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***Teaching Politics: A Study of the Subject 'Government and  
Public Affairs' in Hong Kong's Schools***

***By***

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***Supervisor: Professor Michael Byram***

***A thesis submitted for the degree of***

***Doctor of Education***

***School of Education***

***University of Durham***

***2004***

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## ***Abstract of Research***

### ***Ed D Thesis: Teaching Politics: A Study of the Subject***

#### ***'Government and Public Affairs' in Hong Kong's Schools***

***(Yuen Wai Wa, Timothy)***

Government and Public Affairs (GPA), a subject at senior secondary level, was set up in Hong Kong in 1980's, as part of the civic education drive to prepare for the change of sovereignty in 1997. It still is the only subject whose content is entirely about the study of politics and government. This study investigates the perceptions of GPA teachers with regard to how the subject is taught and how the subject may have an impact on the students with regard to the key concerns of civic education in Hong Kong, namely national identity, patriotism, democratic learning and international outlook.

It aims at filling the literature gap about the implementation of GPA in schools. Results of the study may also be used as reference when politics is considered as a subject taught in the formal curriculum.

Qualitative analysis was used and it was done in the tradition of the grounded theory. GPA teachers and other pertinent parties, namely curriculum planners, public examination setters and the Subject Officer at the Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority were interviewed. In line with the tradition of grounded theory, theoretical sampling was used and academics were invited to comment on significant concepts that emerged in the study.

The results of the study show that didactic methods are commonly adopted by many teachers and the subject may only have very little or even negative effect on enhancing national identity and patriotism of the students. The subject's contribution to democratic learning and the development of international perspectives in understanding politics is also limited. These need to be understood against an analysis that takes into account milieu, curriculum design and personal beliefs of the teachers. A model is proposed to explain the salient features of the analysis. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the subject's delivery are made.

## Acknowledgements

My deepest thanks go to Professor Michael Byram, my supervisor. His professional guidance, encouragement and support has benefited me most throughout these years. This was most important for me in finishing this thesis. What I learnt from him will certainly be of great help for my future academic career. I also want to thank Dr. Andrew Davies for his help in the early stage of my thesis writing.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to those who took part in this study. My thanks go to the curriculum planners, teachers, the Subject Officer, and the academics who kindly agreed to be interviewed. The ideas and reflections they shared provided me with the insight to finish this thesis. I am also grateful to Dr Percy Kwok and Dr Jacob Lung for sharing with me their insight when I was preparing for the viva examination.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Preface

I am much interested in studying the subject “Government and Public Affairs” (GPA) because I have worked with this subject for a long period of time. As one of the subject’s original drafters, I took up different positions in relation to the subject’s development between 1984 and 1991. These included serving as a member and the vice-chairperson to its subject committees; and working as a textbook reviewing panel member and Teaching Guidelines planner etc. As a teacher, I also got the approval of the principal to offer the subject in the school when the subject was first launched. I taught GPA and served as the panel chairperson of the subject until I resigned to work as a teacher educator. Nonetheless, my involvement in the subject has not come to an end as I am still helping the Hong Kong Examination Authority<sup>1</sup> on work related with the subject.

## 1.2 Introduction

The colonial government in Hong Kong worked assiduously to depoliticize education when WWII came to a close and British control over the territories was resumed. Legitimacy consideration, together with political development in the mainland, meant that the colonial government’s interest would be best served by keeping politics out of schools. The primary function of schools gradually became

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<sup>1</sup> Starting 2003, The Hong Kong Examination Authority was renamed as Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority (HKEAA).



preparing students for examinations so that they could fill up positions in the commercial sector and the bureaucracy.

The development of representative government in the 1980's and the reaching of the agreement for the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 altered the landscape dramatically. Political education, a formerly depressed part of civic education, would need to be reinstated. In 1985, the Government released its guidelines on civic education in schools (1985 Guidelines). Hand in hand with this development, the formal school curriculum was reformed. A new subject GPA, which was concerned mainly with the learning of politics, was introduced in the senior secondary level to help provide the necessary learning to students<sup>2</sup>. This would help to prepare the students to participate into political life and to face the reality brought forth by the change in sovereignty in 1997.

Under a much outspoken and, in the eyes of the Chinese authorities, a much more abrasive Governor, Chris Patten, the British administration's final years in the run up to 1997 were caught up in a war of words with Beijing.

In 1996, a new set of civic education guidelines (1996 Guidelines) was issued. The 1996 Guidelines ask the students to develop a sense of national identity and develop affection to their country. Besides, the students are also encouraged to develop the knowledge and skills related with democracy and to be able to understand the world with an international dimension<sup>3</sup>.

These demands were reiterated in different policy speeches<sup>4</sup> and educational

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<sup>2</sup> See Education Department (1985). *Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools* (3.6-3.8; also pp 102-104).

<sup>3</sup> See Education Department (1996). *Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools* (2.2, 2.3, 3.23, and 4.5).

<sup>4</sup> See *Address by the Chief Executive at the Provisional Legislative Council Meeting on 8 October 1997* (section 79, 110,111).

documents<sup>5</sup> after the transfer of sovereignty and the founding of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

### **1.3 The Problem**

In Hong Kong, the deficiency in political education, which is the result of a long history of educational depoliticization, is widely considered to be unhealthy for the development of Hong Kong after the handover, as students will have to adapt to a change in their citizenship status and work in various forms of political participation to realize self government, which is an important part of the “One Country, Two Systems” principle. As GPA was given the role as the subject in the formal curriculum to teach politics in senior secondary level and it still is the only subject whose content is entirely focused on politics, it is meaningful to conduct a study on the subject, particularly in regard to the way it is taught and the impact it brings.

It is important to focus on the perceptions of teachers with regard to the teaching and the impact of the subject. First, teachers are responsible to implement teaching in the classroom and their mindsets will undoubtedly affect the actual substance of teaching. Second, to a certain extent, the other factors that will also affect the impact of teaching GPA in schools, namely curriculum matters, attitudes of students, ethos of schools and society etc, may be reflected in the teachers’ perceptions. It will be meaningful to study how these elements will affect the teachers when they implement teaching in the classroom. Views of other important parties, such as curriculum planners and academics of the field, are brought in as reference to help the analysis.

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<sup>5</sup> See Education Commission (2000). *Education Blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2.3 and 4.1).

Notwithstanding that I have chosen to focus on teachers' perceptions in this study due to the constraints and time frame, I consider that the surveying of students, parents and school heads in the future will also be valuable in gaining understanding of the issues<sup>6</sup>.

#### 1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the GPA teachers' perceptions about how the subject is taught and how the subject may have an impact on students. Special attention is paid to the attributes: national identity, patriotism, democracy and international perspectives in understanding politics as these attributes have been described as important objectives for civic and political education in Hong Kong. The pedagogical choice of the teachers and the teachers' attitudes about indoctrination are included as they will have an impact on GPA teaching and its outcome. Apart from interviewing teachers, curriculum planners of GPA (i.e. Syllabus and Teaching Guidelines planners<sup>7</sup>, public examination setters etc.) will be invited to give their views as such views can inform the understanding of the teachers' discourse. The views of ex-teachers, ex-curriculum planners and ex-setters in particular will provide a source of triangulation to guard against possible bias due to stake holding. In the course of data collection, other academics will be chosen through theoretical sampling to give their

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, I had tried to ask a number of informants concerning the possibility of surveying the students, parents and school heads, but the request was turned down promptly as the subject was deemed sensitive. Thus, to ensure that the teachers can speak freely and to ensure gaining a focus, the present study is confined to the perceptions of teachers.

<sup>7</sup> In this study Syllabus refers to the *Regulations and Syllabuses* published by the Hong Kong Examination Authority while Teaching Guidelines refer to the syllabuses published by the Curriculum Development Council. This is in line with the way the two curriculum documents are addressed in schools.

opinions if their expertise can shed light in understanding of concepts that emerge in the teachers' discourse. Analysis of the official documents (Syllabuses, Teaching Guidelines, past examination papers and examination reports) provides the important background information for the study.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The researcher aims at studying the perceptions of the GPA teachers and understanding from such perceptions how the subject is taught and how it may have an impact on the students.

The research questions used to facilitate this study include:

1. How do teachers make their pedagogical choice?
2. How do teachers understand and think about indoctrination?
3. Do teachers tolerate divergence and promote political participation?
4. How do teachers define national identity and patriotism and whether, in the view of the teachers, GPA teaching has enhanced them amongst the students?
5. Do teachers think that GPA can promote understanding of politics with international perspectives?
6. How do teachers feel that institutional and societal factors are shaping the teaching of the subject?

### **1.6 Importance and Need for the Study**

Promoting political learning is a well-established goal in the education of Hong Kong, during the run up to and after the handover of sovereignty. In particular, due to



the reunification with the People's Republic of China, students will need to develop a sense of national identity and have affection to their country. Besides, they are required to be able to appreciate and exercise democracy and understand politics and government with international perspectives. These dovetail with the fact that Hong Kong has her own representative government and retains her status as an international city after the handover.

The study is important to the body of literature for the following reasons:

1. In the case of Hong Kong, no study has been taken after the founding of GPA to assess the way it is delivered and the impact it has on its students, despite that this subject is said to play a role in political education in senior secondary level. This study will provide information to curriculum planners with respect to how the curriculum has been implemented and some of the results related to such implementation.
2. The study will provide information on teachers' perceptions about the teaching of the subject and the subject's impact on the students. This in return can help one to assess the achievement, difficulties and shortfalls of GPA teaching in schools.
3. The study can help provide insight into how political education in Hong Kong should be improved to bring out the desired level of outcome. Such improvement may include curriculum reforms, staff training and building up of supportive ethos at school level etc.
4. The study will provide valuable reference to countries that plan to incorporate political education into the formal curriculum, say as a part of their civic education drive. This study can help interested parties develop the insight about whether the

ideals of such endeavors will be affected by practical matters, once the teaching of politics becomes a regular subject in schools. Such practical matters may include staff training, curriculum design, ethos in schools and society etc. At a more theoretical level, results of the study may also highlight whether the teaching of politics will inevitably achieve certain learning outcomes, such as a growth in national identity and patriotism, the capabilities to understand politics with international perspectives, and the learning for democratic politics etc.

