The Pacific Review

Political context, policy networks and policy change: the complexity of transition in Hong Kong

Kai Hon Ng

University of York, University of Sheffield,

Online Publication Date: 01 March 2007

To cite this Article: Ng, Kai Hon (2007) 'Political context, policy networks and policy change: the complexity of transition in Hong Kong', The Pacific Review, 20:1, 101 - 126

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/09512740601133245
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09512740601133245

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf

This article maybe used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
Political context, policy networks and policy change: the complexity of transition in Hong Kong

Kai Hon Ng

Abstract Central to the debates on the transition of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty is how this process has affected change in the policy process and policy outputs. Many see policy change as a result of the evolving political environment in Hong Kong following the political transition. This article, however, adopts the notion of policy networks and argues that the analysis of policy change cannot be reduced to a simple contextual stimulus – the policy alteration model. A case study – ‘the development of civic education’ – demonstrates the importance of policy networks, as a particular structure of government and group relations in decision making, in explaining the course of policy change. It is apparent that the relationship between regime change and political liberalization, on the one hand, and established networks, on the other, tends to be complex and dialectical in Hong Kong. Despite the importance of sovereignty transition and political restructuring, the effect of contextual factors on public policy greatly depends on the nature of the network involved.

Keywords Hong Kong; regime change; political liberalization; policy network; policy change; civic education.

Introduction

This article is a study of policy making and policy change in Hong Kong during the transition from colony to China. The resumption of Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong has placed the issue of change at the heart of policy analysis. As a result, large numbers of foreign and local studies have been made and published of the political transition and its impact on Hong Kong governance. In fact, many studies have defined the political

Kai Hon Ng obtained an M.A. in Public Administration and Public Policy from the University of York and a Ph.D. in Public Policy from the University of Sheffield. He lectures at the Department of Government and Public Administration, Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interests are public policy analysis and pressure group politics in Hong Kong.

Address: Department of Government and Public Administration, Third Floor, T. C. Cheng Building, United College, Shatin, New Territories, Hong Kong. E-mail: ngkaihon@hotmail.com
transition – notably regime change and political liberalization – as the key determinant of change in both the organization of policy making and policy outputs.

The underlying argument of this article is that excessive emphasis has been placed on regime change and on activities in the revamped legislature in explaining policy decisions. The major problem ensuing from this undue emphasis is that it overestimates the ease with which new issues and political actors can change policy. Decolonization and democratization did not occur within a vacuum; instead, rising politicians, pressure groups and, to a large extent, the Chinese authorities have to operate within the pre-existing structures of policy making. In this regard, this article explores the explanatory utility of the policy network approach in the context of Hong Kong. It argues that the concept, developed in Western societies, can supplement existing studies and provide a more sophisticated analysis of policy outcomes and policy change.1 The theoretical importance of network analysis lies in two major aspects. First, it draws our attention to the significance of structural relationships within the policy process, by demonstrating that in Hong Kong particular groups may be able to influence policy because their interests and ideas are built into the structure of policy making. Second, the network approach sensitizes us to the complexity of policy change. This article does not deny the significance of macro-level variables in changing policy, which particularly include the political transition and the concomitant changes in agendas, actors and resources involved in policy making. Nevertheless, it is argued that policy change does not happen independently of policy networks as an entrenched form of government/group relations. While the political transition creates new issues and political forces that threaten the networks and their policies, these challenges are to be mediated by the well-established networks that have the ability to minimize the effect of contextual change. Hence, the network approach explains why in some areas the degree of policy change tends to be smaller than expected.

In order to analyse the causal relationship between networks and policy in the context of Hong Kong, the government policy on civic education between 1970 and 2000 has been selected for detailed investigation.2 This case was chosen because it allows a systematic conclusion to be drawn. Given the concern with networks and change, it is essential to select a case where a network has existed and was subject to increasing challenges as a result of the political transition. In curriculum policy, the juxtaposition of contextual hostility and the existence of a strong network permits the researcher to analyse the extent to which networks have affected the course of policy change. As the transition of Hong Kong to China, which had 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 related to the political transition.

**Contextual explanations of change**

The transition of Hong Kong to China has led to the development of interest in policy change among scholars of Hong Kong studies. There
is a common theme straddling most of these studies. In order to analyse policy, they concentrate on contextual factors. Many writers maintain that regime change and the presence of the Chinese authorities are the central focus of analysis (Scott 2005: ix; Segal 1993: 2–3). One key issue is the degree of China’s interest in influencing Hong Kong policy making (Tsang 1997: 32). In fact, there is a wide range of problems seen by China as important to its interests in Hong Kong, namely the symbolic issues of sovereignty and convergence as well as the practical issue of economic benefits (Lau 2000: 88; Scott 2005; Sing 2000: 23). Inevitably, China, as the new sovereign state, not only has the incentives to intervene but also has the ability to make a major impact (Scott 2005: 82; Segal 1993: 92).

In a similar vein, there are writers who see policy change as a result of the development of a representative system and electoral politics in Hong Kong. A number of individuals and groups previously excluded from the policy process formed political groups and accessed the expanded political arena through elections to the Legislative Council (Legco) (Chiu and Levin 2000: 108). The elected politicians may act as a motor of change either by taking up new issues and bringing requests for policy changes to the government’s notice or by exercising their power of veto to force the government into compromise (Cheung 2005: 138; Overholt 2001; Scott 2000: 44). The policy process was ‘no longer a simple cosy arrangement which allows for dialogue and decision between the bureaucracy and strongly entrenched elites and interest groups’ (Harris 1988: x–xi).

