to join the scheme of common curriculum in the 1970s (Postiglione, 1992, p. 9).

Secondly, the curriculum policy network was important in the development of curriculum policy on civic education because its shared views defined what knowledge ought to be included in school curricula. Perhaps more importantly, the consensus between the Education Department and the teaching profession on the apolitical and academic tenor of curriculum defined what knowledge was to be marginalised or excluded from schooling. In other words, the network greatly affected the curriculum policy on civic education by shaping the agenda within the curriculum-making process. Therefore, when the curriculum policy was made, it was not simply the result of a rational assessment of available options. Rather, it reflected

the values and consensus within the network.

It has been shown that within the network there was clear agreement between the Education Department and the mainstream teaching profession on the direction and parameters of curriculum policy. They had a strong consensus on curriculum policy, which was dedicated to the dissemination of academic and abstract knowledge in schools. Meanwhile, the Education Department and the teaching profession regarded civic education as either a threat or a triviality that needed to be avoided in schools. Under this consensus, any knowledge that was academic-oriented was regarded as legitimate knowledge that warranted the consideration of being infused into the teaching and learning in schools. By the same token, civic education that did not fall into this category of legitimate knowledge was neglected in the curriculum-making process. As the Education Department and the teaching profession were integrated and united around the principle of an apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum, they were able to dominate the agenda.

Therefore, from the 1970s the curriculum-makers pursued an apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum in the policy process. They focused on the conventional academic disciplines such as English, Chinese, Mathematics and Science when making and reviewing the curriculum policy. They emphasised the importance of 'providing pupils with access to the basic disciplines of learning' (Morris, Kan and Morris, 2001, p. 167). On the other hand, until the mid-1980s, 'political education was never stated as an explicit educational objective in any official educational document'. The issue of civic education was consciously excluded from the agenda. The Education Department and the teaching profession were 'sensitive to and suspicious of political issues in education and tried to put them under control through the control of the subjects offered and the content and treatment of topics within the formal curriculum' (Tse, 1997, pp. 7-8).

In summary, influenced by the consensus within the network, the curriculum-making process was not neutral. Rather, it privileged academic-oriented knowledge and excluded the issue of student's civic and cultural needs from the agenda. In doing so, it ensured that the interests and ideas of the key actors within the network were served. By privileging academic-oriented knowledge and depoliticising the common core curriculum, the Education Department was able to fill the loopholes for pupils to be exposed to materials that might be viewed by the government as sensitive or controversial. For the teaching profession, it meant that they could eschew sensitive political discussion in schools and concentrate on the teaching of high-status knowledge that was intimately associated with public examinations and schools' reputations.

Consequently, until the mid-1980s, the academic and apolitical orientation of curriculum was strong at both the primary and secondary levels (Morris, Kan and Morris, 2001, p. 167). Civic education was deliberately and consistently overlooked.

The curriculum was depoliticised to the extent that 'for a long time pupils studied very little about modern China and political issues' (Morris, 1995, p. 97). Pupils' exposure to political topics involved 'at most a description of the structure and functions of Government Departments and of the means by which they tackled various social problems' (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p. 260). The only reference to the People's Republic of China (PRC) was in the context of identifying Hong Kong's geographical neighbours. The curriculum policy was biased against civic education; it 'alienated the students from their indigenous nationality and local politics and cultivated them as "subjects" rather than "citizens"' (Tsang, 1994; quoted in Tse, 1997, p. 8).

Finally, the network affected the curriculum policy on civic education by excluding groups opposed to the curriculum policy that constantly shunned civic education. It has been argued in the previous section that access to the curriculum policy network was highly restricted. The groups such as the Federation of Education Workers (FEW) that represented pro-China schools, the Education Action Group (EAG) and other social and political interests could not access the network, because they did not abide by the consensus on school curriculum within the network. The institution of Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) provided the professional network with a further means of exclusion. Although these groups were excluded from the network, they continued to advocate civic education in schools. In the 1970s they mobilised a number of social campaigns in order to muster support for civic education. However, as they had to work outside the network, their voice of concern was easily marginalised in the curriculum-making process. Therefore, they failed to pose any significant challenge to the network and its curriculum policy on civic education (interview with the leader of an educational pressure group).

Consequently, the network covering the Education Department and the mainstream teaching profession dominated the curriculum policy in Hong Kong from the early 1970s. The existence of the network explains why the curriculum policy was biased towards the teaching of conventional academic disciplines whilst the advocacy of civic education was consistently unheeded.

However, since the mid-1980s the network has been under increasing attack because of the processes of decolonisation and democratisation in Hong Kong. The next chapter will examine the impact of these changes in Hong Kong's political environment. It will focus on how the network mediated the effect of hostile circumstances and affected the trajectory of change in civic education policy.

## Chapter Six

### **The Politics of Civic Education in Hong Kong: Curriculum Policy Network and Colonial Transition**

Chapter 2 demonstrated that an argument commonly used to explain policy change in Hong Kong during the transition concentrates on a number of macro-level factors. Despite the importance of network-environment, this chapter will show that the curriculum policy network, because of its structural strength, was equally significant. Its structural advantages, notably its institutional structure, resource inter-dependence and strong consensus, enabled it to survive the processes of decolonisation and democratisation, which precipitated mounting political pressure for change in civic education policy. In the 1980s and 1990s, the network largely remained intact, closed and highly integrated. Its survival meant that it had the ability to mediate growing political pressure and to influence the extent and speed of policy change. Despite the fact that the agenda changed to some extent, it still controlled the decision-making process. Therefore, little change has occurred in the apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum against pressure to the contrary.

This chapter will be divided into two parts; the first will focus on civic education policy in the 1980s and the second on the curriculum policy for post-1997 civic education. The two periods are different in terms of the intensity of pressure for change and its impact on policy. The chapter will begin by examining why the first wave of pressure occurred in the 1980s and look at how the network minimised this pressure by following a strategy of damage limitation. It will then focus on the increasingly immense pressure in the 1990s, in which more domestic groups and the Chinese authorities participated. It will argue that the mounting political pressure led to a complicated picture of policymaking. On the one hand, the network became looser and the agenda changed to a greater extent. On the other hand, as the network was structurally strong, it changed although not dramatically; there was still a high degree of exclusion and integration. By securing control over the further reforms, it managed to limit the extent of policy change. Consequently, the 1996 reforms did not involve an overhaul of the apolitical and academic tenor of the curriculum. Rather, they showed more signs of continuity than change.

#### **Part I**

##### **1. Colonial Transition and Challenges to the Curriculum Policy Network in the 1980s**

In the 1980s, the curriculum policy network covering the Education Department

and mainstream educational groups and organisations was subject to increasing challenge. This chapter will begin by examining why the challenge occurred and how it affected the policy network. In the last chapter, it was demonstrated that the network was embedded in the historical-political conditions of Hong Kong from the 1950s, which meant that the government had to centralise and depoliticise school curricula in order to avoid anti-colonial political education in schools. However, the political conditions of Hong Kong have changed dramatically since the signing of the Sino-British Joint Agreement in 1984. This section will argue that the increasing challenge to the network was a consequence of the changes in Hong Kong's political environment. These contextual changes made it difficult for the network to evade the issue of civic education in schools.

Two closely related political changes took place in Hong Kong from 1984, and both had a significant bearing on the change in civic education. The first political change was the promulgation of the Sino-British Joint Agreement in 1984, which decided that Hong Kong would be returned to China in July 1997 and brought Hong Kong into a period of decolonisation (Lee, 1999, p. 314). The transitional period leading up to the change of flags in Hong Kong was set at nearly 13 years (Bray, 1997, p. 13). Immediately after the signing of the Sino-British Joint Agreement, the Hong Kong Government announced the political reform for the development of representative government, which was the second major political change in Hong Kong during the colonial transition.

In November 1984, the Hong Kong Government published a White Paper, *The Further Development of Representative Government in Hong Kong*. The primary objective of the paper was 'to develop progressively a system of government the authority for which is firmly rooted in Hong Kong, which is able to represent authoritatively the views of the people of Hong Kong, and which is more directly accountable to the people of Hong Kong' (Hong Kong Government, 1984, p. 3). To achieve this objective, the Government introduced elements of electoral representation into the Legislative Council that in the past had been completely dominated by appointees (Hong Kong Government, 1984, p. 14; Wong, 1988, p. 84).

The end of colonialism and the development of a representative system affected the curriculum policy network and its curriculum policy in a number of ways. First, they lessened the importance of avoiding threats to the legitimacy of colonial rule in education. Historically, the Education Department, in close consultation with the representatives of the teaching profession, pursued an apolitical common curriculum that was marked by 'an avoidance of general political issues and of any attempt to develop a clear sense of local or Chinese national identity' (Morris and Sweeting, 1991, p. 265). However, the concern to avoid threats to the legitimacy became less critical for the colonial government from the early 1980s, when 'it became clear that Hong Kong would cease to be a British colony' (Morris and Chan, 1997, p. 101).

Second, the processes of decolonisation and democratisation affected the change in civic education because they gave rise to new problems to which the network did not have

available solutions. With the designated return of Hong Kong to China, the preparation of pupils for the change in national identity became a pressing educational issue during the colonial transition (Tse, 1997, pp. 3-4). Likewise, the development of a representative system made it compelling for Hong Kong to foster politically literate, responsible and participative citizens, who were able to adapt to the new political conditions of Hong Kong (Ting, 1987, p. 12). The leader of an educational pressure group in Hong Kong argued that:

During the colonial transition, the Hong Kong government made public its plan to return power to people in the territory. However, as people in Hong Kong had long been under the colonial governance, they generally lacked a sense of electoral participation. To achieve the steady development of a representative system in Hong Kong, it was necessary for the government to arouse the political literacy and awareness among the public (interview with the leader of an educational pressure group).

Therefore, the White Paper on the development of representative government pointed out the need to promote civic education in society in general, and in schools in particular. It was stated that 'arrangements should be made for the people of Hong Kong to be educated more effectively and comprehensively in political and constitutional matters so that they will be able to understand better all the implications and complexities of proposals for the development of the representative system of government in Hong Kong' (Hong Kong Government, 1984, p. 12).

However, the established agenda within the network did not provide a solution to the new educational problems facing the government and society. The apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum policy could hardly be reconciled with the need to promote politically enlightened citizens. The traditional school curriculum focussed on 'avoiding political and social issues and the contemporary aspects of pupils' culture'. Consequently, 'until the mid 1980s pupils who left school had very little awareness of political and social issues' and a weak sense of national identity (Morris, 1995, p. 127; Lee, 1999, p. 327). In the face of the vast gap between the new educational problems and the traditional school curriculum, there was an upsurge of interest in, and concern for, changing the traditional policy on civic education in the 1980s (Morris, 1990, p. 93).

Third, the change of sovereignty and the process of democratisation influenced the change in common curriculum by bringing the issue of civic education into sharper focus. In other words, it affected the attention paid to civic education that became a major issue in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. The changes in Hong Kong's political environment precipitated politicisation at the societal level, and led to the creation of groups interested in using civic education to shape political culture in Hong Kong in a bid to influence the course of political transition (Bray and Lee, 2001, p. 4). As Sweeting (1997, pp. 31-32) argued, the 1980s and the 1990s was: 'a period when *real politik*

seemed of greater relevance to education policy making than any resort to educational principles. It was a period which witnessed the increasing politicisation and polarisation of educational discourse'.

Therefore, in the 1980s civic education was not only an issue that concerned the groups representing pro-China schools in Hong Kong. Rather, there were three categories of groups that challenged the traditional nature of common curriculum. The first category included political groups, among which the Meeting Point was the most active during the 1980s. Educational pressure groups, such as the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers (FEW), the Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union (PTU) and the Education Action Group (EAG), were in the second category. Lastly, community groups like the Association of Community Organisations (ACO), the Hong Kong Association of Christianity (HKAC) and the Hong Kong Affairs Society (HKAS) also called for curriculum change.

Many of the groups that supported change were intent on using civic education to influence the course of colonial transition by shaping the political culture and civic society in Hong Kong. For instance, the FEW, which represented pro-China schools in Hong Kong, believed that national integration was pivotal to the political and economic prospects of China and Hong Kong. Thus, it called on the government to strengthen civic education in order to nourish nationalistic consciousness among the young generation (Deng, 1984). Likewise, due to its passionate support for the return of Hong Kong to China, the Meeting Point called for nationalistic education to nourish the concepts of state and Chinese identity among pupils (Singtao Daily News, 24 August 1985). In addition, there were groups like the HKAS that championed the development of a democratic system in Hong Kong. Therefore, they argued that the bulk of civic education should be focussed on pupils' political competence and their understanding of human rights, responsibilities and the democratic systems (Hua Qiao Ri Bao, 15 September 1984; Mingpao, 17 September 1985).

Since civic education urgently needed to be in place before the sovereignty handover, a range of groups including the EAG, the FEW, the HKAC, the Meeting Point and the HKAS unanimously called for the formulation of a mandatory civic education syllabus in schools (Mingpao, 30 November 1984; Deng, 1984; Singtao, 24 August 1985; Mingpao, 23 October 1985). Not only did the groups call for curriculum change, they also challenged the network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession directly. A coalition of fourteen groups, including the PTU, FEW, EAG, Meeting Point and HKAC, issued a joint statement in 1984, which made a request for a second curriculum network, a co-ordinating committee, charged with the development of civic education. According to their plan, the co-ordinating committee would channel a wider range of interests, besides the representatives of the teaching profession, into the domain of curriculum decision-making. By doing so, they intended to access the domain and execute their planned changes (Wen Wei Po, 16 September 1984).

Generally, these groups in the 1980s adopted pressure group tactics in campaigning for change. They issued statements and reports on civic education, publicised their policy proposals through media, arranged press conferences to increase public pressure on the government, and met the representatives of the Education Department and teaching profession to press for change (Mingpao, 30 November 1984; Deng, 1984; Wen Wei Po, 16 September 1985; Mingpao, 17 September 1985; Singtao, 24 August 1985). Through these efforts, they had some success in widening discussions in society of any desirable changes to the established curriculum.

So far, I have argued that in the 1980s the curriculum policy network was under increasing pressure for change because of the processes of decolonisation and democratisation in Hong Kong. The colonial transition lessened government anxiety about political education in schools. It created new problems that the network had difficulty in solving. It also created a number of groups interested in using civic education to influence political culture and then the course of political transition in Hong Kong. Consequently, civic education became a major issue once again in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. However, faced by the increasing political pressure, the curriculum policy network largely remained intact in the 1980s. The next section will examine how it survived the changes in Hong Kong's political environment.

## **2. The Maintenance of the Curriculum Policy Network**

This section will examine the maintenance of the curriculum policy network covering the Education Department and the mainstream teaching profession. It will argue that, despite the growing political pressure, the network managed to survive the changes in Hong Kong's political environment and remained stable, independent, highly integrated and closed in the 1980s. The stability and integration of the network were due to a number of structural factors in the relationship between the government and the teaching profession: independence of the Governor; institutionalisation; resource dependence; isolation from other networks; and strong consensus. These structural advantages meant that the network had the ability to withstand external pressure and remain intact. As a result, unlike the manpower policy network (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8), it was in a stronger position to affect the course of policy change.

### **2.1 Independence of the Governor and a Single Decision-making Centre**

The first structural factor which achieved the stability and integration of the curriculum policy network was that it contained only one powerful actor at the executive level. The Education Department, which provided the educational groups and organisations with an access point, held the initiative in curriculum policy-making.



Institutionally speaking, the network was independent of other government actors including the Governor, as its policy decisions did not have to go through the Governor or other government agencies for final approval (interview with a senior curriculum officer). Therefore, as long as there was agreement between the Education Department and the teaching profession within the network on the parameters of curriculum, the potential for rapid politicisation of the policy arena was very small.

Of course, if the highly resourced Governor drew on his power, he had the authority to change the network and its policy agenda on civic education. Actually, in the mid-1980s Governor Wilson recognised: 'the need for the public to be educated more effectively in order to cope with the implications arising from proposals for developing the local system of government' (Wong, 1988, p. 111). Yet he was not directly involved in making curriculum policy on civic education. Although he suggested that civic education could be pursued both through the formal and informal curricula in schools, 'these ideas were general and not clearly defined'. Therefore, the network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession was, in effect, given a great deal of room to manoeuvre (interview with a senior curriculum officer).

The Governor did not intervene in curriculum policy on civic education because he believed that the curriculum-makers had already come up with some fundamental ideas on how to promote civic education. It was necessary for the general public and, especially, the curriculum-makers to have enough space to thrash out the whole issue (FEW, November 1984). Perhaps more importantly, the Governor and the government as a whole intended to maintain a low profile on the issue of civic education in order to avoid the accusation of political indoctrination (South China Morning Post, 4 October 1985). Therefore, the Governor and other government actors distanced themselves from the domain of curriculum decision-making. They did not challenge the central role played by the Education Department in the policy process. As power remained in the Education Department, the curriculum policy network that was created and supported by the educational officials neither collapsed nor disintegrated in the face of increasing pressure for change.

## **2.2 Institutionalisation, Resource Dependence and Exclusion**

The other structural factor which achieved the stability and integration of the curriculum policy network was that, central to the network, there was a high degree of institutionalisation and resource dependence. Although a number of groups interested in civic education pressurised the government to allow them access to the domain of curriculum decision-making, the network managed to preserve its exclusive nature. It was protected by the institutional arrangements of the Curriculum Development Committee/Council (CDC). Moreover, the Education Department did not open itself to other interests besides the teaching profession because it had to rely on teacher educators, schools and

teachers in implementing the curriculum policy on civic education. As a consequence, the groups opposed to the apolitical and academic tenor of curriculum could not access the process of curriculum decision-making.

The last chapter (section 4.3) demonstrated that the curriculum policy network was highly institutionalised. The institution of the CDC was central to the network and the process of curriculum making. In the face of exogenous pressure, it provided the network with an institutional cover by stating clearly the privileged position of the teaching profession in the policy process (Education Department, 1975, p. 6). Membership of the CDC ensured that the representatives of teacher educators, schools and teachers had access to the network. By the same token, as the groups interested in civic education were not members of the CDC, they could not penetrate the domain of curriculum making. Unless the institutional arrangements of curriculum making changed, it was difficult for these excluded groups to break into the network.

However, during the 1980s and the 1990s, neither the Secretary for Education and Manpower nor the Director of Education considered a major change to the institution of CDC. They did not initiate a change to the institution of CDC so as to open the domain of curriculum decision-making to the groups outside the teaching profession. In the Education Commission's report, they argued that 'we fully agree and are pleased to note that there is considerable teacher participation in curriculum development'. It is important to provide the teaching representatives with sufficient opportunities to advise on: 'curriculum development at all levels, plan and produce recommended syllabuses and ensure that textbooks and other related materials are appropriate for the local syllabuses' (Education Commission, 1984, p. 60). These efforts were considered as key to success in curriculum development and thus should continue (Education Commission, 1984, p. 61).

A coalition of groups, including the PTU, the FEW, the EAG, the HKAC and the Meeting Point, strove to persuade the Education Department to create a new decision-making centre that would supplant the established network and give them a say in the curriculum policy on civic education. However, the Education Department did not set up a new policy network in charge of civic education in schools. It did not open itself to other interests besides the teaching profession. On civic education it still insisted that the representatives of the teaching profession were the major interlocutors in the policy process (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 8 November 1984, p. 307). It did not change the network and relinquish its support for the teaching profession because it had to rely on schools, teachers and teacher educators in implementing the curriculum policy on civic education. The last chapter demonstrated that schools had a high degree of autonomy in deciding: 'upon the range of subjects to be offered' (McClelland, 1991, p. 116). Moreover, teachers were allowed to adjust the teaching methods and therefore: 'curriculum development relies heavily on the performance and good work of teachers in the classroom' (Education Department, 1976, p.6). In short, schools: 'exercised a great deal of autonomy as long as they avoided any inputs which might be viewed as subversive'

(Morris, Kan and Morris, 2001, p. 167).

The autonomy of schools in the selection of subjects, teaching methods and informal curriculum meant that it was difficult for the Education Department to impose any curriculum changes on schools without consultation with the teaching profession. When the Education Department responded to a perceived need for civic education by introducing a change to the curriculum, there was no requirement on schools to adopt it (McClelland, 1991, p. 117). Therefore, a former Director of Education believed that 'as with all educational plans and programmes, full consultation with and co-operation from heads of schools [was] essential to their success' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 25 July 1984, p. 1283). Likewise, the training of teachers for civic education was also important, but it was under the influence of teacher educators. To 'ensure that both in-service, pre-service, and indeed retraining programmes [were] structured to reflect this new emphasis', the Education Department was aware of 'the importance of discussions with the colleges of education and other teacher training institutions' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 25 July 1984, p. 1283).

As the curriculum policy network was protected by the high level of institutional support and the structure of resource dependence, the opposition groups were unable to penetrate the network in the 1980s. There was only one exception; the PTU, which frequently challenged the government's policy on civic education and 'never lost its culture as a protest group', traditionally had representation in the mechanism of curriculum decision-making (Sweeting, 1997, p. 32). This was most likely because it was one of the largest teachers' unions in Hong Kong. However, its views on civic education were marginalised within the network. A teaching representative in the network argued that: 'their views on civic education were in a minority within the curriculum committee and, therefore, rarely made a real impact on the curriculum decisions' (interview with a member of the CDC).

### **2.3 Isolation from Other Networks and the Absence of Horizontal Conflicts**

The curriculum policy network was not open to change also due to the fact that it was not subject to horizontal challenge from other policy networks. Conflicts can often occur over territory as new problems arise and different policy networks contest responsibility for particular policy arenas. In many cases horizontal conflicts can destabilise a policy network and result in a change in decision-makers. However, the curriculum policy network was isolated from other networks that could possibly threaten its influence on civic education in schools. Therefore, it managed to remain closed and intact in the 1980s.

There was a potential territorial battle between the curriculum policy network centred around the Education Department and a newly-established network centred around the District Administration Department over the issue of civic education in schools.

The Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE) was an institutional arrangement for a policy network covering government departments (centred around the District Administration Department), legislators and a number of pressure groups (Express News, 15 May 1986). The CPCE could have posed a challenge to the curriculum policy network and its decisions on civic education for two major reasons. First, the policy responsibility of the CPCE and that of the curriculum policy network initially overlapped. According to its document, the CPCE was: 'to encourage all sectors of the community to actively promote civic awareness and responsibility and to participate in associated activities, and to provide necessary guidelines and support for this' (CPCE, 1986, p. 3). Schools were one of the major sectors of the community and, therefore, their decisions might encroach on the turf of the curriculum policy network. Second, the CPCE incorporated representatives from a wider spectrum of the society. A number of pro-curriculum change groups like the FEW that had no access to the curriculum policy network were represented in the CPCE. Therefore, the policy recommendations made by the CPCE were more progressive (CPCE, 1989a, p. 3).

However, this potentially horizontal challenge did not materialise. Rather, the curriculum policy network had a high degree of isolation from the CPCE. Between the two networks there was a consensus that clearly separated their policy domains and responsibilities. This consensus grew quickly in the mid-1980s when the government planned to earmark a large sum of money for the promotion of civic education in Hong Kong. As their policy domains initially overlapped, the networks were likely to scramble for the available funding and contest responsibility for the promotion of civic education. In order to avoid this problem, the Education Department (curriculum policy network) and the District Administration Department (CPCE) agreed to clarify their policy domains respectively, and thus a consensus began to take shape.

According to the consensus, the curriculum policy network was responsible for the policy on civic education within the school system. On the other hand, the District Administration Department, in consultation with the representatives in the CPCE, could not intervene in the teaching activities in schools (interview with a member of the CDC). Instead, the CPCE liaised with and assisted in the efforts of various community organisations in promoting good citizenship. It was: 'to study, discuss and make proposals on the objectives and scope of civic education outside the school system' (CPCE, 1986, p. 3). Consequently, the networks had separate financial sources and were independent of each other. The curriculum policy network was, therefore, impervious to the challenge from the other network (CPCE) that was also concerned with the issue of civic education (interview with a member of the CDC).

## 2.4 Strong Consensus and Internal Integration

The last chapter highlighted that in the 1970s the curriculum policy network was

consensual and very well integrated. There was a clear agreement between the Education Department and the mainstream teaching profession on the apolitical and academic orientation of common curriculum. In terms of resisting the external pressure for change, the network had the structural advantage and started from the position of strength. Despite the new problems and new groups voicing strong opinions on the issue of civic education, the network managed to maintain its consensus on the parameters of school curriculum. As a result, the exogenous pressure did not lead to internal tensions within the network, and the domain of curriculum making remained depoliticised in the 1980s.

If civic education was to develop in Hong Kong, the consensus between the Education Department and the teaching profession within the network on an apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum had to change, because, as has been seen, civic education is politically defined and essentially non-academic in nature (Lee, 1987, p. 243). However, the political pressure resulting from the changes in Hong Kong's political environment did not break down the consensus within the network. In fact, the Education Department and the teaching profession responded to the pressure for change in similar ways.

Although the survival of the colonial rule became a less critical issue in the 1980s, the Education Department did not abandon the apolitical and academic-oriented principle of curriculum making (Morris and Chan, 1997, p. 101). It clung to the established agenda because it wanted to minimise controversies in the process of curriculum decision-making. The educational decision-makers in Hong Kong could be characterised as having 'bureaucratic-led inertia', which referred to the fact that the instinct of the educational decision-makers was 'to avoid change and conflict' (Morris, Kan and Chan, 2001, pp. 169-170). However, civic education was a new issue that could 'generate one of the most controversial areas in education' (Lee and Sweeting, 2001, p. 101). Since the early 1980s: 'the society has not yet arrived at any consensual view on what the contents of civic education should be, and how it should be implemented' (Chen, 1996; cited in Lee and Sweeting, 2001, p. 113). The educational officials were also worried that the development of civic education in Hong Kong was viewed with considerable misgiving by the Chinese authorities, which in turn would make the transitional period more turbulent (interview with a senior curriculum officer; Bray, 1997, p. 17). To avoid being embroiled in the controversies, the Education Department wanted to play it safe. It did not favour a substantial change in the established agenda (Lee, 1987, p. 249).

However, when confronted with new problems and increasing pressure for change, the Education Department had to flirt with the need for curriculum change. It followed a strategy of damage limitation by accepting the need for certain changes at the margins without destroying the established structure of the common curriculum. It argued that: 'within the existing curriculum, there [were] various subject areas in which civic education feature[d] in many ways'. Therefore, it was not necessary for the curriculum makers to consider an extensive change (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 25 July 1984, pp. 1283-1284). To encapsulate, the Education Department tended to take 'symbolic

action', which served to demonstrate its concern for civic education rather than really change the nature of curriculum (Morris and Chan, 1997, p. 101).

The response of the teaching profession to the external pressure for change was similar to that of the Education Department. Principles and teachers wanted to limit damage to the established structure of the common curriculum. Morris (1997, p. 331) argued that the apolitical and academic nature of curriculum: 'has been incorporated, reproduced and internalised... to the extent that it has achieved a "taken for granted" status'. Therefore, 'in some ways education [might] act as a vehicle for resistance for decolonisation' (Bray, 1997, p. 19). Schools, principals and teachers took for granted the apolitical and academic orientation of education, which was reinforced by the elitist school system, the resulting parental pressure and keen competitions between schools.

As discussed in the last chapter, the school system in Hong Kong was extraordinarily elitist, which changed little in the 1980s, and there was a strong link between educational qualifications and lifetime earnings (McClelland, 1991, p. 335). Access to each level of schooling and to different quality schools was determined by pupils' performance in internal and, particularly, public examinations that were organised around traditional academic disciplines (Morris, 1997, p. 334). Parental pressure was: 'overwhelmingly for schools offering an academically oriented set of subjects' (McClelland, 1991, p. 116). Overall, parents exerted an indirect but powerful influence on the school curriculum (Morris, 1995, p. 101). Moreover, 'schools saw themselves as competing with other schools' and the key determinant of their success was their pupils' academic achievements in the high-status subjects. Any schools that decided to opt out of this cycle of competition and provide a diversified curriculum including civic education would suffer from compounded problems. For example, its status would drop. More importantly, 'parental choice [would] ensure that it [recruited] students of ever lower levels of academic achievement and a greater proportion of students with behavioural problems' (Morris and Chan, 1997, p. 106). To avoid these problems, the teaching profession, like the Education Department, was not hospitable to any substantial changes to the status quo. Additionally, it did not want change because of its conservative political culture. It wanted to keep controversial political and social topics out of schools and classrooms (Tse, 1997, p. 20).

Despite their scepticism towards civic education, the educational organisations were aware that they had to accept some demands for curriculum change because of the processes of decolonisation and democratisation. Thus, like the Education Department, they adopted a new approach. Their position was not to directly confront the demand for civic education, but they attempted to minimise change. They obfuscated civic education with apolitical moral education. In doing so, they were able to avoid sensitive issues, such as democracy, political participation and national identity in the civic education programmes (interview with the leader of a community group; Lee, 1999, pp. 324-327). Likewise, they rejected the proposal for a mandatory civic education syllabus that would compromise their autonomy in determining when and how civic education should be

promoted and what it should contain. In other words: 'they wanted to limit damage to the established curriculum by keeping a firm grip on how to implement civic education' (interview with the leader of a community group).

Hence, despite the increasing political pressure, the curriculum policy network managed to maintain its consensus on the apolitical and academic-oriented principle of curriculum making. There was also agreement between the Education Department and the teaching profession on how to deal with the demands for curriculum change. The changes in Hong Kong's political environment did not lead to the breakdown of the consensus and a politicisation of the policy arena. As a consequence, internal divisions did not develop within the network, which continued to be highly integrated and consensual during the colonial transition. In addition to the institutional arrangements, the consensus and internal integration acted as a further means of exclusion. By maintaining agreement on the apolitical and academic orientation of curriculum, groups which might destabilise the network by raising new issues and suggesting alternative solutions were automatically excluded. A member of the network pointed out that:

Our institute did not consider a change to the membership of the Curriculum Development Committee/ Council (CDC). Furthermore, according to my contact with other members, they did not think that it was necessary to consider the question about whether or not the CDC should be representative of different interests in society. In fact, the CDC was not an institution that should involve political and social interests besides educational organisations. Our job was simply curriculum development. It was not our task to strike a balance between various interests (interview with a member of the CDC).

It is apparent from the above discussion that the curriculum policy network was important in the development of civic education policy in Hong Kong during the transition because it had a number of structural advantages which enabled it to survive the contextual uncertainty. The network covering the Education Department and educational organisations was independent of the Governor, other government actors and other policy networks. Therefore, power did not gravitate away from the network. There was a high level of institutional support and the structure of resource dependence, which meant that it was difficult for outsider groups, including a range of political and social interests, to penetrate the network. Moreover, the network was protected by the fact that the Education Department and the teaching profession managed to maintain their consensus on the parameters of common curriculum. As a result, the external pressure for change did not create internal divisions within the network. The consensus also acted as a further means of exclusion. Consequently, the network remained stable, highly integrated, independent and closed in the 1980s.

Having already shown why the curriculum policy network was in a stronger position to resist change, the next section will now examine how the maintenance of the network

actually affected policy outcomes.

### 3 Explaining Policy Outcomes: Minor Changes at the Margins

This section will demonstrate that the curriculum policy network significantly affected the course of policy change on civic education. It managed to survive the processes of decolonisation and democratisation, and largely remained intact and closed in the 1980s. As a result, it was strong enough to mediate the growing political influence by coopting certain pressures for curriculum change and excluding other radical demands. Consequently, change in the apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum policy did not occur easily. The external pressure was minimised to the extent that only minor changes at the margins were possible.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that nothing changed in civic education policy. In fact, within the policy network the agenda changed, in that civic education became more important. The development of a representative system made an impact on the agenda. A senior curriculum officer pointed out that:

The political reforms not only had policy implications for the legislative and administrative systems, but also affected the curriculum decision-making. The White Paper on representative government was a cross-departmental document, to which every related government agency, including our Education Department, needed to respond accordingly. By suggesting the role of the school system in the promotion of civic education, the White Paper was effectively a binding document on the Education Department (interview with a senior curriculum officer).

To a lesser extent, the challenge from a constellation of domestic groups also influenced the agenda. As an increasing number of political, community and educational pressure groups drummed up support for curriculum change, their pressure was felt within the Education Department (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 2 May 1984, pp. 920-921). As a former Director of Education admitted in the mid-1980s, the Education Department: 'fully accept[ed] that there [was] growing public interest in the extent to which schools [were] preparing students for the future' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 25 July 1984, p. 1282). This concern filtered down through the Education Department hierarchy and became the concern of teaching representatives within the network. Therefore, curriculum change to strengthen civic education became a pressing issue for the network to deal with in the 1980s.

Although the curriculum policy network was certainly impinged on by the changes in Hong Kong's political environment, it retained its influence on curriculum policy. The network was important because it was the one which made the decisions on curriculum



reform. The network had, to a certain extent, lost control over the agenda. Yet it still controlled the decision-making process and, in that sense, the network did not become any more open. The network was independent of the Governor and other policy networks. It was highly integrated and protected by the institution of the CDC. The opposition groups could not penetrate the domain of curriculum making, and the policy-makers remained the same. Therefore, the network had the ability to dominate the reform agenda. In reforming the curriculum policy on civic education, it did its best to limit damage to the apolitical and academic tenor of common curriculum. In spite of the fact that it no longer could ignore the issue of civic education, it controlled the scope and speed of policy change.