### **1.7 Delimitation**

The study is limited to GPA, a subject at the senior secondary level (secondary 4-7) in Hong Kong. Apart from documentary study, teachers and ex-teachers, curriculum planners and ex-planners will be invited as informants. Academics, whose areas of specialty may help provide useful reference in the understanding of various issues, will also be consulted.

### **1.8 Organization of the study**

The study is divided into seven chapters.

This first chapter gives an introduction to the study. It also contains the problem, the purpose, and the importance of the study. The research questions are outlined, together with the delimitation and organization of the study.

Chapter Two presents a sketch of the subject GPA. It gives a historical account about how the subject was created and a factual account of the content of the subject at both School Certificate and Advanced Level. Study of the subject's documents, like the

Examination Syllabus, Teaching Guidelines, public examination questions and the examination reports etc. are also reported.

The emphasis of Chapter Three is on literature review. Efforts are made to review the history of civic education in Hong Kong, with particular emphasis on the deliberate suppression of political education during the colonial era. The resulting problem of poverty in political education will be highlighted and recent literature about the teaching of politics in Hong Kong will be discussed. The key concepts: national identity, patriotism, democracy, indoctrination etc. will be generally discussed with the help of local and overseas literature and such discussion will point out pertinent questions to be asked with regard to the teaching of GPA in Hong Kong.

Chapter Four introduces the research methodology. The rationale of the design is explained. Specific emphasis is given to the design of the research instruments, the population selected, method of collecting data and how measures are taken to enhance the reliability and validity of data collected.

Chapter Five presents finding on teachers' perceptions, together with some initial analysis. Attention will be paid to how the findings reported in this chapter can help to answer the questions raised in Chapter Three.

Chapter Six presents both a paradigm to understand the findings as reported in Chapter Five, as well as a model that captures the salient features of the paradigm. Apart from the data reported in Chapter Five, discourses of other parties (curriculum planners, question setters and academics etc.) will be incorporated wherever they are helpful to the understanding of the issues.

Chapter Seven includes the summary, conclusions, recommendations and the researcher's reflections.

# **Chapter Two: A brief sketch of GPA**

## **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims at introducing Government and Public Affairs (GPA) to the readers.

First a historical account about the setting up of the subject GPA is given. This will help the readers to understand how the subject was introduced in the 1980's as a response to the popular demand for political education in schools. How this marked the change in the tone of civic and political education in Hong Kong will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Second, a descriptive account about what the subject is, at both the Certificate and the Advanced Level is given. The role of the official curriculum documents, namely the Syllabuses and the Teaching Guidelines, are explained. The content of the subject will be outlined, together with its examination rubrics. The Project Assessment Scheme, which is an option in the subject's Advanced Level examination, will be discussed. Examination reports on the performance of students will also be discussed.

The researcher will highlight salient features of the subject and review important questions that may help the understanding of the informants' discourses and the analysis in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

## **2.2 A historical account about the setting up of GPA**

Tao (1986) gives a detailed account about the setting up of GPA.

The setting up of GPA at Advanced Level (A Level) dated back to the mid 1970's,

mainly due to the dissatisfaction with the subject Economic and Public Affairs (EPA)<sup>8</sup> in senior secondary level. EPA was considered difficult to handle, both because of its excessive content, and of the need to have two distinctive sets of expertise for effective teaching. The two parts, namely “economic affairs” and “public affairs” were also considered unrelated. In 1976, the University of Hong Kong sent letters to schools to survey their opinions about possibly splitting EPA into two subjects, Economics on the one hand and Government and Public Affairs on the other. The response indicated that schools were in favor of setting up Economics but were against the idea of setting up GPA<sup>9</sup>. As a result, A Level Economics was set up as an independent subject in 1977, side by side with EPA, and was first examined in 1979. Earlier in 1975, Economics was already established in the Certificate Level (CE Level) as a result of requests from schools.

The enrollment for EPA at both CE and A Level dropped rapidly as schools switched from taking EPA to taking Economics.

The political scene of Hong Kong changed rapidly with the coming of the 1980's. The concern about politics grew as a result of the initiation of talks between Britain and China about Hong Kong's future in 1982. The development of district administration and the issue of the White Paper entitled “The further development of representative government” in 1984 added further impetus to the development. On 14<sup>th</sup> March 1984, Rita Fan, a Legislative Councilor, told the Legislative Council that, as the political system of Hong Kong was about to change, it was important that the young generation should receive political education in schools. When she repeated the request and sought

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<sup>8</sup> The subject EPA was introduced in early 1970's to replace the subject Civics. This represented firstly an attempt to minimize the role of politics in schools, and secondly a way to enhance the academic nature of the subject to suit the need of schools. See Morris and Chan (1997), pp 104.

<sup>9</sup> See Tao (1986), 2.1-2.3.

concrete action by the government on 2<sup>nd</sup> May in the same year, C.H. Haye, Director of the Education Department, replied that the government was considering starting a new subject GPA to replace the existing subject, EPA. In 1985, when the government issued its guidelines on civic education, GPA was introduced as the subject by which students at senior secondary level could learn about politics.

We can conclude from above that the setting up of GPA was due to the demand made on political education. The demand was legitimized both by the development of representative government in Hong Kong and by the impending change of Hong Kong's political status. Tao (*ibid.*:50) states that GPA was needed as Hong Kong's politics would become more democratic and open, with the signing of the Joint Declaration and the issue of White Paper for further developing representative government. Thus, GPA, formerly conceived of as a curriculum improvement, finally came out as a response to answer the political reality.

Morris and Chan (1997) explains, "Given the effective self control of the curriculum exercised by schools and the impending transfer of sovereignty in 1997, the criteria for the selection of valid curriculum knowledge used by the government have changed. The study of previously sensitive material, including some aspects of politics and the social and political context of the PRC (The People's Republic of China), has been allowed." In this light, GPA's setting up can be understood against a reversion of the school depoliticization policy in the 1980's, a result of popular concern about Hong Kong's future. The "self discipline" of schools gave the regime the confidence to lift the political ban on school teaching<sup>10</sup>.

Scott (1989) explains the shift in the nature of curriculum knowledge, in terms of

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that the official ban on political teaching in schools by Education Regulation was only lifted in 1992.

the aspiration of the middle class for political emancipation, which arose against the impending change of sovereignty. This shift in curriculum knowledge in favor of political education in schools provided the room GPA needed.

GPA was first introduced to secondary schools in secondary 6 in 1986; and in secondary 4 in 1987. The first public examination of the subject at A Level was held in 1988; and at CE Level in 1989. The subject is an elective subject and only a small amount of secondary students are studying the subject<sup>11</sup>.

**Point to note:** It is interesting that, though the subject was supposed to be important, the number of schools actually adopting the subject has always been small. In Chapter Five, we shall learn from the discourses of the informants about the difficulties related with the teaching of GPA and how changes in social ethos after 1997 have hindered the teaching of politics in schools.

### 2.3 The Syllabuses

The Hong Kong Examination Authority (HKEA) issues the syllabuses of GPA every year in its *Regulations and Syllabuses* in order to provide schools and students with information, such as content, aims, objectives, and examination rubrics. The Syllabus at each level is looked after by a subject committee. The committees are composed of teachers and the Subject Officer of the HKEA. University lecturers will also be present.

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<sup>11</sup> See appendix 4 for GPA candidature for both Certificate and Advanced level from 1988-2002. Note that candidature after the launch year includes independent candidates. Many of these independent candidates are re-sitting the examination after leaving schools.

The following stipulations about the subject are adapted from the HKEA's *Regulations and Syllabuses 2002*<sup>12</sup> because in that year most of the informants were interviewed.

### **2.3.1 Advanced (A) Level GPA**

Students in the sixth forms (secondary 6 and 7) study A Level GPA. After two years of study, the students will take the subject's A Level examination, which leads to the university.

#### **2.3.1.1 Aims of A Level GPA**

The syllabus is designed to stimulate candidates' interest in, and enthusiasm for the study of political science, and more importantly, to promote candidates' social awareness and responsible citizenship. After studying this course, candidates should be able to:

1. understand a number of salient concepts in the political science vocabulary;
2. analyze the relationship between the individual and the state;
3. apply the various concepts and theories to the understanding of Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China and the United States of America;
4. examine the government and politics of Hong Kong;

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<sup>12</sup> The *2005 Regulations and Syllabuses* are reported in appendix 1.



5. discuss the underlying philosophies, institutions, and the operation of the government and politics of the People's Republic of China and the United States;
6. acquire a sense of social awareness and civic responsibility through an understanding of the functioning of society and the influences acting upon it;
7. develop a broader outlook on the world through an appreciation of different political systems and the relationship between individuals and the state; and
8. develop the attitudes that are conducive to their participation in political and community affairs as active and responsible citizens.

**Point to note:** It should be noted that America has been much emphasized, both as a political system to study per se and as a version of Western democratic polity for China to compare with. This was also much emphasized when teachers talked about the subject's contribution to international perspectives in political understanding as reported in Chapter Five. The validity of this belief should be reflected against the fact that Western democracies are implemented in a variety of forms, each with own merits and shortcomings. The presidential system of the U.S. co-exists with the parliamentary system or Westminster model as two of the most popular forms of democratic systems. In the case of GPA, though Westminster model, as a general concept, should be covered in Certificate Level, teachers pointed out that it might not be covered in teaching as no questions would be set on the topic.