These contextual explanations of change have oversimplified the complexity of policy making in Hong Kong. Many studies contain the presumption that the Chinese government is bound to get its way if it participates in Hong Kong’s local affairs. However, they do not identify clearly the strategies that the Chinese authorities have followed. ‘Repossession’ or overt control is a strategy with which many writers are mostly concerned, but there is notably a political limit to it (Emmons 1988: 118–19). A growing body of works have highlighted the possibility of ‘penetration’, which is an increase in China’s personnel, organizations and activities in Hong Kong, coupled with more active contact with the Hong Kong government that is likely to influence its policy informally (Koehn 2001: 113–14; Lee 1998; Yeung 1998). Failure to recognize the importance of ‘penetration’ leads to little attention being paid to the context in Hong Kong within which the Chinese authorities have to act. Yet ‘penetration’ is an indirect and informal measure, and its influence depends heavily on Hong Kong’s policy makers enthusiastically or grudgingly taking on board the concerns of the Chinese authorities. Likewise, those who suggest the importance of political liberalization have not paid enough attention to the fact that the newly emerging politicians access the Legco and face the pre-existing structure of policy making and government/group relations involved. This is where policy networks in Hong Kong come into play, as they are an important part of the structural context.
Policy networks: reconceptualizing policy change

The previous section demonstrated that it is important to shift the focus of concern from simple contextual explanations to the analysis of the structure of policy making and the government/group relations involved. In this regard, this section will briefly outline the notion of policy networks and demonstrate how it can reconceptualize policy change in Hong Kong.

Policy networks are an approach used to analyze the relationship between government and groups having regular access to policy making. A network is a cluster of organizations, represented by individuals and aiming to achieve mutual advantage through collective action, which is distinguished from other clusters by breaks in the structure of resource dependence (Marsh and Smith 1996: 30). Central to a network are the concepts of resource dependence and resource exchange. It is not a case of pressure groups outside the policy process lobbying government. Rather, groups and government in a network are mutually dependent, as the government wishes to achieve specific policy goals with the help of incorporated groups, while the groups wish to influence policy. Resource dependence in terms of finance, organization, information or legitimacy leads to the recognition by the government that it is useful to engage these groups on a regular basis in a certain policy area (Smith 1993: 56). Groups not possessing significant resources for exchange are normally unable to gain recognition and to access the process of decision making. Of course, government has the potential to be autonomous even in a feisty and fragmented society. Yet if the government does intend to achieve specific goals with the minimum of financial cost, conflict and political reverberation, it needs the assistance of groups in the development and implementation of policy (Smith 1993: 58–9). In order to gain the political and practical support of groups, gimmicky consultation is insufficient; resources have to be exchanged. The government can exchange access to the policy process and policy-making power for cooperation, and thus establish a policy network (Richards and Smith 2002: 173–8).

Policy networks constitute a generic term that can vary along a continuum according to the closeness of the government/group relations within them (Rhodes 1997: 43). 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. Marsh and Rhodes (1992a: 251) outline a number of dimensions that determine a network's position on the continuum: the number of participants; the frequency of interaction; continuity; the degree of consensus; the nature of the relationship; the distribution of resources; and the balance of power. These dimensions are illustrated clearly in Table 1, but the first category merits brief discussion. A policy community normally contains a limited number of participants with some groups deliberately excluded, whereas there is 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
Table 1 The nature/types of policy networks

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


periphery or a primary and secondary network. 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 but have to abide by the rules of the game (Marsh and Rhodes 1992a: 255–7). Various patterns of policy outcomes are the consequences of different types of networks.10

The notion of policy networks has barely been applied to Hong Kong’s policy studies. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the concept is not apposite to policy analysis in Hong Kong. In fact, prior to the political transition, the colonial governance and administrative structures in Hong Kong
were highly facilitative of pressure group involvement in a network relationship with the government. This is the case for a number of reasons. First, the governance in Hong Kong had a political style that was highly consultative (Endacott 1964: 229). Second, the absence of parliamentary politics meant that there were no intermediaries between interest groups and the government organizations, and that direct access to the source of authority became a pivotal issue (Harris 1988: 45–7). Third, the government coped with its legitimacy problem through creating routine relationships with certain groups, in which it exchanged access to policy making for support of the incorporated groups in the policy process (Cheng 1992: 98–9). 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 in the 1960s and 1970s. Expansion and specialization meant that the government, which adhered to the principle of fiscal conservatism, needed to create networks through which officials could obtain from the incorporated groups the support and advice on which to base and implement their policy decisions in the most cost-efficient manner (Miners 1996: 248–51).

Networks might have developed and influenced policy in some areas but not in others. This is an empirical issue. What we have to accept here is that there was a 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 question of this paper: could the traditional networks survive the political transition and affect the trajectory of policy change?

Compared with the contextual explanations, the policy network approach offers a more sophisticated view of policy change. Marsh and Rhodes’ (1992a, b) model and, especially, Marsh and Smith’s (2000) dialectical approach to policy networks recognize the role of both networks and context in the course of change. When trying to explain policy, they do not entirely concentrate on contextual factors. Rather, they stress the interactive relationship between networks and context within which they are located. If the dialectical relationship is unravelled, two closely related dimensions can be identified. The first dimension is that changes in the environment can have a major impact on networks and policies. No network is wholly impervious to the changes in the environment which may give rise to new issues and forces that threaten the consensus and ideology within the networks. These contextual factors can also produce tensions and conflicts that may either substantially weaken or undermine 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 (Marsh and Smith 2000: 8).

However, such exogenous changes do not determine policy. The networks are equally significant. They affect policy change because the extent and
speed of change is clearly influenced by their capacity to mediate, and often minimize, the effect of contextual changes. Marsh and Smith (2000: 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.’ Hence, the contextual changes do not have an effect that is independent of the networks. The ability of a network to withstand outside forces depends greatly on the nature of the network (Smith 1993: 98). A network can survive a great deal of pressure if it is tightly integrated, with a strong consensus and a high degree of control over the implementation process. 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 politicize the policy arena. This then leads to substantial changes in the network and policy.