The curriculum policy network affected the course of policy change in three major ways. First, it accepted superficial changes at the margins, thereby diluting the exogenous pressure for curriculum change. In reaction to the external pressure, the network in the mid-1980s drew up guidelines on how to promote civic education in schools (Wong, 1988, pp. 112-113). The guidelines suggested the permeation approach to the implementation of civic education in schools. According to the approach, schools were recommended to infuse the elements of civic education into 'both the formal and informal curriculum and the ethos of the school or the hidden curriculum' (CDC, 1985, p. 5). However, the implementation of the guidelines was voluntary and integrating civic education into the established curriculum was a matter for schools to decide (interview with a member of the CDC). Therefore, whilst the guidelines allowed the curriculum makers to claim that there were policy measures in place to deal with the poverty of civic education, they were unlikely to threaten the established structure of curricula.

Likewise, the network accepted the need for civic education. However, civic education is a multi-faceted concept (highlighted in the last chapter). The network seized on this ambiguity and twisted political-oriented civic education into the teaching of public and private morality. In doing so, it was able to limit damage to the apolitical orientation of school curriculum, whilst not directly confronting the demand for curriculum change. For the Education Department, the prime function of civic education had to be helping pupils to acquire a sense of moral and social values. They included: 'respect for others and for their views and beliefs' and 'appreciation of the world's cultural heritage' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 2 May 1984, pp. 920-921). Likewise: 'the representatives of teacher educators and schools also placed emphasis on the moral dimension of civic education in reforming the curriculum, rather than its political aspect' (interview with a member of the CDC). Consequently, the civic education programmes contained in the guidelines were biased towards moral education, which was to 'develop "desirable qualities in people" so that members of society could establish and maintain good relationships with one another' (Lee, 1987, p. 246). To some extent, this indicates a change, as the curriculum became less academic and more diversified. However, the curriculum did not change in a way that was intended to develop an understanding of, attitudes towards and competence in the political life in Hong Kong among pupils.

Second, the network prevented policy change by excluding threats to the dominant interests within the network. This demonstrates the importance, within the network, of its agreement on the parameters of curriculum policy. Within the network the Education Department and the teaching profession had a clear consensus on the apolitical and academic-oriented principle of curriculum making. Although they had to accept the need for certain changes within the established curriculum, they wanted to limit change by allowing individual schools to determine how civic education should be promoted and what it should contain. Any alternative solutions that seriously clashed with this consensus were automatically excluded from the policy process.

For example, a number of pressure groups suggested that the Education Department needed to formulate a mandatory civic education syllabus. If this proposal were accepted, it would have caused a substantial change in the established curriculum, as there would have been compulsion on schools to implement a common programme on civic education devised by the Education Department. However, it bumped against the consensus. A former teaching representative in the network pointed out that:

We rarely considered the issue of civic education within the Curriculum Development Committee. Only when the Education Department suggested the need for curriculum change and consulted our opinions did we start the relating discussion. We seldom raised the issue, and I could not see that the educational organisations had much interest in the promotion of civic education at all. We gave our support to the government's policy on civic education on the grounds that it only ambiguously recommended civic education being permeated in the formal and informal curricula, and this ambiguity gave schools much room to decide how to implement it. We did not consent to the imposition of a single approach on schools that would reduce our space to manoeuvre (interview with a member of the CDC).

Therefore, the proposal was defined by the network as infeasible and as such was excluded from the policy process. In accounting for its inaction, the Education Department argued that there was no compulsory subject under the existing curriculum system. In other words, the Education Department did not have the capability to impose civic education as a mandatory subject on schools (CPCE, 1989b, p. 7).

Additionally, a range of political, community and educational pressure groups intended to use civic education to shape the political culture in society at the juncture of political transition. The consequence of this posture was that they proposed a radical plan for the reform of the apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum. They saw civic education as education for political competence and attitudes rather than for private and public morality. Yet this proposal met with opposition because it harmed the interests and ideas within the network. Both the Education Department and educational organisations defended their position on moral education and discredited the proposal by defining it as

extreme. Eventually, many political topics were withheld from the reform agenda (interview with the leader of a community group).

Since the network's overall tack involved the acceptance of minor changes at the margins and the exclusion of radical plans for curriculum reform, the changes in the curriculum policy on civic education were cosmetic in the 1980s. The formulation of a set of guidelines had a limited impact on school curricula. The main features of apolitical and academic-oriented curricula were still in place, as the promotion of civic education on a voluntary basis easily led to the consequence that the guidelines were not implemented at school level, where civic education was: 'crowded out in the formal and informal curriculums'. Even though the guidelines were carried out in some schools that were enthusiastic over the promotion of civic education: 'what [was] transmitted in schools [was] still a kind of apolitical culture', as the government's policy privileged the teaching of private and public morality. In short, despite the processes of decolonisation and democratisation, the status of civic education in schools: 'showed striking continuity with the past' (Tse, 1997, p. 28).

Third, the network affected the course of policy change by excluding groups that were opposed to the dominant interests and ideas within the network from the policy process. The water-downed version of curriculum reform unleashed a great deal of criticism from the political, community and educational pressure groups interested in civic education. For instance, the Hong Kong Affairs Society (HKAS) opposed the permeation approach and argued that 'civic education should be made a separate and compulsory subject in schools and not just a topic for discussion when it [arose] in other subjects'. It also criticised the direction of civic education and maintained that not enough emphasis was placed on the nurturing of national and ethnic consciousness (South China Morning Post, 5 October 1985). On this basis, a range of groups, such as the HKAS, the FEW, the PTU, the Hok Yau Club (HYC) and the Meeting Point, urged the Education Department to review the civic education guidelines almost immediately after the document was issued in 1985. However, these groups could not access the curriculum policy network. By excluding them from the domain of curriculum decision-making through the institutional structure and consensus, the network marginalised their influence in the policy process. One of their leaders admitted that:

We could only adopt the pressure group tactics to promote civic education because we had not accessed the established mechanism of curriculum making... We acted in accordance with our capabilities, in the ways of meeting informally with the educational officials, stating clearly our positions and trying our best to convince them that it was necessary to revise the guidelines in order to strengthen national, patriotic and democratic education in schools. However, as our group was not inside the mechanism of decision-making, it was difficult to ensure that the curriculum makers would consider our views seriously (interview with the leader of an educational pressure group).

The opposition groups not only failed in their attempts to change the contents of civic education, they also could not compel the curriculum makers to re-consider the need for a mandatory civic education syllabus:

We also emphasised the importance of a mandatory civic education subject throughout and, actually, we met the curriculum-makers informally to thrash out this issue. Their response was that they were as equally concerned about civic education as we were, and that was it. We could not see any concrete plan or promise (interview with the leader of an educational pressure group).

The exclusion of issues and groups demanding change explains why the reform ensured the continuation rather than the opening up of the established curriculum. Consequently, the changes in the established curriculum to promote civic education were minimal in the 1980s, and further reform was procrastinated over.

In the 1980s, the Education Department and the teaching profession policy network was safe. However, it did not convince outsider groups that it had a potent policy in place to prepare pupils for the transition of Hong Kong to China. Pressure for further reform did not fall away. In the 1990s, due to the development of representative government and the change of sovereignty, the groups gained in political strength and mustered more support for civic education. Added to the domestic pressure was the challenge to the network from the Chinese authorities. Therefore, the pressure for change in the 1990s was different to that in the past, in terms of intensity and influence. The second part of this chapter will examine the survival of the network in these hostile circumstances and the impact the network had on the trajectory of policy change. It will begin by analysing how the changes in Hong Kong's political environment in the 1990s intensified the pressure for further reform.

## **Part II**

### **4 Political Transition and Resurgent Pressure for Post-Colonial Civic Education Policy in the 1990s**

Compared with the 1980s, the immediate years before the transfer of power in 1997 saw the growth in influence of the pressure for curriculum change, as the development of a representative system deepened and the change of sovereignty in Hong Kong drew closer. In other words, the network was confronted with increasing attacks because of the changes in Hong Kong's political environment. The macro-level factors affected the curriculum policy network and its decisions on civic education in a number of ways.

Firstly, the contextual factors led to further politicisation at the societal level, which

increased the level of attention that was paid to the poverty of civic education. In the 1990s, the representative system in Hong Kong developed to a greater degree, with the majority of the Legislative Council being open to direct and indirect elections. The development of representative government triggered the establishment of pressure groups that were concerned about the colonial transition, and transformed these groups into well-organised political parties. It also changed the political climate in Hong Kong from: 'one that was depoliticised to one that was politically sensitised' (Lee, 1999, pp. 314-315). The change in Hong Kong's political climate was also due to the imminence of sovereignty transfer, which resulted in rising concern among Hong Kong people about their political future after 1997. As a result of further politicisation at the societal level, there were increasing interests in Hong Kong that centred round the government's preparation for the handover, in areas such as civic education. In other words, the politicised climate within the society: 'served to magnify and accelerate the range of forces and interests which attempt[ed] to define the nature of the school curriculum' (Morris, 1992, p. 119).

Secondly, as argued before, the processes of decolonisation and democratisation in the 1980s created a number of problems that were at odds with the established agenda within the policy network. During the 1990s, these problems once again gained magnitude, as it became clear that the diluted version of curriculum reform was inadequate in preparing pupils for the imminent political transition. The 1985 civic education guidelines recommended a permeation approach to the promotion of civic education in schools. Conspicuously, this approach suffered 'a major problem as the implementation of a policy which is every individual teacher's responsibility can easily become no-one's responsibility' (Morris and Chan, 1997, p. 107). The guidelines had very limited impact on the implemented curricula that remained apolitical and academic in nature (Morris, 1995, p. 100). Civic education, though urgently needed, was easily marginalised from the implemented curricula.

As a result of the discrepancy between the policy-makers' rhetoric and policy outcomes, an increasing number of groups were involved in pressurising the network for further reform in the 1990s. Some of them had already participated in the 1980s, such as the Federation of Education Workers (FEW), the Professional Teachers' Union (PTU) and the Education Action Group (EAG). Others were new to this campaign, such as community groups like the Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI) and the Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese (JPC); human rights groups like Amnesty International Hong Kong (AIHK); educational pressure groups like the Education Convergence (EC); and newly-established political groups like the Democratic Party (DP) and the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB).

There was a clear thread connecting the past and new interests in civic education in the 1980s and 90s respectively. Like the past interests, the pro-curriculum change groups were concerned about the political future of Hong Kong, and sought to use civic education to influence the political culture and society after 1997 (Bray and Lee, 2001, p. 4; Lee and

Sweeting, 2001, p. 102). For instance, the FEW and the EC saw that the future of Hong Kong lay in the convergence and identification with mainland China. They made the criticism that: 'the old guidelines did not mention any concept of country or nationalism at all' (FEW, 10 January 1996, p. 3). They called on the Education Department to review the 1985 guidelines and to focus on the concepts of state and nation instead of private and public morality (Wen Wei Po, 17 June 1995: Education Convergence, 1995, pp. 5-6). In addition, groups like the Democratic Party were anxious about the future of democracy in Hong Kong. For them, one of the keys to the success of democratisation in Hong Kong was the promotion of democratic and liberal education in schools (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 22 May 1996, pp. 152-153; Morris, 1992, p. 123). Regarding the best way forward, they argued that the Education Department had to introduce mandatory civic education, be it an independent or an integrated subject, into the common curriculum (Singtao, 4 April 1995; Wen Wei Po, 17 June 1995).

The development of post-1997 civic education cannot be fully understood without considering the roles that the Chinese authorities played in the immediate years around the handover. Unlike the course of change in the 1980s, the campaign for further reform was primarily local, but it was also closely related to the Chinese authorities. It is hardly surprising that the Chinese government showed a keen interest in Hong Kong's post-colonial civic education, because it traditionally treated civic education as a strategic area for political stability and power in mainland China (Morris and Marsh, 1992, p. 253; Lee, 2001, p. 201). However, in contrast to its policies in mainland China, it showed little desire to conduct communist ideological education in Hong Kong after 1997. Instead, it called for 'change in the curriculum to reflect Chinese sovereignty in Hong Kong' and to strengthen 'the preparation of the re-defined Chinese citizenry of Hong Kong' (Lee and Sweeting, 2001, p. 107). Like the domestic groups, it became increasingly concerned with the issue of civic education in Hong Kong when presented with evidence that the Education Department and the teaching profession policy network had difficulty in solving the poverty of civic education. It argued that: 'there should be more lessons about the state and national identity in Hong Kong's foundation education' (Wen Wei Po, 26 September 1994). It also demanded the formulation of a mandatory civic education subject in primary and secondary schools (Ta Kung Pao, 13 September 1994).

Taken together, the contextual factors in Hong Kong, notably the deepening political reforms and the imminent change of sovereignty, had a significant impact on the curriculum policy network by affecting the interests of the Chinese authorities and domestic groups, which called for policy change on two major fronts. They realised the necessity of revising the 1985 guidelines and tried to reorientate the watered-down version of civic education towards political education. Moreover, they proposed a mandatory civic education syllabus so that the implementation of civic education in schools would be guaranteed.

Finally, the changes in Hong Kong's political environment affected not only the

interests but also the relative power of the political forces opposed to the established agenda within the network. Due to the further development of a representative system in Hong Kong, the pro-curriculum change groups had far greater strength in putting the Education Department under pressure in the 1990s. Groups that championed further curriculum reform were no longer outsiders. Rather, the DP, the DAB, the FEW and the PTU managed to penetrate the enlarged political arena through elections to the Legislative Council (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 11 October 1995, pp. 1-5). Of course, membership of the Legislative Council was not tantamount to accessing to the network in curriculum policy. However, they had more influence than in the past because, in addition to pressure group lobbying, they could draw on their political resources on the Legislative Council to affect policy change. They pressurised the Education Department by initiating debates and tabling motions on the Legislative Council (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 22 May 1996). They also provided other groups, such as the HKCI, the JPC and the AIHK, that operated outside the political arena with alternative access points to the government (interview with the leader of a community group).

With this enhanced political strength, the local campaign for curriculum change was not so readily neglected as it was in the 1980s. In fact, the groups exerted a great deal of pressure on the upper echelon of the Education Department. This pressure filtered down the administrative hierarchy and, eventually, became the concern of curriculum-makers. Hence, in 1995, the network reversed its refusal to have further curriculum reform and announced a review of the 1985 guidelines. As the leader of a community group argued:

The Curriculum Development Council was persistently dismissive of the idea, but, all of a sudden, it changed its attitudes in 1995...According to my reading, the change in attitudes among the curriculum-makers was a consequence of the pressure from the upper echelon of the Education Department. But why did the top-ranking educational officials require the curriculum-makers to consider a change to the civic education guidelines? They did so because they encountered massive pressure from the Legislative Council (interview with the leader of a community group).

Compared with the domestic groups, the Chinese authorities made an even greater impact on the network. The influence they had on Hong Kong policy substantially increased in the 1990s, as a result of another macro-level factor, the transition of Hong Kong to China. Hong Kong's reintegration with China rather than a transition to independent sovereignty meant that 'another form of dependency and external control' developed in the territory. The transition of Hong Kong was not 'one of decolonisation so much as recolonisation' (Bray, 1997, p. 12). Therefore, the Chinese government was influential in changing the curriculum policy on civic education in Hong Kong if it wielded its power. It influenced the curriculum policy network through its official arms that managed Hong Kong matters, notably the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office

(HKMAO), the Hong Kong New China News Agency (NCNA), the Preliminary Working Committee (PWC) and the local representatives of the National People's Congress (NPC). In putting Hong Kong's curriculum-makers under pressure, the PWC, which was an agency established to tender advice to the Chinese government, issued an official statement in 1994. In the statement, it averred that: 'nationalistic and patriotic education had been under-emphasised in Hong Kong'. Thus, it demanded the government to strengthen civic education by focussing on nationalism and patriotism and on Chinese History as well as the Basic Law (Ta Kung Pao, 13 September 1994).

China's intervention meant that the curriculum policy network had little choice but to accept the need for further change. The curriculum-makers had to consider the political pressure from China in deciding whether or not to change the 1985 guidelines. Initially their position was to reject the proposals for further reform in the early 1990s. However, they realised that if they maintained this position they would lose their initiative, because the pressure from the Chinese authorities would only become stronger after 1997. As a former member of the network admitted:

We felt that if we did not review the guidelines before the handover, we were likely to be forced to do so after 1997 by the new government under the Chinese sovereignty. This likelihood gave rise to a worry that we might not have enough space to manoeuvre after 1997, so that we could not devise a balanced, academic-sounding and inclusive civic education policy. In weighing the advantages of responding to increasing pressure against the uncertainty involved, we decided to launch a review and formulate a new set of guidelines in the middle of the 1990s' (interview with a member of the CDC).

Consequently, the Education Department, with the concerns of the Chinese government in mind, set up an ad hoc working group to review the civic education guidelines in the mid-1990s (Lee and Sweeting, 2001, p. 107).

In summary, due to the deepening political reforms and the change of sovereignty, the pressure to further reform the curriculum policy on civic education became immense in the 1990s. There was an increasing number of groups campaigning for change, and these groups had more influence than in the 1980s. To the mounting domestic pressure was added the challenge to the curriculum policy network from the Chinese authorities. China's intervention meant that it was better for the network to promptly accept demands for greater change than postponing action until after 1997. There was widespread recognition of the need for further reform within the network. In the face of this pressure, the network became weaker. The next section will examine how the network weathered the vicissitudes of its circumstances in Hong Kong.



## 5 From Closed Professional Network to Open Political Network?

This section will examine the extent to which the curriculum policy network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession survived the pressure for change in the 1990s and how it managed to achieve it. It will argue that, on the one hand, the political pressure was so immense that the network was inevitably weakened. The Education Department had to give access to a number of groups opposed to the established curriculum, and the Chinese authorities had great influence on the policy-makers. On the other hand, the network had not collapsed in the 1990s, although it had to operate within hostile circumstances. There were some changes in the network, but it did not change dramatically. It managed to survive the mounting political pressure because of its strong institutional structure and clear agreement on curriculum policy. It was also saved by its constitutional and international contexts that hobbled the influence of the Chinese government on Hong Kong. As a result, the domain of curriculum making split into a core and a periphery. Whilst the pro-curriculum change groups managed to penetrate the periphery, the core, which contained the Education Department and the teaching profession, continued to be closed and consensual. It still controlled the decision-making process. Thus far it has not turned into an open political network.

### 5.1 Weakened Curriculum Policy Network

The curriculum policy in Hong Kong in the mid-1990s saw some change in its network. The network containing the Education Department and educational organisations was weakened, as it could no longer preserve its exclusive nature in the face of mounting pressure for curriculum change.

Groups that were motivated by political ideologies and opposed to the apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum managed to penetrate the curriculum policy network. In 1995, the Education Department set up an ad hoc working group charged with the responsibility to review the old civic education guidelines, and a number of groups such as the FEW, the EC, the HKCI and the DP that were previously excluded were represented within the ad hoc committee (Education Department, 1997, p. 9). Through the ad hoc committee, the Education Department gave the pro-curriculum change groups access to the domain of curriculum making (Mingpao, 20 March 1995).

The reason why the Education Department opened the curriculum policy network was a combination of the increased political strength of pro-change groups and government desire to have a new set of guidelines that could transit across 1997 without disturbance. The primacy of this objective was evident in a 1996 policy document. For example, it was argued that the new guidelines were designed for use in schools that encountered: 'the transition to the twenty first century' and 'the resumption of the exercise

of sovereignty by China over Hong Kong in 1997' (CDC, 1996, p. 1). By having a policy on civic education that could straddle 1997, the Education Department wanted to remove one of the factors of uncertainty which hung over Hong Kong during the colonial transition. To enhance the possibility of achieving this goal, the Education Department had little choice but to allow access to the pro-curriculum change groups that had greater political strength to challenge its policy decisions. As a teaching representative within the network argued:

The Education Department intentionally allowed these groups access to the ad hoc committee. It realised that if they were not represented and the new set of guidelines could not reflect their views and interests, it was very likely that they would challenge the new guidelines shortly afterwards. This would probably cramp the government's plan to have a policy that could last beyond 1997 and even into the twenty-first century (interview with a member of the CDC).

The Education Department did not intend to run the risk at the juncture of sovereignty transfer, and so it allowed a number of opposition groups to have a formal role in reviewing the past policy on civic education. These groups did not share the established agenda within the network. They were opposed to the apolitical and academic-oriented principle in general and the moralised and non-compulsory features of the 1985 guidelines in particular. Their involvement in the policy process was bound to destabilise the network.

The pressure from the Chinese authorities also weakened the Education Department and the teaching profession network in curriculum policy. As the Chinese government was increasingly concerned with Hong Kong's civic education and the Education Department wanted to have a policy that the new government after 1997 would follow, it was almost impossible for the network to remain impervious to the pressure from China. Within the network the curriculum-makers had to make civic education policy for the post-1997 government under China's sovereignty. In order to secure smooth transition, they had to take more notice of the demands for change made by the Chinese authorities. One of the teaching representatives within the network illustrated that:

We needed to consider whether or not the Chinese government would accept our guidelines, because of the unique position that we were in. It is usually the case that a post-colonial government snuffed out past policies on civic education and replaced them with a new direction, values and content. It happened to almost all former colonies. However, we were formulating the civic education guidelines for the post-1997 government under China's sovereignty... We did not want to see our guidelines overthrown by the new government under the pressure from the Chinese authorities shortly after 1997. In this situation, we fully understood the reality that it was important to

win China's blessing for our policy (interview with a member of the CDC)

The need for securing China's support inevitably placed certain constraints on the curriculum policy network in Hong Kong. This does not mean that civic education policy had to be made formally acceptable to the Chinese government, given that China had promised Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy under the precept of 'one country, two systems'. Nevertheless, it was important for the network to avoid any overt criticisms from the Chinese government that were likely to create political uncertainty and controversy in Hong Kong. In this sense, the network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession was, to a certain extent, weakened.

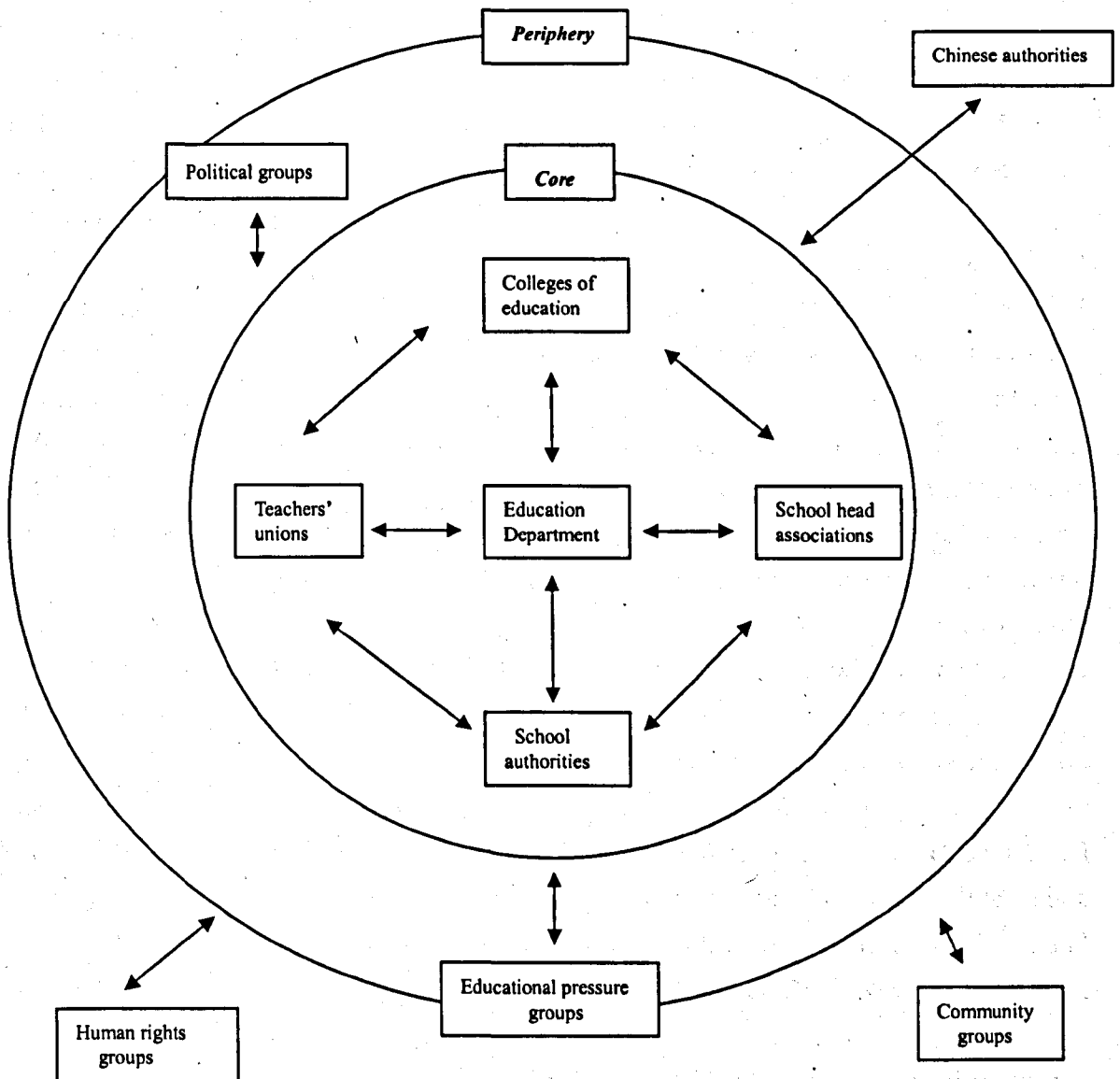
## 5.2 The Two-Layer Network: Closed Core and Open Periphery

In the mid-1990s, there was some change in the Education Department and the teaching profession policy network, with a number of diametrically opposed interests penetrating the domain of curriculum decision-making. To some extent, the network became more open. However, the network did not change dramatically. There was no general opening of the network to groups that were motivated by political ideologies and wanted to use civic education for political purposes. Although the network could not preserve its exclusive nature, this does not mean that there was no exclusion at all. But exclusion was not simple. The network split into two layers, with a core and a periphery or, in other words, a primary and secondary network. The core contained the Education Department and the representatives of educational organisations that continued to occupy a few central positions in the policy process. On the periphery were the opposition groups that were given access to the ad hoc committee. They had to abide by the rules set by the key actors within the primary network and had only tenuous involvement in the system (see figure 5.1).

The distinction between the primary and secondary networks was clear. Although a number of opposition groups penetrated the periphery, they did not access the core of the network. The primary network was able to exclude the opposition groups because it was protected by its institutional structure. Central to the network was the institution of the Curriculum Development Council (its predecessor was the Curriculum Development Committee) (CDC). As argued before, the institution stated clearly the privileged positions of teaching representatives in the heart of curriculum decision-making, thereby safeguarding the network that contained the Education Department and the teaching profession against the external pressure for change. This is not to say that nothing has changed in the institution of the CDC throughout the 1990s; there were some marginal changes. Yet none of them was targeted at enlarging the primary network to incorporate the political, social or educational pressure groups, or giving these groups institutionalised access to the domain of curriculum making (CDC, 1993, p.2; Education Department, 1993,

p. 117; CDC membership list, 1993-2000).

Figure 6.1 Curriculum Policy Network in the Middle of 1990s



Therefore, although the opposition groups were given occasional access to the policy process, they did not penetrate the primary network and have any continuous influence on policy (CDC, 1996, p. iii). As a member of the ad hoc committee argued:

The representatives in the ad hoc committee were only consulted on the making of a new set of civic education guidelines. The task lasted for nearly a year, and then the ad hoc committee dissolved. Therefore, we did not have any lasting influence on policy (interview with a member of the ad hoc committee on the review of civic education guidelines).

Besides the institutional support, the primary network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession managed to exclude the opposition groups because there was a strong consensus on curriculum policy within the network. The consensus will be discussed later. Here it is important to point out that through the consensus, the groups opposed to the apolitical and academic-oriented principle of curriculum making were kept out of the primary network. In order to maintain the stability and professionalism of the policy arena, the key actors within the primary network did not consider opening the core to various interests in society (interview with a member of the CDC). Therefore, there was still a high degree of exclusion within the curriculum policy network.

The existence of two layers meant that the curriculum policy network did not disintegrate in the 1990s. To some extent, the pro-curriculum change groups that penetrated the periphery destabilised and diluted the policy arena. However, as they did not access the core of decision-making, they did not debilitate the network. The structural distinction between the core and periphery limited their ability to undermine the established network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession in three major ways. First, the opposition interests did not have any lasting influence on policy. Second, they were not given a great deal of freedom on the periphery of the network. The core had its representatives in the secondary network, who were responsible for defending its interests and ideas in the policy process (interview with a member of the CDC). Third, in order to gain entry to the policy process, the pro-curriculum change groups had to accept the final decisions of the primary network. The ad hoc committee on the review of civic education policy, in which the pro-curriculum change groups were represented, was set up under the auspices of the CDC and accountable to it (Commercial Press, 22 October 1994). This meant that any new policy measures proposed by the ad hoc committee were for the purpose of consultation only, which needed to be finalised and approved by the key actors within the primary network (Singtao Daily News, 2 May 1995; interview with a member of the ad hoc committee).

Hence, the curriculum policy network changed but not dramatically. In the mid-1990s it became more difficult to exclude the opposition groups from the domain of curriculum making. However, their penetration of the domain of curriculum making was not equal in effect to the disintegration and opening up of the whole network. There was still a high degree of exclusion, with the network splitting into a core and periphery. The opposition groups, though penetrating the periphery, did not access the core of the network. The primary network that contained the Education Department and the teaching profession was protected by its institutional structure and strong agreement on curriculum policy. Restrained by the structural characteristics, the opposition groups did not exert any continuous and substantial influence on policy. As a result, the network continued to be structurally intact, at least at the core of curriculum making.

### 5.3 Vertical Independence of the Chinese Authorities

It cannot be denied that the Chinese government, which was increasingly concerned with the poverty of civic education in Hong Kong, had more influence on the curriculum policy network during the 1990s than previously. Within the network, the curriculum-makers had to take on board some of the issues raised by the Chinese authorities in order to ensure that their curriculum policy on civic education would be used after 1997. As a result, the Education Department and the teaching profession network was weakened, and the Chinese authorities seemed to be a significant factor in changing curriculum policy in Hong Kong.

However, it is necessary to be specific in order to understand how the Chinese authorities actually influenced the network and the extent to which the network survived this pressure. In the 1990s the Chinese authorities did not use their power to break up the network. They did not take decisions themselves and impose their decisions on the network, nor did they change the institution that was responsible for making curriculum policy. Therefore, China's intervention did not lead to the collapse and disintegration of the network. The network still controlled the decision-making process, and in that sense, the network was independent of the Chinese authorities in charge of Hong Kong affairs. There were a number of domestic and international factors that constrained China's intention and ability to remove decision-making from the curriculum policy network.

First, the Sino-British Joint Agreement stated in principle that Hong Kong would retain the pre-existing system of law and education and would enjoy the same rights and freedom after 1997 (Wong, 1988, pp. 64-65). The Chinese authorities were obliged to abide by this principle in dealing with Hong Kong's educational affairs, because the Joint Declaration was international in nature. The agreement was signed by the Prime Ministers of Britain and China, and it was registered at the United Nations in New York by both governments (Wong, 1988, p. 63). Second, Hong Kong's autonomy in educational policy-making was specifically built into the wording of the Basic Law, which was a de facto constitution for Hong Kong after 1997 and approved by the National People's Congress of China. Article 136 of this legal document states that: 'on the basis of the previous educational system' the Hong Kong Government: 'shall, on its own, formulate policies on the development and improvement of education' (National People's Congress of the PRC, 1991). Third, the return of Hong Kong to China was a subject of massive international media scrutiny and scepticism. Thus, the Chinese authorities had to consider the political costs of attempting to intervene in Hong Kong's internal affairs. This was especially true, given that they were eager to demonstrate to the international community China's capacity to allow Hong Kong to operate in the ways spelt out in the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law (Morris, Kan and Morris, 2001, p. 166).

With these domestic and international constraints, China's intervention in Hong Kong's curriculum policy was normally confined to indirect influence and vocal threats.

Despite the fact that the common curriculum in Hong Kong went through some important changes: 'almost none of these changes so far have been the result of overt direction from Beijing'. The Chinese government: 'cannot easily be said to have exercised control' (Bray, 1997, p. 14). Moreover, it did not break up the network and heighten the issue of civic education to the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) that was established by Britain, China and Hong Kong to tackle disputable issues facing Hong Kong during the colonial transition.

As the Chinese authorities did not try to control the process of curriculum-making in Hong Kong, the Education Department and the teaching profession policy network was largely independent. This does not signify that the network was a completely isolated entity from the influence of China. However, as long as the Chinese authorities were cautious about forcing change in Hong Kong's curriculum policy, the network was left with much room to manoeuvre. In reforming the curriculum policy on civic education, it could incorporate certain changes and exclude others. This demonstrates the importance of the domestic and international contexts of Hong Kong. Besides the network's structural advantages, it was its international and constitutional contexts which allowed it to survive the mounting pressure for change.

#### **5.4 Strong Consensus and Integration at the Core**

The curriculum policy network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession was structurally strong because from the 1970s there was a firm consensus on curriculum policy. This consensus was the other structural variable that enabled the network to largely remain intact in the 1990s. Although there was increased questioning of the apolitical and academic-oriented principle that the network followed, the Education Department and the teaching profession managed to maintain it. They also had clear agreement over the options for dealing with the demands for further curriculum change. Therefore, the external pressure stemming from the changes in Hong Kong's political environment did not cause a cleavage within the network during the 1990s.

