

# Introduction

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The fundamental basis of comparative studies of all kinds is identification of similarities and differences. From this identification, analysis usually proceeds to the reasons for the similarities and differences, and to the conceptual implications of the forces which shape the objects being compared.

The field of comparative education resembles all other comparative fields in this respect. Major questions for analysts in the field of comparative education concern the reasons why education systems in different parts of the world are similar to and/or different from each other. Additional questions concern the links between education systems and the broader societies which those education systems serve. Education systems on the one hand reflect the societies in which they are situated, and on the other hand shape those societies.

Meaningful analysis is facilitated when the units for comparison have sufficient similarity as well as significant difference. In this light, Hong Kong and Macao make an ideal pair for comparison. This book shows that the conceptual lessons from comparison of Hong Kong and Macao go far beyond the small corner of East Asia in which the two territories are located.

To expand on this point, this Introduction begins by outlining the major similarities and differences in Hong Kong and Macao. It then turns to comments on the nature of continuity and change in education and society, and to specific aspects of education and political and social transition with which the book is particularly concerned. The next section explains the way in which the book is organised, and outlines the contents of each chapter.

## **Hong Kong and Macao: Similarities and Differences**

For comparative studies of the type presented here, analysis of education systems must be couched within the framework of contextual features. For this reason, it is useful to commence with an outline of political, social and economic similarities and differences.

The most obvious similarities between Hong Kong and Macao are in location and in political history. Both territories are located on the south coast of China; both have been colonies of European powers; and both are now Special Administrative Regions (SARs) within the People's Republic of China (PRC). The chapter in this book by Adamson and Li describes the two territories as siblings. Macao, the chapter points out (p.35), is "the introspective elder – outshone, overshadowed and greatly influenced by the more gifted and extrovert junior"; but the two territories exist in

parallel and mutual support. They operate economic, political and social systems which resemble each other but are significantly different from those in the rest of the PRC. Pursuing the metaphor of the family, China is commonly referred to as the motherland. Adamson and Li point out that the motherland was until recently politically, economically and socially estranged, and that the reunification has resulted “in a familial accommodation of differences rather than a whole-hearted embrace”. Commonalities in evolving attitudes towards the motherland are further elements of similarity between Hong Kong and Macao.

As distinguishable entities, Hong Kong and Macao are products of colonialism. Macao emerged as part of the Portuguese empire in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (C.M.B. Cheng 1999). It was chiefly needed as a port in which ships could anchor and be repaired, and as a base for trade with China and other parts of Asia. Geographically, the territory of Macao comprises the Macao peninsula and the offshore islands of Taipa and Coloane. The Portuguese arrived in southern China in 1513. Macao was ceded to the Portuguese in 1557 by the Chinese government in exchange for banishment of pirates in the Pearl River Delta. In 1974, Macao was redefined as a “Chinese territory under Portuguese administration”. The 1987 Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration set a timetable for full reversion of sovereignty to the PRC on 20 December 1999 (Shipp 1997).

Hong Kong was established as a separate entity three centuries later than Macao, but again was chiefly valued by the British as a port and as a base for trade within the region (Endacott 1964). Geographically, the territory of Hong Kong comprises Hong Kong Island which was ceded to the British in 1841, the Kowloon Peninsula which was added in 1860, and the New Territories which were leased for 99 years in 1898. The scheduled expiry of the lease in 1997 was the chief factor setting the timetable for the reversion of sovereignty over Hong Kong to the PRC on 1 July of that year. Although strictly speaking the lease applied only to the New Territories and not to Hong Kong Island or the Kowloon Peninsula, it was clear to negotiators on both sides that the component parts could no longer be separated. Because of this, the whole of the territory of Hong Kong was returned to Chinese sovereignty, including the parts that had been ceded “in perpetuity”. The initial arrangements for the change of sovereignty were set out in a Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984.

These comments show that similarities in the political histories of the two territories are not confined to colonial origins, for both have had a common destiny in the contemporary era. Although Macao had been colonised earlier than Hong Kong, its reversion of sovereignty occurred slightly later. The political negotiations allowed Hong Kong to retain many of its existing characteristics, including its legal, financial and educational systems. While China remained officially socialist, Hong Kong remained officially capitalist. This formula was known as ‘one country, two systems’, and set the model for Macao’s subsequent reversion of sovereignty (S.H.S. Lo 1993). The Basic Law for Macao was modelled on that already prepared for Hong Kong.

The similarities do not end there. Among other common features, some of which are identified in Table 0.1, are that:

- both are small in area;
- both are small in population, especially compared with their immediate neighbours;
- both are urban societies, with insignificant agricultural sectors;
- in both territories, the great majority of inhabitants are Cantonese-speaking