### 2.3.1.2 Content of A Level GPA

The main topics to be covered include:

- a) A study of political concepts: democracy, sovereignty, nationalism, constitutionalism, legitimacy, power, authority etc.
- b) The individual and the state: ideas from Marxist theory and social contract theories, political participation, interest groups, parties etc.
- c) The government and politics of Hong Kong\*: political institutions and process, the protection of human rights
- d) The relationship between Hong Kong and China analyzed from political concepts acquired, and also in relation to the Joint Declaration, “One Country, Two Systems”, Basic Law etc.
- e) The government and politics of the People’s Republic of China studied from philosophical, institutional and behavioral perspective
- f) The government and politics of the United States of America studied from philosophical, institutional and behavioral perspective
- g) Comparative study of the politics of China and the USA

\*: In this part, schools can opt for project research work under the Project Assessment Scheme. So doing will exempt the student from part of the written examination.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Please see 2.3.1.4.

### **2.3.1.3 The examination of A Level GPA**

Candidates are to sit for two papers, each of three-hour duration.

Paper I (50%):

Four questions are to be answered; one question each from the two parts in section A and two questions from section B.

Section A

Part 1: A general survey of concepts

Part 2: Individual and the state

Section B: The government and politics of Hong Kong

Paper II (50%):

Four questions are to be answered; two from section A, and one each from B and C.

Section A: The government and politics of the People's Republic of China

Section B: The government and politics of the United States

Section C: Comparative government and politics of the People's Republic of China and the United States

#### 2.3.1.4 The Project Assessment Scheme

The Project Assessment Scheme (PAS) provides an opportunity for candidates of Hong Kong A Level GPA to engage in research projects, and to provide project reports as part of their A Level examination assessment.

The scheme is operated on a school basis. Schools can opt to join the PAS in which case every candidate in these schools will produce a report on a chosen topic/area in Section B of Paper 1, i.e. *the government and politics of Hong Kong*, for assessment. These candidates will only need to answer one essay question in Section B in Paper 1. Thus, the PAS result represents 1/8 of the total marks scored by the candidates involved.

PAS aims at promoting awareness and concern among students for local issues and policies. It encourages students to do research. It puts emphasis on the learning process as well as the learning outcome.

During secondary 6, teachers will help their students to choose a topic. A Supervisor will be appointed by the Hong Kong Examination Authority to liaise with teachers and hold meetings with teachers when needed. Schools will be required to submit the titles of their students' projects in September, when students promote to secondary 7. Students will be notified within one month whether their proposed topics are acceptable. Finished reports should be handed in to the schoolteachers by mid-February in secondary 7. The schoolteacher in concern grades his own students. Criteria for grading include attitudes and initiative towards project work, and quality of the written projects. Such marks and the projects received will be handed in to the HKEA. Two external assessors will then grade the written project. The final mark of the students will be the average of the teacher's mark and that of the two assessors.

Students may need to attend an oral examination should the Supervisor suspect that the report submitted is not the true work of the student. (Adapted from HKEA's explanatory notes about PAS)

HKEA described students' PAS performance in 2001<sup>14</sup> as:

“The overall quality of the projects is quite satisfactory. The projects cover a wide range of important topics that are of major relevance to the political and social development of Hong Kong. Generally speaking, students have been able to lay out the issues involved in the topics... The methodology used in the projects is rather rudimentary, though. There are two areas in which improvement can be made. First, students should be more analytical and critical. Instead of simply describing facts, they might want to put their discussion in perspective... Second, students seem to rely too heavily on the information available on web sites...students might also want to draw upon other sources of information so as to enrich the empirical basis of their studies. These may include archival research on academic journals, more in-depth interviews, and surveys of a large scale.”

**Point to note:** We can see that there is an emphasis that students should be critical and analytical. Besides, they need to have more formal methodology and references. These tie up nicely with the fact the subject is considered academic and a prelude to university study as reported by the teachers in Chapter Five. This conception may be important in affecting what the teachers want to achieve and how they will like to teach the subject.

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<sup>14</sup> There were no comments on students' PAS performance between 1996 and 2000.

### **2.3.2 Advanced Supplementary (AS) Level GPA**

This is not an independent syllabus. It first came when students were allowed to study a subject at AS level in the sixth form. Students doing AS level GPA are requested to sit for examination on Paper 1 (general political concepts and Hong Kong politics and government) only. However, they are not permitted to take the PAS.

### **2.3.3 Certificate (CE) Level GPA**

Students in the senior forms (secondary 4 and 5) study GPA at the Certificate Level. After two years of study, the students will take the subject's CE Level examination, result of which determines whether students can continue into the sixth forms.<sup>15</sup>

#### **2.3.3.1 Aims of CE Level GPA**

Candidates are expected to be able to:

1. develop knowledge and understanding of the society and polity of Hong Kong, the political and administrative institutions of Hong Kong, as well as the distribution of power among these institutions.
2. develop understanding of some of the political concepts related to the government and public affairs of Hong Kong

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<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that competition for sixth form places has been the keenest in the education system of Hong Kong. Approximately, only one third of the contingent could get through in 2002.

3. develop understanding of the relationship between the Central Authorities of the People's Republic of China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and the political system of China.
4. develop the skills necessary for the study and intelligent discussion of issues of current interest and importance.
5. promote candidates' social awareness and responsible citizenship

#### **2.3.3.2 Content of CE Level GPA**

In brief, the subject at its CE Level deals with the following topics:

- a) Resumption of the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong by the People's Republic of China (Joint Declaration, Basic Law inclusive)
- b) The government of Hong Kong
- c) Government and the people ( elections, representative government with USA and UK as examples, rights and duties of citizens inclusive)
- d) Law and justice in Hong Kong (idea of rule of law inclusive)
- e) Government and the economy
- f) Social policies and issues (one policy area will be specified for examination)\*
- g) The People's Republic of China and Hong Kong (including a brief introduction of China's polity)

\*: The policy area will be chosen from the following: education, medical and health, housing, environmental protections, social welfare, transport, labor.

**Point to note:** We should note that the policy area includes a lot of current development that will not normally be found in a textbook. GPA teachers thus need to spend a lot of time to read the newspapers and discuss relevant articles with students. Besides, the teachers might not be able to cover the details and issues actually asked in the examination. Teachers' discourses in Chapter Five do point out that when compared to other "regular subjects", GPA is hard to teach on the one hand and looks rather uncertain on the other.

### **2.3.3.3 The examination of CE Level GPA**

There will be two papers.

Paper 1 (1.5 hours): essay questions; candidates are required to answer 3 out of 5 questions; 60% of marks

Paper 2 (1 hour): multiple choice questions; 40% of marks

## **2.4 The curriculum documents issued by the Curriculum Development Institute**

The Curriculum Development Institute also issued curriculum documents for GPA. Such documents are often addressed by teachers as the Teaching Guidelines. The job of looking after such Teaching Guidelines is entrusted to the subject committees. Both the subject committee at A Level and the committee at Certificate Level are composed of Education Department officials (Inspectors or Curriculum Officers etc.) and teachers. In the A Level Subject Committee, the membership also includes university lecturers.

The Teaching Guidelines are not updated frequently. So far, two sets of Teaching



Guidelines were turned out for CE Level, one in 1986 and one in 1996<sup>16</sup>. On the other hand, it was as late as 1996 that A Level GPA first got its first and only set of Teaching Guidelines.

Apart from spelling out the aims, these Teaching Guidelines provide a plan for teaching, which includes time allocation, activities and guidance notes.

The extract<sup>17</sup> from the A Level Teaching Guidelines in the following page can help to illustrate what the documents are like. The Teaching Guidelines for Certificate Level is similar in nature.

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<sup>16</sup> The 1996 Teaching Guidelines for Certificate Level was not available in English.

<sup>17</sup> Extracted from *GPA (Advanced Level) Syllabus*, Curriculum Council (1996), pp14.

Table 2.1 Extract from the A Level Teaching Guidelines

Syllabus Content	Specific Objectives	Suggested Activities
Power (4 periods)	<p>At the conclusion of the lessons, students should be able to-</p> <p>Explain the meaning of power in politics,</p> <p>Analyze the attributes and the constraints of the power of the government,</p> <p>Evaluate how the exercise of the power invested in a government affects the formulation of public policy and resolving of political conflicts</p>	<p>Devise a project to identify the different sources of power in school.</p> <p>Interview a local politician on a specific issue and ask how he/she exercises his/her power to achieve his/her purpose for the interest of Hong Kong.</p>
Authority (4 periods)	<p>At the conclusion of the lessons, students should be able to-</p> <p>Explain the meaning of authority in politics, Analyze the relationship between authority, power, legitimacy and conflict in politics,</p> <p>Evaluate how the exercise of authority by the government affects political processes.</p>	<p>Select a political issue and analyze the relationship among conflict, power, legitimacy and authority</p> <p>Select a specific issue in school and observe how the different office-bearers resolved the case through exercising their authority; observe in particular the constraints imposed on the office-bearers by their official authority. Issues, which could be studied, are the problems of student discipline during recess and lunchtime or the lack of co-operation among classmates in preparing an exhibition.</p>

**Point to note:** Activities suggested are quite plentiful when compared to the periods assigned to the topics. It is also interesting that students are asked to analyze politics in their own schools, despite the fact it can be rather sensitive. We need to consider these when we try to understand why teachers interviewed said that the teaching guidelines were too idealistic and were in fact “quite useless”.