Although the political agenda has changed in that civic education became more important, the Education Department/ teaching profession policy network did not waver in its support for the established curriculum. In its policy document, the Education Department continued to put emphasis on the apolitical and academic nature of the curriculum by stating that: 'schools should help students to build a strong foundation of literacy and numeracy'. In defending its position, it used the argument that: 'in a complex modern society, the skills of literacy and numeracy are the essential foundation for developing individual potential and promoting social and economic development'. The teaching of established academic disciplines was 'therefore a prime responsibility of schools' (Education Department, 1992, p. 17).

Table 6.1 Political Conditions, Curriculum Policy Network and Policy Change:

	Before 1984	1984 – 1990	1991 – 2000
Political Conditions	Tenuous legitimacy of colonial rule; PRC's interest in Hong Kong's civic education	Sino-British Joint Declaration; the development of representative government; new educational agendas	Further development of the representative system; sovereignty handover; the rise in the power of the Chinese authorities and pro-curriculum change groups
Memberships of the policy network	<i>Inclusion:</i> Education Department; representatives of schools, school head associations, teachers' unions and colleges of education  <i>Exclusion:</i> Representatives of pro-China schools; educational pressure groups; political and social interests	<i>Inclusion:</i> Education Department; representatives of schools, principals, teachers and teacher educators  <i>Exclusion:</i> Political groups; educational pressure groups; community groups	<i>Core:</i> Education Department; representatives of schools, principals, teachers and teacher educators  <i>Periphery (ad hoc basis):</i> The DP (political party); The FEW and the EC (educational pressure groups); the HKCI (community group)  <i>Exclusion:</i> Human rights groups
Institutions	The institution of CDC provided the network between the Education Department and teaching profession with an institutional cover	The institution of CDC was intact	Marginal changes to the institution of CDC, but not targeted at incorporating the political and social interests into the network at the core
Independence	<i>Vertical:</i> Largely independent from the Governor-in-Council  <i>Horizontal:</i> Independent from other government agencies, such as the Secretary for Chinese Affairs	<i>Vertical:</i> Largely independent from the Governor-in-Council  <i>Horizontal:</i> Independent from the CPCE that could possibly challenge the network	<i>Vertical:</i> The Chinese authorities exerted influence in indirect ways through their official arms in Hong Kong; largely independent of the Chinese authorities because they were constrained by internal and international factors  <i>Horizontal:</i> Independent from the CPCE
Integration / Consensus	Well integrated; strong consensus on the apolitical and academic nature of education; compromise on the common core curriculum that allowed school's autonomy in curriculum matters	Well integrated; strong consensus on the apolitical and academic nature of curriculum; agreement on how to deal with the issue of civic education (damage limitation)	<i>Core:</i> Fairly well integrated; long-standing consensus on the nature and system of curriculum; but had to take into consideration of some issues raised by the Chinese authorities  <i>Periphery:</i> The pro-curriculum change groups got the issues of political education onto the agenda
Rules of the game	The Education Department had influence over the membership selection, agenda setting and policy initiation; the teaching profession could modify the government's curriculum proposals	State centered but the teaching profession could modify the government's curriculum proposals	The pro-curriculum change groups in the periphery of the network must abide by the rules of the game set by the educational officers and teaching experts at the core; the rules of the game were biased towards the maintenance of the status quo and limited the influence that the pro-curriculum change groups had
Policy outcome / change	Civic education was deliberately overlooked on the curriculum	<i>Change:</i> First ever civic education guidelines  <i>Continuity:</i> moralization of civic education; the permeation approach; no mandatory subject on civic education	<i>Change:</i> Review of the old guidelines; more political topics in the guidelines  <i>Continuity:</i> moralization was still the dominating feature; the permeation approach; no mandatory subject on civic education



As argued before, the Education Department flinched from substantial change because it wanted to avoid being embroiled in political controversy in the process of curriculum making. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, in the immediate years around the handover, the Hong Kong government as a whole, in the light of massive international media scrutiny and the importance of economic vibrancy, placed a premium on maintaining stability and diversity in the political, economic and social systems (Morris, Kan and Morris, 2001, p. 165). The Education Department, as part of the government committed to continuity rather than change, avoided pursuing radical decolonising policies and any direct attempt to promote the political ideology of CCP (Chinese Community Party) (Morris, Kan and Morris, 2001, pp. 175-179). Like the Education Department, schools and teachers in the 1990s took more notice of the need for civic education. Yet they did not want to abandon the established curriculum, which was reinforced by the 'educational ethos of longing for success in examination'. They treated 'civic education as something unimportant or even dispensable' (Lee and Leung, 1999, pp. 3-4).

However, the pressure for further reform had reached a point where it was almost impossible to prevaricate. In response to this immense pressure, there was clear agreement between the Education Department and the teaching profession within the network on what should be done. Both of them used the old strategy of damage limitation by twisting politically-oriented civic education into the teaching of personal and public morality. In doing so, their interests and ideas were served. On the one hand, the Education Department could distance itself from the political controversy surrounding the concept of citizenship. On the other hand, it could create a sense of togetherness and identity based on a homogenous sense of Chinese culture, morality and values (Morris, Kan and Morris, 2001, p. 177). For principals and teachers, students' discipline was: 'a more pressing problem than their attitudes towards and skills of participation'. The strategy of damage limitation allowed them to: 'emphasise the moral dimension but discard the political dimension of civic education' (Lee and Leung, 1999, p. 21). In addition, both the Education Department and the teaching profession wanted to limit damage by allowing individual schools to implement civic education policy on a voluntary basis. They argued that schools needed autonomy in curriculum matters for the quality of education (interview with a member of the CDC)

The standpoint of the colleges of education on change was more subtle and complicated. One of their representatives in the curriculum policy network indicated that they were less fundamentally opposed to political education than were principals and teachers. To them, the concept of civic education could be politically defined. However, there was apprehension that the development of civic education could be easily manipulated by political forces and calculations in such a politicised environment of Hong Kong. As a result, they did not wish to abandon the established curriculum. They argued that political education should not be an over-arching definition of civic education. Instead,

it represented only a component of education for citizenship. They emphasised the importance of personal/ public morality, such as a sense of family, neighbourhood and social ethics, in order to combat the dangers of political indoctrination (interview with a member of the CDC). Therefore, their position was similar to that of the Education Department and schools. In response to growing political pressure, all of them accepted the need for further reform, but they wished to minimise the extent of change. Due to this consensus, during the 1990s, the network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession was still highly integrated.

It is apparent from the above discussion that the relationship between the political transition in Hong Kong in the 1990s and the curriculum policy network was dialectical. On the one hand, the political transition weakened the network, with a number of pro-change domestic groups penetrating the periphery and the Chinese authorities exerting colossal pressure on policymakers. On the other hand, the changing political environment did not undermine the network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession in curriculum policy. Faced with immense political pressure, the network changed but not dramatically. It survived the mounting pressure because it was protected by its institutional structure and strong consensus on curriculum policy. Its survival was also, to a certain extent, due to the domestic and international contexts within which it operated. Therefore, it managed to remain intact throughout the 1990s. There was still a high degree of exclusion, with political interests and pressure groups being kept out of the core of curriculum making. Power did not gravitate away from the network to the Chinese authorities. Schisms did not occur between the Education Department and the teaching profession. The politicised environment of Hong Kong in the immediate years around the handover did not lead to a politicisation of the policy arena. The final section of this chapter will examine how the survival of the network affected the further reform in curriculum policy.

## **6 Explaining Policy Outcomes: Continuities within Change**

The curriculum policy network, which weathered the hostile circumstances and largely remained intact in the 1990s, significantly affected the course of further reform in curriculum policy. It would be wrong to say that nothing changed in the political agenda and curriculum policy on civic education throughout the 1990s. In order to strengthen its position, the network had to accommodate certain demands for change. However, its survival meant that it had the ability to mediate the external pressure. Unlike the disintegrated manpower policy network (which will be discussed in Chapter 8), policy was still made within the confines of the closed network. It still controlled the decision-making process and followed a strategy of damage limitation. It resisted change by incorporating certain reforms and excluding others that would do substantial harm to the interests and

ideas within the network. Moreover, it did not allow diametrically opposed interests access to the core of curriculum making, and thus marginalised the voices of opposition in the policy process. The upshot of all this was that change was limited. Although a new set of guidelines on civic education was issued in 1996, it did not involve an overhaul of the apolitical and academic-orientated common curriculum. Rather, it showed more signs of continuity than change.

Nevertheless, in the 1990s the policy agenda within the curriculum policy network changed to a larger extent than during the 1980s. It was no longer one of avoiding political education and emphasising established academic disciplines. New issues were on the agenda. This was because the network became looser, with a number of political and pressure groups that championed curriculum change penetrating the domain of curriculum making. In order to reduce their pressure, these groups were consulted when the Education Department conducted a review of the 1985 civic education guidelines. Therefore, the network had less control over the agenda, and these groups managed to raise some previously excluded issues onto the agenda. For example, in the ad hoc committee, they prompted the Education Department and the teaching profession to accept that the civic education programme needed to include more political topics, such as democracy, human rights, rule of law, national identity and patriotism (interview with a member of the ad hoc committee). In addition, the curriculum-makers within the network had to incorporate the issue of patriotic education raised by the Chinese authorities, in order to ensure the continuation of their policy beyond the handover.

Consequently, further changes were made in the curriculum policy on civic education. In 1996, the curriculum policy network agreed on a plan for further reform and issued a new set of civic education guidelines. As opposed to the 1985 guidelines, the new guidelines showed signs of politicisation, with more political topics associated with the development of representative government and the change of sovereignty being included in the civic education programme. In the new guidelines, the direction and content of civic education centred around five major parts, including family, neighbourhood, regional community (Hong Kong), state (China) and international community (CDC, 1996, pp. 21-25). According to a teaching representative in the network, the sections on regional community and state were intended to locate and accommodate the demands for change made by the Chinese authorities and opposition groups (interview with a member of the CDC). The two parts contained a number of political topics that were seen as controversial in the past, such as national identity, sovereignty, political equality, political freedom, plurality, democracy and human rights (CDC, 1996, pp. 12-25). It was argued that the new guidelines were the first government document that suggested patriotic education in Hong Kong (Express News, 25 November 1995). This alteration indicates that no policy network can be completely impervious to exogenous pressure for change, especially when the pressure is exacerbated by the changes in its political, social or economic context.

However, the closed and highly integrated curriculum policy network, which

survived the processes of decolonisation and democratisation in Hong Kong, was not automatically open to change either. There have been changes but these were made because the curriculum-makers within the network realised that if some concessions were not made, the political pressure was likely to mount and force radical change upon them. Those most intimately involved in making curriculum policy had an interest in maintaining the apolitical and academic orientated common curriculum. Although the network lost some control over the agenda in the immediate years around the handover, it still controlled the process of curriculum decision-making. Clearly, any changes had to occur within the established network that encompassed the Education Department and the teaching profession, for them to rule out the most radical proposals for change.

Despite the mounting political pressure, the network was able to control the decision-making process because of its structural characteristics. First, there was still a high degree of exclusion. Although a number of political and pressure groups penetrated the domain of curriculum making, they did not access its core. The Education Department and the teaching profession at the core had control over the reforms in curriculum policy by setting the 'rules of the game' that the opposition groups had to abide by in order to gain entry to the policy process. Through these 'rules of the game', the Education Department and educational organisations at the core dominated the main policy direction of the network as a whole.

As argued before, one of the major demands for change was to make civic education a mandatory subject in schools. However, the rules restrained the pro-curriculum change groups in the ad hoc committee from raising and making a decision on this issue (CPCE, 1995, p. 4; Mingpao, 18 February 1995). A Principal Assistant Director of Education who chaired the ad hoc committee also pointed out that: 'the decision on whether or not civic education should become a mandatory subject exceed[ed] the ad hoc committee's terms of reference' (Wen Wei Po, 22 March 1995). In addition, the groups on the periphery did not act in a vacuum; they had to base their policy proposals on the reports and documents compiled by the Education Department (interview with a senior curriculum officer; Hua Qiao Ri Bao, 6 January 1995). These reports, as argued by Morris (1990, p. 109), were manipulated by the Education Department and 'primarily used to legitimate the Department's policy'. Since the reports were biased towards the maintenance of status quo, the rules effectively pre-ordained that 'the review must not lead to large-scale change in the established curriculum' (Wen Wei Po, 20 May 1995).

Second, the Education Department and the teaching profession network had control over the reforms in civic education policy because the initiative in curriculum decision-making did not shift from the network to the Chinese authorities. Although the Chinese government increasingly accepted the argument that the curriculum policy on civic education needed strengthening in Hong Kong, its influence was confined to the pattern of vocal threats and indirect pressure. For example, in 1995 the cultural subgroup of the Preparatory Working Committee (PWC) established by the Chinese government

publicly issued their version of policy guidelines on Hong Kong's post-1997 civic education. It attempted to affect the decisions made by the curriculum-makers in Hong Kong. But it made it clear that it had no intention of imposing any curriculum plans on Hong Kong (South China Morning Post, 11 October 1995; interview with the leader of an educational pressure group). Its best scenario was that through incessant pressurisation, the curriculum-makers in Hong Kong would automatically take account of its proposals for change. This is not to deny the importance of the Chinese authorities in changing civic education policy in Hong Kong in the 1990s. However, the influence of the Chinese government was indirect, which was inevitably mediated by the policy-makers in Hong Kong who acted on what they themselves felt would be favoured by the authorities in Beijing (Bray, 1997, p. 14). Therefore, the curriculum policy network was actually left with a great deal of room to manoeuvre.

In the 1990s, both the Education Department and schools wanted to maintain the apolitical and academic orientation of the common curriculum. By securing control over the reforms in curriculum policy, the Education Department/ teaching profession network had the ability to resist change. It acknowledged that civic education needed strengthening in schools, as China resumed its sovereignty over Hong Kong. However, in reforming the curriculum policy on civic education, it tried to ensure that the further changes that were introduced would do as little harm as possible to the established curriculum. In order to achieve this, it tended to accept minor changes at the margins and reject the most radical proposals for change raised by the Chinese authorities and domestic groups.

For instance, the curriculum-makers within the network removed from the agenda one of the most important issues that the Chinese authorities and domestic groups raised in the 1990s; civic education was synonymous with political education and which was concerned with nationalism, patriotism, human rights and democracy. Civic education needed to be focused on political topics that could prepare pupils for the changes in Hong Kong's political environment (Education Convergence, 1996, p. 5; Wen Wei Po, 26 September 1994; Hong Kong Legislative Council, 22 May 1996, pp. 152-153). This proposal was particularly inimical to the interests and ideas of the Education Department and schools. Therefore, it was defined as extreme and, as such, was excluded from the policy process. In order to indemnify themselves against any criticisms, the curriculum-makers within the network argued that:

Discussions on nationalism and patriotism in relation to the other locality contexts were more sensible and appropriate than campaigns to secure for them the major or even the only part of civic education (Lee and Sweeting, 2001, p. 112).

According to them, the other locality contexts included individuals, family, neighbourhood and social community. Consequently, although the new guidelines showed signs of politicisation, the Chinese authorities and domestic groups failed in their attempts

to make political education the central theme of government policy on civic education throughout the 1990s.

Instead of strengthening political education, the network emphasised the importance of the teaching of personal and public morality. Although moral education was not something that the Chinese authorities and domestic groups disagreed on, it was not the focus of their concerns. By shaping politically-oriented civic education into moral education, the network could promote civic education in a way that was least harmful to the Education Department and the teaching profession. On the one hand, the introduction of moral education into schools meant that the common curriculum became less academic in nature. It enabled the network to reduce exogenous pressure by demonstrating its ability to recognise problems and adapt. On the other hand, the Education Department could avoid being involved in the vortex of political controversy, and the teaching profession could continue to keep politics out of schools. In other words, the network used the teaching of personal and public morality to dilute the political elements of civic education.

Consequently, the importance of morality was asserted in the new policy on civic education, which suggested the concept of social citizenship. The concept of social citizenship denoted a range of social ethics and moral values, including honesty, individual courage, filial piety, respect among family members, caring parents, mutuality of neighbourhood and taking care of public facilities (CDC, 1996, pp. 33-41). The focus on pupils' moral standards rather than their political awareness was a feature that underpinned the past and new school curriculum in general, and the past and new policies on civic education in particular.

The other major continuity was the absence of a mandatory syllabus on civic education. Although by the late 1980s it was clear that the 1985 reforms had not had the desired effect, the curriculum-makers within the network still rejected calls for making civic education a mandatory subject in the common curriculum in the 1990s. Rather, they encouraged schools to promote civic education on a voluntary basis, and rendered support to schools by issuing a new set of non-binding curriculum guides in 1996 (CDC, 1996, p. 3). According to a senior curriculum officer: 'the curriculum-makers still held the view that the use of curriculum guidelines was an appropriate and effective policy on civic education' (interview with a senior curriculum officer). They justified their decision by stressing the link between school autonomy and the quality of education. They argued that:

We disapproved of the proposal for a mandatory subject because we had no intention of monopolising the approach to the promotion of civic education in schools. Instead, we wanted to encourage schools, in the light of their own missions, resources and pupils' civic needs, to develop their school-based approaches. We believed that this would contribute to the quality of teaching (interview with a member of the CDC).

The decision might benefit the quality of education, but it also served the interests and ideas of the key actors within the network, who followed a strategy of damage limitation. It allowed the policy-makers to demonstrate that they had a policy in place to tackle the poverty of civic awareness among a young generation. Perhaps more importantly, there was no compulsion on schools to implement the guidelines. Therefore, schools still had the pretext for ignoring civic education and, particularly, political education in the common curriculum.

The Education Department and the teaching profession network also resisted change by marginalising the domestic groups that clamoured for a complete overhaul of the common curriculum. The groups did not accept the argument that the promotion of civic education on a voluntary basis was effective. Yet they were not in a position to change the policy. Despite having penetrated the mechanism of curriculum making, they had to abide by the rules set by the key actors at the core of the network. These rules did not allow them to introduce a mandatory civic education subject into the common curriculum (interview with a member of the ad hoc committee). As a result, their pressure had a limited impact on the policy. Their weakness in terms of pressure group influence was exacerbated by the fact that they did not exert a continuous influence on policy. The leader of a group that gained access to the periphery of the network argued that:

For a number of groups, it became increasingly evident that the 1996 guidelines were inadequate as time passed. However, there was a lack of a mechanism to enable us with a particular interest in political education to have any lasting effect on policy (interview with a member of the ad hoc committee).

To some extent, their participation in the policy process when the Education Department conducted a review of the 1985 guidelines affected the curriculum policy on civic education. Their views were reflected and a number of controversial political topics were introduced. However, the impact they had was ephemeral, which ended with the publication of the new guidelines in 1996. As a consequence: 'the recent policy re-manifested the signs of moralisation as a dominating feature of civic education' (interview with a member of the ad hoc committee). This is borne out by the current development in curriculum policy. In a 2001 curriculum document, *Learning to Learn*, 'civic education' was renamed as 'moral and civic education' (CDC, 2001).

Of course, the Chinese government could break up the network between the Education Department of Hong Kong and the local teaching profession and force its issues onto the agenda, in view of the fact that Hong Kong was no match for the Chinese government in terms of political power. However, the problem with this strategy was that the political costs could be very high. It has been argued that there were internal and international constraints for the Chinese authorities to intervene in the educational policy-making in Hong Kong. The constraints included the Sino-British Joint Declaration,

the Basic Law, and the massive international media scrutiny of the sovereignty transfer.

If the Chinese government decided to change the curriculum policy network in Hong Kong, it would effectively mean the violation of the provisions stipulated in the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law. The Chinese government was clearly not prepared to bear the political risks of creating international opprobrium and political, economic and social instability in Hong Kong on this matter. There were other policy areas that the Chinese government had more interest in and, thus, chose to target. Bray (1997, p. 14) argued that: 'the educational sector was given nothing like the attention devoted to such matters as the new airport, financial reserves, land reclamation or the Court of Final Appeal'. Under these circumstances, the Chinese government did not break up the curriculum policy network and heighten the issue of civic education to the Joint Liaison Group, nor did it force their demands onto the agenda within the network by giving direct instructions to the Hong Kong Government (interview with a member of the CDC). It relied on its indirect influence on the curriculum-makers, and this influence was limited by the nature of the curriculum policy network. As a result, the network was able to minimise the extent of change through the exclusion of groups and issues.

## 7. Conclusion

This chapter has revealed that the course of policy change in civic education in Hong Kong during the colonial transition was complex and dialectical. There were two forces, a force for change and a countervailing force, that coexisted and shaped the curriculum policy on civic education in Hong Kong. During the 1980s and 1990s, the development of a representative system and the change of sovereignty acted as a motor of change. They had a significant impact on Hong Kong politics, which created threats for the pre-existing network covering the Education Department and the mainstream teaching profession and its decisions on the curriculum policy on civic education. However, it would be inaccurate to say that, as some political scientists have suggested (Li, 1997; Newman, 1985; Segal, 1993; Wang, 1995; Chiu and Levin, 2000; Cheung, 1997; Miners, 1994; Lau, 1999; Yukari, 1996), change in policy-making and policy outcomes simply occurred as a result of the processes of decolonisation and democratisation in Hong Kong. Rather, these contextual changes did not have an effect independent of the curriculum policy network, which was structurally strong and so had the ability to withstand the pressure for change. In other words, the impact of colonial transition in Hong Kong on civic education policy greatly depended on the nature of the network.

Whilst it is important not to overemphasise the impact of contextual factors, it is apparent from this study that the changes in Hong Kong's political environment during the transition, including the end of colonialism and the development of representative government, affected the change in civic education policy. They created new problems to



which the established agenda within the Education Department and the teaching profession network did not have available solutions. They brought the poverty of civic education into sharper focus because the apolitical and academic-oriented curriculum could not easily be reconciled with the need to prepare pupils for the transition of Hong Kong to China. They also led to the creation of groups that were interested in using civic education to shape political culture in Hong Kong, thereby affecting the course of political transition. Similarly, as a result of the change of sovereignty, the Chinese government was increasingly concerned with the curriculum policy on civic education in Hong Kong. Of greater significance was the increase in relative power of the Chinese authorities and domestic groups demanding policy change.

In short, civic education became a major issue in Hong Kong during the transition, as it was inextricably intertwined with the changes in Hong Kong's political landscape. The outcome of this was that in the 1980s, and particularly the 1990s, Hong Kong's curriculum policy on civic education saw some change in the network and policy outputs. This demonstrates that, although the notion of a policy community is very static, the closed and well-integrated network in curriculum policy was not completely independent and impervious to the changes in Hong Kong's political environment. Thus far, two sets of policy guidelines, which were ostensibly used to strengthen civic education, have been issued to schools. In addition, a number of political topics that were previously regarded as unacceptable have been introduced into the civic education programmes sponsored by the network.

However, as has been seen, it is also the case that civic education policy did not change automatically. The Education Department and the teaching profession network was the other important factor that affected the trajectory of change. In accounting for policy change, we need to examine the nature of the network and how it interacted with the changes in Hong Kong's political environment. The network was structurally strong, with a single decision-making centre, a high degree of institutional support and resource exchange, and a consensual mode of policy-making. Therefore, it survived the processes of decolonisation and democratisation in Hong Kong, and remained intact, closed and highly integrated in the 1980s. The political pressure became greater during the 1990s, and thus led to a greater degree of change in the network. Yet the network did not change dramatically. It was protected by its institutional structure and clear consensus on curriculum policy, which united the network and excluded opposition interests from the core of curriculum making. Therefore, within the network, there was still a high level of exclusion and integration. The politicisation of Hong Kong during the transition did not lead to a politicisation of the policy arena.

Here, it is necessary to point out that the network was also saved by its constitutional and international contexts in which the Chinese authorities refrained from directly imposing any policies on Hong Kong. As a result, power did not gravitate away from the network to other institutions. This demonstrates the importance of network's context in

explaining the change in a network and policy. In the case of civic education policy, the context of Hong Kong created both threats and possibilities for the network. Nevertheless, the nature of the network was still important because the pressure from the Chinese authorities, though restrained, was still immense.

Since the network did not break down, it had the ability to affect the pace and extent of policy change. As we have seen, the network had less control over the agenda, which changed in that civic education became more important. However, those most intimately involved in making curriculum policy had an interest in maintaining the apolitical and academic-orientated curriculum. Policy-makers remained the same. Any changes largely occurred within the Education Department and the teaching profession network. By securing control over the reforms in curriculum policy, the network was able to limit damage to the established curriculum. On the one hand, it incorporated minor changes at the margins in order to reduce the political pressure. On the other, it rejected radical proposals for change and excluded from the core of curriculum making the groups demanding further reforms. The existence of the network, through the exclusion of issues and groups, explains why so little change was made to the established curriculum in order to promote civic education during the 1980s and 1990s. Consequently, civic education, especially political education, was squeezed out of the implemented curricula in most schools.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **The Development of The Manpower Policy Network in Hong Kong: The Dominance of Economic Interests (1970s – early 1990s)**

This chapter will examine how a fairly well integrated and closed policy network developed and succeeded in the area of manpower policy in Hong Kong between the 1970s and the early 1990s. The policy network included the Education and Manpower Branch (EMB) of the government and the key business groups in Hong Kong – the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce (HKGCC), the Federation of Hong Kong Industries (FHKI) and the Chinese Manufacturers Association (CMA). This chapter will show that the government/business relations in the policy network were distinctive, and that the network had a significant impact on the development of manpower policy.

A stock argument that is commonly used to explain the government/business relations emphasises the financial resources available to business and their importance to the success of economy as a whole, which gives business a privileged position in policymaking. However, in the second section, I shall argue that the manpower policy network was distinctive. It was not created because of the power of business. Rather, it emerged as a result of the colonial nature of Hong Kong. As an undemocratic colony, the Hong Kong government encountered a built-in legitimacy crisis and, therefore, particularly needed the successful economy for the stability and legitimacy of the regime. In order to secure the economic prosperity, the major business groups were co-opted. The immediate reason for the establishment of the network was the economic difficulties facing Hong Kong in the 1970s, which gave rise to shared views between the government and business on how to manage the labour force. This demonstrates that the network was less based on the economic power of business than on a consensus on manpower policy. It was only when the consensus took shape that the network began to develop.

In the third section, I shall argue that the manpower policy network was different from normal pressure politics, because it was not fluctuating but stable, closed and fairly well integrated for two decades. Central to the network were three major components. First, a limited number of participants were involved in the network, which meant that a consensus was relatively easy to reach. Second, the stability and integration of the network was achieved by the shared views between the government and business on the values and goals of manpower policy. There was also a general agreement on how to achieve these goals. Third, contrary to the pluralist position, access to the network was highly restricted. The shared views on manpower policy acted as a means of excluding radical groups, notably trade unions, from the network. The restricted membership of the

network meant that the actors did not change frequently, and that the government and business were able to de-politicise the domain of policymaking.

The fourth section of this chapter will go on to discuss how the nature of the network affected manpower policy. It will argue that the existence of the network was important in explaining why the manpower policy was biased towards the economic interests at the expense of the labour's ones. It will reveal that the network, through the mechanisms of defining what problems existed and what policy options were acceptable, had great influence on the development of manpower policy. This demonstrates the importance, within the manpower policy network, of its consensus on the values and goals of manpower policy. The network also affected the manpower policy, by preventing other problems and alternative solutions raised by trade unions from getting onto the agenda. Moreover, the trade unions that were opposed to the manpower policy were excluded from the network. Hence, the role of radical groups in influencing manpower policy was limited by the policy process, and the network was impervious to their challenges to its decisions. The policy process was far from neutral. As a consequence, the economic interests prevailed over the interests of labour in the development of manpower policy.

In spite of the fact that the network was strong enough to dominate the area of manpower policy for two decades, it contained a number of deficiencies. The last part of this chapter will highlight the structural weaknesses of the network, and argue that these weaknesses, which did not de-stabilise the network during a period of rapid economic growth and buoyant labour market, would explode as the political and economic circumstances changed. It will demonstrate that the network was fundamentally different from the curriculum policy network discussed in the previous chapters, and these differences made it much weaker.

## **1. The Definition of Manpower Policy in Hong Kong**

This chapter will begin by outlining the major elements constituting the manpower policy in Hong Kong before discussing how the manpower policy network developed during the 1970s. What does manpower policy mean in Hong Kong? This study adopts the official definition, by which 'manpower' refers to: 'all persons in employment, including employers, employees and workers on own account' (Education and Manpower Branch, 1991, pp. iii-iv). In other words, manpower policy concerns the management of labour force in Hong Kong.

According to the Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM), the manpower policy in Hong Kong had three major components, including manpower development (technical education, vocational training and employees retraining), labour importation, and employment services. Although the three components could be independent policy

sub-sectors, they were closely related by the fact that they all affected the manpower structure and labour market in Hong Kong. The fundamental principle governing the manpower policy was: 'to ensure that Hong Kong has a well-trained, positive and enterprising working population to meet the ever-changing manpower needs of Hong Kong, and to maintain our competitiveness in the international market'. To put this principle into practice, the Education and Manpower Branch (EMB) of the government provided the society with vocational education and training, and imported foreign workers to sustain the economic prosperity (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 5 November 1997, p. 166). Based on the official definition, this study examines the development of manpower policy in Hong Kong by focussing on the policy changes in manpower development and labour importation.

## **2. The Development of the Manpower Policy Network**

Traditional theories of interest group intermediation, including pluralism, corporatism, elitism and marxism (instrumental approach), place particular emphasis on the financial and economic resources controlled by business and their importance to the economic performance, in order to explain the relations between the government and business (Smith, 1993, pp. 15-47). To some extent, the above argument provides a useful insight into understanding the impact of business on policy outcomes. In Hong Kong, the financial and economic resources of business always placed their organisations in a privileged position in terms of policymaking. However, I shall argue that the manpower policy network was fundamentally different from an entity in which the business groups used their financial and economic resources to lobby and influence the government. Instead of this, the network was embedded in the nature of Hong Kong colonial state. Moreover, it was created not because of the power of business, but because the shared views between the government and business emerged as a result of economic difficulties during the 1970s.

The growth of the network was highly related to the colonial nature of Hong Kong. Cheng (1992, pp. 98-99) argued that: 'the notion of legitimacy is particularly significant for the government of Hong Kong', which was basically 'in a state of legitimacy deficit'. The legitimacy problem inevitably arose because of the undemocratic colonial nature of Hong Kong government. Under these circumstances, the government of Hong Kong particularly needed economic prosperity as one of the measures to maintain the legitimacy and stability of the regime. The success of the economy was important due to the fact that many people in Hong Kong were immigrants fleeing the political and economic turmoil in mainland China in the 1950s and the 1960s. Through the achievement of economic success, the Hong Kong government created a situation in which the people contrasted their living standards with the economic and social failures

exhibited next door by mainland China, and thus were willing to accept the colonial status quo.

It was clear that: 'the economic performance of Hong Kong was crucial to the stability of the colony' (interview with the leader of a trade union). The Hong Kong government prioritised the economic development over other issues. In order to develop a manpower policy to support economic growth, the co-operation of the business community was essential. Therefore, the major business groups like the HKGCC, the FHKI and the CMA were incorporated into the domain of manpower policymaking, and the government: 'paid special attention to their interests and worries (interview with the leader of a trade union). The business groups performed the roles of aggregating demands and channelling the views and interests of business to the government. They also helped to sell the agreed programmes to their members (McGregor, December 1977, pp. 3-4). Through the establishment of the manpower policy network, the government secured the co-operation of business groups in terms of information exchange in the policy process. Information exchange was especially important in the light of the fact that the economy of Hong Kong was highly open, volatile and, to some extent, fragile (Macleod, 1995, p. 11). The business groups were 'the people who presumably knew how best to maintain the territory's seemingly fragile prosperity', and their participation in the policy process contributed to the potency of manpower policy. Moreover, through the network, the government was well versed in the interests and worries of business, and could take immediate actions to revive their economic confidence in the government (Ahmed, Tao Lai and Wilding, 1997, p. 3).

Besides, the network was established not because of the power of business, but because of the development of a general agreement between the government and business on how to manage the labour force in the 1970s. The business groups had long lobbied the government for a more proactive manpower policy aimed at facilitating economic growth. However, a policy network did not develop until the 1970s when a consensus on manpower policy began to take shape among the government and business groups. This demonstrates the importance of consensus-building in the development of the network. In addition, the immediate reason for the growth of the consensus was the worsening economic situation of Hong Kong in this period. With the emergence of shared beliefs, the government and business groups were able to co-operate constantly in the making of manpower policy.

As early as the 1960s, the business associations, including the FHKI and the CMA, called on the government to take a more active role in managing the labour market and to formulate a comprehensive system of manpower training under the government revenue and administration. They were increasingly aware that the industrial productivity of Hong Kong needed to be upgraded, and that the whole economy would benefit from the establishment of a centralised vocational training system, which would supply a sufficient number of skilled workers for technology-intensive production. They pressurised the

government in the hope of setting up a government/business committee to thrash out the issue (Advisory Committee on Diversification, 1979, pp. 4-5). They argued:

There is in the industrial infrastructure a major and vital area which Hong Kong has neglected and is still neglecting. It is technical education and industrial training for the young generation. This is an internal factor, over which we in Hong Kong have full control... As a result, the shortage of technicians and craftsman is becoming increasingly critical and, unless there will be some significant improvement in the near future, our rate of industrial expansion, and hence economic growth, may be slowed down apparently (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 7 October 1970, p. 41).