The notion of dialectical relationship can be used to reconceptualize policy change in Hong Kong. In order to understand the trajectory of change, we need to recognize the role of both context and networks. The networks are as important as the changes in Hong Kong’s political environment in the course of policy change. While these exogenous changes create new issues and political forces that impinge on the networks and their policies, these challenges are mediated by networks that might have the ability to minimize the contextual effect. If the challenges occur in areas where the networks are strong and able to minimize the contextual pressures, policy change tends to be tardy and timorous. In order to analyse the truth or otherwise of these propositions, the remainder of the article is concerned with the case study of civic education policy between 1970 and 2000. Two points need emphasizing before examining the case. First, regarding the operationalization of the empirical study, Marsh and Rhodes’ typology (1992a) discussed above is used as a benchmark for identifying the strength and change of the network involved. Second, Porter’s definition (1996: 3–8) of civic education is adopted to examine what was included and, more importantly, missed in the government policy. Accordingly, the concept of civic education is politically centred, as it concerns the pupils’ understanding of, attitudes towards, and competence in political life.

Civic education before the Joint Agreement (1970–83)

In curriculum policy, a network covering the Education Department and the teaching profession developed in 1970. Generally speaking, it was stable, closed and highly integrated throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. According to Marsh and Rhodes’ typology, it can be regarded as a policy community. Central to the network during that period were a number of major components, which will be discussed below.

Membership and policy leadership

The curriculum network was a professional network, which encompassed the Education Department and the mainstream teaching profession. The
teaching experts incorporated were the representatives of teacher educators, school authorities, principals and teachers. Teaching institutes, school bodies, school head associations and teachers’ unions nominated their representatives to the network.\textsuperscript{11} Their nominations needed confirmation by the Education Department. Ostensibly, the representatives were appointed in a personal capacity to present a neutral image of curriculum making. In reality, they performed the role of channelling the views of the profession into the policy process (Cheng 1983: 109). Within the network, the Education Department provided policy leadership. The senior officials from the department normally chaired the meetings with the teaching experts, while the Advisory Inspectorate Division of the department was the secretariat. This allowed the department considerable influence over agenda setting and policy initiation.\textsuperscript{12} Therefore, the department was unlikely to be captured by various interests within the network.

**Mutual dependence and positive-sum game**

The relationship between the department and the profession was asymmetric. However, it was essentially different from co-option. First, the relationship was one of mutual dependence rather than supplication and political largesse. The profession needed access to the curriculum-making process to defend its interests and values. On the other hand, it was difficult for the 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 (Morris 1990: 2). Perhaps more importantly, most schools in Hong Kong were non-government schools over which the department could not exercise direct control. Traditionally they had a high degree of autonomy in designing and selecting their own curricula. The department drew up and disseminated, but could not ensure the implementation of, model syllabuses in schools (Morris and Sweeting 1991: 258). Hence, it was essential for the department to seek their support for the common curriculum in order to avoid policy dislocation.

This is not to say that the department could not act without the profession. Compared with the profession, it is clear that the department had greater resources in terms of financial leverage, administrative machinery and despotic power. It could choose to bypass the profession and impose curriculum policy against their wishes. The problem with this approach was, however, the concomitant costs. In tackling policy this way the department would unilaterally have had to change the regulatory framework over curriculum development, which would probably have unleashed a torrent of political reverberations, given the organization and vigour of the teaching profession in the 1970s. Moreover, if the department had chosen to ignore the profession, it would have had to develop its own sources of information concerning curriculum innovation and revision. The costs of such an approach might have been so high in terms of vocal/physical opposition and
the difficulty of developing the policy would have been so great that the government was clearly not prepared to take this path in the 1970s when its legitimacy was tenuous and the principle of fiscal conservatism was of paramount importance. Therefore, it was useful for the department to establish a network with the profession as a means of creating the mechanism through which to intervene in the school curriculum with the minimum of conflict and the smallest administrative burden.

Second, power was a positive sum within the relationship. In order to gain the support of the integrated teaching representatives, the department 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 proposals was Herculean, there were norms enabling the teaching experts to affect policy:

The Education Department had the responsibility to take into account our opinions to revise original curriculum plans. After doing so, the revised 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. Generally speaking, they had to follow the recommendations made by the teaching experts. If they genuinely thought our recommendations inappropriate or impractical, they needed to return to the committee and give a detailed explanation.13

In this situation, curriculum policy might still have reflected the goals of the educational officials. Yet their goals were modified by their relationship with the teaching profession. Third, power was a positive sum as 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 below).

**Consensus and integration**

Although the norms allowed the teaching experts to modify the government proposals, it did not court many disputes during the 1970s because there was a strong consensus between the profession and the department on apolitical and academic-oriented education. Here, the term ‘academic’ denotes study geared to tertiary education, with its content derived from conventional academic disciplines (Morris and Marsh 1992: 254–5). Given the colonial governance, there was no surprise that the department placed a premium on the conscious pursuit of a curriculum which strove to eschew political issues (Sweeting 1995: 244). What is intriguing is that the mainstream teaching profession wholeheartedly supported the views taken by the government. As early as the 1940s, heads and teachers of schools were concerned about communist propaganda targeting schools and pupils. Such anxiety would only be sharpened in the early 1970s after a series of civil
disturbances (Morris and Sweeting 1991: 256–7). Moreover, the highly elitist and examination-driven school system, which drove schools to stress the prime importance of academic knowledge, reinforced the consensus.