## 2.5 Examination reports and other observation

### 2.5.1 Examination reports

In 2002, the Hong Kong Examination Authority first reported its comments when it released the past examination papers to the public<sup>18</sup>. As a result, the comments made on candidates' performance on Certificate Level Paper 1 (essay questions) for 1998-1999; and the comments on Paper 2 (multiple-choice questions) for 1999-2001 are known. As for A Level, the examination reports from 1996-2001 were also obtained<sup>19</sup>.

These examination reports provide useful reference to understand the following.

- The concern of the markers in assessment
- The strength of the students
- The weakness of the students
- Possible achievement and shortcomings of the subject

In this study, this can also be a source of triangulation to understand the discourses of the teachers and other informants as reported in this study.

**Point to note:** Candidates taking GPA CE examinations were criticized for being poor in language and communication skills, for lacking analysis and comparative skills, and for not having enough updated information on current issues, especially with regard to the public policy areas. The predominantly descriptive style of the students was pointed out again in A Level's examination reports. In the A Level reports, students were urged

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<sup>18</sup> See Hong Kong Examination Authority (2002): *Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination Question Papers*.

<sup>19</sup> A summary of the comments is given in appendix 2.

to be more analytical and critical. On the other hand, students were praised for being able to define political concepts and having adequate understanding of political facts in Hong Kong and knowledge about China and the United States. It should be noted that such comments largely support the comments the teachers gave in the interviews as reported in Chapter Five.

### 2.5.2 Repetitions in public examinations

In Hong Kong, students usually learn by rote to get through their public examinations<sup>20</sup>. One of the reasons for this is that same or highly similar questions will turn out again in the course of a few years. This in return affects the teaching and learning process, as teachers will emphasize only those areas which will be asked in public examination while students will tend to sit back and wait for the teachers to give them the “best answers”.

The researcher analyzed the questions asked in GPA’s public examinations at both Certificate Level and Advanced Level over a five-year period (1996 and 2000). To illustrate our finding, two tables using questions asked in 2000 as the base year of comparison, are prepared and presented in appendix 3.

**Point to note:** Our analysis reveals that questions of a similar nature<sup>21</sup> could come out again in the course of a few years. This applies to all 5 years under review. What happened was that some of the questions asked repeated those asked in previous years, in terms of content or answer required. Sometimes, the repetition could be verbatim in nature. This is in tandem with the comments made by setters and an academic as reported in Chapter Five and Six. Whether and how this may affect teaching and learning and how setters of questions feel about it will also be discussed in subsequent chapters.

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<sup>20</sup> See Education Commission (2000). *Learning for Life: Learning through Life* (2.5).

<sup>21</sup> Questions similar in nature are construed as questions whose contents are wholly or partly similar; or that the questions, though differing in content, are seeking similar answers.

# Chapter Three: Literature Analysis

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at reviewing, with the help of literature, areas that may help to inform the investigation and the analysis of this study.

The chapter deals with the following areas that are basic to the understanding of the present study:

1. A brief outline of the literature on the development of civic education and political education in Hong Kong
2. A brief discussion about political teaching and the key concepts related to it, namely: national identity, patriotism, democratic learning and international perspectives<sup>22</sup>.
3. A review of writings about GPA teaching in Hong Kong

## 3.2 Civic education and political education in Hong Kong

There is a very close relationship between civic education and political education in terms both of concept and of actual practices. Tse (2002) expounds this relationship vividly, “The terms civic and political education carry denotative, descriptive and normative meanings, and they are often used interchangeably... Conceptually, political education refers to ‘institutionalized forms of political knowledge acquisition which

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<sup>22</sup> Section 1.3 outlined the importance of national identity, patriotism, democratic learning and international perspectives as goals of civic and political education in Hong Kong. This is further discussed in 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

take place within formal and informal educational framework' (Ichilov, 1994). In nation-states, which are the dominant political communities in the world, political education is commonly called civic education or citizenship education, in particular in the US literature." According to this understanding, the core of civic education is political education, as it defines the relationship between the person in concern to the political community he belongs to. As a corollary, civic education, totally without, or without sufficient political education, must be incomplete.

### **3.2.1 The development of civic education and the poverty of political education in Hong Kong before 1996**

The story of Hong Kong's civic education development can best be understood from a political perspective, taking into account her colonial history, the political development in China and China's relationship with the world. Certainly, Hong Kong's own social changes and economic development under British rule also proved to be important.

Morris (1997) proposes that there are three distinct phases in this period.

From the ending of the World War II to mid 1960's, there was a distinct need of the colonial government to depoliticize Hong Kong. State coercion was resorted to in order to counter the threat to legitimacy. Morris and Chan (1997) emphasize that in this period both warring factions across the Taiwan Strait, namely the Nationalist Party in Taiwan (KMT) and the Communist Party in China (CCP), saw the colonial government with hostility. The fact was that these parties controlled most of the schools in Hong Kong, including their curricula and the teaching of politics. The first mission of the government thus would be to play down such political teaching. Morris and Sweeting

(1991) explain that in late 1940's, the government enacted regulations to empower the Director of Education to control school subjects, textbooks, teaching materials and political activities in schools. Model syllabuses leading to public examinations were set up. Such syllabuses were both apolitical and decontextualized. In order to counteract anti-government propaganda in schools, Civics was also set up as a school subject in 1953 with its own public examination.

Morris and Chan (1997) explain the content of civics as "focused on describing the responsibilities of a good citizen, the constitutional relationship between Hong Kong and the UK and the ideals of the United Nations".<sup>23</sup> Examining the subject in some details, one can see both a highly conservative tone<sup>24</sup> as well as an attempt to nurture a more favorable attitude toward Western polities.<sup>25</sup>

At about the same time, the government built her own schools and encouraged missionaries from the West to establish schools in the colony. Generous land grant and other assistance were provided.<sup>26</sup> The rapid population growth in this period helped to

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<sup>23</sup> According to the *Civics Pamphlets for Secondary School*, there are 9 major parts in the subject. Respectively, they are: 1) Introduction to the meaning of civics, 2) Education, 3) Getting a living, 4) Public Health, 5) Money, 6) The press, 7) How Britain is governed?, 8) Non-British countries which exemplify Western democratic ideas and 9) Hong Kong's chief industries.

<sup>24</sup> There was a clearly conservative tone. The *Civics Pamphlets for Secondary School* (pp7) expresses that " We have noticed that citizenship in a free and democratic community carries with it certain rights. But it also demands certain duties." In the prescribed exercise that follows, students are further asked to think about " Why is it dangerous to allow uneducated people to share in the government of their state?" and " How does education help us to become good citizens?"

<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, the Pamphlet associates the autocratic government of the old days with the Chinese character for king. The Pamphlet (pp1) states: " The earliest form of the Chinese character for 'wang' (王) or 'king' shows a man standing on the ground beneath him and with arms stretched. We can imagine that this picture was intended to show that the word 'king' meant in the early days a man who ruled his state...All the people who lived in the state were the king's subjects and owed obedience to him as the ruler." Even more interestingly, the Pamphlets (pp 3 ) makes an allusion and states that " There are many so-called 'free' states in the modern world in which the ruling parties make laws to suit their own interests and to keep themselves in power."

<sup>26</sup> Morris, P. , Kan, F. and Morris, E. (2001: 167) describe, " The expansion of public schooling in the 1950s and 60s was largely achieved through the work of missionary groups who fled the civil war in China and were encouraged by the government to establish schools in Hong Kong. These groups, whilst not hostile to the colonial government, desired to teach their religious beliefs and to select whom they

justify the government's move to expand the education service.

The second phase of development lasted from mid 1960's to the beginning of 1980's. The major event in this period was the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in Communist China in mid 1960's. The ultra-leftist movement rippled the colony. Internal riots broke out, resulting in tremendous tensions, chaos and instability. When order was gradually restored, seemingly with the tacit approval of China, the government moved swiftly to undo any possible teaching of politics in schools. The most important aim of the government then was to preserve the status quo and avoid offending China. Civic education entered a dormant stage as education was further depoliticized. According to the Education Regulations released in 1971, Section 98(1) stipulates: "no instruction, education, entertainment, recreation or propaganda or activity of any kind which, in the opinion of the Director, is in any way of a political or partly political nature, and prejudicial to the public interest or the welfare of the pupils or of education generally or contrary to the approved syllabus, shall be permitted upon any school premises or upon the occasion of any school activity." In the same Regulations, there are provisions allowing the Director to expel any students involved in political or partisan activities and to enforce that schools only teach according to the officially approved syllabuses. Civics was replaced by a new subject called Economic and Public Affairs<sup>27</sup>. Politics and discussion of sensitive issues were played down as far

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teach."

<sup>27</sup> According to the outline released by the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Board in 1969, the subject was composed of the following parts: 1) Economic structure and activities, 2) Population, 3) Industries and land, 4) International trade, 5) Production and market, 6) Commerce, 7) Money, 8) Stock exchange, 9) Hong Kong as a British colony, 10) Political structure of Hong Kong, 11) The Administrative branch, 12) The judiciary, 13) Taxation in Hong Kong, 14) Rights and Duties of the people, and 15) Hong Kong and the international organizations. Overall, less than half of the content was related to government and public issues. In fact neither Chinese politics nor any substantial political topics were studied in this subject apart from factual knowledge of how the Hong Kong Government worked and how powers were exercised.



as possible. This was a typical uncritical subject approach to the understanding of government that discouraged participation. In fact the curriculum was confined in a way so that nothing about Communist Party and Communist China could be studied. Another pertinent example was the curriculum of Chinese History. Interestingly, it stopped with the founding of the republic in 1911. This effectively avoided any discussion about the political issues related to the KMT and the CCP.