Although the CMA and in particular the FHKI were powerful, with the membership accounting for above 60 percent of total industrial outputs in Hong Kong and employing over 50 percent of the local manufacturing workers, they received only negative feedback from the government in the 1960s (Li, February 1988, p. 2; The Commerce and Industry Department, 1970, pp. 56-57). This was because a consensus between the government and business on how to manage the labour force had not existed yet. This shows that the financial and economic resources controlled by business were not a major factor in determining the development of the network. Contrary to the demands made by the business groups, the government clung onto the traditional principle of positive non-intervention. It was maintained that the government should: 'leave the initiative to industries themselves' (Advisory Committee on Diversification, 1979, pp. 4-5). The principle of *laissez-faire* was enshrined in the government and, therefore, it did not support a more proactive approach to manpower policy proffered by the business groups (Ng, 1993, pp. 60-66). Without a clear consensus, the government distanced itself from the business and refused to set up a committee with their representatives to discuss how to implement a change to manpower policy. As a consequence, a government and business network did not develop in manpower policy in the 1960s.

However, the 1970s saw the emergence of the network. The economic situation of Hong Kong worsened dramatically, which triggered the establishment of the network. In the face of economic obstacles, the government changed its posture, and a consensus began to grow rapidly among the government and business. During the 1970s, the harsh international trade protectionism seriously troubled export-oriented Hong Kong's economy. Trade restrictions increased in number and strength in the major trade partners of Hong Kong, including the United States, Britain and other European countries (Choi, 1999, p. 143; HKGCC, June 1977, p. 17). Consequently, about 80 percent of domestic exports of garments and textiles, which were the major products of Hong Kong's manufacturing industry, were adversely affected by protectionist packages (HKGCC, August 1982, pp. 5-9). Meanwhile, regional competition and labour shortage aggravated the economic problems. Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore: 'had one by one jumped on

the export manufacturing bandwagon and presented Hong Kong with formidable competition' (Choi, 1999, p. 143). Besides, the problem of labour and skill shortages for construction and manufacturing industries fuelled big wage increases. The lack of well-trained workers also constrained the ability of business to resolve the economic difficulties by upgrading the technological level of production (HKGCC, May 1976, p. 14).

The government was immensely concerned about the economic difficulties, which can be understood in the light of the colonial nature of Hong Kong. It responded by changing its attitudes towards manpower policy. Consensus began to take shape among the government and business. First, they thought it important to maintain the vigorous manufacturing industry, and economic diversification was regarded as the best way forward. They believed that the manufacturing industry: 'must continue to upgrade its products, increase productivity and improve quality standards' (McGregor, December 1977, p. 5; FHKI, 2 November 1977, p. 2; Hong Kong Legislative Council, 5 October 1977, pp. 7-9). Second, the economic difficulties demonstrated to the government that the laissez-faire paradigm no longer worked in the area of manpower policy and could not be reconciled with the need to move upmarket. As a result, the government deviated from the traditional principle of positive non-intervention, and accepted that it had a greater role to play in ensuring a sufficient supply of skilled workforce to facilitate economic diversification (FHKI, 2 November 1977, p. 2). The business groups, including the HKGCC primarily representing the British hongts (trade houses) and the others speaking for manufacturers like the FHKI and the CMA, completely supported the new government's stance. They echoed the government's belief that the economic strategy of diversification was 'little more than empty words and phrases', unless a new policy was made to guarantee the supply of 'suitably trained manpower to make these activities possible' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 28 March 1979, p. 660).

The growth of the consensus was important to the development of the manpower policy network. This was because the consensus cleared the ideological barrier for stable and closed government/business relations to develop in the area of manpower policy. In fact, as put by the former leader of the FHKI, the issue facing the government and business in the 1970s was no longer on: 'whether the Government should be involved in industrial development but to what extent the involvement should be' (FHKI, 19 April 1978, p. 62). As the intervention in manpower policy to facilitate economic diversification became a clear agreement, the foundation for the government and business to co-operate in the policy process emerged. Therefore, a policy network developed. The major business groups like the HKGCC, the FHKI and the CMA were incorporated into the policy process through their access to the Advisory Committee on Diversification (ACD). They advised the government on: 'whether the process of diversification of the economy, with particular reference to the manufacturing sector, can be facilitated by the modification of existing policies or the introduction of new policies' (FHKI, 2 November 1977, p. 1). They were



also co-opted into the Vocational Training Council (VTC), whereby they could influence the policies on manpower training (Tang, 1990, p. 35). Besides the formal channels, they also established informal links with the EMB, through which both were in constant contact in the form of telephone meetings, conferences, luncheons, policy documents and the like (Miners, 1995, p. 188).

From the above discussion, it has been demonstrated that the manpower policy network was distinctive because its establishment was less a consequence of the resources available to business than of other factors. There was a structural factor that significantly affected the development of the network. The network was embedded in the nature of Hong Kong's colonial regime, which needed the success of the economy for its stability and legitimacy. Besides, there was an immediate reason for the development of the network. During the 1970s, in the face of the economic difficulties, a basic consensus on manpower policy began to grow between the government and business. This consensus created the network.

### **3. The Nature of the Manpower Policy Network**

It has been shown that the manpower policy network came into existence during the 1970s when a proactive approach to manpower policy was widely accepted by the government and business. In this section, I shall argue that unlike normal pressure politics, the network was not fluctuating and open to change. Rather, it was stable, closed and fairly well integrated for two decades until the early 1990s. The stability and integration of the network were achieved by its three important components: the limited number of participants; the widely accepted consensus on economic-oriented manpower policy; and the isolation of the network from labour's interests.

#### **3.1 The Limited Number of Participants**

The manpower policy network was stable and fairly well integrated. To some extent, its stability and cohesion depended on the limited number of participants. It primarily involved one government agency – the EMB, and three major business groups in Hong Kong – the HKGCC, the FHKI and the CMA (interview with a government official). Although the HKGCC was mainly representative of trade and commerce, especially of the interests of British hongts (trade houses), whilst the FHKI and the CMA were the agents of industries, they were not competing forces. Chan (1998, p. 4) argued that the former: 'had more or less good working relations with the Chinese manufacturers', because it: 'provided loans, marketing, shipping, insurance, technology and many other services to the manufacturers'. In other words, the interests of the HKGCC, the FHKI and the CMA were interconnected. Actually, within the policy network, they shared the same interests

and agendas in the making of manpower policy. They supported the increase in training facilities under the government's revenue and the importation of foreign workers in a bid to enhance Hong Kong's economic competitiveness (Christie, February 1989, p. 2; Rodwell, May 1989, p. 12; CMA, February 1986, p. 14; FHKI, 2 November 1977, p. 2; HKGCC, October 1977, p. 12).

At the executive level, the EMB was a major government actor in the manpower policy network. Although other government agencies were occasionally involved in the network, they accepted the lead of the EMB in the making of manpower policy. For instance, in the sub-sector of vocational education and training, the Labour Department sometimes participated in the policy process, by: 'updating the EMB on the state of the labour market'. However, 'according to the government structure, the Labour Department was under the EMB and, therefore, it must accept the lead of the latter' (interview with a government official). Likewise, in the sub-sector of labour importation, the Security Branch, the Economic and Services Branch and the Labour Department took part in the process of policymaking from time to time. Since the importation of foreign workers was a complex issue that had policy implications for other sectors, such as the immigration control and labour abuse, the EMB needed the co-operation of other government agencies. However, according to a legislator, the EMB was the single government actor that was finally responsible for the details of the policy. The other government actors were co-operative but not competing for the lead (interview with a legislator).

The limited number of participants affected the nature of the manpower policy network. It meant that it was easier for the government and business groups to reach and maintain a consensus on manpower policy over a relatively long period of time. And the consensus contributed to the stability and cohesion of the network.

### **3.2 The Consensus and Stability of the Manpower Policy Network**

From the 1970s, a belief in economic-oriented manpower policy was widely accepted, if not by the general public and labour, then by the government and business within the network. In the network, policies on technical education, vocational training and labour importation that could affect the labour market were explicitly linked with the pursuit of economic growth, through the enhancement of economic competitiveness and the control over labour costs. With a fairly high degree of consensus, the relations between the government and business groups were stable and integrated for two decades.

In the policy network, there was a clear agreement on the values and goals of manpower policy. The ideal manpower policy was dedicated to the enhancement of Hong Kong's economic competitiveness and the success of its economy. In the policy process, the economic needs of Hong Kong took priority over other issues, such as the protection of labour. As Ng (1993, p. 73) argued:

In a way, labour policy has slowly lost its distinctiveness such that it now regularly coincides with economic policy concerns. As a result, it has been alternatively labelled employment policy, manpower policy, human resource policy, or even education and training policy. It has become increasingly an integral aspect of the complex organic circuit of economic management in parallel to other pluralistic industrial societies.

The importance of manpower to the survival and prosperity of Hong Kong's economy led a belief in economic-orientated manpower policy being widely accepted by the government and business. As the former Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) emphasised (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 17 July 1991, p. 3050):

Hong Kong is devoid of natural resources. We have to rely mainly on our labour force to give impetus to economic development. A sustained shortage of manpower will limit the potential for economic growth. If we do not try our best to rectify the imbalance of supply and demand in the labour market, the social and economic development of Hong Kong will be impeded, and local and foreign new investment as well as reinvestment will also be adversely affected.

Human resources were of particular significance to the performance of Hong Kong's economy. Therefore, the economic orientation of manpower policy became a clear agreement between the members of the policy network (Advisory Committee on Diversification, 1979, p. 217).

There was also a general agreement on how to achieve the economic goals of manpower policy. In the eyes of the government and business, vocational education and training were pivotal to the drive: 'to facilitate the process of diversification of economy' (Advisory Committee on Diversification, 1979, p. 219). They were used to increase Hong Kong's productivity and move into more sophisticated products (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 27 March 1980, p. 660). A plan for massive expansion of government-sponsored vocational education and training was set out, which stated that: 'it is worth risking an over-provision of places for education and training' (Advisory Committee on Diversification, 1979, p. 217; p. 244). Besides, the importation of foreign labour was also regarded as central to the enhancement of economic competitiveness and the pursuit of a healthy economy (Advisory Committee on Diversification, 1979, p. 322). In the policy network, it was commonly held that:

Where a particular sector of the economy came under temporary pressure from excessive demand, there might be a case for bringing in additional capacity, in terms of both capital and labour... to maintain our position in a particular export market of value' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 13 April 1978, p. 816).

The government and business shared a view that labour importation was one of the solutions to the running of a healthy economy. It could make 'the production more competitive' and provide 'the economy with greater scope for growth', because it relieved economic bottlenecks and removed wage pressures on employers (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 17 July 1991, p. 3042).

The EMB and business groups had a shared view on the parameters of manpower policy – for the sharpening of Hong Kong's economic competitive edge. There was also a general agreement on how to achieve the economic goals of policy. This consensus had the important effect of maintaining and integrating the relations between the government and business in the policy network. This was because it served the interests of the government and business, which needed economic prosperity for their survival. Therefore, they did not intend to break down the network. More importantly, the consensus contributed to the stability and integration of the network because it limited the range of controversy over manpower policy. Issues relating to the management of the labour market were reduced to simply technical and routine issues within the policy network (see CMA, January 1986, p. 9-10; February 1986, p. 14). Take the immigration of foreign labour as an example. Although it was highly controversial in society, technical issues like how to effectively implement and monitor the labour importation scheme dominated the debate in the policy network. There was no questioning of the policy goals (Rodwell, 1989, pp. 12-14; Hong Kong Legislative Council, 7 November 1990, p. 315). As the range of controversy over manpower policy was limited in the political domain, the relations between the government and business groups tended to be stable and fairly well integrated between the 1970s and the early 1990s.

### **3.3 The Isolation of the Manpower Policy Network**

The manpower policy network was distinctive because of its isolation from the labour's interests. Pluralists suggest that the state is neutral and access to the state is relatively open (Jessop, 1983; Schmitter, 1974). However, in this case, access to the manpower policy network was highly restricted. Other interest groups, notably organised labour, were denied access to the network for two decades. The restricted membership of the network was not a consequence of the power of business. Instead, the consensus between the government and business on manpower policy acted as a significant means of exclusion. It was extremely difficult for the trade unions that did not abide by the agreed values, agendas and options to penetrate into the policy network.

Organised labour, including the Federation of Trade Unions (FTU), the Confederation of Trade Unions (CTU) and the Federation of Hong Kong and Kowloon Labour Unions (FLU), were strongly opposed to the labour importation scheme. They did not believe the economic justifications for this manpower policy. They argued that the scheme deprived the local workers of their fair share of economic benefits in good times,

and threatened their job security (interview with the leader of a trade union). They claimed the need to be involved in the policy network. However, between the 1970s and the early 1990s, the network was not open to them. The leader of a trade union pointed out that in the making of labour importation policy, the EMB consulted only the business groups like the HKGCC, the FHKI and the CMA. It: 'did not regard the trade unions as legitimate interlocutors'. Therefore, the trade unions were left out in the cold (interview with the leader of a trade union). Another trade unionist also argued that organised labour: 'was not consulted by the government during the course of policymaking'. They: 'needed to battle for a seat in the consultative process, if only to voice out their objections directly to the labour importation policy' (interview with the leader of a trade union).

In the manpower policy network, the EMB was not neutral but shared the belief with the business groups in economic-oriented manpower policy. This consensus was important in explaining why the trade unions were denied access to the manpower policy network. It acted as a significant means of exclusion in two perspectives. First, the problem of labour and skill shortages, inflation, and the labour importation policy were seen in the light of the consensus. They were construed as wholly economic issues, although they also had implications for the labour's living and working conditions, as argued by trade unionists (interview with the leader of a trade union). The Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) maintained that the labour importation policy merely: 'affected the development of Hong Kong's economy and went well beyond purely labour considerations' (South China Morning Post, 5 July 1990). Therefore, there was no need to include the representatives of labour in the discussion of the issue. Hence, trade unions were excluded from the policy network.

Second, the consensus made it extremely difficult for the trade unions to access the network, because the EMB and business groups wanted to maintain their agreements on the values, agendas and policy options. To avoid the politicisation of the issue of labour importation, they refused to include the trade unions, which tried to raise other values, problems and solutions, in the policy process. As a consequence, the trade unions were deliberately excluded from the policy network. A senior official of the EMB argued that:

The consultation would not be appropriate because obviously there are other various interests. If you go and ask them [trade unions] whether we should import any labour, the answer is definitely 'No'. We know the answer already (Adversario, September 1991, p. 30).

A former principal assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower elaborated the argument and emphasised:

But Government has to make up its mind on the level of quota that should be imposed. When you consult, you want to get something from it. If you don't expect to get any sort of

consensus out of the consultation exercise, you'd have to make a decision one way or another' (Adversario, September 1991, p. 30).

Access to the manpower policy network was highly restricted not only in the sub-sector of labour importation but also in that of vocational education and training. In this sub-sector, the shared belief in the economic orientation of manpower policy also served as a means of restriction. The EMB believed that the 'training policies must accommodate the needs of economic development' (interview with the leader of a trade union). Obviously: 'business associations were widely regarded as the organisations that had a good grasp of the difficulties faced by different economic sectors. And the business, not labour, was regarded as the primary users of the training facilities' (interview with the leader of a trade union). The consequence was that the business groups like the HKGCC, the FHKI and the CMA were incorporated by the EMB into the domain of policymaking, through the Vocational Training Council (VTC). On the other hand, the representatives of labour were marginalised (VTC, 2002; interview with a trade unionist).

The stability and continuity of the manpower policy network resulted, to a large degree, from its restricted membership. The restricted membership meant that the groups involved in the policy network did not change frequently. Moreover, the trade unions that did not abide by the agreed values, agendas and policy options were automatically excluded from the policy network. Therefore, the government and business groups were able to de-politicise the domain of policymaking over a relatively long period of time, and to contain conflicts in the process of decision-making. As a consequence, between the 1970s and the early 1990s, the policy network was stable.

So far, it has been argued that the network covering the EMB, the HKGCC, the FHKI and the CMA in the area of manpower policy was special in a variety of dimensions. First, it was stable, closed and cohesive between the 1970s and the early 1990s. Second, only a limited number of actors had representation in the network. At the executive level, the EMB was the major government actor in the network. Other government actors accepted its lead. The business associations that participated in the network were not competing forces, but had interconnected interests. Third, there was a fairly high degree of consensus within the policy network. The belief in economic-oriented manpower policy was widely accepted by the government and business. Fourth, due to this shared belief, access to the manpower policy network was highly restricted. The trade unions not subscribing to the consensus were automatically excluded from the network. The network was distinctive, but how did it affect the manpower policy from the 1970s? The following section will turn to analyse the impact of the network on manpower policy.

## 4. The Impact of the Network on Manpower Policy

In this section, I shall demonstrate that the manpower policy network significantly affected the development of manpower policy in Hong Kong between the 1970s and the early 1990s. It affected the manpower policy through the mechanisms of defining the nature of problems and privileging policy options favourable to economic interests. Meanwhile, it constantly excluded trade unions and their agendas from the domain of policymaking. As a result, the manpower policy was conspicuously biased towards the economic interests of the government and business, whereas the interests of labour were inevitably ignored.

First of all, between the 1970s and the early 1990s, the manpower policy network was important in the development of manpower policy because in the policy process its shared views defined what problems existed and what actions were to be taken to deal with the problems. In other words, the consensus determined the agenda within the policy process. In doing so, it ensured that the interests of the government and business – the economic growth of Hong Kong – were served.

It has been argued that the EMB and business groups had a consensus on manpower policy, which was dedicated to the enhancement of economic competitiveness and the pursuit of economic growth. Under this consensus, any trends in the labour market inimical to Hong Kong's competitiveness were regarded as problems that warranted the consideration of government's actions. For example, from the 1970s, regional competition and protectionist restraints demonstrated that Hong Kong's economy needed to diversify and move upmarket (CMA, February 1986, p. 14). However, the lack of workers who were sufficiently educated to acquire new skills and change to new technology crippled the drive to upgrade industrial production. This signalled to the EMB and business groups that it was necessary for the government to take actions to redress this problem in the labour market (CMA, January 1986, pp. 9-10; March 1986, p. 11).

Similarly, the trend of labour shortage in the 1980s was seen in the light of the economic-oriented principle within the policy network. It was argued that: 'the combination of a tight labour market with rising wages jeopardizes the competitiveness of Hong Kong products and the attractiveness of Hong Kong to investors'. Since the tight labour market was regarded as an issue hampering the economic competitiveness of Hong Kong, the government's action was justified. The EMB and business groups believed that: 'unless we take concrete steps to break the wage-push inflationary cycle, we will never solve the problem' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 4 July 1990, p. 1907). The government's intervention in the labour market in the form of reducing the labour costs was, however, against the wishes of workers. Obviously, trade unions argued that the problem of labour shortage did not exist. In their eyes: 'Hong Kong has in fact always had to face a vacancy rate, and its existence is a normality'. Moreover, 'the current level of

workers' wages is in fact not too high' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 4 July 1990, pp. 1904-1905). They preferred the government to let the labour market re-adjust itself, but their demands went unheeded in the policy process (interview with the leader of a trade union). By neglecting the arguments made by the trade unions, the economic interests of the government and business were served.

In the making of manpower policy, the consensus defined not only what problems existed but what options were available. Policy options that could tackle the problems in the labour market and restore Hong Kong's economic competitiveness were acceptable to the government and business groups in the policy network. For example, the government and business groups emphasised the importance of vocational education and training, because they believed that the policy option could accelerate economic diversification and improve Hong Kong's economic competitiveness. They argued that: 'vocational training is extremely important for providing the manpower necessary for the continuing development of industry, commerce and services' (FHKI, 22 August 1979, p. 8; Hong Kong Legislative Council, 6 January 1982, p. 324). As a consequence, the EMB in the 1980s liberalised its hitherto restrained role in technical education and vocational training, and began the expansion of the training system (Ng, 1993, p. 66). The expansion programmes increased the total number of technical institutes to eight in 1987. By 1988, full-time and part-time places in technical institutes numbered 11,500 and 50,500, which amounted to an increase of 158 percent and 41 percent respectively since the VTC was established in 1983. Moreover, the number of vocational training centres increased to 16 by 1988, and the annual numbers of training places rose to 12,000 full-time and 5,000 part time (Vocational Training Council, 1987).

In the face of labour shortage and inflation, the EMB and business groups believed it appropriate to import foreign workers to make up the shortfall. Although the policy option was highly controversial, the government and business believed that it was legitimate and justifiable because it could lessen the problem of labour and skill shortages and: 'safeguard the forward development of Hong Kong's economy' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 17 July 1991, p. 3043; Education and Manpower Branch, 1992, p. 3). Therefore, the EMB and business groups ignored the labour's opposition, and pushed ahead with the policy. In the 1980s, in addition to the importation of professionals and domestic helpers, the EMB formulated the quota-based General Labour Importation Scheme (Labour Department, 1995, pp. 30-31; South China Morning Post, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1989). Under the general scheme, 25,000 skilled, semi-skilled and experienced foreign labour at the technician, supervisor, craftsman and operative levels was allowed to work in Hong Kong at any one time (Labour Department, 1991, p. 12). The importation of foreign workers served the interests of the government and business, because it helped the business to remove wage pressures, and safeguarded the growth of Hong Kong's economy.

Second, the manpower policy network was also important in the development of manpower policy because it prevented problems raised by trade unions and their



alternative options from entering the domain of policymaking. Since the government and business were integrated and united around the principle of economic-led manpower policy, they were able to manipulate the agenda. In fact, the network constantly kept labour's concern and their policy proposals off the agenda within the policy process. As a result, between the 1970s and the early 1990s, the manpower policy was biased towards the advancement of economic interests at the expense of labour protection. This mechanism of exclusion was particularly important in the making of labour importation policy, in view of the fact that the trade unions were strongly opposed to the idea of labour importation.

Trade unions like the FTU, the CTU and the FLU uniformly disagreed with and raised problems about the policy option of labour importation. They argued that the importation of foreign labour had severe social impacts. It jeopardised the position of local workers, as they were replaced by imported foreign labour (South China Morning Post, 13 February 1989). It opened the floodgates of abuses of foreign labour by unscrupulous employers (interview with the leader of a trade union). Moreover, the trade unions emphasised the other problem – the great impact of labour importation on the local workers' incomes. It was argued that labour importation depressed wages, and affected: 'the improvement to the livelihood of the working class' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 4 July 1990, pp. 1905-1906). Worry about these social problems was not restricted to the trade unions, but was also broadly shared in society (South China Morning Post, 20 March 1989).

However, the problems of labour importation that were raised by trade unions could not get onto the agenda within the policy process. In the policy network, the EMB and business groups agreed on the range of existing problems – the problems inimical to the economic competitiveness of Hong Kong. The social impacts of labour importation did not fall into this category. More importantly, labour importation was conducive to the economic growth of Hong Kong, which was central to the economic-oriented principle. Therefore, the policy network repeatedly dismissed the existence of these problems. It suggested that these problems were neither present nor serious enough to justify a substantial policy change. Contrary to trade unions, the EMB and business groups did not believe the labour importation scheme jeopardising the position of local workers. They argued that the scheme did not 'significantly drag down wages for locals', because employers were required to 'pay the same to employ overseas contract workers as they would to employ comparable local workers' (Rodwell, 1989, p. 13; South China Morning Post, 31 May 1990). In their eyes, there was sufficient protection for local workers, by requiring 'all the applicants to demonstrate that they have made an effort to recruit locally and fail to fill their vacancies' (South China Morning Post, 31 May 1990). The policy network did admit some employers abused the system of labour importation. But it argued that the situation was not grave and thus large-scale change was unnecessary. The problems of labour importation were reduced to only: 'a matter of building sufficient

safeguards' (Adversario, September 1991, pp. 29-30). In short, the trade unions were opposed to labour importation and raised some problems about it. However, the policy network excluded these problems from the agenda within the policy process.

The trade unions also suggested alternative options to replace labour importation. Nevertheless, the policy network dominated the domain of policymaking and restrained these options from getting onto the agenda. The Christian Industrial Committee (CIC), a prominent trade union in Hong Kong, suggested raising salaries and improving working conditions. The Confederation of Trade Unions (CTU) recommended automation (South China Morning Post, 8 April 1989). In the policy network, these alternative options, in comparison to labour importation and vocational training, were defined as either infeasible or insufficient to allay the problems of labour and skill shortages. Wage adjustment was regarded as infeasible because it would fuel production costs and inflation, and cause high turnover (CMA, January 1989, p. 27; Hong Kong Legislative Council, 17 July 1990, p. 3042). Moreover, the government and business emphasised that advanced machinery could not be adopted in many economic sectors. Therefore, automation was defined as insufficient to relieve the problem of labour and skill shortages and, again, excluded from the agenda (Rodwell, 1989, p. 13; Hong Kong Legislative Council, 17 July 1991, p. 3049).

It has been demonstrated that the network dominated the policy process. In the policy network, there was a consensus which determined that labour and skill shortages affecting the economic competitiveness of Hong Kong were serious problems with which the network had to deal. Under the consensus, vocational training and labour importation that could restore the economic competitiveness were acceptable solutions. On the other hand, the policy network ensured that other problems and solutions suggested by trade unions were not conceived of during the course of policymaking. As a result, between the 1970s and the early 1990s, the manpower policy was tilted in favour of the economic interests at the expense of the labour's ones. The former leader of the United Democrats of Hong Kong argued that the formulation of manpower policy: 'invariably involves the question of identification and espousal of certain social values'. In Hong Kong, economic growth was always high on the government's list of priorities, whilst labour had to bear the adverse effects of the economic-oriented manpower policy, such as labour importation. In effect, the government: 'trade[d] the principle of social equity simply for economic prosperity' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 29 January 1992, p. 1602).

Finally, the network affected the manpower policy by excluding trade unions from the domain of policymaking. In other words, the trade unions and their voice of opposition were marginalised in the policy process. It has been discussed in the previous section that access to the manpower policy network was highly restricted. The trade unions that did not abide by the consensus were automatically excluded from the policy network. This is not to say that the trade unions, such as the FTU, the CTU, the FLU and the CIC, desisted from challenging the manpower policy, especially the labour importation scheme. In fact, in the

second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s, they organised an array of public campaigns in a bid to drum up the public support for their cause (interviews with trade unionists). However, as they could not access the policy network, their public campaigns did not pose a serious challenge to its decisions on manpower policy. The leader of a trade union pointed out:

As the government did not regard us [trade unions] as legitimate interlocutors in the making of manpower policy, the only thing we could do was to keep voicing out our opinions and concern over labour importation through media, petitions and demonstrations... Apparently, our measures were not sufficient to persuade the government to change the policy. The business had access to the government and was very influential. As a consequence, the government continued to make policies in favour of economic interests (interview with the leader of a trade union).

All in all, between the 1970s and the early 1990s, the network covering the EMB and business groups dominated the domain of manpower policymaking. It was stable, closed and fairly well integrated over this period, which was achieved by the following factors: a limited number of participants; a consensus on economic-oriented manpower policy; and highly restricted membership. The network was important in the development of manpower policy. It affected the policy through the mechanisms of defining what problems existed and what options were acceptable. It also prevented other problems and alternative solutions raised by trade unions from getting onto the agenda, and marginalised the trade unions in the policy process. The existence of the network explains why the manpower policy was biased towards the advancement of economic interests, whilst the interests of labour were generally overlooked.

Yet, in spite of the fact that the manpower policy network was strong enough to dominate the domain of policymaking for two decades, the last part of this chapter will argue that the policy network contained some structural defects. These structural defects did not destabilise the relations between the government and business associations during a period of economic growth and buoyant jobs market. But they would explode once the political-economic conditions substantially changed. The manpower policy network was significantly different from the curriculum policy network that was analysed in Chapters 5 and 6, and these differences made it much weaker. I shall now highlight these structural weaknesses.

## **5. The Structural Weaknesses of the Manpower Policy Network**

Despite the apparent consensus within the manpower policy network, it contained a

number of deficiencies. It was not as integrated as the curriculum policy network. In the manpower policy network, there was fundamental agreement between the EMB and business groups on the values and goals of manpower policy. As discussed earlier, both the government and business groups believed that manpower policy should be dedicated to the enhancement of Hong Kong's economic competitiveness and economic growth. However, there were some differences between the government and business on what should be done and as to what extent the interests of labour should be sacrificed in the pursuit of economic growth. Although these differences did not stem from the deep ideological divergence that existed among the major actors, they could create internal divisions within the policy network.

The first of these differences lay in the durability of the labour importation scheme. Although the government and business had a fundamental consensus on the use of labour importation to sharpen Hong Kong's competitive edge, there was no agreement on the durability of this strategy. The EMB of the government regarded the labour importation policy as 'a temporary measure' to develop the economy at a time when it was hardly hit by the problem of labour and skill shortages. It believed that in the longer run: 'sustained productivity growth, coupled with flexibility of adjustment in the labour market, provides the only real and lasting solution' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 14 October 1987, p. 62). By contrast, the business groups like the HKGCC, the FHKI and the CMA argued that the government: 'should allow the immigration on a relatively long-term basis', in order to: 'safeguard the forward development of Hong Kong's economy' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 13 April 1978, p. 816; 17 July 1991, p. 3043). This disagreement was a cause of potential conflicts over policy when the business groups urged the government to renew or enlarge the arrangements of labour importation (Ho, 1992, pp. 200-203).

Of greater significance was the difference between the government and business groups on the extent to which the workers' interests should be sacrificed in the pursuit of economic growth. This is not to say that the government and business groups did not have a consensus on the values and goals of manpower policy. In fact, as discussed earlier, they fundamentally agreed on the economic orientation of manpower policy. There was a universal acceptance that the enhancement of economic competitiveness should be given a priority in decision-making. However, they had little agreement on how to deal with the workers' interests in the making of manpower policy, especially when the workers' interests were incompatible with the economic ones. Obviously, the business groups gave their unreserved support to the notion that the welfare of labour should be subservient to the pursuit of economic growth (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 17 July 1991, p. 3048). They argued that 'Hong Kong is always a business city' and must 'go for growth'. To them, the sacrifice of workers' interests in the pursuit of economic growth was completely justifiable because: 'a high economic growth rate will bring long-term benefits to all the people of Hong Kong' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 29 January 1992, p. 1624). The position of the EMB was subtler, and it was more concerned than its business counterparts

about the social impacts of manpower policy. It resembled the business groups in prioritising the economic aspect of manpower policy. But unlike the business groups, in pursuing economic development through manpower policy, it considered limiting the damage to local workers (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 17 July 1991, p. 3050; 17 October 1991, p. 71). Therefore, there were occasional skirmishes between the EMB and business on the size of labour importation (see FHKI, July 1990, pp. 9-10; HKGCC, 1989, p. 2; South China Morning Post, 7 April 1989). If these differences began to fester, it would undermine the general agreement on how to achieve the goal of economic development and even the integration of the policy network.

Nevertheless, these differences neither surfaced nor destabilised the manpower policy network amid rapid economic growth and buoyant labour market between the 1970s and the early 1990s. Faced with the acute problem of labour and skill shortages and a situation of full employment, the EMB sidelined its concern over the durability of labour importation and the possible social impacts of manpower policy. During this period, the most pressing issue in the policy process was to relieve the problem of labour and skill shortages as quickly as possible. The vigorous labour market meant that the protection of labour's interests was not a major issue (interviews with senior government officials). In this situation, a clear agreement on the goals and a general consensus on how to achieve them were established between the government and business within the policy network. Based on this consensus, the policy network was stable and fairly well integrated. Yet the consensus became increasingly difficult to maintain as the economic and political circumstances substantially changed. In the 1990s, the unemployment rate climbed and the relative power of trade unions sharply increased, which greatly impinged on the consensus and the integration of the manpower policy network. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

The manpower policy network was also relatively weak because, unlike the curriculum policy network, the relations between the EMB and business groups were not highly institutionalised. Although access to the network was restricted because the representatives of labour who did not abide by the agreed values, goals and options were automatically excluded, the network lacked an institutional basis that provided a further means of exclusion. The Advisory Committee on Diversification (ACD), on which the business groups like the HKGCC, the FHKI and the CMA were represented, provided the focus for government and business interaction in the 1970s. However, it was an ad hoc institution, and dissolved in the early 1980s (FHKI, 2 November 1977, p. 1). The membership of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) that advised the EMB on the policies on vocational education and training was exclusive to the HKGCC, the CMA and the FHKI (VTC, March 2002; interview with a government official). Yet the VTC was confined in the sub-sector of manpower training. It did not provide an institutional cover for the government / business relations in the sub-sector of labour importation. This weakness did not create great difficulty for the manpower policy network in excluding

radical groups when the consensus was strong and the opposition was weak. However, it became increasingly difficult for the network to keep the trade unions out in the 1990s as they launched ferocious attack on manpower policy and the consensus began to waver in the face of changing political-economic circumstances.

A further weakness of the manpower policy network was that it was not as vertically independent of the actors above it as the curriculum policy network. The Governor did play a role in manpower policy. This limited the extent to which the network could seal itself off and de-politicise the domain of policymaking, particularly when the Governor did not subscribe to the consensus between the EMB and business groups. So, what was the role of the Governor? In the process of policymaking, the EMB in close consultation with the business associations was responsible for identifying and defining problems, and initiating policy proposals. Normally, the Governor intervened at an advanced stage and had a final say on the policy (South China Morning Post, 10 May 1989; 29 May 1990). A member of the Legislative Council pointed out:

In my understanding, the policy on labour importation must have gone through the Governor-in-Council, before the government finally took the decision. So who was the policymaker? I think that the EMB was the one identifying the problem of labour and skill shortages and initiating the arrangements of labour importation. At the last stage, the policy proposals were submitted to the Governor for final approval. With the Governor's blessing, the EMB finalised the policies and put them into effect (interview with a member of the Legislative Council).