**Exclusion and institutionalization**

The network had a high degree of exclusion from educational pressure groups radical in their demands and from other social and political interests in general. Access to the network was highly restricted to the educational organizations sharing the consensus on the direction and parameters of the school curriculum. Any groups not sharing the consensus were automatically thrown out of the domain of curriculum making. The leader of a group representing pro-China schools argued:

\begin{quote}
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 proposing civic education in schools, the government did not invite us to participate in the process of curriculum making.
\end{quote}

The pro-China groups were not the only ones excluded from the network. Groups like the Education Action Group (EAG), which frequently challenged the deliberate neglect of civic education in schools, raised the suspicions of educational officials and thus could not access curriculum making.

Within the network there was an institutional basis providing a further means of exclusion. In 1972, the Education Department established the Curriculum Development Committee (CDC), which institutionalized the privileged positions of teaching experts in curriculum making. According to the rules of the CDC, members involved in detailed curriculum planning consisted only of principals and teachers as well as teaching institute lecturers, besides officials from the Education Department (Education Department 1975: 6). Membership of this institution ensured access to the network. With the formal rules, it was easy to exclude groups not belonging to the category of teaching profession.

**Impact on civic education policy**

Between 1970 and 1983 the network significantly affected the curriculum policy on civic education. First, the shared views on the apolitical and academic tenor of education shaped the agenda within the curriculum-making process. Under the consensus, any knowledge that was academic oriented was regarded as legitimate knowledge warranting the consideration of being infused into the teaching and learning in schools. By the same token, civic education that did not fall into the category of legitimate knowledge was
neglected in the process. Added to this influence was the fact that through the exclusion of groups opposed to the curriculum policy that constantly shunned civic education, their voice of concern was easily marginalized in curriculum making. Consequently, between 1970 and 1983, the academic and apolitical orientation of the curriculum was strong at both the primary and secondary levels to the extent that pupils studied very little about modern China and political issues (Morris 1995: 97). Civic education was never stated as an educational objective in any official document.


During this period, the curriculum network and its policy were subject to increasing challenges as a result of two closely related political transformations: regime change and political liberalization.

Political transition and pressures for change

The changes in Hong Kong’s political context had a significant bearing on the network and its curriculum policy in a number of ways. First, the established curriculum could hardly be reconciled with the need to foster politically literate, responsible and participative citizens who would be able to adapt to the new political complexion (Tse 1997: 3–4). Thus, there was an upsurge of concern for changing the traditional civic education policy after 1984. Moreover, between 1984 and 2000, the political transition precipitated politicization at societal level, and led to the creation of groups interested in using civic education to shape political culture in society in a bid to influence the course of political transition (Bray and Lee 2001: 4). Therefore, throughout that period civic education was not an issue that concerned only the groups representing pro-China schools. Rather, there were three categories of groups challenging the traditional nature of the common curriculum: political groups; educational pressure groups; and social groups. Some called on the government to promote state and national education in schools. Others championed democratization and argued for the bulk of civic education to be focused on pupils’ political competence and their understanding of human rights and democratic systems. Regarding the best way forward, they commonly called on the Education Department to introduce mandatory civic education, be it an independent or an integrated subject, into the common curriculum.

Unlike in the 1980s, the campaign in the 1990s was primarily local but also closely related to the Chinese authorities. It is hardly surprising that the Chinese government showed a keen interest in Hong Kong’s civic education, because it traditionally treated civic education as a strategic area for political stability and power (Lee 2001: 201). However, in contrast to its policies on the mainland, it showed little desire to conduct ideological education in Hong Kong after 1997. Instead, it called for change in the curriculum to reflect Chinese sovereignty and to strengthen the preparation of the re-defined
Chinese citizenry (Lee and Sweeting 2001: 107). Like the domestic groups, it demanded the formulation of a mandatory civic education subject in primary and secondary schools (*Ta Kung Pao*, 13 September 1994).

The political transition affected not only the interests but also the relative power of the political forces opposed to the established curriculum. In the 1980s, the groups adopted only pressure group tactics in campaigning for change. They issued statements and reports on civic education, publicized their policy proposals through the media and arranged press conferences to increase public pressure on the government.\(^{17}\) With the further development of a representative system in the 1990s, the pressures grew as the groups that championed curriculum reform were no longer outsiders. Rather, DP, DAB, FEW and PTU managed to penetrate the enlarged political arena through elections to the Legco. Of course, membership of the Legco was not tantamount to access to the curriculum network. However, they had more influence because, in addition to pressure group lobbying, they could pressure the Education Department by initiating debates and tabling motions in the Legco (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 22 May 1996).

Compared with the domestic groups, the Chinese authorities could probably have made an even greater impact on the network if they had wielded their influence. Their influence increased substantially in the 1990s as a result of regime change. Hong Kong’s reintegration with China meant that another form of dependency and external control developed in the territory (Bray 1997: 12). The Chinese government influenced the network through its official arms that managed Hong Kong matters, notably the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, the New China News Agency, the Preliminary Working Committee (PWC) and the local representatives of the National People’s Congress. In 1994 the PWC put Hong Kong’s curriculum makers under pressure by issuing a statement in which it averred that nationalistic and patriotic education had long been underemphasized in Hong Kong and exhorted the government to strengthen civic education in schools (*Ta Kung Pao*, 13 September 1994).

**The maintenance of the network**

Faced with mounting political pressures, the network was inevitably weakened, all the more so in the immediate years around the handover. However, as the network had been consensual, institutionalized and closed in the 1970s, it started from a position of strength and managed to survive the pressures throughout the 1980s and 1990s. It had not turned from a closed professional network into an open political network.