There was no significant resistance to this virtual censorship in education. Tse (1997) explains this against the fact that the local population was a group of loosely organized immigrants who were weary of the partisan warfare in China. The rapid industrialization of Hong Kong since late 1960's and the growth in prosperity allowed the government to provide better education opportunities to the people. The increase in economic opportunities encouraged students to study for public examinations in order to win a promising job in either the commercial sector or the civil service.

The third phase of development began with the start of 1980's. Over 90% of Hong Kong's territories were leased to Britain in 1898 for a period of 99 years<sup>28</sup>. In the start of 1980's, due to pressure from the local business sector, the British government under Margaret Thatcher initiated talks with China over the future of Hong Kong. When the proposition of extending the lease for another 50 years was turned down, it became clear that the days of Hong Kong as a colony were counted. In 1984, Britain and China made a joint declaration on the future of Hong Kong (Joint Declaration), based on the agreement they made<sup>29</sup>. The agreement reinstated China with the sovereignty over, as

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<sup>28</sup> The New Territories of Hong Kong, which comprises over 90% of the land area as well as almost all reservoirs for water supply, was leased by the Qing Court to Britain according to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Treaty of Peking for 99 years in 1898. The lease was due to expire on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1997.

<sup>29</sup> The agreement was known as *A Draft Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Future of Hong Kong*. It was reached on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1984. The draft agreement was rectified by the legislatures of the two countries in 1985.

well as the right to rule, Hong Kong on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1997. In return China promised to give Hong Kong people self-rule and keep the capitalist system as well as the way of life for another fifty years. These developments struck like thunder bolts and had tremendous impact on the development of civic education in Hong Kong. Against this impending transfer of sovereignty, representative government began to develop. In 1985, apart from the Urban Council, which was responsible for hygiene, recreational and cultural matters, the government introduced the elected District Boards that helped co-ordinate government services at the district level. In 1988, the White Paper entitled "The Development of Representative Government: The Way Forward" was released. By the end of 1980s, the law making body first admitted its elected elements.<sup>30</sup> Self-rule in 1997 as well as the growth of middle class rendered the development of representation inevitable. Civic education needed to be reinforced and political education would need to be reinstated. In 1985, the Government released its guidelines on civic education (1985 Guidelines) in schools. Hand in hand with this development, the formal school curriculum was reformed. Morris (1990) gives a clear account of pertinent syllabus changes around this period. In 1984, the syllabus of Economic and Public Affairs was revised and discussion of representative government was included. A new subject Government and Public Affairs, which was concerned mainly with the learning of politics, was launched two years later. In 1984, the study of Chinese History was also extended to include the founding of the People's Republic of China. Sweeting (1990) states "The relationship between politics and the school curriculum changed drastically after 1982 when it became clear that Hong Kong would return to Chinese

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<sup>30</sup> The composition of the Legislative Council in 1988 was: Official Members (10), Appointed Members (20), Members elected by functional constituencies (14) and Members elected by electoral college (12). In 1991, members directly elected in geographical constituencies replaced the members returned by electoral college.

sovereignty... The rationale for this was derived primarily from a desire to develop in Hong Kong a democratic political system which would be able to ensure its autonomous status after 1997." Morris and Chan (1997) comment, "Given the effective self-control of the curriculum exercised by schools and the impending transfer of sovereignty in 1997, the criteria for the selection of valid curriculum knowledge used by the government have changed. The study of previously sensitive material, including some aspects of politics and the social and political context of the PRC, has been allowed." We should note from this statement the colonial regime's confidence to lift the political ban on political education was also to be understood against the fact that schools had already developed a relatively conservative ethos<sup>31</sup>.

Though the 1985 Guidelines were released, little was actually done in schools, especially with respect to political education and the nurturing of Chinese national identity. It was more akin to Cuban's (1992) description of a symbolic action. Cuban (*ibid*: 217-218) says, "Because of these powerful forces at work in the larger society ... Some officials endorse the imposed changes and move swiftly to adopt the new policies. Other officials question the direction of the changes as well as the process. They also act, but try to keep things as they are... Such token or symbolic changes are tactical responses by the institution to conserve what already exists." In the case of Hong Kong at this period, the symbolic nature of the move to political education was evident with the facts that no long-term teacher training and meaningful system of student assessment were ever launched. Ironically, the 1985 Guidelines called for schools to pass on political knowledge while the ban on political education was not removed till

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<sup>31</sup> Morris and Morris (1999) mention, "In effect the depoliticization of the curriculum and consequently the neglect of civic education was achieved in the period from 1945-65 by direct government intervention, while in the subsequent period was more by a by-product of the curricular priorities in schools".

1992. In 1993, the Education and Manpower Branch released a document known as *Hong Kong School Education: A Statement of Aims*. A deliberate attempt was made to evade the issue of impending Chinese citizenship<sup>32</sup>. Promoting Chinese citizenship would be embarrassing to the colonial government, especially because the run up to the transfer of sovereignty was long: a 13-year period since the signing of the Joint Declaration. On the other hand, rapid politicization of the people could also be thorny. China had long made clear that she would like to see Hong Kong returned as what she used to be. Drastic changes, like sudden politicization of the people and rapid development of a representative government, were eyed with distrust and were most resisted.<sup>33</sup> Wong (1988) believes that the British government's main aim was to avoid offending China to ensure the protection of British economic interest.

Tse (1997: 5-7) concludes that, notwithstanding the issue of 1985 Guidelines and what had been done in its pursuance, students in Hong Kong still suffered from the poverty of political education in the wake of the handover.

The poverty of the young people was explained in terms of:

1. Lacking detailed knowledge and understanding of institutions, principles and process of government, law, and politics.
2. Lacking an understanding of Chinese affairs, particularly of Chinese politics.
3. Lacking confidence in and unenthusiastic about voting while most of them believe voting is an important right of citizenship.

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<sup>32</sup> Aim (12): "Social, political and civic awareness" spells out "Schools should help students to become aware of Hong Kong as a society; to develop a sense of civic duty, responsibility to the family and service to the community; and to exercise tolerance in interacting with others."

<sup>33</sup> This was evident by the aggressive comment made against Governor Patten who took office in the final years of the run up to transition. He was branded by Lou Ping, the Head of China's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, as "a sinner of a thousand generations" when he decided to speed up representative reform by opening up the Legislative Council election to the general public.

#### 4. Lacking social-consciousness and being anationalistic.

In fact, a number of surveys done in this period seem to confirm Tze's notion.<sup>34</sup>

Tse (ibid.) points out that the 1985 Guidelines was conservative in tone and weak in its political content. It unduly dodged the issue of national identity. On the other hand, there was under-implementation at school level. In return, Tse believes that democratic and nationalistic education, which has been largely crowded out in the formal and informal curriculum<sup>35</sup>, is most needed to prepare students for challenges related with the change of sovereignty.

### **3.2.2 The issue of the Civic Education Guidelines in 1996 and its implication for political education in Hong Kong**

In 1996, a new set of guidelines (1996 Guidelines) was issued under a much more outspoken and, in the eyes of the Chinese authority, a far more abrasive Governor,

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<sup>34</sup>In 1990, a government commissioned opinion survey conducted by The Committee on the Promotion of Education finds out that 60% of people under the age of 21 say that they will register to vote. Most respondents have heard of civic education and a majority of the respondents believe it is needed to enhance the understanding of politics. Tam and Wong (1990) find out that 60% of the respondents express lack of interest in news about elections and government consultation papers. In 1992, a study implemented by the Young Women's Christian Association reports that 30% of respondents express that they find articles about current affairs to be boring. In the same year, another study conducted by Yeung et al. discovers that up to 30% of people attribute wrong functions to the Legislative Council, the most important elected body in Hong Kong. In its studies conducted in 1994, the Hong Kong Federation of Youths find out that about 45% of youths read the newspaper on a daily basis. Yet, only 12% of the respondents will be attracted to read the news about local political affairs as compared to 28% respondents who say they will read about entertainment. On the other hand, less than 15% of the respondents can tell what the two systems are in the famous "One Country, Two Systems" arrangement upon which the future of Hong Kong is hammered out. Wong and Shum (1998) concludes after a survey that people in Hong Kong express a strong desire for direct election of the Chief Executive as well as the Legislative Council as they believe elections are effective means to express their opinions. They also believe that civic education should be strengthened. However, civic attitudes are rather negative and cynical and the people are quite apathetic in terms of real social and political participation.

<sup>35</sup> See Tse (1997), pp20-29.

Chris Patten.

Learning politics was much needed against the backdrop of the impending sovereignty change and the realization of self-rule by representative government. Learning politics and democracy, as well as the development of national identity, had become much more than distant educational ideals, considering the fact that the transition period was coming to an end. Locally, representative reform moved swiftly forward, amid hostile comments made by the Chinese officials of the New China News Agency and the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office. On the other hand, the populace became more politicized as a result of the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, the discussion related to the passing of the Basic Law and the Bill of Rights in 1990 and 1991 respectively.

It was under such a background that the 1996 Guidelines were turned out.

Leung and Ng (in press) suggest that "The focusing on politics made the document much more appropriate for preparing the students to face the future of Hong Kong"<sup>36</sup>.

The 1996 Guidelines are spectacular in a number of ways.

First, it admits that a number of approaches to civic education can be viable and schools should make their own choice, including the setting up of an independent subject of civic education, when it is deemed appropriate.

Second, it addresses the transfer of political sovereignty. The national identity of being Chinese citizens is promoted and students are encouraged to understand China, her history, politics and socio-economic state of affairs.