It was inevitable that the Governor, as a final decision-maker, had significant influence on manpower policy. Sometimes the Governor even used this influence to intervene at an earlier stage in the policy process, as what happened in the middle of 1990s (next chapter). Again, the influence of the Governor did not destabilise the manpower policy network between the 1970s and the early 1990s. This was because from MacLehose through to Wilson, the Governor clearly supported the agreement between the government and business on the economic orientation of manpower policy (MacLehose, 1979, pp. 20-25; Wilson, 1990, pp. 5-7). Yet once the Governor began to question the existing policy line during the course of de-colonisation, this weakness would become a major destabilising factor. The potential for rapid politicisation of the policy area was great, as the existing consensus would break down, and the Governor, the administration and business groups would propose different policies.

In short, once the political-economic conditions of Hong Kong changed, the structural deficiencies of the manpower policy network would worsen. At that time, it would be very difficult to maintain the network.

## 6. Conclusion

Manpower policy in Hong Kong between the 1970s and the early 1990s was made within the confines of a stable, closed and fairly well integrated policy network. This policy network included the Education and Manpower Branch (EMB) of the government and the major business groups in Hong Kong – the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce (HKGCC), the Federation of Hong Kong Industries (FHKI) and the Chinese Manufacturers Association (CMA). They developed a shared view of the values, goals and options of manpower policy, and dominated the domain of policymaking

It is clear from this study of manpower policy that the manpower policy network had something more than an entity in which the business groups simply used their economic and financial resources to lobby and exert influence on the government. It was created, not because of the power of the business, but because of the colonial nature of Hong Kong and the economic difficulties facing the territory in the 1970s. The undemocratic colonial status of Hong Kong meant that the government inherently lacked legitimacy and particularly needed a successful economy to uphold the stability and legitimacy of the regime. In order to develop the economy, the government co-opted the business associations into policymaking. Through the establishment of the policy network, the government secured the co-operation of the business in terms of information exchange in the making of policy. Moreover, through the network, the government was attuned to the interests and worries of the business, and thus could take immediate actions to revive their economic faith. Besides this structural factor, the immediate reason for the establishment of the network was the economic difficulties facing Hong Kong in the 1970s. The economic hardship meant that the government had to intervene in manpower policy to give a fresh impetus to economy, and a consensus between the government and business began to take shape. It was only when a shared view of manpower policy began to emerge that the policy network developed. In other words, the development of the network was a consequence of consensus-building.

Unlike normal pressure politics, the manpower policy network was distinctive because it was stable, closed and fairly well integrated for two decades. The stability and integration of the network were achieved by a number of factors. First, in the network, the participants were limited, which meant that a consensus on broad goals was relatively easy to reach. Second, between the government and business groups, there was a shared view on the values and goals of manpower policy, which was dedicated to the enhancement of economic competitiveness in the face of trade protectionism and regional competition. They also had a general agreement on how to achieve the goals, through the expansion of vocational training and the importation of foreign labour. The consensus contributed to the stability and integration of the network because with it, the issues of manpower policy were largely de-politicised and seen as technical issues in the policy process. Third, access

to the network was highly restricted, and the consensus acted as an effective means of exclusion. The trade unions that did not abide by the shared views of manpower policy were automatically excluded from the network. As a result, the groups involved in the network did not change frequently, and the government and business groups were able to de-politicise the domain of policymaking.

The case of manpower also reveals that the policy network covering the EMB and business groups significantly affected the manpower policy in Hong Kong. In other words, the nature of the manpower policy network was important in explaining the development of manpower policy from the 1970s. The network affected the policy through the mechanisms of defining what problems existed and what policy options were acceptable. This demonstrates the importance, within the policy network, of its shared views on manpower policy. The consensus on economic-orientated manpower policy determined that the issues in the labour market crippling the economic competitiveness of Hong Kong, notably the labour and skill shortages since the 1970s, were serious problems that warranted the government's intervention. In order to revitalise the economy, the expansion of vocational education and training, and the importation of foreign labour were regarded as acceptable policies. The network also influenced the manpower policy by preventing other problems and alternative options raised by trade unions from getting onto the agenda. The network insisted that the problems of labour importation either did not exist or was not serious enough to justify a substantial change. Alternative solutions raised by the trade unions were defined as infeasible or insufficient to allay the problem of labour and skill shortages. The policy process was far from neutral, and the policy outcomes were biased towards economic interests at the expense of the workers' interests as a result. Finally, by excluding the trade unions from the network, the radical groups opposed to the policy were marginalised and thus could not pose a challenge to the network and its decisions.

In spite of the fact that the manpower policy network was strong enough to dominate the domain of policymaking, it contained a number of problems that would explode as political and economic circumstances changed. It is clear from this study that the manpower policy network was, to a large extent, different from the curriculum policy network, and these differences made it much weaker. It lacked the integration of the curriculum policy network. Although there was a shared view on the values and goals of manpower policy and some agreement on how to achieve them, there were differences between the EMB and the business on the durability of labour importation, and on the extent to which the interests of workers should be sacrificed. Moreover, unlike the curriculum policy network, the manpower policy network lacked an institutional means of exclusion, and it was not independent of the Governor. Rather, the Governor had a role to play in the policy process. If he used his power, he was able to influence the policy outcomes. All of these weaknesses were important, but they did not de-stabilise the network during a period of rapid economic growth and vigorous labour market. In the face of labour and skill shortages and full employment, the consensus was strong and the



opposition was weak. Nevertheless, the network had the seeds of its own destruction embedded in its make-up. Once the political and economic circumstances dramatically changed, as what happened in the 1990s, these seeds of destruction would undermine the network and cause substantial changes to manpower policy. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Eight

### **The Decline of the Manpower Policy Network: From the Dominance of Economic Interests To the Inclusion of Labour**

This chapter will examine the decline of the economic-oriented manpower policy network that contained the Education and Manpower Branch (EMB) of the government and the major business associations during the 1990s, and how this decline affected the development of manpower policy in Hong Kong. It will argue that the structural weakness of the manpower policy network prevented it from being a major factor in policy change. This structural weakness meant that the network was unable to survive the political and economic change of Hong Kong, which mostly occurred during the 1990s and triggered a great deal of pressures for change in manpower policy. In fact, the network had disintegrated by the middle of the 1990s. Due to this decline, it could not mediate the external pressures for change and lost its influence on policy outcomes. Therefore, the contextual factors were more important than the network in determining the course of change in manpower policy.

In the 1990s, the economic-oriented manpower policy network was subject to increasing challenge. This chapter will begin by examining why this challenge occurred and how it affected the policy network. In the first section, I shall argue that the challenge was a consequence of major change in the political and economic conditions of Hong Kong during the colonial transition. In the 1990s, the state of labour market in Hong Kong worsened markedly in the wake of economic re-structuring and integration with mainland China. The growing problem of unemployment stoked the trade unions' opposition to the economic-oriented network and its decisions on manpower policy. Besides, the network was under the influence of political liberalisation in Hong Kong. The development of representative government affected the distribution of power in the territory, and greatly strengthened the position of trade unions that put the network under unprecedented pressure. The challenge to the network was also closely related to another change in the political picture of Hong Kong. As the end of colonialism approached, the British policy towards Hong Kong shifted from prioritising stability through economic success to making a graceful exit and popular policies in the immediate years before the handover. This transformation threatened the very basis of the economic-oriented network.

The second section will show that the weak manpower policy network was not important in the development of manpower policy in the 1990s, because it contained the seeds of its own destruction. This structural weakness meant that the network was highly susceptible to the external pressures for change and was unable to survive the contextual

change. There was an explosion in the structural problems within the network, triggered by contextual change, which eventually undermined the network. First, the stability of the network heavily relied on whether or not the Governor supported the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy. However, Governor Patten, who was influenced by the change in the British policy towards Hong Kong, no longer subscribed to this value and removed decision-making from the network. Second, as a consequence of the growing problem of unemployment, the latent differences between the EMB and business on manpower policy surfaced and widened. The consensus within the network rapidly broke down and internal divisions developed. Third, the network was weak because there was a low degree of institutionalisation. When the consensus broke down and trade unions gained in political strength, it did not have a further means of exclusion. Hence, the trade unions penetrated the domain of policymaking and further diluted the network.

The third section will examine how the collapse of the network affected the trajectory of policy change. It will argue that the network had disintegrated by the mid-1990s and lost its influence on policy outcomes. As the Governor increased his role in the policy process, it was difficult for the network to delay or manipulate the direction of policy change. Moreover, as the consensus broke down and the trade unions accessed the policy process, the network could not mediate the external pressures by defining the nature of problems and privileging the existing policy. Nor could it limit the extent of policy change through the exclusion of trade unions, radical issues and alternative solutions from the policy process. In short, the contextual change and the concomitant pressures led to a politicisation of the policy area. As a consequence, manpower policy that had been conspicuously biased towards economic interests at the expense of workers' welfare substantially changed and became more evenly balanced in the middle of the 1990s. Although there was no general shift to a labour-oriented manpower policy, there were an increasing number of provisions being made to safeguard the interests of workers.

## **1. Political and Economic Change and Challenges to the Manpower Policy Network**

In the 1990s, the economic-oriented network covering the EMB and major business associations was subject to many challenges. This chapter will begin by examining why these challenges occurred and what impact they had on the policy network. It has been argued in the last chapter that the establishment and success of the policy network was based on the colonial nature of Hong Kong and its vigorous labour market. However, the political and economic conditions of Hong Kong have massively changed since the signing of the Sino-British Joint Agreement in 1984, and these changes were particularly explicit in the latter part of transition during the 1990s. This section will argue that the challenges to the network were a consequence of these contextual changes – the

vicissitudes of labour market, the development of representative government and the end of colonialism – and these shifts in contexts eroded the basis of the network and its economic-oriented manpower policy.

### **1.1 Change in Labour Market, New Problems and Intense Worker's Opposition**

Chapter seven argued that full employment in the 1970s and the 1980s led to a belief in economic-oriented manpower policy being widely accepted in Hong Kong. The chance of unemployment was remote so policymakers and even workers did not pay enough attention to the labour side of manpower policy. However, in the 1990s, the economic-oriented network was subject to increasing challenge because of a change in the labour market of Hong Kong, which itself was an economic consequence of the colonial transition. The vicissitudes of the labour market affected the manpower policy network by presenting it with new problems and uncertainty.

As a consequence of the colonial transition, the state of labour market in Hong Kong deteriorated in the 1990s. The signing of the Sino-British Joint Agreement, which stated that the sovereignty of Hong Kong would be restored to China in 1997, exacerbated and accelerated the economic integration between mainland China and Hong Kong. Since the early 1980s, the manufacturing sector of Hong Kong economy has continuously moved to the vast hinterland of China, especially the Pearl River Delta, in an attempt to lower the production costs. Meanwhile, Hong Kong has rapidly shifted from a labour-intensive manufacturing centre to a capital-intensive service hub (Ip, 1997, p. 170). This ongoing process of economic re-structuring has had far-reaching implications for the labour market of Hong Kong. It meant that the manufacturing sector remaining in Hong Kong had surplus labour, and that a large number of surplus manufacturing workers had to change their jobs to the service sector.

Yet the skills and experience of many redundant manufacturing workers were not readily transferable, and the expansion of service sector could not keep pace with the demise of the manufacturing sector. As a result, in the early 1990s, the problem of unemployment began to surface, and it particularly worsened from 1995 (South China Morning Post, 20 April 1995). The unemployment rate sharply rose from 2.8 percent in the first quarter of 1995 to 3.6 percent in November. The level of 3.6 percent meant unemployment hitting a record high, which was only a fraction below the rate of 3.7 percent in 1984, when the Hong Kong economy was hard hit by the political uncertainty about the future status of Hong Kong (HKGCC, December 1995, p. 39; South China Morning Post, 18 August 1995). Although, theoretically speaking, unemployment at the level of 3.6 percent was by no means serious, it was a major issue and actually 'provoked much collective hand-wringing' in Hong Kong, because the people were used to a very low unemployment level during a long period of rapid economic development (Asiaweek,

23 June 1995, p. 32). Moreover, as the Hong Kong government did not provide unemployment benefits, unemployment at this level inevitably brought about severe financial difficulties for the unemployed (Wong, 1995a, p. 30).

Growing unemployment affected the economic-oriented manpower policy network in three major ways. First, it triggered labour unrest and intensified workers' opposition to the labour importation policy. Trade unions, including the FTU, the CTU and the FLU, blamed the labour importation scheme for the surge in unemployment. Although the causes of unemployment were complex, they argued that the policy on labour importation aggravated the problem. According to them, many imported foreign workers had taken up jobs that did not require special skills, and these jobs could have gone to local workers. Therefore, they challenged the manpower policy network and its decisions, by calling for an end to labour importation (South China Morning Post, 20 April 1995).

Second, the economic re-structuring and the surge in unemployment created a new problem to which the manpower policy network had no available solutions. Many displaced workers were previously employed in manufacturing industries and were middle-aged, with low levels of education and skills (Asiaweek, 20 October 1995, p. 44). When the manufacturing sector was shrinking, the unemployed needed targeted and subsidised retraining programmes to reinforce their competitiveness in the labour market. However, the traditional policies on manpower training did not provide a solution, because they were economic-oriented and neglected the issue of labour protection. To achieve economic diversification and rapid growth, the traditional training programmes were focussed on target trainees who were young and educated, and could acquire sophisticated knowledge and skills quickly (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 9 October 1996, p. 104). Displaced workers who were middle-aged and less educated were generally neglected. As a new problem arose to which no solutions were available, trade unions challenged the network and called on the government to change the existing policies on manpower training. The leader of the CTU argued that: 'the present predicament is a result of the lack of a long-term policy on labour and manpower and Government's failure to inject adequate resources to provide retraining for local workers'. Therefore, the trade unions pressurised the government to help the unemployed by: 'providing funds for the provision of retraining to local workers' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 29 January 1992, p. 1597).

Third, the vicissitudes of the labour market prompted the trade unions to question not only the policies but also the values and principles that dominated the policy process. Traditionally, manpower policy was dedicated to the pursuit of economic growth through the provision of training programmes and the importation of foreign workers. This economic-oriented principle of manpower policy was a consensus between the government and business in the policy network (see the third and fourth sections of the last chapter). However, in the midst of growing unemployment, the trade unions and the political parties representing workers' interests increasingly questioned the

economic-oriented principle the network has followed since the 1970s. They urged the government to pay greater attention to the values of social justice and equity in the making of manpower policy. They argued:

No doubt economic growth is important for Hong Kong, particularly when we are facing 1997. Economic growth will add to our confidence in the future of Hong Kong. Yet *we cannot trade the principle of social equity simply for economic prosperity*. If the gap between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong widens and social conflicts intensify, it will not be to the advantage of our long-term economic growth. Conversely, it is only when we are *pursuing economic prosperity and at the same time upholding social equity* that every one of us, whatever his/her position in society, can have a share in the fruit of economic growth. Only then will there be real stability within our society and hence prosperity (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 29 January 1992, p. 1602-1603; emphasis added).

All in all, the change in Hong Kong labour market, which originated in the colonial transition, caused and intensified the workers' opposition to the manpower policy network, its values and decisions on manpower policy.

## 1.2 Political Reform and Stronger Labour Movement

In the 1990s, the manpower policy network was also confronted with increasing challenge arising from the political reform in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. It has been argued that trade unions in the 1990s stepped up their opposition to the economic-oriented manpower policy network and its decisions on manpower training and labour importation. Like the curriculum policy network, the manpower policy network was influenced by the development of representative government in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. This political change affected the network by strengthening the position of trade unions and political groups representing the interests of workers. As a result, they were able to put the network under unprecedented political pressure.

The development of representative government started shortly after the signing of the Sino-British Joint Agreement, and gained in pace during the 1990s. In 1991, for the first time in Hong Kong history, direct elections on the basis of universal franchise were introduced into the Legislative Council, a lawmaking body in Hong Kong, and elected members (directly and indirectly) formed a majority of the legislature (Lo, 1992, p. 1). The development of representative government changed the political landscape and the distribution of power in Hong Kong. The revamped Legislative Council increased the political influence of trade unionists and political activists who penetrated the political domain on a platform of advancing the workers' interests (Louie, 1992, pp. 58-59). Particularly in 1995, the legislature was further open to election, and the seats won by the trade unions like the FTU, CTU and the FLU increased from two to eight, which

substantially enhanced their influence within the political domain (South China Morning Post, 19 September 1995). To this electoral victory was added the increasing presence of labour-friendly political groups on the Legislative Council, such as the Democratic Party (DP), the Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) and the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) (South China Morning Post, 19 September 1995). On manpower policy, the trade unions and political groups had similar positions. Their cooperation could form a majority on the Legislative Council and mount a great deal of pressure on the manpower policy network (Wong, 1995b, p. 28).

As political reform strengthened the political influence of organised labour, they were able to challenge the manpower policy network. In the face of growing unemployment, the CTU, the FTU, the DP, the DAB and the ADPL all pledged their support to the protection of workers' interests (South China Morning Post, 20 September 1995). To indemnify the local workers against unemployment, the trade unions and political groups drew on their influence on the Legislative Council. They used motions, question and answer time and, especially, private member's bills in a bid to pressurise the government to change the economic-oriented manpower policy. The DP, for instance, moved the Employment Protection Bill in 1995 in an attempt to remove decision-making from the manpower policy network. If the bill were passed, it would allow the Legislative Council to set overall limits on the number of imported foreign workers for each industry (South China Morning Post, 30 May 1995). Moreover, the FTU and the CTU, in co-ordination with the unionists on the Labour Advisory Board (LAB), moved a more radical bill that aimed at completely terminating the General Labour Importation Scheme (South China Morning Post, 10 October 1995).

By trying out their mandated role as people's representatives, the trade unions and political parties put the government under a great deal of pressure. It became increasingly difficult for the government to resist their call for change and exclude them from the domain of manpower policymaking. As the leader of a trade union pointed out:

The unemployment level increased sharply in the 1990s, and thus manpower policy became a focus of concern in society. Trade unions were opposed to labour importation all along, and we [trade unions] stepped up our opposition under these circumstances... I personally believe that an increase in the number of trade unionists on the Legislative Council was significant in changing the manpower policy. The government was apprehensive that if it turned a deaf ear to the demands made by the trade unions and labour-friendly political groups on manpower policy, it might have difficulty of finding enough votes to secure passage of proposals in manpower and other policy areas. As trading of political favours, the government became more responsive to our demands on manpower policy (interview with the leader of a trade union).

In short, the development of a representative system in Hong Kong had an impact on the

manpower policy network. This was because the trade unions and political groups representing the workers' interests penetrated the political domain through the Legislative Council, and became more influential in challenging the manpower policy network and its policy decisions. It was increasingly difficult for the policy network to exclude them from the policy process.

### **1.3 The Impending End of Colonialism and the New Goals of Governance**

The increasing challenge to the manpower policy network was also closely related to a fundamental change in the political picture of Hong Kong – the end of colonialism. Chapter seven (second section) argued that the manpower policy network was distinctive because its establishment and success were deeply embedded in the colonial nature of Hong Kong. The colonial state needed success in the economy for the stability and legitimacy of the regime. Therefore, an economic-oriented policy network into which the major business groups were co-opted was established in the 1970s. However, with the advent of sovereignty transfer, the political nature of Hong Kong fundamentally changed during the transition.

After the signing of the Sino-British Joint Agreement, the British Hong Kong government had thirteen years to prepare for the handover of Hong Kong during the transitional period. This colonial transition significantly affected the British policy towards the governance of Hong Kong after 1984. The survival of Hong Kong as a colony was no longer an important issue. To maintain the colonial stability through the economic growth of Hong Kong became less significant. Instead, since Hong Kong would be de-colonised without independence and under the governance of a socialist state, the British government: 'was under pressure to indemnify itself against attack by opposition parties at home and against international condemnation'. In this situation, the foremost goal of British policy towards Hong Kong was: 'to leave the colony as gracefully as possible'. In order to make a graceful exit, the British Hong Kong government pursued policies that were popular inside and outside Hong Kong (Sing, 2000, pp. 23-24). On the one hand, it pressed ahead with the democratisation of Hong Kong's political system, which earned it political credit in the international community, Britain and Hong Kong. On the other hand, in the immediate years before the handover, it placed unprecedented emphasis on the grassroots' interests in making policies, which was popular among the general public in Hong Kong (Lau, 1997, p. 74).

The impending sovereignty transfer and the resultant change in the British policy towards Hong Kong affected the manpower policy network because they posed a significant threat to the basis of the network. They transformed the British governance of Hong Kong from prioritising stability and economic success, on which the network was based, into making a graceful exit and popular policies in Hong Kong. This meant that



there was a decreasing need for a business policy network that could assist the government in pursuing economic growth through manpower policy. In contrast, there was an increasing need for a pluralistic policy network by which the government could show that it was attuned to the interests of general public. The change in the British governance of Hong Kong also created uncertainty for the manpower policy network because the formulation of policies that were popular among the general public threatened the consensus between the EMB and business groups within the policy network on economic-oriented manpower policy. As the leader of a trade union argued that:

During the immediate years before the handover, the British Hong Kong government, in view of the paramount goal of graceful exit, intended to avoid labour unrest and pacify the working class by having a more balanced policy on the management of economy, welfare and manpower (interview with the leader of a trade union).

As a sop to organised labour, the British Hong Kong government tended to pursue more evenly balanced policies. This inevitably impinged on the economic-oriented policy network that strictly prioritised economic growth at the expense of workers' interests.

So far, I have argued that in the 1990s the manpower policy network was subject to increasing challenge, which arose from three salient changes in the political and economic conditions of Hong Kong during the colonial transition. These significant contextual changes included the vicissitudes of labour market, the development of representative government and the end of colonialism. How did they affect the manpower policy network? First, the economic integration and re-structuring and the resultant problem of unemployment affected the network by intensifying the workers' opposition to the existing policy and creating new problems to which the network had no available solutions. The growing unemployment also prompted trade unions to increasingly question the economic-oriented values and goals of manpower policy. Second, the development of representative government affected the policy network by strengthening the position of trade unions and political groups that clamoured for a change in manpower policy. As they penetrated the political domain through the Legislative Council, it was increasingly difficult for the government to exclude them from the policy process. Third, with the end of colonialism in the offing, there was a shift in the British policy towards the governance of Hong Kong. This threatened the very basis of the business policy network and its consensus on the economic orientation of manpower policy.

In the face of these pressures, the manpower policy network became fragmented and turned into an open network in the middle of the 1990s. The Governor no longer distanced himself from the policy process and removed from the network part of the initiative in policymaking. This meant that there was no longer a single institution providing policy direction. The consensus on manpower policy substantially weakened. The relations between the EMB and business groups were strained. I shall now examine why this policy

network collapsed so quickly.

## 2. The Decline of the Manpower Policy Network

This section will examine the decline of the manpower policy network covering the EMB and major business groups in the 1990s. It will argue that the collapse of the economic-oriented manpower policy network was the consequence of a combination of external (contextual change) and internal (structural weakness) factors. On the one hand, political and economic change posed a serious threat to the network. On the other hand, the network was so weak that it was unable to withstand the increasing challenge resulting from the political and economic change during the colonial transition. The structural weakness meant that it was highly susceptible to the external pressures for change. The weakness also made it difficult for the network to withstand these pressures. This indicates that the weak manpower policy network was not important in determining the course of policy change in the 1990s, because it did not have the ability to survive the political and economic change during the colonial transition. It had the seeds of its own destruction embedded in its make-up. It was structurally weak, and these structural problems surfaced and exploded once the political and economic conditions of Hong Kong changed. As a consequence, unlike the curriculum policy network, it had disintegrated by the middle of the 1990s.

### 2.1 Dependence on and Interference from the Governor

The first weakness of the manpower policy network was that it contained two powerful actors at the executive level (see section five of Chapter 7). Normally, the EMB of the government, which provided the business groups with an access point, had the initiative in making manpower policy. Yet the network was not independent of the Governor, who had a role to play in the policy process. Institutionally speaking, he was a powerful actor because he had the authority to make final decisions on manpower policy. If he wielded his power, he could break up the network. This structural weakness did not de-stabilise the network whilst there was agreement on the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy. However, as the Governor no longer subscribed to the economic-oriented principle when the handover approached and the state of labour market worsened, this structural weakness became increasingly evident and made it difficult for the network to withstand change.

In 1992, Chris Patten became the new governor of Hong Kong. Compared to his predecessors, he was remarkably less in favour of the economic orientation of manpower policy. This was because he, as the last governor of Hong Kong, was under the influence of the end of colonialism. He was the representative of the British government in Hong

Kong, who had to implement the new British policy towards Hong Kong in the immediate years before the handover (Hook, 1997, pp. 25-28). Through him, the British policy towards the governance of Hong Kong affected the policymaking in the territory. In order to: 'leave as gracefully as possible', Governor Patten made policies that were popular among the general public in Hong Kong. For example, in his first policy address to the Legislative Council in 1992, he set out his agenda for the coming five years, on which the improvement of welfare was given top priority (Patten, 1992, p. 1).

By the same token, Governor Patten paid special attention to the problem of growing unemployment and the intense worker opposition to the policy on labour importation. He neither clung onto the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy nor dismissed the existence of the problem. Instead, he admitted that the policy on labour importation had flaws, which caused unemployment (South China Morning Post, 3 June 1995). He also emphasised that: 'full employment should, in effect, be the Government's single most important welfare objective'. Therefore, the problem of unemployment was the 'major economic worry', which warranted the government action (Patten, 1995, p. 11). As a sop to trade unions and millions of local workers, Governor Patten made an explicit challenge to the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy. He argued that:

I know there are employers who are very concerned about finding the workers they need to carry on their businesses successfully. There are also many workers and their trade union representatives who believe there should be no importation of labour at all while there are many people without jobs. The Government must devise and revise its policies with the simple objective of securing the best interests of the whole community. I think in this instance *the best interests of the whole community lie in getting our unemployed workers back into jobs* (HKGCC, November 1995, p. 10; emphasis added).

In short, the Governor no longer subscribed to the consensus between the EMB and business groups on economic-oriented manpower policy. He wanted to widen the goals of manpower policy to include the protection of workers' interests.

Faced by the Governor's challenge, change to the manpower policy network was almost pre-ordained. This was because the network was not independent of the Governor, which meant that it did not have the ability to endure the contextual change and the resultant Governor's challenge. This structural weakness made it difficult, if not impossible, for the network to seal itself off and depoliticise the policy process. Policies initiated by the EMB had to go through the Governor for final approval. The highly resourced Governor then used this power to impose change on the policy network, which eventually led to its decline.

In the middle of the 1990s, Governor Patten became directly involved in the making of manpower policy. Although he did not break up the network, he drew on his power to intervene at an early stage in the policy process, and removed from the network part of the

initiative in policymaking (interview with a government official). In 1995 and 1996, he organised and chaired a number of summit conferences, in which both the business and labour's representatives were invited to participate, in order to thrash out the issues of unemployment, labour importation and manpower training (South China Morning Post, 1 June 1995; 3 June 1995). According to a government official, in the unemployment conferences, 'Governor Patten actively identified particular problems and issues and issued recommendations to the EMB, to which the EMB had to respond accordingly' (interview with a government official). In other words, the manpower policy was no longer completely made within the confines of the network that covered the EMB and major business groups. There was no longer a single institution providing policy direction. As a result, the network failed to remain intact and declined.

## 2.2 Latent Differences and Internal Divisions

The second weakness of the network was that there were latent differences between the EMB and business groups on manpower policy. In the face of political and economic change, these differences surfaced, widened and undermined the integration of the network in the 1990s. It was argued in Chapter 7 (section five) that the manpower policy network was much weaker than the curriculum policy network, because it lacked the integration of the latter. Although there was a general agreement on the economic-oriented goals of manpower policy, there were differences between the EMB and business on what should be done. They did not have a clear agreement on the durability of the labour importation scheme. Of greater significance was the difference on how to deal with the workers' interests in making manpower policy. Whereas the business groups believed that the workers' interests should be subservient to economic growth, the EMB was more concerned about the labour side of manpower policy. These differences did not turn into a major conflict during a period of rapid economic growth and vigorous labour market. Yet they were latent problems that made the network susceptible to the pressures resulting from contextual change. Once the political and economic conditions of Hong Kong changed in the 1990s, these latent differences quickly surfaced, widened and sparked off internal tensions between the EMB and business groups within the network. As a result, the network was unable to weather the political and economic change and rapidly disintegrated into a loose entity.

In Hong Kong during the 1990s, it was increasingly evident that economic interests were incompatible with the interests of workers in the making of manpower policy. The traditional manpower policy served the economic interests by prioritising the need for economic growth. It was focussed on how to enhance the economic competitiveness of Hong Kong. Yet it caused and aggravated the problem of unemployment. Therefore, how to redress a balance became a pressing issue. As unemployment was on the increase and there was heightened opposition to the existing manpower policy, the differences between

the EMB and business groups within the policy network that were previously dormant surfaced and turned into a major wrangle. The EMB was increasingly concerned about the growing problem of unemployment and the social impact of economic-oriented manpower policy (interview with the leader of a trade union). Trade unions that were strengthened by the development of a representative system, such as the FTU, the CTU and the FLU, also made enough noise on the issue to persuade the government to re-consider the policy on labour importation (interviews with the leaders of trade unions). This is not to say that the EMB was prepared to give up the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy, which prioritised economic growth over other issues. Yet it tended to adjust the principle, in order to achieve some kind of balance between the pursuit of economic growth and the protection of workers' interests. In making manpower policy, the EMB placed greater emphasis on limiting damage to the interests of local workers. The Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) argued that:

Our unemployed are human beings out of a job. As a Government we are responsible to make sure our own people are well looked after. This is what a responsible and wise Government should do. This is not a hang-up. It is a brave and wise thing to do... The local workers are real human beings not numbers. With the Government the bottom line is the human side and that is important (HKGCC, October 1994, p. 36).

However, because of the traditional differences on manpower policy, there was no consensus on the changes that needed to be made. Whereas the EMB tended to re-consider the existing policy, the incorporated business groups, however, adopted an uncompromising posture on the issue. As such, the differences between them on the labour side of manpower policy came to the surface and widened into a vast chasm. The business groups clung onto a belief that the economic growth of Hong Kong was paramount and the welfare of workers should be subservient to the pursuit of economic growth. They challenged the government's stance on a change to manpower policy. For instance, the leader of the joint association of business groups argued:

If we deprive ourselves of workforce our economy can't grow at the speed it would otherwise grow. But *when the economy is allowed to grow the benefits of that growth filter through to everybody* – local workers as well as imported workers. In real terms you are improving the wages of local workers. You are not suppressing them (HKGCC, November 1994, p. 56; emphasis added).

They also argued that a change to the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy would not be beneficial to Hong Kong as a whole and the interests of workers in particular. They pointed out:

Hong Kong workers should enjoy the benefits of Hong Kong's growth, a point that everyone in the community supports but *Hong Kong workers are not well served by encouraging inflation and restraining the potential growth of the economy*; greater growth will lead to higher real wages in an environment where Hong Kong becomes more cost competitive (HKGCC, February 1995, p. 20; emphasis added).

In short, the business groups criticised the EMB for changing its policy line. They refused to adjust the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy, because they firmly believed that in the long run the economic growth of Hong Kong would benefit not only the business but also the workers in the territory.

All in all, in the middle of the 1990s the manpower policy network became much looser, as internal divisions between the EMB and business groups on a change to manpower policy developed. It became an entity of political controversy. The combination of external (contextual change) and internal (structural weakness) factors precipitated the disintegration of the network. The growing unemployment and stronger opposition from organised labour posed a threat to the consensus on economic-oriented manpower policy. On the other hand, because of the latent differences between the EMB and business groups on manpower policy, the manpower policy network was highly susceptible to the external pressures arising from political and economic change. If there had not been any latent differences within the network, the chances were that the economic-oriented network would have survived the political and economic change and there would have been a consensus on the changes that needed to be made. It was only when the latent differences surfaced and festered that the network disintegrated. The fact that the network was too weak to survive the contextual change explains why the manpower policy network, with a number of structural problems, was not an important factor in explaining the course of policy change in the 1990s.

### **2.3 Low Level of Institutionalisation and the Inclusion of Labour**

Chapter 7 (section five) argued that the manpower policy network was weak for its low level of institutionalisation. Unlike the curriculum policy network, it lacked an institutional basis that provided a means of exclusion. This weakness did not create great difficulty for the network in excluding radical groups when the consensus between the EMB and business groups on economic-orientated manpower policy was strong and the opposition was weak. In the 1970s and the 1980s, trade unions that did not share the values of the network were automatically thrown out of the domain of policymaking. However, the weakness became increasingly evident in the 1990s when trade unions gained in political strength and the consensus on economic-oriented manpower policy waned. Without an institutional basis, it was difficult for the network to avoid change. As a result, from the middle of the 1990s the major trade unions, including the FTU, the CTU and the

FLU, penetrated and further diluted the manpower policy network.

The institutional weakness of the network became evident in the 1990s when the political change in Hong Kong had an impact on the network. It has been argued that the development of representative government affected the relative power of various groups and strengthened the trade unions and political parties that were opposed to the economic-oriented manpower policy network. In the 1990s, elections to the Legislative Council returned many representatives of trade unions and radical political groups, such as the Democratic Party (DP), the Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) and the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB). On the issue of manpower policy, they managed to forge an alliance and drew on their legal power to penetrate the network. They introduced a number of bills in a bid to break up the network and change the existing manpower policy (South China Morning Post, 21 February 1995; 30 May 1995; 10 October 1995). In short, they posed a serious threat to the network that was dominated by economic interests.

To a large extent, the structural weakness of the network led to its own destruction. Faced by this political pressure, it was difficult for the network to avoid change to its composition. The relations between the EMB and business groups were not highly institutionalised. Therefore, there was no particular institution within the policy network that the EMB and business groups could take cover from the increasing political pressure. This is not to say that within the network there were no institutions at all. The ad hoc Advisory Committee on Diversification (ACD) was one of the institutions central to the policy process, but it dissolved in the early 1980s (FHKI, 2 November 1977, p. 1).