**Membership**

Although groups interested in civic education pressure the government for access to curriculum making, the Education Department did not open itself
to other interests besides the teaching profession in the 1980s. However, in the mid-1990s, the network saw some change in its membership. In 1995, the Education Department set up an ad hoc working group charged with reviewing civic education policy. Groups motivated by political ideologies and opposed to the established agenda, such as FEW, HKCI and DP, were represented within the ad hoc committee (Education Department 1997: 9). Through the committee, these groups penetrated the network. The reason why the Education Department made the change was a combination of the increased political strength of pro-change groups and the government’s desire to have a civic education policy transiting across 1997 and the years following the handover. As a teaching expert closely involved in the network argued:

The Education Department realised that if these groups were not represented and policy guidelines could not reflect their views and interests, it was very likely that they would challenge the guidelines shortly afterwards. This would probably cramp the government’s plan to have a policy that could last beyond the handover and into the 21st century.18 Therefore, to some extent, the network became more open. This, however, does not mean that there was no exclusion at all. But exclusion was not simple in the mid-1990s. The network split into two layers, with a core (primary network) and a periphery (secondary network). The core contained the Education Department and the teaching representatives that continued to occupy central positions in curriculum making. On the periphery were the opposition groups given access to the ad hoc committee. The distinction between the primary and secondary networks was clear, meaning that the groups on the periphery could not debilitate the established Education Department/teaching profession network in curriculum making. First, the ad hoc committee lasted for a year, and thus the groups had only tenuous involvement in the system. 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.19 Third, in order to gain entry to the policy process, the pro-change groups had to accept the final decisions made within the primary network (Singtao, 2 May 1995). Taken together, the Education Department and the teaching profession remained the most important curriculum-makers throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Institution, resource dependence and exclusion

The opposition groups could not access the network core in the 1980s and 1990s because it was protected by its institutional structure. Central to the network core was the institution of the Curriculum Development Council (its predecessor was the Curriculum Development Committee) (CDC).
As argued above, the institution stated clearly the privileged positions of teaching representatives in the heart of curriculum making, thereby safeguarding the primary network against the pressures for change. This is not to say that nothing changed in the institution between 1984 and 2000. Yet none of them were targeted at enlarging the primary network to incorporate political, social or educational pressure groups, or giving these groups institutionalized access to curriculum making. Therefore, even though these groups were given access on an ad hoc basis in the mid-1990s, they did not infiltrate the primary network and have institutionalized, continuous influence on policy (Curriculum Development Council 1996/97). Unless the institutional arrangements for curriculum making changed, it was difficult for the groups to break into the network core.

However, during the 1980s and 1990s, the Education Department did not reform the institution and relinquish its support for the teaching profession because it had to rely on schools, teachers and teacher educators in formulating and implementing civic education policy. As discussed above, non-government schools had a high degree of autonomy in selecting the subjects to be offered and in adjusting the teaching methods suggested in the common curriculum. The autonomy of schools meant that it was difficult for the Education Department to impose any curriculum changes on schools without consultation. Therefore, it was believed that full consultation with and cooperation from schools was essential to the success of civic education. Likewise, as the training of teachers for civic education was also important but under the influence of teacher educators, the department was fully aware of the need for discussions with teacher training institutes.20

**Isolation**

It cannot be denied that the Chinese government, which was increasingly concerned with the lack of civic education in Hong Kong, had more influence on the network in the 1990s than previously. However, it is necessary to be specific in order to understand how the Chinese authorities actually affected the network and the extent to which the network survived this pressure. Between 1995 and 1996, 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 notice of the demands made by the Chinese authorities. According to one of the teaching representatives within the network:

> We needed to consider whether or not the Chinese government would accept our policy 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 guidelines for the
post-1997 government under China’s sovereignty . . . We did not want to see our guidelines overthrown by the new administration under the pressure from the Chinese authorities only years after 1997. In this situation, we fully understood the reality that it was important to win China’s blessing for our policy.21

The need to secure China’s support inevitably placed certain restraints on the curriculum makers. This does not mean that civic education policy had to be made formally acceptable to the Chinese government. It was important, nevertheless, for the curriculum makers to avoid any overt criticisms from the Chinese government that were likely to create political uncertainty and controversy. This corresponds with the argument that Hong Kong policy makers might have to ‘second guess’ Beijing (Lee 1998). In this sense, the isolation of the primary network was, to a certain extent, weakened.

However, it is important to point out that in the 1990s the Chinese authorities did not impose decisions on the network. There were a number of factors hobbling China’s ability to remove decision making from Hong Kong. First, the Joint Agreement stated in principle that Hong Kong would retain the pre-existing political, economic and social systems after 1997 (Wong 1988: 63–5). Second, Hong Kong’s autonomy in educational policy making was built specifically into the wording of the Basic Law (National People’s Congress 1991). Third, the return of Hong Kong to China was subject to massive international media scrutiny and scepticism. Thus, the Chinese authorities had to consider the political costs of meddling in Hong Kong’s civic education. They were clearly not prepared to take that risk on this matter. There were other areas that they had more interest in and, thus, chose to target (Bray 1997: 14).

With these domestic and international constraints, China’s intervention in Hong Kong curriculum making was confined to vocal pressures.22 As the Chinese authorities did not try to control the curriculum-making process, the Education Department/teaching profession network was largely independent. This does not mean that the network was a completely isolated entity in terms of influence from China. However, as long as the Chinese authorities were cautious about forcing changes in Hong Kong, the network was left with significant room for manoeuvre.