Third, students are required to study the related political and constitutional arrangements, such as the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law of Hong Kong. They are

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<sup>36</sup> Leung was one of the drafters of the 1996 Civic Education Guidelines.

also encouraged to develop the knowledge and skills related with democracy.

Fourth, students are requested to gain the knowledge of global citizenship. This comprises: 1) the idea of global village; 2) human rights, e.g. minority rights, gender rights, economic and cultural rights etc.; and 3) global responsibilities, e.g. peace making, promotion of mutual understanding and exchange etc. It also requires the students to develop a cross-cultural frame of mind.

The issue of the 1996 Guidelines has important implication for the development of political education in Hong Kong because it sets the agenda for political education in Hong Kong, namely understanding politics and government, learning for democracy, national identity, and promoting international perspectives.

On the other hand, Lee and Leung (1999) argue that there is always a controversy between whether political education should be more inclined to national identity or to democratic personality. Choi (1995)<sup>37</sup> points out that nationalistic education is emotional and irrational, with emphasis on political indoctrination to identity with the nation-state. Man (1996) also expresses that education for human rights and democracy may be downsized if nationalistic education is given top priority. We should note this controversy particularly because the Western concept of democracy is not among the building principles of the People's Republic of China.

### **3.2.3 After the handover: the call for patriotism amidst a new phase of redepoliticization.**

Leung and Ng (in press) argue that after the return to China, there is now a trend for

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<sup>37</sup> See Lee and Sweeting (2001).

the government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to rede politicize<sup>38</sup> civic education. There is a move to dilute the political elements by adding a lot of non-political and moral content into the discussion of civic education. Leung and Ng (ibid.) state, "As noted, the Guidelines (1996) included a lot of political content as to prepare the students to face the political and constitutional changes stipulated in the Basic law. But just after a few years, the curriculum document: *Learning to Learn: Life Long Learning and Whole-person Development (Learning to Learn)*, proposed a very drastic step backward by attempting to re-de politicize civic education. The most fundamental change in the document of *Learning to Learn* is that *civic education* is replaced by *moral and civic education...*" It is pointed out that in the so-called *moral and civic education*, political education has been substantively downsized. *Life in Community* is the only one out of the six categories<sup>39</sup> that will comprise political elements. Out of the seventeen themes and life events for *Life in Community*, only seven are political.<sup>40</sup>

Against this depoliticized context, the government gives a strong official affirmation to nationalistic education, aiming at promoting patriotism.

Morris, Kan and Morris. (2001) points out that Tung Chee Hwa has repeatedly emphasized the need to be patriotic. It's important to display love for the motherland and traditional Chinese culture. Values like filial piety, love for the family, modesty, integrity, the desire for continuous improvement and collective responsibilities should

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<sup>38</sup> The first phase of depoliticization, accordingly, took place in the period between 1950 and 1985. Please see Leung and Ng (ibid.).

<sup>39</sup> The six categories are: Personal Development and Healthy Living, Family Life, Work Life, Social Life, Life at Work and Life in Community.

<sup>40</sup> They are: participating in public election activities, expressing opinions on issues of social injustice, participating in national flag hoisting ceremony, discussing current issues of local/ national/ international community. See *Learning to Learn: Life Long Learning and Whole-person Development (2001)*, appendix III.



be stressed while sensitive topics should be avoided.

In fact, national identity is actually included as one of the paramount values in the Five Essential Learning Experiences and Four Key Tasks in *Learning to Learn*.<sup>41</sup>

Leung and Ng (ibid.) highlight that, “Nationalistic education in Hong Kong is also de-politicized. There is evidence from the speeches of Tung Chee Hwa and the document *Learning to Learn* that focuses have been placed mainly on the cultural dimension such as history, culture, natural and human environment of China. The document, however, avoids the political dimension of China”. This type of nationalistic education is termed education for cultural nationalism (Leung & Print, 1999). This is a sharp remark on the current undertaking. On the other hand, it will also be worth studying why nationalistic education in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region will call for national identity and patriotism of an apolitical nature, when in fact they should be closely related to politics.

### 3.3 Discussion of basic concepts covered in the study

This study aims at finding out from the perceptions of the GPA teachers how the subject is being taught and how the subject may have an impact on the students in relation to national identity, patriotism, democracy, and international perspectives in political understanding as they are the important objectives for Hong Kong’s civic and political education. The issue of indoctrination will also be highlighted, as it will affect the outcome of GPA’s teaching. In this section, the key concepts involved in the present study are examined, both in light of their meaning in general, and of their spectacular

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<sup>41</sup> See *Learning to Learn: Life Long Learning and Whole-person Development (2001)*, pp 20 and 83-84.

nature in Hong Kong, whenever appropriate.

### 3.3.1 Teaching politics

Porter (1983) identifies five possible models in relation to the aims of political education. A summary of the account (adapted from Porter, *ibid*: appendix 2) is given as follows:

1. **Conservative:** Teaching focuses on transmitting knowledge about how the present political system functions and the duties and responsibilities of the subject. Skills acquisition is not important, with the exception of the skills related to learning of facts.
2. **Liberal:** Teaching aims at preparing students for informed and responsible political participation. Knowledge as well as analytical and participating skills is emphasized in learning. Teaching covers discussion of controversial issues.
3. **Apolitical:** Political education is academic in nature. Knowledge and understanding sought are construed in relation to acknowledged social science disciplines. Analytical and not participating skill is emphasized.
4. **Reformist:** Teaching is construed as an enabling process for students to gain a sense of identification with the society. Students should understand the society's shortcomings, and develop methods of participation in those activities that are needed for solving the social problems. Critical understanding of issues is emphasized, together with a stress on organization and participation skills.
5. **Radical:** It aims at preparing students to work towards the abolition of class domination. It requires students to view the social reality critically and develop the will

and skills to transform such attitude into action to change the status quo.

On the other hand, Morris and Cogan (2001), by analyzing intended curricula on a cross-country basis, find different political emphases are evident.

The more important points of the finding are provided below (adapted from Morris and Cogan, *ibid*: 113-114).

1. Australia: Understanding democratic principles, processes and values is emphasized hand in hand with the understanding of Australia's government and its processes. Skills and values for active participation are emphasized.
2. Japan: It aims at helping students to achieve a broad perspective as citizens and develop essential qualities to live in a democratic and peaceful nation. Structure of society, economics and national government are stressed.
3. Hong Kong: It promotes the understanding of the People's Republic of China, patriotism and love of the motherland. National identity, in particular, is gaining more importance. Reflection on controversial issues is also encouraged.
4. Taiwan: It emphasizes civic values, e.g., social cohesion, national identity, self-cultivation, democratic values. Respectful attitude to other cultures is also emphasized. Civic knowledge is academic as it is tied to social science disciplines.
5. Thailand: It prepares youth to be good national and world citizens. It cultivates students to live in a democratic state. The role of the Monarch as the head of the state is emphasized.
6. United States: It encourages the development of informed and responsible political participation by competent citizens. Commitment to fundamental values and principles of constitutional democracy is stressed. It aims at equipping students to develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society.

In the case of the United Kingdom, Lister (1998)<sup>42</sup> explains the case of Program for Political Education (PPE) as, “ PPE aimed to promote political literacy and democratic values for all secondary students. Its image of the citizens was of someone with the knowledge, attitudes and predisposition to be active in polity...Its view of politics was characterized by the inevitability and centrality of issues, to be analyzed and debated and where appropriate, acted on. It focused on developing the ‘politically literate person’ - where ‘literate’ meant ‘reading’, ‘understanding’ and acting ...”

It is evident from this discussion that the aims and the characteristics of political education can vary significantly between different countries. One outstanding difference highlighted is whether such education should be more focused on promoting allegiance or on nurturing a critical and reformist attitude. Another significant difference highlighted is whether the teaching of politics should be translated into political actions on the part of the learners or that whether it should be confined by and large to understanding and knowledge. These differences will have an impact on how politics should be taught. Certainly, in addressing such difference one should also understand the setting in which political education is implemented. Is it taken as a part of the formal study in school? Who has control over the curriculum? What is the ethos of the school like? Is politics a very sensitive topic in the society? What is the prevailing mode of teaching and learning? How do teachers understand their task of teaching politics? All these will be very important questions whose answers will lead us to understand the nature of political education in a particular country.

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<sup>42</sup> In Ichilov (ed. 1998), pp 254-266.

**In view of the above discussion, some pertinent questions to ask about the case of GPA teaching in Hong Kong are:**

- **What are the salient features of the GPA curriculum and how do such curriculum features affect the way politics is taught?**
- **How do GPA teachers understand their task?**
- **How do the ethos of schools and the conventional beliefs about class teaching affect the teaching of GPA in Hong Kong?**
- **Will political teaching in class become sensitive?**

### **3.3.2 Indoctrination**

The teaching of politics has often come along with the worry of possible indoctrination. Brownhill and Smart (1989: 148-150) for example describe religion and politics as the two traditional danger zones of indoctrination. Unlike mathematics and logic, which runs on a straight set of rules of deductive reasoning, these two areas are full of propositions whose evidence are often questionable.

Broadly speaking, literature seems to interpret indoctrination in a negative way, as it is often compared to concepts like brainwashing and robbing others' freedom.

Snook (1972: 47-48) gives a concise but well thought-out definition to indoctrination by saying, "A person indoctrinates P (a proposition or set of propositions) if he teaches with the intention that the pupil or pupils believe P regardless of the evidence." In this definition, as Snook emphasizes, the focal point is the intention of the indoctrinator. In fact, White (1967) defines indoctrination as requiring the intention of a certain sort, namely the intention that the learner believes what is taught in such a way that nothing will shake his belief.