In the 1970s and the 1980s, the representatives of major business associations, including the HKGCC, the FHKI and the CMA, and the members who were primarily concerned with the economic performance of Hong Kong had an overwhelming majority on the Legislative Council, its manpower panel and trade and industry panel. These institutions then provided a focus for government / business interaction in the area of manpower policy throughout the 1970s and the 1980s (CMA, April 1986, pp. 11-12; HKGCC, January 1983, pp. 28-29; Hong Kong Legislative Council, 14 October 1987, pp. 62-65). However, as a result of the development of a representative system, the Legislative Council itself was the centre of change in the 1990s. Elections to the revamped lawmaking body returned many representatives of radical groups (see section 2.2). A large number of members who were concerned with the workers' interests penetrated the body. The business bloc no longer had a majority on the Legislative Council and its committees. The business vote that was once a significant factor in the making of manpower policy had much less influence. Hence, the network was no longer able to use these institutions to exclude the trade unions from the policy process.

The Vocational Training Council (VTC), which advised the EMB on the policies in relation to vocational education and training, was the other institution within the manpower policy network. Unlike the Legislative Council and its committees, it was not

open to the representatives of organised labour that gained in political strength during the 1990s (VTC, March 2002). However, the institution was confined in the sub-sector of manpower training. It did not provide an institutional cover for the government / business relations in the sub-sector of labour importation. In other words, the network could not use this institutional structure to prevent the trade unions from accessing the process of making labour importation policy.

The institutional weakness of the network also became increasingly evident as the internal divisions between the EMB and business groups within the network emerged. In the middle of the 1990s, the EMB decided to open itself to workers' interests. In doing so, it attracted the political actors into the arena who could strengthen its position against the business groups and increase its legitimacy. Paul Cheng, the leader of the HKGCC, pointed out that the EMB was playing 'the game of politics' with business groups and trade unions. It drew in and 'negotiated almost exclusively with the unions', which generally supported its position on the change to manpower policy, in order to isolate the business groups (HKGCC, February 1996, pp. 34-36). The EMB also gave the trade unions access to the domain of policymaking because it increasingly relied on their votes in order to pass manpower and labour legislation. To find enough votes to secure passage of legislation, the EMB forged a coalition with the trade unions (South China Morning Post, 5 November 1996).

Obviously, the business groups did not want a change to the composition of the network. The inclusion of trade unions in the network would dilute their influence on manpower policy (HKGCC, December 1995, p. 39). But again, when the consensus on manpower policy weakened, the (lack of) institutional structure of the network did not provide the business groups with a further means of exclusion. The business groups could not thwart the government in its attempt to attract trade unions into the domain of policymaking by incurring substantial cost on the EMB within the policy process. This was because the institutional structure within the network did not enable them to do so. For example, the Business Council was an important institution within the network. Through the Business Council, the EMB sought information on business interests and views on a range of issues affecting the Hong Kong economy. The business groups attempted to use this institution to prevent the EMB from re-shaping the network. On the Business Council, they raised the issue of manpower policy and tried to block any policy proposals made by the EMB and trade unions. However, as the EMB was not required to reach any concrete consensus with the business representatives on the Business Council before taking decisions, the intransigence of business interests did not cause a great deal of trouble to the EMB within the policy process (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 7 December 1994, pp. 1221-1222). In other words, the cost involved in changing the make-up of the network was low. Therefore, to a large extent, the EMB was able to re-shape the network without let or hindrance.

Change to the make-up of the manpower policy network occurred in the middle of



the 1990s, when the EMB allowed the major trade unions, including the FTU, the CTU and the FLU, access to the policy process. The EMB changed its previous posture and regarded the trade unions as one of the legitimate interlocutors in making manpower policy. It emphasised the importance of taking into account the views expressed by organised labour and consulting their representatives on the Legislative Council and the Labour Advisory Board (LAB) (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 8 November 1995, p. 51). Consequently, in the middle of the 1990s, the closed manpower policy network turned into a loose network with a number of actors, including the representatives of the EMB, business and organised labour, who might not be able to work together. This does not necessarily mean that since then the power within the network has been evenly distributed. However, it was conspicuous that organised labour was given a formal role within the policy process, and their interests carried more weight than they previously did in the making of manpower policy. As a trade unionist pointed out: 'the business groups might still be influential but at least the government had to accept part of the demands made by the trade unions in the making of manpower policy' (interview with the leader of a trade union). In short, since the mid-1990s, the network has changed from one where trade unions were almost completely excluded to one where they were involved on an increasingly equal basis to business interests.

This section has shown why the weak manpower policy network was insignificant in the development of manpower policy in the 1990s. It became insignificant because it had the seeds of its destruction embedded in its make-up. Once the political and economic conditions changed in the 1990s, the structural problems surfaced, exploded and crippled the network's ability to weather the contextual change. Due to the latent differences between the EMB and business groups on manpower policy, the network was highly susceptible to the external pressures resulting from the political and economic change. The network was dependent on the Governor and weak in terms of institutional arrangements. Therefore, it did not have the ability to withstand the increasing pressures when problems grew. In short, the weak network did not have the ability to survive the contextual change, and thus its impact on the trajectory of policy change was marginal. This section has also demonstrated that the network containing the EMB and business groups had disintegrated by the middle of the 1990s. The Governor removed part of the initiative from the network. The consensus between the EMB and business groups on manpower policy broke down. Internal tensions developed within the network. The trade unions that were previously excluded penetrated the domain of policymaking.

Having shown why the weak manpower policy network was not a major factor in explaining the course of change, the next section will examine how the decline of the network actually affected policy outcomes.

### 3. Explaining Policy Outcomes: Redressing the Balance

This section will demonstrate that the manpower policy network, which had disintegrated by the mid-1990s, lost its influence on the development of manpower policy. The decline of the network meant that it was no longer strong enough to mediate the external pressures for policy change. It could not limit the extent of policy change through the mechanism of defining the nature of problems or privileging the existing policies. Nor could it affect policy outcomes through the exclusion of radical groups and issues that would lead to substantial change. As such, the contextual factors were more important than the network in determining the course of policy change. The upshot of all this was that the manpower policy, which had been biased towards economic interests at the expense of the welfare of workers, considerably changed and became more evenly balanced in the middle of the 1990s. Although there was no general shift to a labour-oriented manpower policy, there were an increasing number of provisions being made to safeguard the interests of workers.

First of all, the network covering the EMB and business groups lost its influence on manpower policy because the Governor was increasingly involved in the policy arena. This shift in power meant that there was no longer a single institution providing policy direction, and thus the network was no longer in full control of the agenda within the policy process. As power gravitated away from the network to the highly resourced Governor who questioned the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy, it was difficult, if not impossible, for the network to delay or neglect the issue of policy change. In addition, the shift in power also crippled the network's ability to control the direction of policy change.

In the middle of the 1990s, Governor Patten intervened in manpower policy. As unemployment worsened and the handover of Hong Kong was in the offing, the Governor demurred at the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy and supported change. He removed part of the initiative in policymaking from the manpower policy network, and organised a number of anti-unemployment summit conferences to initiate change (South China Morning Post, 19 May 1995; 1 June 1995; 3 June 1995). Although he did not use his power to break up the network covering the EMB and business groups, he overtly questioned the existing policy on labour importation, and pushed the EMB for a policy review (HKGCC, November 1994, p. 31). Under these circumstances, it was difficult for the network to neglect the issue of policy change. As a result, in 1994 the EMB undertook to review the controversial policy on labour importation (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 14 December 1994, p. 1399).

Moreover, since the Governor had increased his input into the policy process, the manpower policy network was unable to control the pace of change in manpower policy. In other words, the network could not put the policy change off. Although the EMB

promised to review the labour importation scheme, it initially stopped short of specifying when the policy review would start and how long it would take. This posture was regarded by trade unions as deliberate procrastination on policy change. They argued that the EMB wanted to 'drag on with the issue', in the hope that the jobless rate would drop and thus it could 'get away with the scheme' (South China Morning Post, 20 April 1995). However, there was little room for 'delaying tactics', as Governor Patten increased his role in the policy process. He was increasingly convinced that a review of the labour importation policy must be launched and completed as quickly as possible. In order to reassure the trade unions about the government's commitment to indemnify the local workers against growing unemployment, he imposed on the EMB a tight schedule in relation to the policy review. As a consequence, the review was brought forward and would be completed within four months (South China Morning Post, 19 May 1995).

As the Governor increased his role in manpower policy, the network lost its influence on the pace of policy change. In addition, this shift in power also greatly weakened the network's ability to control the direction of policy change. Initially, the network attempted to manipulate the direction of policy review, so as to limit damage to the existing policy on labour importation. It accepted that there was a need to review the labour importation policy, but confined the review to only the consideration of technical issues. For example, the EMB and business groups agreed to review the method of quota allocation and the monitoring system of labour importation. They also agreed to: 'increase and step up enforcement action against illegal workers' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 14 December 1994, p. 1399; 3 May 1995, pp. 3481-3483 and p. 3527). Yet they refused to include more salient issues like the termination of labour importation or any substantial changes in the policy review. They argued that: 'it will not be right to call for its termination without thoroughly and carefully reviewing its value in the context of our overall employment policies and our economy' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 3 May 1995, p. 3527).

However, the Governor intervened again, and thus the room for manoeuvre was substantially reduced. Through the anti-unemployment conferences, he redefined the general direction of policy review, which the network had to follow. Contrary to the network's position, he demanded a comprehensive review of the labour importation policy, and gave top priority to curbing the growing problem of unemployment (South China Morning Post, 7 June 1995). He argued that:

Government policies are not immutable. They must change to meet changing circumstances. The case for the General Labour Importation Scheme has been eroded in recent years by changes in the labour market. The labour market has changed and government policy must change with it (HKGCC, November 1995, p. 10).

As a result of the Governor's intervention, there was a shift in the direction of policy

review. The network was eventually prepared to launch a radical review of the labour importation policy, which re-examined the goals of policy, the size of labour importation, the application and vetting procedures, and the quota allocation criteria. The protection of local workers against growing unemployment was highlighted throughout the process of policy review, which aimed at ensuring that local workers would 'be given priority in employment' and they would 'not be displaced by imported workers' (Education and Manpower Branch, 1995, p. 90).

In short, the manpower policy network lost its influence on the course of policy change because there was a shift in power from the network to the Governor. This shift in power made it difficult for the network to neglect the issue of change in manpower policy. It also vitiated the network's ability to control the pace and direction of policy change. As a result, a substantial change to manpower policy that aimed at protecting the interests of workers suddenly became a top priority on the government's agenda in the middle of the 1990s.

Second, the manpower policy network was also insignificant in the course of policy change because the consensus between the EMB and business groups on manpower policy broke down. The policy area became one of political controversy. This meant that the network was no longer strong enough to mediate the external pressures for change by clearly defining what problems existed and privileging the existing policy within the policy process. A whole range of problems and solutions that would lead to various degrees of change were proposed and debated within the network. As a result, the outcome of the policy review was an uneasy and messy compromise, which inevitably included substantial changes and some continuity.

In spite of the fact that the network lost its influence on the direction of policy review, it was still within its power to determine the scope and forms of policy change. In normal circumstances, the network would follow a strategy of damage limitation by accepting the need for certain minor changes without destroying the economic interests. If manpower policy had been made within a policy community that had a high degree of integration and a strong consensus, the chances were that a great deal of changes would be prevented in manpower policy. In the real circumstances, though, the manpower policy network was unable to limit damage because the EMB and business groups disagreed on how to deal with the interests of workers and subsequently on the existing problems and details of policy change.

The breakdown of the consensus on how to deal with the interests of workers led to the rapid politicisation of the policy area. Within the policy network, there were subsequent differences on the range of existing problems that warranted government action. In other words, there was no agreement on accepted problems with which the network had to deal. As a result, a whole range of problems were proposed within the policy process, and the network was unable to prevent changes by suggesting that new problems either did not exist or were not serious enough to justify substantial changes to

manpower policy.

The EMB became increasingly concerned with the problem of unemployment. It tended to redress the balance in manpower policy, and thus it raised this issue within the policy process. The Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) argued that:

The Government is very concerned about the unemployment rate. Although the percent is not a very high figure compared with other industries, it is the highest rate in Hong Kong compared with the past (South China Morning Post, 19 May 1995).

The EMB also increasingly accepted the argument that there had been a causal linkage between the problem of unemployment and the policy on labour importation, and raised this issue within the policy process. The Principal Assistant SEM argued that the labour importation policy had caused and aggravated the unemployment problem, because 'some employers preferred eager and hardworking imported labour to those who had been in the industry for 20 or more years'. Therefore: 'if more migrant labour quotas were given there would be more unemployed local workers' (HKGCC, October 1994, p. 36). In short, through the EMB, new problems like the growing unemployment and the defects in manpower policy infiltrated the domain of policymaking.

On the other hand, the business groups were unwilling to adjust the economic-oriented principle of manpower power and challenged the EMB's views on the range of existing problems. Despite their recognition of an increase in unemployment, they suggested that the problem was not serious enough to justify any substantial policy changes. As Anthony Griffiths, one of the leaders of the joint association of business groups argued:

So I find this issue of Hong Kong's unemployed completely blown out of proportion and it is promoted as an emotional argument to carry the day. The problem with that to my mind is that it is not good government. I think we deserve better of our Government than a lot of emotional response to an issue that needs calm, serious attention' (HKGCC, November 1994, p. 59).

The business groups also questioned the EMB's diagnosis of the existing unemployment problem. They commissioned an 'authoritative and objective' study on the problem of unemployment, and argued that: 'the relationship between unemployment and the imported labour scheme is actually very weak'. Instead, 'the increase in unemployment is really due to a temporary increase in the working population' (HKGCC, December 1995, p. 40). Obviously, the business groups tended to define the new problems as 'temporary' or minor issues with which the policy network did not have to deal urgently. Yet there was no agreement on this definition of existing problems within the network. As the EMB argued that the problems with labour importation were serious enough to justify the government

action, it was impossible for the business groups to exclude these problems from the domain of policymaking.

Within the policy network, there were differences between the EMB and business groups on the range of existing problems. Inevitably, there were also major differences on the potential solutions to these problems. The EMB and business groups had little agreement on the scope and forms of policy change. This is not to say that their views on policy options were completely discordant. In order to pacify the trade unions that were discontented with the economic-oriented manpower policy, they were able to reach a strategic agreement on the introduction of retraining programmes. Yet this agreement did not privilege the existing policy on manpower training. The EMB wanted to be seen as having a new policy in place to tackle the problem of unemployment, whilst the business groups intended to use these new programmes to appease the trade unions' opposition to the labour importation policy (interviews with the leaders of trade unions). As a result, the network met the trade unions' demands for government assistance, and the policy on manpower training substantially changed. The employees' retraining programmes that primarily provided financial assistance and training opportunities for the unemployed were set up and strengthened during the 1990s (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 26 May 1993, pp. 3821-3824; 3 May 1995, p. 3527). As such, a new element of labour protection was infused into the traditional policy on manpower training.

However, it was more difficult to reach an agreement on the scope and forms of change in the sub-sector of labour importation. This difficulty stemmed from the major differences between the EMB and business groups on the labour side of manpower policy and on the understanding of existing problems. There was no consensus on the changes that needed to be made. In fact, the network covering the EMB and business groups disintegrated in the middle of the 1990s. It was no longer able to mediate the external pressures for change by privileging the existing policy and defining legitimate solutions. As a result, a range of policy options were proposed and debated within the network, which eventually led to substantial changes in manpower policy.

The economic-oriented principle of manpower policy that dominated the policy process in the 1970s and the 1980s still had a great deal of influence on the business groups. They still believed that the economic growth of Hong Kong was paramount, and the unemployment problem was mild. They did not think it necessary to adjust the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy. Therefore, they were generally against a change to the existing labour importation policy (HKGCC, February 1995, p. 20; Hong Kong Legislative Council, 3 May 1995, p. 3477). However, in order to placate the trade unions, they were prepared to accept certain minor changes at the margins. For example, they were opposed to the termination of the General Labour Importation Scheme, but they supported the government in imposing 'tough penalties against any employer who abuses the importation scheme' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 3 May 1995, p. 3483; HKGCC, February 1995, p. 20).

For the EMB, the influence of the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy began to ebb away in the mid-1990s. Unlike the business groups, the EMB wanted to redress the balance in manpower policy by limiting damage to the interests of local workers. It increasingly accepted the argument that the importation of labour had aggravated the problem of unemployment and so was increasingly prepared to meet the trade unions' demands for policy change. It did not privilege the existing policy. Nor did it think that minor changes at the margins were enough. Instead, it proposed that the size of the labour importation scheme should be reduced, in order to protect the local workers against the rising level of unemployment. The Principal Assistant SEM argued:

Under our schemes we import about 30,000 people. But then we have 50,000 unemployed of our own. Why can't we use our own people instead of depending on outside help? If Government doesn't get the balance right we could end up with no quotas. The situation is very delicate and real (HKGCC, October 1994, p. 36).

The EMB also proposed a change in the application procedures for labour importation, so as to prevent unscrupulous employers from abusing the system. Within the process of policy review, it suggested that the application procedures should be toughened up. 'Employers will have to prove that local workers are not available before we begin to process their applications to import labour' (Education and Manpower Branch, 1995, p. 90).

As the consensus between the EMB and business groups broke down, the network no longer had the ability to affect policy outcomes by excluding radical problems and options from the domain of policymaking. A range of issues and solutions that would lead to substantial policy changes went onto the agenda in the policy process. As a consequence, the network was unable to limit damage to the economic-oriented policy on labour importation. The policy became an outcome of uneasy compromise, which included not only some continuity but also substantial changes that aimed at protecting the interests of local workers. To some extent, the policy on labour importation has not changed. In order to pursue economic growth and to canvass the business groups for support, the EMB did not put an end to labour importation. Following completion of the policy review, the EMB emphasised the importance of retaining the policy option of importing foreign workers. It argued that: 'to maintain the competitiveness of Hong Kong as an open and flexible economy, there is a continued economic need to retain this policy option of employing foreign workers where they are necessary' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 25 October 1995, p. 31; Patten, 1995, p. 12).

Despite this continuity, manpower policy from the middle of the 1990s was not as economic-oriented as it had been in the past. There were substantial changes in the labour importation policy, which compromised the need for economic growth so as to provide the local workers with better protection. After the policy review, the EMB initiated a radical

plan for the reform of the labour importation policy. It decided to: 'bring the existing scheme to an end'. The existing General Labour Importation Scheme (General Scheme): 'will be run down naturally and replaced with radically revised arrangements' (Education and Manpower Branch, 1995, p. 90). In 1996, the EMB replaced the existing scheme with a new Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS), and the two schemes were greatly different. According to the new SLS, the number of foreign workers who were allowed to work in Hong Kong was considerably scaled down. The 'quota ceiling will be 5000 compared with 25 000 under the existing scheme' (Education and Manpower Branch, 1995, p. 90). Moreover, in order to 'safeguard employment opportunities of local workers', tougher application and vetting procedures were introduced into the new scheme. According to these procedures, employers wishing to import workers were required to go through a lengthy process that contained two-week advertisement, four-week recruitment exercise and two-month Job Matching Programme (JMP) of the Labour Department, before their applications were processed further (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 8 November 1995, pp. 51-52). In short, from the middle of the 1990s, the manpower policy became increasingly balanced between the pursuit of economic growth and the protection of workers' interests.

Third, the network that included the EMB and business groups had only limited influence on the trajectory of policy change because it could not mediate the external pressures by excluding trade unions from the policy process. It has been argued that from the middle of the 1990s the EMB increasingly relied on the trade unions' support in order to legitimise its policies and pass legislation. As internal divisions developed between the EMB and business groups within the network, the EMB faced the difficulty of legitimising its policies. During the 1990s, it also had the problem of finding enough support within the Legislative Council to secure passage of manpower and labour legislation. In order to strengthen its position in both the network and the Legislative Council, the EMB in the mid-1990s developed a coalition with the major trade unions and incorporated them into the policy process.

However, the need for such a coalition further diluted and politicised the domain of policymaking. It placed severe constraints on the EMB and business groups to exclude new issues and alternative solutions from the policy process. The major trade unions, including the FTU, the CTU and the FLU, accessed the policy process when the review exercise entered an advanced stage. During the review exercise, they questioned the 5000-quota ceiling initially proposed by the EMB and pressurised the government into cutting further the size of quotas granted for labour importation (South China Morning Post, 8 December 1995). Moreover, they raised a new issue about the labour importation policy within the policy process. They argued that the importation of foreign workers without constraints on particular industries had severely worsened the problem of unemployment. This was because a large number of imported workers: 'were in precisely those sectors of the economy where unemployment is rising' (South China Morning Post,



13 October 1995). In other words, imported workers: 'have taken up the same jobs that our local workers are trying to get' (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 3 May 1995, p. 3502). In order to tackle this problem, the trade unions wanted to reduce the scope of labour importation, and suggested that 'requests for imported workers in twenty-six job categories should not be approved' (interview with the leader of a trade union). During the review exercise, they also raised an issue about how to review the labour importation policy in the future. They pushed the government for establishing a mechanism that would institutionalise their role in the making of labour importation policy (interview with the leader of a trade union).

The trade unions penetrated the domain of policymaking. This not only placed constraints on the network in preventing radical issues and options from getting onto the agenda, but also weakened its ability to crush these issues and solutions within the policy process. In order to gain the trade unions' support, the EMB had to take on board their issues and demands and make the policy acceptable to them. As a trade unionist argued:

It was clear that from the middle of the 1990s, the government gave more attention to the interests of workers. If trade unions strongly demanded or opposed certain policy options, I believe that the government would act accordingly (interview with the leader of a trade union).

The trade unions that accessed the policy process wanted to have a further change to the labour importation policy. During the review exercise, the EMB did take into consideration their issues and demands and reconciled the differences. One of the trade unionists, who participated in the review exercise, pointed out that 'the EMB was more flexible in managing the interests of workers and prepared to make a compromise on the controversial labour importation policy' (interview with the leader of a trade union).

As a result, on top of the changes initiated by the EMB, there were further changes to the labour importation policy in the direction of safeguarding the workers' interests. First, the size of labour importation was further reduced. The EMB came under pressure to cut the quota from 5,000 to 2,000 (South China Morning Post, 3 January 1996). Second, under the pressure from trade unions, the EMB agreed to limit the scope of labour importation. It introduced a list of job categories to be normally excluded from the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS). In a briefing paper to the Legislative Council, it stated that 'having regard to the availability of local labour and the underlying principle of the scheme, requests for imported workers in certain job categories will not normally be approved' (Education and Manpower Branch, 1996, p. 3). Third, the EMB agreed to give the trade unions an institutional voice in the policy process. It developed a mechanism that institutionalised the tripartite relations between the government, business and labour in making policy on labour importation. As regards future review, the briefing paper stated that:

When a total of 2,000 visa applications have been approved under the SLS, a review will be conducted by the Government *in consultation with the Labour Advisory Board* to ensure that the SLS is achieving its policy objective. The review is expected to be completed within 6 weeks and *the outcome will be presented to the LegCo (Legislative Council) Panel on Manpower for discussion* (Education and Manpower Branch, 1996, p. 4; emphasis added).

The major trade unions, such as the FTU, the CTU, and the FLU, were members of the Labour Advisory Board and the Legislative Council (LegCo) Manpower Panel. Their membership of these bodies ensured that from the middle of the 1990s they had access to the manpower policy network. Since then, the closed policy network has turned into a tripartite policymaking entity.

All in all, the manpower policy network covering the EMB and business groups collapsed so quickly because of its structural weakness. As the economic-oriented network disintegrated, trade unions were in a better position to influence policy. The Governor and the EMB were more concerned with the interests of workers. The trade unions penetrated the domain of policymaking and were given an institutional voice in the policy process. As a consequence, the mid-1990s saw a substantial change in manpower policy. In spite of the fact that there was no general shift to a labour-oriented manpower policy, there were an increasing number of provisions being made to safeguard the interests of labour. The policy became increasingly pluralistic, labour-friendly and evenly balanced. This change was epitomised in the objective of new labour importation policy, which stated that:

To ensure that local workers have *priority in employment* and that their *salaries and benefits are safeguarded*, employers must accord priority to fill available job vacancies with local workers. If employers have *genuine difficulties* in finding suitable staff locally, they can import workers to fill such vacancies (Education and Manpower Branch, 1996, p.2; emphasis added).

In other words, the government pledged itself to balance the interests of workers, notably their employment opportunities and living standards, and the need for economic growth.

#### 4. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the weak network covering the EMB and major business groups was not important in the development of manpower policy in the 1990s, when it was subject to immense pressure arising from the political and economic change of Hong

Kong. Despite the economic strength of business, it did not manage to survive the contextual change. The agenda changed in that it was much less economic-oriented, and policymakers did not remain the same. The network rapidly disintegrated and, therefore, was unable to affect policy outcomes. This is not to say that the network did not have any impact on manpower policy. However, by comparison with the political and economic factors, the network was an insignificant factor that determined the development of manpower policy. As a consequence, the mid-1990s saw a substantial change to the economic-oriented manpower policy.

It is clear from this study that the decline of the manpower policy network was, to a certain extent, due to the change in the context within which it operated. In the 1990s, the network was under increasing attack, which resulted from the political and economic change of Hong Kong during the transition. Change in Hong Kong's labour market and increased concern over unemployment posed a threat to the economic-oriented network. As the economic integration between mainland China and Hong Kong accelerated after 1984, Hong Kong experienced a painful process of economic re-structuring, and unemployment began to rise in the 1990s. Growing unemployment intensified the trade unions' opposition to the network and confronted it with new problems to which the economic interests did not have solutions. Moreover, the development of representative government in Hong Kong during the transition, especially in the 1990s, had an important impact on the closed network between the EMB and business associations. Elections to the Legislative Council returned many trade unionists and members who were concerned with the interests of workers, and so considerably strengthened the position of trade unions that put the network under unprecedented pressure. In addition, the decline of the network was also closely related to the end of Hong Kong as a British colony. With the end of colonialism in the offing, the British policy towards Hong Kong shifted from prioritising stability through economic success, on which the network was based, to making a graceful exit and popular policies in Hong Kong in the immediate years before the handover. This change threatened the basis of the economic-oriented manpower policy network.

However, it is also undoubtedly the case that the decline of the manpower policy network resulted from its own structural weakness. It contained the seeds of its own destruction. Once the political and economic circumstances of Hong Kong dramatically changed, these seeds of destruction became increasingly evident and eventually undermined the network. This indicates that when there was political and economic change in the 1990s, the weak manpower policy network became insignificant in the development of manpower policy, because it did not have the ability to survive. There were major structural problems within the network that exploded, triggered by contextual change. Due to the latent differences between the EMB and business groups on manpower policy, the network was highly susceptible to the external pressures resulting from the political and economic change. These latent differences surfaced and widened in the 1990s.

As a result, the consensus within the network quickly broke down and internal divisions emerged. Moreover, the network was weak because it was not independent of the Governor. This meant that when the Governor no longer subscribed to the economic-oriented principle of manpower policy and attempted to force new issues onto the agenda, the network did not have the ability to seal itself off and depoliticise the policy process. In addition, the network was weak for its low level of institutionalisation. There was a lack of a well-established institution within the policy network that provided it with a further means of exclusion, as the consensus weakened and the trade unions gained in political strength. This weakness further crippled the network's ability to survive the political and economic change, and so a number of trade unions managed to penetrate the domain of policymaking in the mid-1990s. In short, the manpower policy network became insignificant in the development of manpower policy because it was too weak to weather the pressures resulting from the political and economic change of Hong Kong. By the middle of the 1990s, it had disintegrated and turned into a loose and volatile entity.

The decline of the network meant that it lost its influence on the development of manpower policy in the middle of the 1990s. When problems grew, it was no longer strong enough to mediate the external pressures for change and limit damage to the existing policy. First, as power gravitated away from the network to the highly resourced Governor who was increasingly concerned with the interests of workers, the network no longer had full control over the agenda within the policy process. It was difficult, if not impossible, for the network to delay or neglect the issue of policy change. This shift in power also crippled the network's ability to control the direction of policy change. Second, as the consensus between the EMB and business groups on manpower policy broke down, the policy area became one of political controversy. The network could neither define what problems existed nor privilege the existing policy within the policy process. A whole range of problems and solutions that would lead to policy change were proposed and debated within the network. Third, the major trade unions penetrated the domain of policymaking. This placed severe constraints on the network to exclude radical issues and options from the policy process. In order to gain the trade unions' support in the network and the Legislative Council, manpower policy had to be made acceptable to them. Whereas the network lost its influence on manpower policy, the contextual change became an important factor that determined the course of development in manpower policy. As a consequence, in the middle of the 1990s, manpower policy considerably changed in that it was much less economic-oriented. Although there was no general shift to a labour-oriented manpower policy, there were an increasing number of provisions being made to advance the interests of workers.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Conclusion: Context, Policy Networks and Policy**

This chapter will return to the questions and propositions outlined in Chapters 1 and 3 respectively by comparing the various policy networks that have been examined in this thesis. The comparison will focus on three vital aspects of policy analysis: government/group relations in policy-making; the effect policy networks had on policy outcomes; and how they affected the trajectory of policy change during Hong Kong's colonial transition. Based on the evidence presented in the case studies, the chapter will argue that most of the propositions outlined in Chapter 3 have been justified. The notion of policy network offers a flexible and effective means of conceptualising the relationship between the government agencies and pressure groups in the policy process. It is also important in explaining policy outcomes, as networks affected policy outputs and provided particular groups with the mechanisms to influence policy. Perhaps more importantly, the nature/types of policy networks are a significant factor that affected the course of policy change in Hong Kong during the transition. The other major point to emerge from the case studies is that network analysis is complex. Policy networks were not completely isolated from the context within which they operated. Hence, we need to be aware of macro-level variables like the political structure in Hong Kong and its international context when we analyse networks and how they affected policy outcomes and policy change.

The chapter will begin by demonstrating that a number of policy networks have been identified. The nature of these networks, in curriculum and manpower policy, varied across sectors and time. The chapter will then indicate how the notion of policy network provides a fuller understanding of government/group relations in policy-making in Hong Kong than the traditional approaches discussed. Contrary to the theoretical perspective of cooption, the case studies show that the relationship between the government and integrated groups was one of mutual dependence, resource exchange and a positive-sum game rather than dependence, deference and supplication. They also demonstrate that, in marked contrast to elitism, the government/group relations in Hong Kong differed from sector to sector, which can be explained by a range of meso-level variables in policy networks. In the third section, I shall demonstrate that policy networks did affect policy outcomes in Hong Kong in a number of ways. They provided the government agencies with the means of developing and implementing particular policies. Through their shared views and consensus, they affected the policy agendas. They also affected policy outcomes by excluding diametrically opposed interests from the policy process. Policy networks were not neutral. The interests of integrated groups were built into the structure

of networks. Therefore, policies in some arenas were constantly tilted in favour of particular groups at the expense of others.

There are two major points in the fourth section. First, I shall argue that policy networks significantly affected policy change in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. The relationship between the changes in Hong Kong's political environment and pre-existing policy networks was dialectical rather than uni-dimensional. Although all the networks in this thesis have changed to some extent, the analysis of policy change cannot be reduced to the analysis of macro-level developments and their impact on policy. It is apparent from the case studies that policy networks, especially policy communities, could mediate the external pressure and affect the extent and pace of policy change. The impact of policy networks depended on their nature/ types. The other major point in the section is that despite the importance of networks in affecting change, they were not completely isolated entities. To some extent, the success of networks in resisting change was due to the context within which they operated.

The fifth section will indicate that policy networks were distinctive because of the political structure in Hong Kong. As Hong Kong had an executive-dominated political system, there was a natural tendency for networks to develop into stable policy communities. For the same reason, the relationship between the government and groups within policy networks tended to be asymmetric. The structure of policy networks also reflected the broader pattern of structural inequality in Hong Kong's society and politics. It was easier for business and professional interests than for the majority of groups to access policy networks and seal their arenas off from other actors. In addition, from the early 1980s the changes in Hong Kong's political environment affected the general trend of change in networks that shifted from policy communities to more open networks. All of this does not mean that policy networks were subservient to the macro-level developments in Hong Kong. However, we need to be aware of the network's environment when we utilise the concept in analysing the policy process, policy outcomes and policy change.

Having established the utility of network analysis in explaining policy outcomes and policy change in the context of Hong Kong, the last section of the chapter will focus on the theoretical discussion of policy network. It will pay particular attention to the development of a policy network approach to policy analysis in Asian authoritarian capitalist regimes, and highlight a number of significant issues for policy network research, which emerge from the thesis and demand further investigation. These issues include the transferability of the policy network concept, the explanatory utility of the concept in non-democratic states, and the need to integrate network analysis with associated approaches at macro and micro levels.

## 1. Policy Networks in Hong Kong

Discussions of policy networks are common in the analysis of public policy in the UK, Europe and the United States. However, policy networks are not confined to liberal democracies. In this thesis two networks in curriculum policy and manpower policy in Hong Kong have been identified. To varying degrees, these networks changed in the 1980s, and particularly the 1990s. Therefore, two networks with four different forms have been examined in the thesis.