**Consensus and integration**

The relationship between 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, besides mutual dependence and institutionalization, another structural variable enabling the network core to remain intact throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The increased questioning of the apolitical and academic-oriented principle that the network had followed did not cause a cleavage during that period.
The educational officials could be said to have had ‘bureaucratic-led inertia’ in that their instinct was to avoid change and conflict (Morris and Chan 1997: 101). However, civic education was a new issue that could generate one of the most controversial areas in education (Lee and Sweeting 2001: 101). To avoid being embroiled in controversy, the Education Department flinched from any substantial change. Moreover, around 1997, the Hong Kong government as a whole, in the light of international media scrutiny and the importance of economic vibrancy, placed a premium on maintaining stability in its political, economic and social systems. The Education Department, as part of the government committed to continuity rather than change, avoided radical decolonizing policies (Morris et al. 2001: 175–9). Like the Education Department, schools and teachers in the 1980s and 1990s did not want to jettison the established curriculum, which was reinforced by their conservative political culture and the educational ethos of seeking success in examinations (Lee and Leung 1999: 3–4). In this way the lukewarm response to demands for change was a result of the collective views of both the department and schools.

However, particularly in the 1990s, the pressures for change had reached a point where it was difficult to prevaricate. In response to these immense pressures, there was clear agreement between the department and the profession on what should be done. Both used the strategy of damage limitation by stressing the moral aspect but discarding the political dimension of civic education. In doing so, their interests and ideas were served. On the one hand, the Education Department could distance itself from the vortex of political controversy surrounding the concept of citizenship. On the other hand, for principals and teachers, students’ discipline was a more pressing issue than their attitudes towards and skills in political participation (Lee and Leung 1999: 21).

The standpoint of teacher educators was subtler. One of their representatives indicated that in the 1990s 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 calculations in such a politicized environment. As a result, they argued that political education should not be an overarching definition of civic education. They emphasized the importance of personal/public morality, such as a sense of family, neighbourhood and social ethics, to combat the dangers of political indoctrination. Eventually, their position was similar to that of the Education Department and schools. As a result of this consensus, the Education Department/teaching profession network was highly integrated at the core of curriculum making throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

All in all, the relationship between the political transition and the curriculum network was dialectical, particularly so in the immediate years around the handover. On the one hand, the political transition weakened...
the network. On the other hand, the politicized environment did not cause a substantial politicization of the network, which was protected by its institutional structure, mutual dependence and strong consensus. Therefore, 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 and schisms did not occur between the Education Department and the teaching profession. The final section will examine how the survival of the network affected policy change.

**Explaining policy: continuities within change**

The political context has changed greatly since 1984. An instinctive response to the contextual changes would have involved a radical reform of the apolitical and academic-oriented principle. However, as the Education Department/teaching profession network did not disintegrate to any extent in the 1980s and 1990s, any reform could occur only through the network. As such, the response did not involve radical reform, but rather damage limitation.

The first reform occurred in 1985 when the curriculum makers drew up a set of guidelines on how to promote civic education in schools (Curriculum Development Committee 1985). However, civic education is a multi-faceted concept. The curriculum makers seized on this ambiguity and watered down the reform by twisting politically oriented civic education into the teaching of public and private morality. In addition, the implementation of the guidelines was voluntary and integrating civic education into the established curriculum was a matter for schools to decide. Therefore, the guidelines had very limited impact on the implemented curricula, which remained apolitical and academic in nature (Morris 1995: 100).

The agenda within the network changed to a greater extent in the years immediately around the handover. New issues were on the agenda. This was because the network became looser, with a number of political and pressure groups penetrating the periphery of curriculum making. Consequently, further changes were made in 1996 when the curriculum makers issued a new set of civic education guidelines. Unlike the 1985 guidelines, the new guidelines showed signs of politicization, in which the direction and content of civic education centred around five major parts, including family, neighbourhood, regional community, state, and international community (Curriculum Development Council 1996: 21–5). The sections on regional community and state were intended to locate and accommodate the demands made by the Chinese authorities and opposition groups.

However, the Education Department/teaching profession network was not automatically open to change either. As discussed above, those most intimately involved in making curriculum policy had an interest in maintaining the established curriculum. Although they lost some control over the agenda around 1997, they still controlled the reform process because of
several structural characteristics. First, the actors at the core set the ‘rules of the game’ that the opposition groups on the periphery had to abide by. One of the major demands for change was to make civic education a mandatory subject in schools. Yet the rules restrained the groups from raising and making a decision on this issue (Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education 1995: 4). Moreover, any proposals had to be finalized and approved by the key actors within the primary network (Singtao, 2 May 1995). Second, as the initiative in curriculum making did not shift from the network to the Chinese authorities, the curriculum makers were left with a great deal of room to exercise their own judgement.

By securing control over the reform process, the Education Department/teaching profession network was able to ensure that the changes introduced in the 1996 guidelines would do as little harm as possible to the established curriculum. For instance, the curriculum makers removed from the agenda one of the most important issues that the Chinese authorities and domestic groups had raised in the 1990s, namely that civic education was synonymous with political education. This proposal was particularly inimical to the ideas of the Education Department and schools. Therefore, it was defined as extreme and, as such, excluded from the reform process. Instead of strengthening political education, the curriculum makers emphasized the teaching of morality. Although moral education was not something that the Chinese authorities and domestic groups disagreed on, it was not the focus of their concerns. However, in 1996, the importance of morality was asserted in the new guidelines which suggested the concept of social citizenship (Curriculum Development Council 1996: 33–41). The focus on pupils’ moral standards rather than their political awareness was a feature underpinning 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 still rejected calls for making civic education a mandatory subject around 1997. They justified their inaction by stressing the link between school autonomy and the quality of education:

We disapproved of the proposal for a mandatory subject because we had no intention of monopolising the approach to civic education. 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.

The school-based approach might benefit the quality of education, but it also served the interests and ideas of the key actors at the core of curriculum making. With no compulsion on schools to implement the non-binding
guidelines, schools still had the pretext for ignoring civic education and, particularly, political education in the common curriculum.