Green (1972) specifies, "When in teaching, we are concerned simply to lead another person to a correct answer, but are not correspondingly concerned that they

arrive at that answer on the basis of good reasons, then we are indoctrinating; we are engaged in creating a non-evidential style of belief. (quoted from Spiecker & Straughan, 1991).

Brownhill and Smart (1989) gives a rather insightful discussion about the meaning of indoctrination. A teacher, it is argued, indoctrinates his students by requesting his students to believe in an unquestioning way. Such indoctrination might include incomplete exposure to truth or the use of opinion disguised as objective truth. A highly “authoritative”, “ready to intervene and correct” mode of teacher attitude usually comes along with such indoctrination.

Spiecker & Straughan (1991) continue to argue that though intentions, methods and content are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for indoctrination, they can all tend to promote non-evidential or non-critical beliefs. In this view, then, indoctrination is a matter of result of learning or upshots of the aims, intentions, methods or content of teaching.

In these discussions about indoctrination, indoctrination has been construed differently in relation to *3ps*. In the view of White (1967), Snook (1972), and Green (1972), the emphasis is on *plan* (requiring the intention that the learner believes). In the view of, Brownhill and Smart (1989), the focal point seems to turn to *process* (authoritative style in teaching, incomplete exposure, or even misleading discourse). In fact, the two may or may not converge, though in the latter, judgment whether indoctrination is going on becomes more difficult. For instance, a teacher can start with an open mind and strong commitment to respecting freedom of beliefs but lacks a repertoire of skills or knowledge to expose the students to different views. He may lack the repertoire of skill to teach other than in a top-down, authoritarian manner. On the other hand an indoctrinator may, due to own inability, fail to control the learners in the

process of learning. A top-down imposition approach is then brushed aside and the teacher is ridiculed. Spiecker & Straughan (1991) try to accommodate these complications by relating indoctrination to *product* (holding beliefs uncritically), regardless of what happened before (either intention matters or process matters or both do is not considered important). This is smart. However, this also does not take into account circumstantial factors, which can be important. If pedagogical choice of the teachers, their teaching behaviors and perhaps also outcomes, may be framed equally, if not more, by objective conditions in the context of teaching, rather than merely by the teachers' own aims and intentions, indoctrination should be construed as a structural problem.

Heater (1990) reminds that there is a boundary between indoctrination on the one hand and political literacy on the other, the latter being aimed at nurturing critical understanding of politics.

Harber (1992: 14) emphasizes that political literacy refers to the knowledge, skills and values that together constitute education for democracy. This should allow the students to become confident citizens who are capable of avoiding manipulation and are able to participate in democratic political action. This comprises the ability to detect biases and values, interpret and evaluate political information and construct argument out of evidence. Participation in political discussion, debate, as well as decision making should be emphasized. It is argued that the 'textbook and board and chalk' mode of teaching that only transmits knowledge and gives the "right answers" to students cannot achieve this. On the other hand, a range of methods, like projects, discussion and simulation are helpful. This shall also affect assessment, whose criteria shall emphasize freedom, critical thinking and political efficacy.

Porter (1979) outlines important values for enlightening political discussion in the classroom as:

1. willingness to take up a critical stance
2. willingness to be rational to one's stance
3. respecting evidence and be open to possibility of changing one's mind in the light of new evidence
4. valuing fairness in judgment and decisions
5. valuing freedom to choose between political alternatives
6. toleration of a diversity of ideas, beliefs, values and interests

Hahn (1998) explains, "When students have the opportunity to explore controversial public policy issues in a supportive atmosphere, where several sides of an issue are presented or explored, and they feel comfortable expressing their views even when they differ from the teacher's and the other students', then there is a greater likelihood that adolescents will express higher levels of political efficacy, interest, trust, and confidence than their peers without such experience."

Just like the discussion on the nature of indoctrination, these discussions on good teaching have been very enlightening but at the same time very idealistically oriented in the sense that there seems to be an assumption that the teacher's right will and correct pedagogical choice are all that matter. On the other hand, the discussion may be rather decontextualized, as circumstantial factors have not been highlighted.



In view of the above discussion, some pertinent questions to ask about the case of GPA teaching in Hong Kong are:

- What does indoctrination mean to the teachers of GPA?
- Do teachers see it as a risk in the course of teaching politics?
- Do GPA teachers share their political views and beliefs with students?
- How would political beliefs of the teachers affect the way they teach the students?
- Do GPA teachers encourage students to arrive at their own conclusions?

### 3.3.3 National identity

Aristotle's belief is that people are social in nature. The question that remains is how social living is organized. Families, clans and tribes each can frame social interactions and form the basis of human identity. In this light citizenship, or membership in a state, is simply one form of identity. Turner (1993) defines citizenship as a set of practices that define a person as a competent member of society while Marshall (1977) understands citizenship as a set of civil, political and social entitlements.

Since nation-state building was widely accepted as the basic principle of human division<sup>43</sup>, it has been believed that national identity should be the highest social identity to which people pledge their ultimate allegiance.

Edwards (1985) expresses that national identity is related to self-government politically and culturally represents an extension of self-defined ethnic identity.

Accordingly, it is pointed out that national identity comprises the following defining features:

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<sup>43</sup> In Western Europe, the unification of Germany and Italy at around 1870's set a major milestone for the age of nation-state building.

1. the subjective conception of groupness based on emotional bond
2. the emphasis (though not necessarily) on objective features, e.g. common ancestors and language etc., as boundary marker(s)
3. the call for solidarity of the group
4. using the group as a ready form of human categorization

It should be remembered that national identity is a dynamic rather than a static concept, being able to ebb and rise; change and be transformed with time.

Smith (1991) explains the fundamental features of national identity as follows:

1. a historic territory called homeland
2. common myths and historical memories
3. a common mass culture
4. common legal rights and duties for all members
5. a common economy with territorial mobility for members

Promoting national identity has long been a major aim of public education as it is believed that solidarity of the political entity will be enhanced. Smith (ibid.) summarizes that, "national identity underpins the state and its organs, or their pre-political equivalents in nations that lack their own states". This is particularly important for the newly created states, especially those in the third world, which are marked by racial and linguistic divisions. Even for developed countries like the United States, the government has deliberately worked to ensure that the immigrants would be assimilated into the mainstream culture. In the case of Canada, the failure to develop an

acceptable form of national identity among the French-speaking population in Quebec has put the state repeatedly on the verge of breaking up. In fact, examples of such disintegration were plentiful in the history of the modern world. Failing to create a sense of national identity, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia succumbed to disintegration one after the other. Each of the breaking up came with enormous political instability and human suffering on a massive scale.

On the other hand, it can be dangerous if such national identity is taken in a non-critical manner, especially if the underlying assumption is that it should be the final determining factor in moral and political judgment. Turner (2000) states, "It was the political environment of loyalty to the state and trust in the leadership which contributed to twentieth-century authoritarianism on both the left and the right." In this sense, a critical form of national identity must be based on openness, good understanding of the polity and sound judgment of the policies the government pursues.

Turner (ibid.) also explains how national identity and loyalty should be modified in the postmodern world: "Now postmodern or cosmopolitan citizenship will be characterized by cool loyalties and thin patterns of solidarity... Hybridity and diversity will have all but obscured the stable world of the nineteenth-century nationalism... The ironic citizens of the next century may be less likely to give their undivided support to whatever government happens to be in power. We need an ideology of membership therefore which will celebrate the uncertainty of belonging where our vocabularies are never known."

Ryn (1994: 100-101) makes a sensible balance between national identity and global citizenship. Responsible nationhood is defined as one that can avoid both utopian globalism on the one hand and national self-absorption on the other. "It is possible to

conceive of an affirmation of nationality that is not only compatible with a cosmopolitan fondness for diversity, but indistinguishable from it. Responsible nationhood can be defined in contrast with two equally unacceptable possibilities: One is an abstract universalism that wishes to replace religious, cultural and regional identities with an allegedly virtuous homogeneity. The other is a nationalism that is so full of itself that it has difficulty tolerating anything else.”

There is abundant literature which attests to the fact that national identity<sup>44</sup> of Hong Kong people has been weak (Tse, 1997; Breakthrough, 2001; Yu, 2002). A move in the direction of encouraging the people to identify with the People’s Republic of China becomes an understandable aim in education, in view of the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997. Morris and Cogan (2001) find that promoting national identity has become a defining feature of civic education in post-1997 Hong Kong. In fact in the curriculum document, *Learning to Learn*, acquiring national identity is specified as one of the five aims of civic and moral education.<sup>45</sup>

In view of the above discussion, some pertinent questions to ask about the case of GPA teaching in Hong Kong are:

- Turner (2000) reminds us that national identity may need to be nurtured hand in hand with critical awareness. Is this view shared by the GPA teachers?
- Does the teaching of politics, Chinese politics in particular, work to build up a sense of national identity among the students?
- What stands in the way of promoting national identity?

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<sup>44</sup> In this case, it is the identification with China, or the People’s Republic of China.

<sup>45</sup> See *Learning to Learn*, pp 20 (Five Essential Learning Experiences).

### 3.3.4 Patriotism

Putman (1998) defines patriotism as the quality of loving one's country. A distinction is also made between it and other concepts, like nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia.<sup>46</sup>

Pullen (1971) distinguishes between the meaning of patriotism in a democracy and patriotism in a totalitarian state. In a democracy, the individual is loyal to several groups (church, clubs and schools etc.) and idea systems that enrich his way of life. In a sense these add up to loyalty to the nation that respects all these institutions and the allegiance they command. On the other hand, in a totalitarian system, the government attempts to destroy all intermediate form of loyalties so that individual loyalty is in the hands of the state. It follows that in a democratic state, it is the responsibility of the individual to criticize one's country when convinced that it be wrong, according to the conscience and judgment. In this light, Pullen's view is that, the US anti-war activists during the Vietnam War era, despite their anti-government and anti-administration stance, are patriotic as they are pro-country in their own rational way (Pullen, p 21-33).