In the 1970s and, to a lesser extent, the 1980s, there was a stable, closed and very well integrated policy network in Hong Kong's curriculum policy. According to Marsh and Rhodes' (1992a; 1992b) typology, it can be seen as a policy community. Central to the curriculum policy network were three major components. First, although it contained a relatively large number of participants, it was stable because there was a clear state-led view of education and a single decision-making centre provided by the Education Department. Second, it was very well integrated, as there was a strong consensus on the system, parameters and direction of curriculum between the Education Department and the mainstream teaching profession. Third, it involved a high degree of exclusion, with access being restricted largely to teacher educators, school councils/ bodies, school head associations and teachers' unions. Groups like pro-China schools, pressure groups and political activists were excluded through the consensus on apolitical/ academic-oriented curriculum and the institution of the Curriculum Development Committee (CDC).

To some extent, the curriculum policy network grew weaker in the face of Hong Kong's colonial transition. The agenda slightly changed in that it was less apolitical. It became easier for outsider groups, such as pro-China schools, community groups and political activists, to access the periphery of the network. Nevertheless, the network remained stable, integrated and closed in the 1980s and the 1990s. It was independent of the Governor and other networks. There was still a high degree of exclusion. Although in the mid-1990s a number of opposition groups penetrated the outer circle of the network, they neither accessed the core nor had any lasting influence. In addition, the Education Department and the mainstream teaching profession managed to maintain their agreement on the direction and parameters of curriculum policy.

Compared to the curriculum policy network in the 1970s, a less integrated network existed in manpower policy. The manpower policy network, in the 1970s and the 1980s, was still relatively close to the policy community end of the continuum. However, it was obviously not so cohesive as the curriculum policy network. It contained a limited number of participants, which included the Education and Manpower Branch (EMB) of the government and major business associations. There were shared views on the broad values and goals of manpower policy, which was dedicated to the pursuit of economic growth. There was also some agreement on how to achieve these goals. Access to the

network was restricted, with trade unions being consciously excluded. However, the network contained a number of structural weaknesses. At the executive level, there were two powerful actors – the Governor and the EMB. This limited the extent to which the network could seal itself off and depoliticise the domain of policy-making. Despite some agreement on manpower policy, there were differences between the EMB and business groups on how to deal with workers' interests in making economic-oriented manpower policy. Access to the network was restricted, but, unlike the curriculum policy network, it lacked the institutional means of exclusion.

Due to these structural defects, the manpower policy network, which was subject to increasing political and economic pressures, disintegrated in the middle of the 1990s. It shifted from the policy community end to the issue network end of the continuum. As support for the economic-oriented policy ebbed away, the Governor removed part of the initiative in policy-making from the network. The consensus between the EMB and business groups broke down, and internal tensions developed within the network. Trade unions that were previously excluded penetrated the domain of policy-making. The policy agenda substantially changed in that the protection of workers' interests became more important. In short, since the mid-1990s the network has turned into a loose and volatile entity.

It is apparent from the above case studies that policy networks have existed in Hong Kong. In this thesis four different types of networks have been identified and investigated. The curriculum policy network during the 1970s and, to a lesser extent, the 1980s can be seen as a stable policy community. Less integrated networks existed in curriculum policy in the 1990s and manpower policy in the 1970s, but they were still close to the policy community end of the continuum. However, the manpower policy network from the mid-1990s was erratic and loose, which was akin to an issue network. The next section will examine how these various networks affected the government/ group relations in policy-making in Hong Kong, and why particular forms of networks developed.

## **2. Government/ Group Relations in Policy Networks**

It was demonstrated in Chapter 2 that there are problems with the traditional approaches, notably the theories of cooption and elitism, in understanding the government/ group relations in policy-making in Hong Kong. It is apparent from the case studies in this thesis that the notion of policy networks, which emphasises the structure of mutual dependence, resource exchange and reciprocal advantage, provides a better means of conceptualising the relationship.

The traditional approaches see the relationship between the government and integrated groups as a means of cooption rather than empowerment. Groups are incorporated into the policy process in order to achieve the goals set by the government.



The relationship is one of dependence, deference and supplication. The case studies suggest that, to some extent, the theory of cooption is corroborated. Both the curriculum policy network and the manpower policy network were created not because of the intrinsic power of groups, but because the government wanted to intervene in society. In curriculum policy, the colonial nature of Hong Kong and anti-colonial political education meant that the government had to develop an interventionist policy towards school curricula. In order to strengthen its influence on school curricula, the cooperation of the teaching profession was essential. Therefore, in the early 1970s the Education Department created the network and allowed the representatives of the teaching profession access to the domain of curriculum making. Likewise, the importance of economic success to the legitimacy of the government and the economic difficulties facing Hong Kong in the 1970s galvanised the government into assuming a more active role in managing the labour market. As a result, the EMB incorporated a number of major business groups into the policy process and a manpower policy network developed. All of this suggests that the historical, political and economic conditions of Hong Kong and government decisions had an important impact on the establishment of networks.

However, the theory of cooption oversimplifies the relationship between government and groups in policy-making. The case studies demonstrate that when policy networks were created, the government/ integrated group relations were not of dependence and deference. Rather, they were the structures of mutual dependence and resource exchange. In the case of manpower policy, the EMB needed the resources and assistance of business groups in the development of effective policy. Within the network the business groups performed the roles of aggregating demands, channelling the views of business to the government and helping the government to sell agreed policies to their members. In return, they established formalised relations with the EMB and influenced policy. In curriculum policy, the structure of resource inter-dependence was more evident. The Education Department would have encountered intractable difficulties if it had had to develop and implement a common curriculum without the cooperation of schools, teachers and teaching experts. It needed their assistance in the development and regular revisions of a huge common curriculum. Moreover, as the majority of schools in Hong Kong were non-government schools over which the Education Department had no direct control, it was essential for the government to obtain their cooperation in implementing a common curriculum without a great deal of political disruption and policy dislocation. It was impossible for the Education Department to develop an alternative administrative structure that could bypass the teaching profession.

As the structure of mutual dependence developed within networks, the government began negotiating with the integrated groups in the policy process. Once negotiation started, the government had to make concessions to the groups in order to maintain the stability of the networks. Therefore, contrary to the theory of cooption, the government/ group relations were not a zero sum game with the latter sacrificing their entire power to

the former. The groups' influence on policy was not a product of supplication and political largesse. Instead, it derived from the structure of resource exchange, and policy depended on negotiation. The teaching profession in Hong Kong could influence curriculum policy by modifying the government's proposals. It was difficult for the Education Department to hatch and implement a curriculum plan without their consent. The same was true with the business groups within the manpower policy network. Through negotiation, they could influence the scope and forms of labour importation policy and manpower training programmes. This is not to say that the networks led to pressure group capture of the government agencies. In fact, the groups relied on the government agencies to access the policy process. However, in order to avoid the costs in terms of losing the means of implementation, political disruption and increasing the uncertainty of the policy process, it was in the government's interests to maintain the networks. This structure of mutual dependence accorded the integrated groups influence on policy.

The relationship between the government and groups was also a positive sum game because both increased power in relation to other interests by being involved in an integrated and closed network. For instance, in curriculum policy, the Education Department and the mainstream teaching profession worked together to seal their policy arena off from pro-China schools, political activists, other networks and even the Governor. In manpower policy, the EMB collaborated with major business associations on enhancing their autonomy in relation to organised labour. In doing so, both the government agencies and integrated groups were in a stronger position to influence policy.

The case studies also suggest that, by comparison with general theories like elitism, the notion of policy network offers a flexible means of conceptualising the government/group relations in Hong Kong. From the evidence presented, policy-making in Hong Kong did not appear to be elitist in the sense that a single elite class, notably business and related interests, was constantly dominant across various policy arenas. This is not to deny that business and related interests tended to be more influential than other groups in a number of policy areas like economy, tax and industrial relations. Yet this general picture oversimplifies the relationship between the government and groups, which actually varied from sector to sector and from time to time. The government as a whole did not represent particular interests. In this regard, the meso-level concept of policy network that is concerned with explaining behaviour within particular policy areas or sub-sectors provides a more flexible account of policy-making.

The government/group relations in policy-making varied in a number of ways. They differed in terms of membership and the interests involved. The manpower policy network contained the EMB and major business groups, whilst the curriculum policy network included the Education Department and a number of educational groups and organisations that were not beholden to moneyed interests. The government/group

relations also varied according to the extent of integration and continuity. If the elitist analysis of Hong Kong policy were accurate, networks covering business would have had a higher degree of integration and continuity than other networks. In the cases of curriculum and manpower policy, however, it seems that the relationship was the other way round. The manpower policy network containing major business groups was less integrated and stable than the network in curriculum policy. In addition, the government/group relations differed across other dimensions like the nature of relationship and interaction. All of this indicates that numerous relations may have developed in policy-making in Hong Kong. Thus, instead of adopting general theories like elitism which contain certain presumptions about the distribution of power, we need to be specific in analysing the relationship between government and groups in particular areas in order to understand the policy process.

The case studies suggest that there was a variety of government/ group relations existing in different policy arenas. This raises an important question: why did different types/ nature of networks develop in different arenas? The policy network theory provides an account of this variation and sees some common features in particular forms of networks. It is easier to establish a policy community if there are a limited number of participants, consensus between the government and integrated groups, and mechanisms for exclusion. Policy communities also develop in areas of importance. However, there are several problems with this explanation. First, the aspect of membership does not apply to the case study of curriculum policy in Hong Kong. The curriculum policy network in the 1970s can be seen as a policy community as it was stable, very well integrated and closed, although it covered a relatively large number of actors. Second, consensus and mechanisms for excluding opposed interests were important, but not sufficient, for establishing a policy community. The manpower policy network had some consensus that served as a means of exclusion, but it disintegrated and became a loose network in the mid-1990s. Third, the existence of a loose network in manpower policy in the mid-1990s demonstrates that issue networks could occur in areas of great political significance where it was difficult to establish a consensus and multiple decision-making centres existed.

In addition to the above aspects, the case studies of curriculum and manpower policy suggest a number of meso-level variables in particular forms of networks. Policy communities normally occurred in areas where a structure of resource dependence developed between the government and integrated groups. In curriculum policy, the government needed the teaching profession in developing and implementing a common curriculum, and it was difficult, if not impossible, for the government to establish an alternative means of implementation bypassing the teaching profession. Therefore, a policy community developed and remained intact in curriculum policy in the 1970s and the 1980s. The structure of resource dependence was not as strong in manpower policy. The EMB did not need the business groups in implementing policy. It had alternative

groups like organised labour that it could talk to and seek political support from. Thus, a network close to the issue network end of continuum developed in the mid-1990s.

It was also easier to establish a policy community if the relationship between the government and integrated groups was institutionalised. On top of the consensus on the curriculum, the curriculum policy network had an institutional basis (CDC) that served from the 1970s as a further means of exclusion. This means that it was highly difficult for outsiders to penetrate the network even though the consensus might occasionally wobble. Within the manpower policy network, there were no such definite institutional arrangements. Thus, its stability and exclusiveness had to depend on how well it could maintain its consensus. Moreover, the comparison between the two cases demonstrates the importance of having a single decision-making centre to the establishment and maintenance of a policy community.

To recapitulate, the case studies suggest that the notion of policy network provides a better approach to understanding the policy process in Hong Kong. Due to a number of meso-level variables in networks, various forms of government/ group relations developed in different policy arenas in Hong Kong. Within policy networks the relationship between groups and the government agencies was one of mutual dependence, resource exchange and reciprocal advantage rather than mere dependence and deference. Once networks and inter-dependence developed, policies were products of negotiation and cooperation instead of supplication and political largesse. Therefore, the government/ group relations within networks were normally a positive sum. The next section will examine how networks affected policy outcomes in Hong Kong and explain why in some arenas policies consistently favoured and indulged particular interests at the expense of others.

### **3. Policy Networks and Policy Outcomes**

It was demonstrated in Chapter 3 that there is little agreement as to whether the concept of policy network has any explicit explanatory power. The case studies in this thesis indicate that policy networks are in fact a significant factor that affected policy outcomes in Hong Kong. On the whole, they affected policy in a number of ways. Firstly, they were important because they provided the government with the means of intervention. In other words, they increased the infrastructural power of government actors and therefore ensured that interventionist policies could be developed. From the early 1970s, the network covering the Education Department and mainstream educational groups and organisations created the mechanisms for resource exchange and consensus building, which allowed the Education Department to intervene in school curricula. Consequently, a common curriculum was formulated and implemented in all types of schools without political reverberations or a policy mess. Had there not been an

integrated network in curriculum matters, it would have been difficult for the government to impose a common curriculum on non-government schools without political disruption.

Secondly, networks defined what problems existed and what policy options were acceptable. Therefore, they affected the policy agendas in the policy process. This demonstrates the importance, within the networks, of their shared views and consensus on policy. For example, during the 1970s and 1980s, the economic-oriented principle was enstructured into the manpower policy network, which affected the attitudes and behaviour of policymakers. Hence, the policymakers determined that the labour and skill shortages crippling Hong Kong's economic competitiveness since the 1970s were major problems that warranted the government intervention. By the same token, the large-scale expansion of vocational training and the highly controversial labour importation scheme that would possibly revitalise Hong Kong's economy were regarded as acceptable measures. In the curriculum policy network in the 1970s, the problem was anti-colonial political education in pro-China schools and the solution was unifying and depoliticising school curricula.

Thirdly, the networks further limited the range of problems and policy options to be deliberated in the policy process by keeping alternative problems and solutions raised by outsiders out of the agendas. As a result, only particular policy decisions would be made. Despite ferocious attacks on labour importation from the 1980s, the policy-makers influenced by the economic-oriented principle within the manpower policy network repeatedly denied that the problems arising from labour importation were serious enough to justify a policy change. Alternative solutions raised by trade unions were dismissed as infeasible and insufficient to allay the problems of labour and skill shortages and rampant wage inflation. Likewise, within the curriculum policy network there was a strong consensus on the apolitical and academic orientation of the school curriculum. Therefore, over a long period, the network prevented the issue of pupils' civic needs and the option of civic education, especially a mandatory civic education syllabus, from getting onto the policy agenda.

Finally, policy networks affected policy outcomes by excluding groups from the domain of policy-making. The curriculum policy network from the early 1970s excluded a range of opposed interests like pro-China schools, political activists and community groups, whilst the manpower policy network in the 1970s and the 1980s blocked the access of organised labour. The consensus and institutions provided the means of exclusion. As a consequence, the opposition groups were marginalised in the policy process, and could not pose a serious challenge to the networks and their decisions.

Policy networks were not neutral. Their existence in Hong Kong explains why in some areas policies were consistently made in particular groups' favour. It was argued in Chapter 3 that the elitist approach to policy analysis in Hong Kong contains certain presumptions about the structural inequality in politics but has difficulty in explaining how particular groups actually influenced policy. The case studies in this thesis suggest

that the notion of policy network may bridge this academic gap. The existence of policy networks created the mechanisms that enabled particular groups to influence policy. The networks included some groups and excluded others. The integrated groups were able to shape policy not because of their structural positions within society or the resources they possessed, but because their interests were built into the structure of the networks, which could be a set of rules, standard operating procedures, ideology, consensus or institutions.

In the policy process, the structure of a network created a certain range of choices that served the interests of the dominant actors within the network. Within the curriculum policy network, the structure was the agreement between the Education Department and the teaching profession on the need to maintain an apolitical/ academic-oriented curriculum in schools. The consensus confined the curriculum-making process to the deliberation of conventional academic disciplines. Civic education was not within these limits and so was precluded in the policy process. This range of policy options favoured the interests and ideas of the key actors within the network. For the teaching profession, it allowed educators, schools and teachers to eschew instruction in thorny social and political subjects and to concentrate entirely on preparing pupils for public examinations and higher education. It also made it easier for the Education Department to plug the loopholes in school curricula that would possibly escalate into a threat to the legitimacy and stability of the government.

In addition, the structure of a policy network served the interests of particular groups by ensuring that diametrically opposed interests and alternative issues and solutions were routinely excluded from the domain of policy-making through the consensus and institutions within the network. In curriculum and manpower policy, the networks prevented alternative problems (pupils' civic needs or social injustice), options (e.g. civic education, automation, better working conditions) and opposition groups (e.g. pro-China schools, political parties and trade unions) from accessing the policy process. By constraining the policy agendas and excluding opposition groups, the government actors and integrated groups within the networks were able to influence policy, and any challenges to their interests were diluted. Consequently, the policy outputs constantly reflected the interests and ideas of the dominant actors.

All in all, the case studies demonstrate that policy networks are important in explaining policy outcomes in Hong Kong. They affected policy by providing the government with the means of intervention, defining the nature of problems, creating a certain range of policy options and excluding opposed interests from the policy process. In addition, the existence of networks explains why policies in some areas favoured the interests of some groups over time in a fairly consistent way against pressure contrary to them. Policy networks created the mechanisms that allowed particular groups to influence policy. The interests of integrated groups were built into the structure of policy networks, which ensured that their interests were served in the policy process. By privileging certain groups, problems and solutions whilst excluding others, the networks

created a certain range of policy options and thus produced particular policy outputs that were tilted in favour of the key actors within the networks.

However, in the 1980s, and particularly the 1990s, policy networks in Hong Kong were subject to increasing challenges as a result of the colonial transition. The next section will examine the external pressures that pre-existing policy networks faced, and how the notion of policy network offers a more sophisticated view of change in Hong Kong than the traditional approaches.

#### **4. Context, Networks and Policy Change**

It was demonstrated in Chapter 2 that the traditional approaches concentrate on the changes in Hong Kong's political environment in order to explain policy change during the colonial transition. Their argument that policy change has occurred as a result of macro-level developments in Hong Kong is, to some extent, borne out by the case studies in this thesis. Both the curriculum policy network and the manpower policy network in the thesis were under mounting pressure for change during the 1980s and the 1990s. Consequently, they changed in varying degrees in terms of their nature and policy outcomes.

The changes in Hong Kong's political environment, notably the process of decolonisation and democratisation, impinged on established networks and their policy agendas in a number of ways. First, the contextual changes created new problems for which the established networks did not have available solutions. In the 1980s and the 1990s, the curriculum policy network was faced with a pressing need for civic education that was intended to provide an ideological prop for the integration of Hong Kong into China and the development of a representative system. However, the established agenda within the network originally created to unify and depoliticise school curricula could not cope with this problem. Since the early 1980s, in terms of manpower policy, the political transition of Hong Kong to China has accelerated and exacerbated the economic integration between the two places. This promptly gave rise to the problems of economic restructuring and rising unemployment in Hong Kong, which the network had difficulty in solving.

Second, as new problems arose, the established networks were likely to be confronted with intense opposition. In curriculum policy, the pressure for change was both internal and external. It came from a number of pressure groups and political parties that wanted to use civic education to shape political culture within society and then influence the course of political transition. Added to this domestic pressure for change was the pressure from the Chinese authorities that regarded civic education as conducive to the political integration of Hong Kong into China. In manpower policy, growing unemployment stoked the trade unions' opposition to the economic-oriented network and

their policy decisions. Third, the colonial transition was important in changing networks and policy because it restructured the political landscape in Hong Kong. It affected the relative power of various groups and organisations, and active participants in Hong Kong's political arena increased. In curriculum and manpower policy, a number of groups like pro-China schools, political activists and organised labour that were previously excluded from the networks gained in political strength and managed to penetrate the enlarged political arena as a result of elections to the revamped Legislative Council. Moreover, the transition of Hong Kong to China substantially enhanced the power of the Chinese authorities over Hong Kong's domestic matters.

For the above reasons, the political pressure for change became increasingly intense. Consequently, the curriculum and manpower policy saw some changes in the networks, their policy agendas and policy outputs. In the 1980s, and particularly the 1990s, the curriculum policy network grew weaker as the opposition groups penetrated its periphery and the Chinese authorities exerted a great deal of pressure on the curriculum-makers to excise the curriculum from the colonial past. The policy agenda also changed to some extent with civic education becoming increasingly important. In manpower policy, the network and its economic-oriented agenda changed more dramatically in the 1990s. As a consequence, there were an increasing number of provisions being made to protect workers against unemployment and the adverse effects of labour importation. The changes in curriculum and manpower policy indicate the importance of macro-level developments in Hong Kong, notably the processes of decolonisation and democratisation, in changing the pre-existing policy networks, their agendas and policy outputs.

Nevertheless, the case studies also demonstrate that the relationship between context and networks was not unidirectional. If political pressure occurred in areas where strong networks or policy communities existed, there was always resistance to reform, and the trajectory of policy change tended to be complex and dialectical. The networks might not automatically collapse. Instead, they affected the extent and speed of policy change by mediating the effect of Hong Kong's colonial transition on policy outputs. Hence, contrary to the traditional approaches, the analysis of policy change in Hong Kong cannot be reduced to the analysis of macro-level factors. The curriculum policy network was structurally strong, which enabled it to survive the contextual uncertainty and affect the course of policy alteration. Despite some changes in its nature and agenda, the network remained largely intact during the 1980s and the 1990s. It was cushioned from growing political pressure by the fact that it was independent of the Governor and other networks. There was also a high level of resource dependence, institutional support and consensus, which resulted in the network being cohesive and not open to change.

As the network weathered the contextual uncertainty and the curriculum-makers remained the same, it was able to withstand the political pressure and control the pace and forms of policy change. Faced by the groundswell of politicisation in China and Hong



Kong, it managed to depoliticise the domain of curriculum decision-making. It was deft at diluting the external pressure by accepting minor changes at the margins and twisting political-oriented civic education into depoliticised moral education. In doing so, it limited damage to the interests and ideas of the key actors within the network. It also prevented change by precluding the most radical issues raised by the Chinese authorities and domestic groups, such as the provision of political education and the formulation of a mandatory civic education syllabus, from getting onto the reform agenda. In addition, through the institutions and consensus, it excluded the opposed interests like the political activists, pro-China schools and pressure groups from the inner core of the network, and thus marginalised their influence in the policy process. As a consequence, thus far the political pressure has resulted only in minimal changes in the curriculum policy on civic education. Whilst the network has issued a number of unbinding recommendations to schools on how to promote civic education, it has repudiated many proposals for change. There was no compulsion on schools to implement the official guidelines on civic education, and in the guidelines political elements were watered down by moral issues.

The ability of networks to resist change varied from policy sector to policy sector. It depended on the nature/ types of particular networks involved. In the face of similar external pressure, a network with a higher degree of internal integration and exclusion was in a stronger position to resist change than a weaker network. Therefore, the impact of macro-level developments in Hong Kong on policy change differed across policy arenas. During the transition, the political pressure produced a great deal of change in manpower policy but little in curriculum policy where China's involvement was greater. This puts a different gloss on the traditional argument that policy change resulted from the changes in Hong Kong's political environment (see Chapter 2). The macro-level variables were important, but their effect greatly depended on the nature of networks, which affected the ability of the networks to prevent change. Hence, the nature/ types of networks were as important as the macro-level developments in explaining the trajectory of policy alteration.

It has just been argued that the curriculum policy network was internally integrated and independent of the Governor and other networks. There was also a high degree of resource dependence, consensus and institutional support. Thus the network was able to survive the political pressure and swat down a lot of proposals for curriculum reform. By contrast, the network covering the EMB and business groups in manpower policy was structurally weaker. It was less closed, consensual and isolated from the Governor who had the intent and authority to undermine the network. These structural weaknesses did not destabilise the network in the 1970s and the 1980s when the participants, in the face of rapid economic growth and robust labour market, were prepared to accept the economic-oriented manpower policy and sideline their concern over its adverse effects on society. However, the network contained the seeds of its own destruction.

Once economic problems and political pressure arose as a result of Hong Kong's

colonial transition, a schism developed between the Governor, the EMB and the integrated business groups. The Governor became more involved in policy-making. The disagreement between the EMB and business resulted in the EMB drawing in trade unions in order to strengthen its position on policy adjustment. In this situation, the network disintegrated in the mid-1990s and lost a great deal of influence on the reform agenda. Unlike the curriculum policy network, it had little ability to mediate the external pressure and prevent change by excluding radical groups, problems and options from the domain of policy-making. Consequently, it failed to limit damage to the economic-oriented manpower policy. The policy substantially changed in that the government snuffed out the General Labour Importation Scheme and there were an increasing number of provisions being made to advance the interests of workers.

Despite the importance of networks in understanding change, it is essential to point out that they were not completely isolated entities in the context of Hong Kong. The transition of Hong Kong to China gave rise to increasing threats to the dominant interests within networks. In addition, it is clear from the case studies that the success of networks in surviving the contextual shifts and fending off political pressure was, to some extent, due to the context within which they operated. In curriculum policy, it was the international and constitutional contexts of Hong Kong which allowed the network to resist the political pressure for change that came from the Chinese authorities. There were a number of domestic and international factors that hobbled the influence of the Chinese government on Hong Kong's educational policy-making. They included the Sino-British Joint Agreement, the Basic Law and a massive international scrutiny of Hong Kong's transition to China.

As the legal sovereign power of Hong Kong, the Chinese government could use its despotic power to break up the curriculum policy network and force their issues onto the agenda, regardless how strong the network was. The problem with this strategy was that the political costs could be very high. If the Chinese government changed the network and took decisions itself, it would effectively mean gross violations of the Sino-British Joint Agreement and the Basic Law, which accorded the Hong Kong government administrative autonomy in education and other domestic affairs. It was eminently not prepared to bear the political costs of international arraignment and any political, economic and social instability in newly acquired Hong Kong on this matter. This was especially true, given that it was eager to demonstrate to the international community including Taiwan its capacity and willingness to allow Hong Kong to operate in the ways spelt out in the international and constitutional documents. More important to the Chinese government was the possible damage being done to China's image abroad and the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong. Therefore, it was squeamish about meddling in Hong Kong's curriculum policy. The network took succour from these international and constitutional contexts. Consequently, it was able to survive the restrained pressure from China and put off fundamental changes in civic education policy.

Two major points have emerged from the above discussion. First, policy networks were an important factor affecting how policy changed in Hong Kong during the colonial transition. Although the processes of decolonisation and democratisation made an impact on Hong Kong's politics, the relationship between context and networks proved to be complex and dialectical. The effect of these contextual changes on policy greatly depended on the nature/ types of particular networks. Generally speaking, policy communities or the networks with a high degree of stability, internal integration, institutionalisation and independence were able to counteract the mounting political pressure and control the scope and pace of policy change by coopting certain reform pressure and excluding others. Hence, policy change tended to be tardy and limited in areas where integrated policy networks existed. On the other hand, less integrated and independent networks, particularly issue networks, were in a weaker position to weather the macro-level developments and ward off the external pressure for change. Thus, where weak and less consensual networks existed, substantial changes in networks, policy agendas and policy outputs were the most likely outcome.

It is also the case that policy networks were not a single factor determining the trajectory of policy change in Hong Kong during the transition. This leads to the second point in this section. Although networks were important, they were not completely isolated from the broader context within which they operated. The transition of Hong Kong to China created increasing political pressure that posed an unprecedented challenge to pre-existing networks. In addition, to some extent, the success of networks in resisting change was the result of their international and constitutional contexts that gave them space to manoeuvre. Therefore, in spite of the fact that network analysis is vital, it needs to be used within the macro-level developments in Hong Kong in order to provide a more comprehensive view of policy change.

As policy networks were embedded in the context of Hong Kong, it is important to investigate how the Hong Kong context actually affected the networks so as to understand the government/ group relations in the policy process. Therefore, the following section will examine the ways in which the political context of Hong Kong influenced the nature of networks and the extent to which the networks were distinctive.

## **5. Networks and Political Structure**

It has been demonstrated throughout the thesis that, although the notion of policy network has been confined to policy analysis in Europe, Britain and the United States, networks have existed and significantly affected policy outcomes and policy change in Hong Kong. This raises the question of how distinctive these networks were in the political context of Hong Kong, which was different from the political structures in liberal democracies. Although it is not the focus of this thesis to compare and contrast

policy networks in different countries, the case studies suggest that policy networks in Hong Kong were distinctive. The idiosyncratic nature of policy networks can be explained by the political structure in Hong Kong, notably its executive-dominated political system and structural inequality in politics. In other words, the macro-level variables in Hong Kong's political structure were important because they influenced the features of networks and the way they operated.

Policy networks in Hong Kong had a number of general characteristics. First, the executive-led political system in Hong Kong encouraged the formation of stable, integrated and independent policy networks. Therefore, the networks had a tendency towards policy communities. It was demonstrated in Chapter 1 that Hong Kong was an 'administrative state', where the administrative organisations played a far more prominent role in making policy than the legislature and judiciary. Power was concentrated with senior civil servants, who made most of the policy decisions only to be formally approved, in some cases, by the Legislative Council. Until the mid-1980s, there was no election to the Legislative Council. The members were appointed by the Governor and had no constituents to whom they were accountable. Consequently, there was a single decision-making centre in Hong Kong – the government agencies – which dominated the policy process and controlled access to the domain of policy-making.

The concentration of power meant that the political system in Hong Kong tended to have stable policy communities. As Jordan and Richardson (1987, p. 181) argue, there is a natural tendency for government to create policy communities because they make the policy process predictable and reduce the likelihood of overload and failing to find a solution. Despite the advantage of policy communities, they do not occur automatically. In countries like the United States, the policy process is so fragmented that it is difficult for policy communities to develop and maintain themselves (Smith, 1993, pp. 9-10). By contrast, the Hong Kong government, as a single decision-making centre, had the ability to control access to the policy process. They could include certain groups and then exclude others. The institutionalisation of particular groups at the heart of policy-making normally constituted impregnable policy communities, as there was the lack of parliamentarians who could play the intermediary role which provided outsider groups with alternative access points to the policy process. Since there was a propensity for policy networks in Hong Kong to develop into stable policy communities, issues within the domain of policy-making were often depoliticised, and policy outcomes were normally stable.

Second, it seems that policy networks in Hong Kong tended to be elitist. They reflected the broader pattern of structural inequality in society and politics. In other words, the class structure in Hong Kong is important in accounting for the structure of policy networks in terms of who governed and in whose interests. Traditionally, the theory of elitism sees the business and related professional interests in Hong Kong constituting an elite class that had strong influence on policy and dominated the principal sources of

information feeding the government agencies. There were a number of bases of structural inequality. The business and professional interests had economic resources or knowledge unavailable to other groups. They had a powerful voice in the appointed governing institutions such as the Executive, Legislative and Urban Councils. Their political influence also derived from their socio-economic background which was in common with that of senior government officials. In addition, the government needed decent economic showing and social developments to shore up its legitimacy. As it abided by the laissez-faire ideology and the philosophy of small government, the cooperation of business and professionals was important in order to make and implement economic and social policies in the most cost-effective manner. Therefore, in terms of pressure group influence, business and professionals were constantly in a stronger position than the majority of groups.

The structural inequality in society and politics affected the structure of policy networks. The case studies in this thesis suggest that it was easier for the business and professional elites to access the networks across a range of policy areas and sub-sectors. There was a pattern of inclusion and exclusion. It was likely that business and professional groups were over-represented in networks. By contrast, other interests like organised labour, community groups and political activists were normally excluded from the domain of policy-making. In addition, policy networks like the ones in curriculum and manpower policy had the potential to be stable, cohesive and closed over a relatively long period of time if they included consensual business and/ or professional interests.

Third, apart from the nature of networks, the macro-level variables in Hong Kong's political structure also affected the way the networks operated. As the government actors had more resources than groups in the executive-dominated political system, the government/ group relations in networks were apt to be asymmetric. The executive-dominated system enabled the government actors to control access to the policy process. The government agencies also had the ability to impose policy against the wishes of integrated groups through legislation, because until the early 1990s they faced little difficulty in pushing legislation through the appointed Legislative Council. Since then, the legislature has changed to some extent, but there were institutional arrangements aimed at containing the emergence of a fully-fledged legislature that might threaten the executive-led governing model (see Chapter 2).

In this situation, groups needed the government more than the government needed groups. Consequently, in most cases, it was the government actors who could determine the membership, the rules of the games and the parameters of policy within networks. In curriculum policy, the Education Department decided who had access to the network. It also held a grip on the main planks of curriculum policy, as most curriculum proposals emanated from the educational officials and sometimes it could choose to ignore the policy recommendations made by the network. In manpower policy, the major business associations, though highly resourced, were unable to thwart the EMB in its aims to

change the economic-oriented labour importation policy in the mid-1990s. As the government was the one which had the potential to call the shots within networks, policy outputs generally reflected the interests and goals of the government actors.

Finally, the macro-level developments in Hong Kong's political structure influenced the trend of change in policy networks. Although networks in Hong Kong tended to be closed and integrated, since the 1980s there has been a general shift in the government/ group relations from stable policy communities to more open networks as a result of the colonial transition. The transition of Hong Kong to China triggered politicisation at the societal level and the proliferation of pressure groups and political parties. It also created new issues and problems besetting established policy networks. The development of a representative system enlarged the political arena in Hong Kong and allowed some outsider groups access to the political system. Consequently, it was more difficult for the government and groups to maintain the pre-existing policy communities, and change was the likely outcome. In this thesis, both the manpower policy network and the curriculum policy network that can be seen as a policy community had become more open to some extent by the middle of the 1990s.

Despite these propensities, it is important not to overestimate the general features of policy networks in Hong Kong. There are many exceptions to the overall pattern augured by the macro-level variables. This suggests that we need to be specific in understanding the factors that affected the nature of particular policy networks. In addition to the political structure in Hong Kong, a range of meso-level variables in networks was equally important. Hence, it is essential to examine particular policy arenas and networks in order to develop a fuller understanding of government/ group relations and how policy was made and changed in Hong Kong. In this regard, the notion of policy network provides a flexible and sophisticated view of policy process and change.