The Education Department/teaching profession network also resisted change by marginalizing the groups that clamoured for substantial reform. The 1996 guidelines did not convince these groups 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 policy arena in the mid-1990s, they had to follow the rules set by the curriculum makers at the core. These rules did not allow them to restructure the curriculum. Their weakness in terms of pressure groups influence was exacerbated by the fact that they did not exert a continuous influence on policy:

For a number of groups, it became increasingly evident that the new guidelines were inadequate after 1997. 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.\(^{30}\)

To some extent, their participation in the policy process when the Education Department conducted a review of civic education in the mid-1990s did affect the policy. Their views were reflected and a number of controversial political topics introduced. However, their impact was ephemeral, which ended with the publication of the guidelines in 1996. Consequently: ‘the recent policy re-manifested the signs of moralisation as a dominating feature of civic education’.\(^{31}\) This is borne out by the recent development in curriculum policy. In a 2000 curriculum document, *Learning to Learn*, ‘civic education’ was renamed as ‘moral and civic education’ (Curriculum Development Council 2000).

**Conclusion**

Change in the policy process and policy outputs in Hong Kong cannot be explained purely in terms of the political transition. The notion of policy networks is also important. This is not to deny the significance of contextual factors. As we have seen in this article, the pressures for change have been mainly political and have arisen as a result of the regime change and political liberalization in Hong Kong. However, while the macro-level approach can be used to examine the overall nature of change, network analysis is important in explaining why the trajectory of change in some areas may differ from the general pattern augured by the changes in Hong Kong’s political environment.

Compared with contextual explanations, the policy network approach offers a more sophisticated view of policy change in Hong Kong. The relationship between context and networks is not unidirectional. If political pressures occur in areas where strong networks exist, there is always resistance to reform, and the course of change tends to be complex and dialectical. The
networks may not automatically collapse. Instead, they mediate the effect of the political transition and affect the scope and speed of policy change. In curriculum policy, the Education Department and the teaching profession network was, in accordance with Marsh and Rhodes’ (1992a) typology, structurally strong. Despite some changes in its nature and agenda, particularly in the mid-1990s, it was cushioned from mounting political pressures by the structure of mutual dependence, institutional support and consensus. As the network weathered the hostile circumstances and the curriculum makers remained the same, it was able to control the reform process throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Despite the importance of networks in understanding change, it is essential to point out that they are not completely isolated entities in the context of Hong Kong. The transition of Hong Kong to China poses increasing threats to the dominant interests within networks. In addition, it is clear from the case study that the success of networks in surviving the contextual shifts and fending off political pressures may be, to some extent, due to the context within which they operate. In curriculum policy, it was the international and constitutional contexts of Hong Kong which hobbled the influence of the Chinese authorities on Hong Kong educational policy making. This is not to say that networks are subservient to their context, as the pressures from China, though vitiated, were still immense. Only if the network was structurally strong could these pressures be minimized. However, despite 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.

One of the important contextual factors we have to consider when using the network approach to policy analysis is the nature of China’s influence. There are two types of influence, with different implications for network analysis. If the Chinese government is prepared to bear the costs of ‘repossession’ and to take overt control over the policy process in Hong Kong, the contextual factor may be sufficient to explain policy change, and the neglect of network analysis may be justifiable. Yet China’s participation rarely takes the form of direct control. Rather, to a larger extent, China intervenes through ‘penetration’ or informal influence. It pursues its agenda by pressuring the policy makers in Hong Kong, who are also influenced by the pre-existing policy-making structure. Therefore, in many areas the purely contextual explanations cannot explain policy change. Policy networks, as an important part of this structure, need to be examined.

This article has illustrated that network analysis has an explanatory utility in the context of Hong Kong. But obviously one case is not sufficient to fully establish the utility of the model in systems beyond liberal democracies. More studies need to be undertaken. Here, I wish to highlight three issues regarding network research which emerge from this paper and demand further investigation. First, to date, discussions of policy networks have been confined mostly to policy analysis in liberal democracies. Hence,
it is important for future network research to examine whether and why the concept is apposite to policy analysis in states which have not followed the path of Western democratic systems. Second, the concept needs to be used in conjunction with a wider macro-level theory in order to provide a comprehensive account of the distinctiveness of policy networks in these states. Third, the case examined in this paper has focused only on the effect of a closed and integrated policy network. In this regard, comparative case studies have to be conducted to examine the proposition that different networks are associated with different policy outcomes.

Notes

1 To date, discussions of policy networks have been confined mostly to the analysis of public policy in Britain, Europe and the United States. Therefore, case studies of Hong Kong also provide an opportunity to delve into the applicability of the concept to regimes beyond the category of liberal democracy.

2 Sabatier (1988: 131) argues that understanding the process of policy change requires a time perspective of a decade or more, for two reasons. First, a focus on short-term decision making is apt to underestimate the cumulative effect of policy analysis and learning on the perceptions and conceptual apparatus of policymakers over time. Second, the focus on time-frames of a decade or more allows a policy cycle (formulation/implementation/reformation) to be completed and enables a researcher to obtain a reasonably accurate picture of policy success or failure.

3 Since the late 1970s, the Chinese government has been committed to economic modernization and has regarded the dynamic and stable economy in Hong Kong as vital to the economic growth in mainland China. As a result of this belief, the Chinese government has intervened in Hong Kong’s fiscal and economic policies in order to maintain Hong Kong’s pragmatic value for China. One of the clearest examples of this type of intervention is the Port and Airport Development Strategy (PADS) (see Segal 1993: 93).

