

# 7

## Higher Education, Imperialism and Colonial Transition

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This chapter poses a historical question: how did colonial states intervene in the development of higher education and use it as a means of colonisation and imperialism as evidenced by Macao and Hong Kong? The history of higher education in the two colonies illustrates how higher education was controlled by the two colonial states and served the interests of their suzerains, Portugal and the United Kingdom (UK).

A case-based comparative strategy is employed in the chapter. Four institutions are selected to illustrate the practices and rationales underlying higher education development and its relationship to state intervention. Table 7.1 lists the institutions at different periods of colonial rule. The two oldest institutions selected are St. Paul's University College (SPUC) which was founded in Macao in 1594, and the University of Hong Kong (HKU) which was founded in 1911. These were the only universities in the two territories during the main colonial period. The other two institutions selected are the University of East Asia (UEA) which was founded in Macao in 1981, and the Hong Kong Baptist College (HKBC) which was founded in 1956. These institutions were established as private bodies and then transformed into public ones during the late colonial period. Colonial governments commonly try to maintain their influences in postcolonial periods, and education is one of the major social institutions for actualising such influence. This is what Law (1997, p.42) defines as neocolonialism, i.e. "the adjustment of colonial mechanism, practice or traditions or creation of new ones by the departing sovereign power or its allies to support the preservation of their interests". In Hong Kong and Macao, the colonial governments initiated higher education expansion during the period of political negotiation over sovereignty, and the change of status of HKBC and UEA occurred within the same period.

*Table 7.1: Four Higher Education Institutions in Macao and Hong Kong, Compared in Different Periods*

	<i>Macao</i>	<i>Hong Kong</i>
Main colonial period (before 1970s)	Establishment of St. Paul's University College	Establishment of the University of Hong Kong
Late colonial period	Establishment and transformation of the University of East Asia	Expansion and transformation of the Hong Kong Baptist College

Using the four cases, the chapter compares the development of higher education in the two colonies across a time span of four centuries, and explores how the colonial governments intervened and determined the pace and course of higher education development. Despite decades of neglect of higher education, both Macao and Hong Kong witnessed rapid expansion and reform during the period of state power transition. During this time, the higher education systems of the two colonies were used as an instrument for Portuguese and British imperialism. Hong Kong was treated as a British pawn in relationships with China and in international political manoeuvres, and Macao was the base for disseminating Portuguese culture to China. Colonial policies, including higher education policies, were influenced by Sino-British and Sino-Portuguese relationships. The chapter builds on existing literatures on comparative higher education and on education and colonialism.

## **Theories of Imperialism, Colonialism and Education**

### *Theories of Imperialism*

‘Imperialism’ is a catchword that has brought people together in both self-assertion and self-defence. Reynolds (1981) identified four modes of imperialism: the power-security theory of imperialism, economic imperialism, ideological imperialism, and socio-biological imperialism. The first two are the most relevant here. The power-security hypothesis argues that by seeking and gaining power, the state can create its own security and achieve a position of hegemony in international politics. Such imperialism extends power through the subjugation of weaker states by force or diplomacy.

Most economic theories of imperialism revolve around Marxism, in which contradiction and conflict emerging from the capitalist mode of production and the notion of capital accumulation are the essence. According to this perspective, the main reasons for imperialist expansion were the needs to guarantee sources of raw materials, to provide outlets for surplus capital, to create profits from investment, and to ensure markets. When the advanced capitalist states entered into that mode of production and were forced to compete for economic territory, it is argued, wars and the partition of colonies were inevitable (Reynolds 1981, pp.70-75).

### *Colonialism and Education*

Colonialism has been defined as “the oppression, humiliation, or exploitation of indigenous peoples” (Nadel & Curtis 1964, p.3). Hong Kong and Macao were colonised in the classical manner. Altbach & Kelly (1984) collected case studies of colonial schooling to illustrate colonial educational practices and their underlying rationales. For example, France gained control of Indochina between 1858 and 1900, and provided some schooling from elementary to university level for the colonised; but by 1937 only 631 indigenous students had enrolled at the university level (Kelly 1984). The United States adopted an inequality policy in the Philippines, expanding the school system in agricultural villages but encouraging private schools from elementary through college to serve the urban and provincial elites (Foley 1984). Treating Taiwanese as second-class citizens, the Japanese colonial government implemented ethnic discrimination in education in Taiwan during the colonial period (Tsurumi 1977).