Due to the executive-dominated political system in Hong Kong, there was a tendency for policy networks to develop into stable and well-integrated policy communities. However, it is not difficult to find exceptions. The manpower policy network from the mid-1990s was erratic, loose and open to conflicting interests. It was close to the issue network end of the continuum rather than the policy community end. The other two networks in the thesis also differed from the curriculum policy network in the 1970s and the 1980s that can be seen as a policy community. Therefore, despite the tendency, policy communities did not occur automatically or in all policy arenas in Hong Kong. The case studies of curriculum and manpower policy indicate that the development of particular types of networks depended on a range of meso-level variables: the number of participants, the degree of consensus, the means of exclusion including institutionalisation, the nature of policy, and the structure of resource dependence. Apart from the executive-led political system, the right range of meso-level variables had to exist for a policy community to develop.

It appears from the case studies that the nature of policy networks reflected the

broader pattern of structural inequality in Hong Kong's politics. It was easier for business and professionals to access the policy networks than for other groups like organised labour. However, it was also the case that no single elite or interest dominated the networks across policy arenas and time. The business associations in the manpower policy network and the educational organisations and groups in the curriculum policy network did not constitute a single elite class because they had different interests, resources and concerns. Moreover, trade unions that were hostile to business interests gained access to the manpower policy network in the mid-1990s. Looking beyond the case studies in this thesis, there were plenty of policy arenas where business and professional groups were not dominant, such as transport and social welfare. In other words, contrary to elitism, the government as a whole did not represent business and related interests. Instead, it favoured various interests according to the arrangements that developed in particular policy areas or sub-sectors. Therefore, network analysis which is concerned with analysing government/ group relations in particular policy arenas is vital to understanding who governed and in whose interests.

The meso-level variables within networks also explain how the networks operated. In Hong Kong's political system, the relationship between the government and groups tended to be asymmetric. However, recognising the importance of government does not mean that groups were insignificant in making policy. The case studies indicate that the integrated groups were likely to have substantial influence on the government and policy if mutual dependence and clear agreement developed within the networks. Network analysis is also important because it, as argued before, explains why the political pressure arising from Hong Kong's colonial transition caused a greater deal of change in some networks and policies than others.

Hence, neither context nor networks were a sufficient factor that determined the government/ group relations in the policy process, how policy was made and how it was changed. In accounting for policy and change, it is important to integrate the macro-level analysis of Hong Kong's political context with the meso-level analysis of policy networks. Whilst the approach starting from the macro-level is crucial for explaining the general features of networks and the trend of change in networks and their policy decisions, network analysis is most appropriate in accounting for variation across policy sectors. We need to be aware of the contextual factors in Hong Kong, such as the executive-dominated political system, the elitist structure in politics, the development of a representative system and the transition of Hong Kong to China. Meanwhile, networks are an equally significant factor that needs to be included in the analysis of the policy process, policy outcomes and policy change in Hong Kong.

## 6. The Way Forward

Having established the utility of network analysis in understanding policy outcomes and policy change in the context of Hong Kong, the last section of this chapter will return to the theoretical discussion of policy network. It will pay particular attention to the development of a policy network approach to the analysis of public policy in Asian semi-democracies. Here, I wish to highlight some issues regarding network research which emerge from this thesis and demand further investigation. They include the transferability of the policy network concept, the explanatory utility of network analysis, and, finally, the need to integrate the structural view of policy networks with associated approaches, notably the macro-level and micro-level analysis of networks.

### 6.1 The Transferability of The Policy Network Concept

To date discussions of policy networks have mostly been confined to the analysis of public policy in liberal democracies. This is not so much because policy networks have not existed in other regime forms, but because the policy network literature has paid little attention to the applicability of the concept to regimes beyond the category of liberal democracy. Hence, it is important for future policy network research to examine whether or not the concept is apposite to policy analysis in states which have not followed the path of western democratic systems.

The case studies of Hong Kong demonstrate that the concept of policy network can be used to explain policy and change in the Hong Kong non-democratic regime. Based on elementary analysis of other Asian polities, it could be suggested that policy networks also exist in other authoritarian capitalist regimes in East and Southeast Asia, such as Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. In politics, these countries are all authoritarian in nature. Whilst power-holders use the rhetoric of constitutionalism and adopt parliamentary and electoral forms of rule, the political order is shaped into different patterns of semi-democracy, in which the electoral processes are concerned with mass mobilisation in support of the governing elites rather than popular participation. Through a variety of means, including vote-buying, corruption, legal oppression, scaremongering and gerrymandering, opposition parties and other non-state political actors are encouraged or compelled to adopt behaviour which is found acceptable by the governing parties or bureaucrats and cannot threaten the status quo. Hence, in reality, there is little possibility of power alteration between the governing elites and opposition elements through a peaceful process of fair, open and transparent elections (Rodan, 1996a, pp. 13-14; McCargo, 1998, pp. 137-146). In economic management, as opposed to communist regimes, the states are market conforming rather than market avoiding, despite the fact that they all intervene in economies to varying degrees. They



rely massively on the private sector to provide capital, management and technology for export-oriented industrialisation (Case, 1998, p.258).

Traditionally, analysis of state and group relations in the authoritarian capitalist regimes in East and Southeast Asia has been conducted within a dichotomous zero-sum framework. However, since the 1990s, a consensus has begun to grow that the boundaries between the state and society are not so distinct but rather blurred and obscure (Rodan, 1996a, pp. 21-25). The state/group distinction is complicated by the existence of a range of institutional and informal forums through which societal groups are incorporated into government. The integrated groups are in constant contact with the same political parties and bureaucratic agencies in the policy process (McCargo, 1998, pp. 131-134). In this context, a host of policy networks have developed, which allows state actors to intervene in society and groups to have regular access to the policy process. Policy networks infuse important dynamics into the state by the fact that they can affect the content of public policy (Rodan, 1996a, p. 28). To delineate the intricate relationships between the state and society, Ding (1994, p. 298) argues that the 'institutional structures are so closely interwoven with each other in their actual operation that the formal demarcation of the scope of each other's activities or powers becomes insignificant'.

Network analysis is important in liberal democracies because the policy process tends to fragment and specialise, with a number of well-established groups possessing significant resources (Campbell *et al.*, 1989). Moreover, in liberal democracies, it is rare that the interests of state actors develop independently of society and are then imposed against the will of societal groups (Smith, 1993, p. 227). By contrast, state actors in authoritarian capitalist regimes have a greater ability to act autonomously. Due to different forms of authoritarianism, these state actors remain politically insulated from the interests and demands of the general public (Case, 1998, p. 251). To add to this state strength, the governments in East and Southeast Asia, particularly in Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea, are centralised, monolithic and efficient, which means that they are less dependent on private groups in policy-making and implementation (McCargo, 1998, pp. 126-147). Therefore, at first glance, it appears that the policy network concept bears little relevance to policy analysis in semi-democratic states, yet appearances can be deceiving. The case studies of Hong Kong indicate that policy networks can develop and influence public policy in semi-democracies. This raises a question regarding why network analysis is also important in authoritarian capitalist regimes in East and Southeast Asia.

In these regimes, the combination of political authoritarianism and economic capitalism facilitates the emergence of policy networks between the state agencies and groups. The political and socio-economic systems create an environment in which policy networks are likely to develop and succeed in different policy arenas. Generally speaking, there are three mechanisms leading to the development and influence of policy networks. First of all, despite the absence of political pluralism, there are feisty civil societies. According to Callahan (1998, pp. 158-159), these civil societies have appreciably

mellowed and expanded since the 1980s, with an apparent mushrooming of non-governmental groups which are concerned with an array of different interests and demands, such as racial equality, women's rights, resource conservation and market liberation (Case, 1998, pp. 271-272). The vibrancy of civil societies stems from the fact that the regimes pay homage to market capitalism instead of central planning in order to pursue rapid economic growth. Consequently, private groups are established in parallel to the burgeoning economic space to advance various economic and social interests. This function of civic society is particularly critical in authoritarian capitalist regimes in East and Southeast Asia. As the parliamentary procedures rarely respond to the changing needs of ordinary citizens, an increasing number of groups are created to articulate the interests of civil societies (Callahan, 1998, p. 151). Normally, interest groups are found acceptable or, at least, tolerated grudgingly by the states as long as they eschew the role of seizing state power and have no connections with opposition parties (Rodan, 1996b, p. 109; Callahan, 1998, p. 151).

The existence of civil society is important to the development and operation of policy networks in authoritarian capitalist states. The importance of civil society derives from it being 'the form of political space that affords the most substantive oppositional capacity and potential' (Rodan, 1996a, p.20). In other words, it contains a variety of social forces that are not domesticated by the state and can both resist and cooperate with the state actors in their own interests. As rapid industrialisation in East and Southeast Asia has generated a significant increase in both the middle and working classes from the early 1980s, the pressure groups have become better resourced and organised in representing their members' interests. Some of them have even become so effective in articulating alternative policies and mobilising local opinion that the government agencies have found it in their interests to incorporate and work in partnership with them in tackling policy problems (Callahan, 1998, p. 243; Case, 1998, p. 270). Consequently, policy networks have emerged.

The second mechanism facilitative of policy networks in semi-democracies is that groups greatly need this form of policy-making structure to enhance their influence on public policy. This mechanism, together with the third discussed later, ensures that the operation of civil society leads not only to pressure group politics by means of mass mobilisation and lobbying, but also to policy networks characterised by internal negotiation between state actors and groups. Central to policy networks is the need for direct access to government on the part of groups. Only when groups wish to relinquish part of their autonomy from the state in exchange for routine relationships with government officials will policy networks occur. The issue of direct access is important to groups in liberal democracies, but it is even more critical in centralised and monolithic one-party states in East and Southeast Asia. The absence of strong opposition parties and fair electoral arrangements means that direct access to government is almost the only practical way in which groups can defend and advance their members' interests on a

regular basis. Some groups manage to gain recognition by government as legitimate interlocutors, and thus policy networks develop.

Whilst civil society and groups' interests can go some way to answering why network analysis is important in authoritarian capitalist regimes, the major answer seems to lie with the need for the state agencies as a whole to create and maintain stable and institutionalised relationships with certain societal groups. On the whole, policy networks as a particular structure of policy-making fits with the authoritarian governance of semi-democratic states in East and Southeast Asia. This is the last and, perhaps, the most important mechanism prompting the development and influence of policy networks outside the western democratic systems.

Policy networks have a number of advantages for state actors over complete isolation from civil society. First, in most Asian authoritarian capitalist regimes, dramatic economic growth has been accompanied by significant transformations in social structure. Increased prosperity has resulted in a more socially differentiated population with separate identities, values and organisational structures. There have been an increasing number of divergent social interests involved in pressure group politics. In this context, state actors need to create policy networks as a means of politically accommodating increasingly complex and divergent social interests without conceding state power to the political opposition. If there is 'opposition' at policy level, the state actors steer it through manageable forums by the creation of policy networks. Within the networks, they make necessary concessions in an attempt to divert the disaffected social interests from oppositional politics, which sets out to seize state power and change the regimes. On the other hand, the state actors, by manipulating network structures, manage to keep the disaffected within strict limits and boundaries (Rodan, 1996b, pp. 102-105). In short, they use the structures of policy networks to condition the character of opposition.

Second, policy networks occur in semi-democracies because it is usual for state agencies to sponsor close ties with certain well-organised groups in a bid to mobilise public support for the policy process in general and policy outputs in particular. In other words, central to policy networks in semi-democracies is the issue of legitimacy. The case studies of Hong Kong indicate that a legitimacy problem often arises in non-democratic polities. The regimes are basically in a state of legitimacy deficit, as they do not possess a significant level of legitimacy which can otherwise come through credible elections. In this situation, the state agencies are prompted to be extremely careful to secure popular support at every step of policy making. One of the approaches taken by the state agencies to tackle the legitimacy problem is the creation and maintenance of close networks with a number of societal groups with the ability to mobilise public opinion in various policy arenas.

Third, policy networks provide state agencies with an important means to intervene in society. Compared with liberal democracies, it cannot be denied that the regimes have a greater ability to act autonomously. To a certain extent, the lack of electoral retribution

insulates the state actors from the interests and demands of groups in society. Therefore, despotic power usually refers to authoritarian states (Smith, 1993, p. 52). However, political insulation does not necessarily mean that the state actors do not need routine relationships with groups. The operation of policy networks can be divided into political and administrative functions. Whilst the state actors in authoritarian capitalist regimes are less susceptible to vocal or physical opposition and the risk of losing an election, the cost of using despotic power might be rather high in terms of the difficulty in implementing policy decisions. Only in ideal totalitarian regimes are states omnipresent and omnipotent. In reality, though, the state agencies in authoritarian capitalist regimes have only a restricted ability to take and implement decisions independently of the demands of societal groups.

In economic policy, the state agencies follow the strategy of market capitalism, which erodes their capability to exercise control over business groups and individual economic organisations, particularly when domestic capital becomes increasingly globalised in East and Southeast Asia. In social policy, the strategic priority of rapid industrialisation means that public financial resources are concentrated on economic development (Callahan, 1998, p. 214). With scant investment in social policy, the state agencies have to implement logistically their policy decisions by relying on the cooperation of non-governmental organisations rather than solely through their administrative machinery. An interventionist approach taken by these states to deal with economic and social problems further exposes the state agencies to the difficulty of implementation (McCargo, 1998, p. 131; Callahan, 1998, p. 201). The consequence of all this is that policy networks, which promote the consultation and coordination of government and groups, have become an integral part of governance in authoritarian regimes in the Asia-Pacific.

It is not my intention to specify the ways in which every single policy network occurs in East and Southeast Asian authoritarian capitalist regimes. Rather, I want to emphasise that network analysis can be important in these states because there is a tendency for networks to develop. In fact, the transferability of the concept has been borne out by the case studies in this thesis. Whilst some attempt has been made in that direction, more is obviously essential.

## **6.2 The Explanatory Utility of Policy Networks**

Despite the fact that discussion of policy networks is common in the analysis of public policy in liberal democracies, there is rarely consensus as to whether the concept has any significant explanatory utility (Marsh and Smith, 2000, p. 4). Hence, more research needs to be conducted into this academically moot point. In terms of analysing the explanatory power of policy networks, the authoritarian capitalist regimes in East and Southeast Asia provide useful comparisons because their political systems contrast with

those of liberal democracies. If it is proved that policy networks affect policy outcomes and policy change across various policy arenas in both democratic and non-democratic regimes, we can rule out, at least to a considerable extent, the possibility of the network's effect being the result of a specific political system. We can then generalise with a certain degree of confidence that the notion of policy network is not only a product of liberal democracies, but also important in accounting for policy in states outside the western democratic systems.

The authoritarian capitalist regimes in East and Southeast Asia also provide intriguing comparisons among themselves in order to establish the relative effect of networks and context on policy change. It is remarkable that since the mid-1980s a number of these regimes, such as Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand and Hong Kong, have moved towards the western democratic systems. Democratisation may be less apparent in other states, such as Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. However, they are still conspicuous by the expansion of civil society which contains a growing number of oppositional forces to government's policies. In short, the countries in East and Southeast Asia share similar changes in contexts marked by political liberalisation, which have posed a good deal of challenge to the traditional structures of policy making. If it is found that these countries had different types of networks, and the changes in policy were different, then this would suggest that networks have a significant impact on policy change. The relationship between context and networks is, therefore, dialectical rather than unidimensional in the course of change.

It is beyond the confines of this thesis to generalise the operation and influence of policy networks across semi-democracies in Pacific Asia. However, based on the case studies in this thesis, I wish to emphasise that the policy network concept is not only a metaphor or a heuristic device giving insights into the structure of policy-making, but also a useful explanatory tool when analysing policy and change in authoritarian capitalist regimes. Through the exclusion of issues and groups, networks can significantly affect policy outputs and the pace and scope of policy change. Of course, more research needs to be done into the empirical question as to whether and how policy networks affect public policy in undemocratic regimes in East and Southeast Asia in order to further establish the explanatory utility of the policy network concept.

### **6.3 Policy Networks and Other Approaches**

There is an increasing amount of literature treating policy networks as a multi-theoretic notion, which means that the concept can be used within a range of broader theoretical frameworks. For example, Smith (1993, pp. 73-74; pp. 233-234) argues that policy networks are a meso-level concept concerned with analysing government and group relations. As such, the concept needs to be used in conjunction with a wider macro-level theory in order to understand the sorts of relationships that

develop. Likewise, Marsh and Smith (2000) develop a dialectical approach to policy networks which argues for the need to integrate meso-level (networks) and macro-level (context) analysis. To add to this complication, they also emphasise the dialectical relationship between networks and the agents who occupy them. Multi-theoretic analysis of networks is academically desirable because it generates a series of intriguing propositions. More importantly, it is also vital practically when examining policy networks in authoritarian capitalist regimes, for policy networks are a concept mainly associated with liberal democracy and political pluralism. Hence, compared with treating policy networks as an isolated meso-level concept, the integration of network analysis into relevant theoretical frameworks has the potential for providing a more comprehensive account of the distinctiveness of policy networks outside the western democratic systems. Here, I shall suggest a number of ways in which different levels of network analysis can be integrated, so as to provide a path for further investigation.

### ***Integrating macro-level and meso-level analysis***

Meso-level policy network analysis needs to be integrated with a macro-level state-centred theory if the origins and structures of policy networks are to be explained. This is particularly important in analysing government/ group relations in authoritarian capitalist regimes because, compared with liberal democracies, the regimes invariably have greater state strength. Although the state actors are not completely autonomous, they have their own interests and the potential to act autonomously. It is, therefore, essential to examine the reasons for state actors to disgorge part of their inherent autonomy in exchange for routine relationships with certain groups, if the development of a particular policy network is explicable. In this sense, analysis of policy networks within the parameters of a state-centred theory is significant.

The state-centred model which is particularly pertinent here is cooptive politics. Cooption, as Saward (1992, pp. 1-2) argues, is: 'a strategy more or less available to state actors in pursuit of their goals, and as such can involve groups and individuals from a variety of professional, producer or promotional standpoints'. In cooptive politics, the incorporation of non-state actors into state bodies is often taken to enhance state legitimacy (Saward, 1992, p. 33). As we have seen in previous chapters, the notion of legitimacy is rather important to undemocratic regimes and, therefore, policy networks are created by state actors to mobilise public support for government policies. Acquisition of political support is not the only reason for policy networks to develop in authoritarian capitalist regimes. State actors also create networks to solicit policy inputs from groups within the policy process and to enhance their capacity to intervene in society. All in all, the model of cooptive politics demonstrates that in order to understand how policy networks develop, it is important to understand the interests of the state. As has been argued in the case studies, it is rare in semi-democratic regimes that policy networks

develop due to the intrinsic power of highly resourced groups. Whilst the interests of state actors are not the determining feature of policy networks, they are an important variable in affecting the development of networks.

In authoritarian capitalist regimes, analysis of the development of policy networks needs to start with cooptive arrangements. However, it is important to point out that the notion of policy networks is conceptually different from cooptive politics. Whilst the concept of cooption is static and uni-dimensional, the relationships between state agencies and integrated groups within networks are dynamic and interactive (see Chapters 2 and 3). For cooptive politics to evolve into policy networks there are a number of meso-level reasons. Generally, cooptive arrangements turn into policy networks when there is a high degree of resource dependence, integration and institutionalisation. If state actors have policy agreements with integrated groups and depend on these groups for resources, they have to make concessions within the policy process and thereby create policy networks. This indicates the importance of integrating macro-level and meso-level analysis in investigating the development and operation of networks.

Elitism is the other macro theory important to network analysis in authoritarian capitalist regimes. Like other state theories, there is no single theory of elitism, but central to the elitist doctrine is the belief that: 'the history of politics is the history of elite domination' (Evans, 1995, p. 228). Elite dominance is a putative phenomenon in Asian politics, where governance is not a right but: 'the prerogative of a narrow set of interlocking elite interests, whose overriding aim is to maintain elite power (McCargo, 1998, p. 126). As policy networks operate in a context where elite governance is an important element in political realities, it is essential to use the theoretical framework of elitism in understanding the membership and structure of policy networks that develop in the Asia-Pacific.

Utilising the notion of policy networks within an elitist position would then generate a number of propositions. First, it is likely that, in authoritarian capitalist regimes, the structures of policy networks reflect the broader pattern of structured inequality within society. Therefore, there is a consistent pattern of inclusion and exclusion across different networks. It is easier for elites, be they bureaucrats, uniformed officers from armed forces, politicians or businessmen, to access and dominate a variety of networks. Second, policy networks, especially those occupied by elite interests, are stable, integrated and exclusive. In the terminology established by Marsh and Rhodes (1992a), many policy networks in semi-democratic regimes tend to develop into policy communities. Third, as many networks are elitist and tight, this structure of decision-making cramps popular participation in the policy process. Within these networks, most policies are hatched by small circles of politicians, bureaucrats and interest groups. Outsiders often find it difficult to penetrate the established networks. Fourth, the elitist feature of networks has a great impact on policy outputs. Normally, policy decisions are taken to allocate benefits to insiders, with little reference to the

public interests.

But again, whilst the elitist position can be used to understand the nature and influence of policy networks in authoritarian capitalist regimes, it is important not to overestimate the effect on policy networks of the elitist governance. As has been highlighted before, it is not difficult to find an exception to the elitist pattern of networks. The nature of a particular network also depends upon the historical context and the specific arrangements between government and groups. Therefore, what we have to accept here is not that the elitist rule is a dominating feature of networks across policy arenas, but that networks are likely to be distinctive as a result of the idiosyncratic political systems in East and Southeast Asia.

### *Integrating meso-level and micro-level analysis*

In this thesis, the view of policy networks that has dominated is a structural view which argues that policy outcomes and policy change greatly depends on the structure of relationships between government and groups within the policy process. However, the thesis represents only the exploration of networks in Hong Kong, a regime beyond the confines of western liberal democracies. It does not exclude the possibility of an anthropological approach to network analysis in Asian semi-democracies. In fact, this conclusion will suggest that an anthropological approach has the potential to be a useful tool for analysing policy networks in these states.

On the whole, an anthropological approach to policy networks is micro-level because its goal is to bring the individual back into the analysis and explain the behaviour of network members. It regards 'networks as based on personal relationships between known and trusted individuals who share beliefs and a common culture' (Marsh and Smith, 2000, p. 5). In this vein, McPherson and Raab (1988) argue that a policy network normally contains a small number of identifiable participants who know each other and are aware of the rules of the game. In short, the interactive relationships within networks are delineated by a 'common kinship' and an 'agreed culture' (see Chapter 3).

Besides the structural view, an anthropological approach seems to be apposite to the study of policy networks in authoritarian capitalist regimes in East and Southeast Asia. This is because in these states, policy agendas are set and achieved as much by formal politics as by informal politics conducted within the parameters of personal relationships, common culture and a set of informal rules evolving as conventions and codes of behaviour. Informal politics is pervasive in many Asian regions, the political cultures of which are massively influenced by a Confucian legacy that emphasises personal relationships and reciprocity (Fukui, 2000, p. 12). Informal politics governed by implicit rules and personal ties is so pervading that, according to Pye (1985, p. 292), in order: 'to uncover the actual flow of power', it is essential to: 'look through the arrangements of authority to the dynamics of the informal relationships'.



If it is accepted that informal politics is prevalent in Asian governance, then we can go further to examine how it may affect the nature of policy networks. Influenced by the political cultures similarly stressing personal relationships, networks tend to operate through distinctive organisational forms. They are created and maintained on the basis of kinship, regional and friendship ties, common generational status and patron-client relationships aimed at the pursuit of common interests (Fukui, 2000, p. 13). The major element underlying this type of networks is the status of one's ties with another person (s), which comes from two broad aspects of interpersonal relationships: ascribed and interactive. The former refers to a collection of ascribed relationships shared by interacting individuals by way of blood association, common locality and even hierarchical relations which evolve into lasting informal ties. On the other hand, the interactive aspect of personal ties denotes 'what is accumulated through actual interaction experiences between the two parties' (Yang, 2000, p. 100). It arises out of the exchanges either following the implicit scheme in which each fulfils the other's personal needs and interests, or the pattern of real affection between the members of a network. Whilst a network based on informal personal relationships may seem opaque, it is not necessarily fluid and loose. Rather, there is a set of prescribed affective and behavioural rules that regulate the interaction and generate the trust needed at different stages of network development (Yang, 2001, pp. 100-101). Therefore, it is important to probe these informal rules when analysing the operation and effect of a policy network in the Asia-Pacific.

The utility of the anthropological approach to network analysis carries methodological implications. At the core of this approach, there is a certain degree of methodological uncertainty. As Ostrov (2000, p. 228) points out, it is tenuous to assume that a patron-client relationship exists between people who happen at some point to work together. It is also questionable to differentiate a cause (a patron-client relationship) from an effect (mutual support and policy outputs). This problem is probably less critical when network analysis turns on a number of discernible factors, such as kinship and locality. However, it is still difficult to identify for certain if these explicit factors have escalated into close and affective ties superseding formal structures in policy making and serving as bonds of unity between agents, which are pivotal conditions of the creation and operation of networks. To remove the methodological uncertainty associated with the anthropological approach to policy networks, it is essential to conduct qualitative research by holding in-depth interviews with the parties involved and those close to them, and/ or gaining access to personal and revealing memoirs.

The above discussion has theoretically demonstrated that personal networks are potentially useful in understanding state and group relations or the relations among state agencies in East and Southeast Asia. Certainly, the potential of the anthropological approach needs to be verified by empirical investigation. Regarding the possible integration between the anthropological and structural approaches to policy networks,

there are a number of salient issues. First, it is better to treat the two approaches as significant components of a tool-kit for analysing the policy process than as mutually exclusive. In other words, both have their own strengths and weaknesses, and thus are apposite to policy analysis in particular contexts. Second, the policy network literature often presents a dichotomy between the two approaches which is too stark, and ignores the fact that they have points of similarity in analysing public policy. Like the structural model, the anthropological approach also treats networks as structures to a certain extent (Marsh and Smith, 1996, p. 9). In fact, both of them focus on how networks lead to persistent patterns of members' behaviour in order to understand policy outputs. Therefore, one of the possible ways to integrate the two approaches is to see networks involving the institutionalisation of micro-level factors, such as beliefs, values and cultures which, in addition to structural factors like resource dependence and consensus, serve as structural constraints on the action of network members. By analysing how networks shape agents' attitudes and behaviour, it is possible to explain policy outcomes and change.

Third, the structural approach is concerned with the degree of integration and exclusion which can be evaluated and explained by focusing on the anthropological dimension to policy networks. Within a personal network, there are interpersonal ties and prescribed cultures and rules that guarantee trust among participants. Personal ties give assurance during interaction as the trust is established by the obligations inherited in those ascribed and interactive relations shared among network members. This trust lubricates transactions between agents and defines who is excluded from the network. Consequently, a policy network with strong interpersonal ties and trust is highly integrated and closed. Hence, in addition to meso-level factors, a set of micro-level variables, including personal relationships, common cultures and prescribed rules, can also be used to examine the structural features of a policy network.

The gist of the discussion above is that, despite conceptual differences, the three levels of network analysis can be integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of public policy in authoritarian capitalist regimes in East and Southeast Asia. This is a subject for further investigation.

## **7. Conclusion**

Three major points emerge from this thesis. First, it demonstrates the explanatory utility of policy networks in the context of Hong Kong. The notion of policy networks provides a flexible and effective means of conceptualising the relationship between the government and groups in policy-making in Hong Kong. The government and group relations in policy networks were one of mutual dependence, resource exchange and reciprocal advantage, which is in marked contrast to the concept of cooption. Once

networks and inter-dependence developed, policies were products of negotiation and cooperation instead of supplication and political largesse. Contrary to elitism, the nature of government and group relations in the policy process varied across policy sectors, which can be explained by a range of meso-level variables in networks. Moreover, policy networks can be used as explanations of policy outcomes rather than purely descriptions of government and pressure group relations in Hong Kong. The networks affected policy outcomes in a number of ways. They provided the government with a source of infrastructural power, defined the nature of problems, created a certain range of policy options and excluded opposed interests from the policy process. In short, they created the mechanisms that allowed particular groups to influence policy. Therefore, the existence of networks explains why policies in particular areas favoured the interests of some groups over time in a fairly consistent way against pressure to the contrary.

Perhaps more importantly, policy networks significantly affected the trajectory of policy alteration in Hong Kong during the colonial transition, despite the fact that outright rejection of change was unlikely. The relationship between context and networks proved to be complex and dialectical. The effect of contextual factors on policy greatly depended on the nature/ types of particular networks. Generally speaking, policy communities or the networks with a high degree of stability, internal integration, institutionalisation and independence were able to survive and withstand the mounting political pressure. They controlled the scope and pace of policy change by coopting certain reform pressure and excluding others inimical to the dominant interests. Hence, policy change tended to be tardy and minimal in areas where integrated policy networks existed. On the other hand, less integrated and independent policy networks, particularly issue networks, were susceptible to the changes in Hong Kong's political environment and more likely to buckle under the external pressure. Therefore, where weak and less consensual networks existed, substantial changes in networks, policy agendas and policy outputs were the most likely outcome. In short, network analysis is important in explaining the policy process, outcomes and change in Hong Kong.

The second major point to emerge from this thesis is the complexity of the relationship between context and networks. It is clear that, despite their ability to affect policy outcomes and create continuity, policy networks were not completely isolated entities from the domestic and international contexts of Hong Kong. On the one hand, the nature of policy networks reflected the political structure in Hong Kong. The establishment and success of policy networks in resisting change were also, to a certain extent, due to the political, economic and international contexts within which the networks operated. Therefore, we need to be aware of the contextual factors when we analyse networks and how they affected policy outcomes and policy change. On the other hand, the analysis of meso-level variables in networks is just as important because they account for variation across policy sectors. They explain why policy networks in some sectors might differ from the overall pattern predicted by the general theories focussing

on the contextual factors in Hong Kong. They also account for the differences in policy change across sectors even though the networks were subject to similar challenge. Hence, policy networks are a significant factor that needs to be included in the analysis of policy process, policy outcomes and policy change in Hong Kong.

Third, the thesis highlights a number of issues for the future of policy network research, paying particular attention to the development of a policy network approach to policy analysis in Asian authoritarian capitalist regimes. The case studies of Hong Kong demonstrate that the concept of policy networks, developed in western liberal democracies, can be used to examine public policy in an authoritarian capitalist regime. More research is essential in order to further establish the transferability and, more specifically, the mechanisms which allow for the creation and success of networks in states outside the western democratic systems.

It is also important to probe the explanatory utility of the concept in authoritarian capitalist regimes which provide useful comparisons. They are contrasting states with western liberal democracies. If there is evidence that networks affect policy and change in both democratic and non-democratic regimes, it is possible to argue with greater certainty that the notion of policy networks is not only a product of liberal democracies but also important in explaining public policy in other political systems. Moreover, a number of these regimes have moved towards the western democratic systems since the mid-1980s. Therefore, they provide useful comparisons in order to establish the relative effect of context and networks on policy change. Finally, network analysis needs to be integrated with associated approaches at different theoretical levels if the distinctiveness of networks in East and Southeast Asia is to be comprehensively understood. Whilst the thesis does not provide a conclusive answer to all these issues, it offers, in my view, some significant ideas for further investigation.

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## *Appendix*

### **Interviews**

- Chan, C.W. (Former researcher, Chinese General Chamber of Commerce), at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 6 November 2002.
- Chan, K.K. (Chief executive of the Curriculum Development Institute, Education Department, vice-president of the Curriculum Development Council), at the office of the Curriculum Development Institute, Wan Chai, 3 October 2002.
- Cheung, T. (Head of Subjects Division, Hong Kong Education Authority), at the office of the Hong Kong Education Authority, Wan Chai, 22 October 2002.
- Cheung, Y.Y. (Manager of the Course Administration and Development Department, Employees Retraining Board), at West Wing, Central Government Offices, 5 November 2002.
- Fu, S.P. (Chief Industrial Training Officer of the Education and Manpower Branch, Hong Kong Government), at West Wing, Central Government Offices, 3 November 2002.
- Lau, S.M. (Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower, Hong Kong Government), at West Wing, Central Government Offices, 16 October 2002.
- Lee, C.H. (Senior curriculum development officer of the Education Department), at the office of the Curriculum Development Institute, Wan Chai, 15 October 2002.
- Lee, W.O. (Professor at the Institute of Education, member of the Curriculum Development Council), at the Institute of Education, 23 September 2002.
- Leung, Y.C. (Executive committee's member of the Neighbourhood and Workers Service Centre, member of the Legislative Council), at West Wing, Central Government Offices, 20 September 2002.
- Leung, Y.W. (Leader of the Christian Institute of Hong Kong, former member of the ad hoc committee on the review of the guidelines on civic education), at the Institute of Education, 30 September 2002.
- Lo, S. (Government official, Labour Department), Cheung Sha Wan Government Office, 7 October 2002.
- Lo Lee, O.L. (Vice-principal of the Institute of Vocational Education, former member of the Curriculum Development Council), at the Institute of Vocational Education, Shatin, 2 October 2002.
- Poon, S.P. (Vice-chairman of the Hong Kong and Kowloon Federation of Labour Unions, member of the Labour Advisory Board and the Employees Retraining Board), at the office of the Hong Kong and Kowloon Federation of Labour Unions, 11 October 2002.
- Seid, S.N. (Retired teacher at Lingnan Secondary School, former member of the

Curriculum Development Committee), at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 25 September 2002.

Tam, Y.C. (Secretary-general of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions, member of the Executive Council, member of the Legislative Council, chairman of the Employees Retraining Board), at the Legislative Council, 11 October 2002.

Wu, S.W. (Representative of the Aided School Teachers Association, former member of the Curriculum Development Council, former member of the ad hoc committee on the review of the guidelines on civic education), at the Institute of Education, 28 September 2002.

Yeung, Y.C. (President of the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers, member of the Legislative Council, former deputy of the Preliminary Working Committee), at the office of the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers, Nathan Road, 8 October 2002.