4 For example, it appears that the Chinese government indicated to the Tung administration that during his term in office the Hong Kong government had to legislate against subversion, sedition, secession and treason under Article 23 of the Basic Law. The legislation eventually unleashed large demonstrations, in which 500,000 people took part, against the Hong Kong government in July 2003.

5 Before the mid-1980s, Hong Kong had been run as an ‘administrative state’, with policy-making powers highly concentrated within the executive branch of the government and the wholly appointed Legislative Council (Legco) playing the role of rubber-stamping the administration’s proposals (see Harris 1988: 70). Thereafter, the British Hong Kong government introduced and expanded indirect elections based on functional constituencies and direct geographical elections to the Legco. In 1995, official and appointed members of the Legco were eliminated, and all members became directly and indirectly elected.

6 Article 74 of the Basic Law cramps legislative power by disallowing legislators to move any bills affecting public expenditure and political structure, and the written consent of the Chief Executive is needed before bills concerning government policies can be introduced.

7 It is not unusual to see that the Chinese officials assigned to or recruited from Hong Kong became outspoken in various fields of Hong Kong policy, particularly before the retrocession. Thereafter, in 1998, the Hong Kong government
opened a Beijing office charged with facilitating direct communication between mainland authorities and SAR officials regarding the central government’s policies.

8 It should be noted that the introduction of the Accountability System in July 2002, with the Principal Officials in Hong Kong owing their positions directly to the Chief Executive and the Chinese government, has significantly affected high-profile policies in Hong Kong. However, as the politically appointed Principal Officials have not made the same impact on more technical but by no means less important policy sectors like civic education, the literature on their roles in policy making is not addressed to any extent in this article.

9 The development of the policy network approach has been well documented in the literature (see Evans 1998; Marsh 1998: Ch. 1; Rhodes 1997: Ch. 2). There are different approaches to network analysis. The view I take in this paper is the structural perspective.

10 Where a policy community exists, it is likely that policy will reflect the goals of the key actors within the community. On the other hand, issue networks mean that the potential policy outcomes tend to be more varied (see Marsh and Rhodes 1992b: 197–8).

11 The educational organizations involved in the network included the Hong Kong Private Schools Association, Catholic Board of Education, Hong Kong Subsidised Secondary Schools Council, Vocational Training Council (VTC), Association of Principals of Government Secondary Schools, Hong Kong Aided Secondary School Vice-Principals Association and Hong Kong Aided School Teachers’ Association (ASTA), etc.

12 Interview with a former member of the network who came from the teaching profession and served over the period between 1980 and 1992.

13 A former teaching representative who was asked about the operation of the network before 1984.

14 What distinguished these schools was that they traditionally supported the Beijing government and had strong links with the Chinese authorities and schools in mainland China.

15 The leader of a pro-China educational pressure group gave this response when asked whether the policy process and curriculum policy itself was ‘depoliticised’, a concept commonly used by academics, during the period before the signing of the Joint Agreement.

16 Among the political groups the Meeting Point and then the Democratic Party (DP) and the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) were the most active in the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. Educational pressure groups such as the FEW and the Professional Teachers’ Union (PTU) as well as social groups such as the Hong Kong Affairs Society, the Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI) and the Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese (JPC) also called for change.

17 See the following newspapers as examples: Mingpao, 30 November 1984; Wen Wei Po, 16 September 1985; Singtao, 24 August 1985.

18 Interview with a teaching representative closely involved in the making of post-1997 civic education policy.

19 Interview data.

20 In an interview an educational official elaborated the relationship with the teaching profession in curriculum making between 1984 and 2000.

21 A teaching representative within the network gave this response when asked about the influence that the Chinese authorities exerted on the post-1997 civic education policy in the years immediately around the handover.
K. H. Ng: Political context, policy networks and policy change

22 For example, in 1995 the cultural subgroup of the Preliminary Working Committee (PWC) established by the Chinese government publicly issued its version of policy guidelines on Hong Kong’s post-1997 civic education. 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).

23 Since the early 1980s, Hong Kong society has failed to reach any consensual view on what the content of civic education should be, and how it should be implemented (Lee and Sweeting 2001: 113).

24 Interview with a teacher educator who participated in the network and commented on the standpoint of teaching institutes on civic education in the 1990s.

25 The civic education programmes contained in the 1985 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: 246).

26 Interview with a teaching representative who was one of the main drafters of the new guidelines.

27 Comment from a teaching representative who participated in curriculum making on the controversy over conceptualizing civic education around 1997.

28 The concept denotes a range of social ethics and moral values, including honesty, individual courage, filial piety, respect among family members, caring parents and taking care of public facilities.

29 Explanation from a teaching representative within the network as to why the calls for making civic education mandatory were unheeded around 1997.

30 Interview with the leader of a group that gained access to the periphery of the network in the mid-1990s.

31 Comment on the development of civic education after 1997 from the leader of a group having access to the periphery of curriculum making in the mid-1990s.

References


—— (1996/97) Membership of the Council, Coordinating Committees and Subject Committees, Hong Kong: Government Printer.


Hong Kong Legislative Council (1996) Hong Kong Hansard, Session 1995/96, 22 May.


K. H. Ng: Political context, policy networks and policy change


**Newspapers**

*Mingpao.*

*Singtao.*

*South China Morning Post.*

*Ta Kung Pao.*

*Wen Wei Po.*

**Interviews**

Between September and October 2002 the author interviewed nine individuals intimately involved in curriculum policy. Those interviewed included senior government officials from the Hong Kong Education Department and representatives of private organizations such as VTC, IED, ASTA, FEW and HKCI that had, or strove to have, access to curriculum making. Since the issues discussed in the article span a relatively long period of time, time-specific questions were asked relating to the period they served in the government or as leaders of the organizations.