Gunsteren (1998) likewise suggests in post-industrial societies, the old republican notion of pure loyalty, devotion and sacrifice to the state has become redundant. Education is thus needed to train up the competence and a repertoire of skills youngsters need to tolerate, respect, communicate and work with such diversities.

Banks (1990) further suggests the notion "reflective patriotism". Accordingly, students must be involved in the process of understanding, not just of the success of the nation, but also of its struggles and shortcoming.

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<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, nationalism is referred to as the belief that interest of one's own country come first before others; chauvinism as unthinking and boastful devotion to one's own country or cause; and xenophobia as undue mistrust or fear of foreigners especially in political matters. See Putman (1998), pp 1-10.

However, it should be noted that even for a country founded on the principles of liberal democracy, how patriotism should be construed is still controversial, and the more rational, liberally framed version of patriotism is still relatively a new premise. Postman (1995), for example, still suggests that the important job of schools will be to inculcate a sense of national pride as the “students deserve it” and the “parents expect it”.

Pullen (1971) differentiates between traditional approach and non-traditional approach for teaching about patriotism. In the traditional approach, the focus is teaching specific expectations or requirements so that students adopt a traditional preconceived set of beliefs about his/her country. On the other hand, in the non-traditional approach, the teachers establish expectations or requirements that students develop a personal definition of patriotism through a careful examination of researched materials. In the same vein, Wringe (1992) distinguishes citizenship education that emphasizes adoption of desirable beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors from political literacy, which is critical in nature.

Tse (1997) believes that there was a state of poverty in terms of nationalistic education when Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997. National identity, loyalty and patriotism were largely dodged in schools.

Morris and Cogan (2001) explain that one of the major objectives of Hong Kong's civic education after the handover is to promote patriotism and love of the motherland. In discussing the four key tasks for schools, *Learning to Learn* takes “commitment to society and nation” as one of the five paramount values and attitudes.

On the other hand, Degolyer (2001) concludes that “a majority of Hong Kong people do not wish to encourage patriotism, or at least, the more overt form of it, and

clearly, people in Hong Kong want their education system focused on effective, not patriotic education.

Leung and Ng (ibid) comment that, "Nationalistic education is also de-politicized. This is evident from the speeches of Tung Chee Hwa and the document of *Learning to Learn* which focuses mainly on the cultural dimension such as history, culture, natural and human environment of China. The document, however, avoids the political dimension of China".

In view of the above discussion, some pertinent questions to ask about the case of GPA teaching in Hong Kong are:

- How do GPA teachers think about patriotism?
- Will the teaching of politics, say through GPA, help to enhance patriotism amongst the students?
- If patriotism is one of the key tasks of education after the political handover, does the call for patriotism sensibly differentiate between loving the country and supporting a regime or the policies it pursues? Is the call for patriotism primarily rational or emotional?

### 3.3.5 Democracy

Democracy is in origin a Greek word, made up of two shorter words, *demos* and *kratos*. *Demos* refers to the body of citizens and *kratos* refers to *power* or *rule* (Arblaster, 1994). Beetham and Boyle (1995) define democracy in terms of two principles, popular control over collective decision-making and equality of rights in the exercise of that control. Though the first institutional form of democratic institution came as early as 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC to the city-state of Athens, the concept is still

controversial and confusing. Carr and Hartnett (1996) explain, “The notion of ‘rule by the people’ is not unambiguous... What this means is that the concept of democracy is, like the concept of education, an essentially contested concept whose history has been marked by political struggle and ideological conflicts.”

One of the main struggles for truly representing the spirit of democracy took place during the Cold War era, when the communist regimes, headed by Soviet Union, challenged the Western notion of liberal democracy or capitalist democracy, which are based on multi-party competition, with a Marxist type of people’s democracy, which is based on dictatorship of the communist party.<sup>47</sup>

Although the fall of Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990’s and the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe represented a major setback to the communist discourse, how democracy should be realized is still a matter marked by diversity and controversies. In particular, there is an endless debate whether democracy should be construed as popular control or the way to legitimize representative government.<sup>48</sup>

Hogan (1997) gives a good account of important strands of thoughts concerning the development of liberal democratic thoughts. John Locke of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century was among the first important characters in democratic construction. His assertion of popular sovereignty and limited constitutional government paved the foundations for the development of modern liberal democratic theories. J.S. Mill of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century contributed vigorously to the building of modern liberal democratic thoughts. According to Mill, citizens should be actively involved in the governing of the state. In his work *On Liberty*, he argues that public participations in politics are not just needed

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<sup>47</sup> See Fukuyama’s discussion of capitalist democracy and Marxist democracy in Arblaster (1994), Chapter One.

<sup>48</sup> For details, see Carr and Hartnett (1996), Chapter 2.



for protection of the people. It is also a means of education for promoting the morality in support of the public good. He also puts forth a broad framework for the exercise of personal freedom in his famous "harm principle". According to Mill, social truths are only tentative in nature and should be subject to possible verification and falsification. As a corollary, development of culture and society hinges on freedom of thought and expression that is vital to the debate of ideas. Holding beliefs as exclusive doctrines only works to tarnish whatever truth that may be involved.<sup>49</sup> T.H. Marshall in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century extends the formerly laissez faire spirit of the liberal democrats to the vision of a welfare state where, apart from equal civil and political rights, social rights of entitlement to public services and social protection are honored. In a sense, this is a way to ensure equalities in a class society.

Hindess (2000) reminds that there has always been a controversy of two opposing views of liberal democracy. On the one hand there is the belief that people should directly participate in government decision making processes. On the other hand, there is the proposition that there should be a separation of the general public from the making of public policies. According to the latter view, all that is important is setting up a system of representative government.

In the United Kingdom, the Crick Report (1989) states that "Recently the terms good citizen and active citizen have come back into currency... individuals must be helped and prepared to shape the terms of such engagements by political understanding and action... Active citizens are as political as they are moral; moral sensibility derives in part from political understanding; political apathy spawns moral apathy..." The Report (1.7) states that, "Citizenship education must be education for citizenship. It is

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<sup>49</sup> See Mill's *On Liberty* and *Inaugural Address to the University of Saint Andrews*.

not an end in itself....” The ideal of participatory democracy is emphasized at the expense of a passive representative democracy in which people are politically active only at election time. Bottery (1995) also highlights that for democracy to flourish citizens must play an active role, in the formulation of public policy as well as the continued scrutiny and change of such policy. Morris and Cogan (2001:114) also outline the United States’ current focus in civic education as “encouraging informed, responsible participation in political life by competent citizens committed to fundamental values and principles of constitutional democracy.” It seems as a corollary to these discourses that the pendulum’s swing is one from merely using democracy as a means to legitimize government, to one where popular control over government and public policies should be enhanced. This emphasis on political participation again will have its impact on education.

Audigier (1998) discusses the notion of education for democratic citizenship in terms of competences. Cognitive competences comprise knowledge of collective life, human rights and democracy, of procedures (including the ability to speak, argue, reflect and debate) and of the present world. Affective competences refer to collective affection, conviction and adhesion to principles of democratic citizenship and that of freedom, equality and solidarity. Social competences, on the other hand, refer to the capability to live with others: to cooperate and resolve conflicts in line with democratic principles and to take part in politics and public debate.

Carr and Harnett (1996) explain, “Historically, the type of education deemed appropriate for enabling future citizens to participate in the shaping of their society has been liberal education...The task of cultivating in pupils the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for public participation requires a curriculum which fosters those forms of critical and explanatory knowledge which allows pupils to reappraise existing

social norms and reflect critically...Pedagogically, it requires participatory rather than instructional teaching methods in order to cultivate the skills and attitudes which democratic deliberation requires." On the other hand, Harber (1992) emphasizes that, if schools are to educate for democracy, the two prerequisites needed are respectively, the carrying out of political education in schools and the building up of democracy within schools.

A summary of the discussion above points out that, apart from the teaching of political knowledge and the meaning of democracy, education for democracy requires:

1. encouraging informed, responsible participation in political life
2. promoting willingness to exercise human rights and respect same rights of others, including the ability to speak, argue, reflect and debate
3. enhancing capability to live with others: to cooperate and resolve conflicts in line with democratic principles and to take part in politics and public debate
4. a curriculum allows pupils to reappraise existing social norms and reflect critically
5. the adoption of participatory rather than instructional teaching methods in class
6. upholding a democratic school ethos

In view of the above discussion, some pertinent questions to ask about the case of GPA teaching in Hong Kong are:

- Do GPA teachers respect divergent views of the students?
- Do GPA teachers encourage their students to participate into politics?
- How do GPA teachers understand democracy and how will their beliefs affect them in teaching GPA?
- How will the ethos of schools affect GPA as far as learning democracy through the subject is concerned?

### 3.3.6 International perspectives in political understanding

Gilbert (1997) emphasizes in this post-modern age, the nature of citizenship should be shifted from parochial national concern to care for the world as a global village and our membership in this village. Likewise, Falk (1994) also gives an account of global citizenship. The new economic realities (internationalization of finance, market, production etc.) represent a series of practical events that globalize our horizon of outlook, including the conceptions about political life. The growth of multinational enterprises and the movement of both capital and labor and population across national boundaries have brought foreign cultures right to our doorsteps. We need not just to get in touch with, but also to live with; work and share life with people whom we once considered aliens.

Crick Report (6.12.2), requires students to “understand there can be different types of government such as democracies and dictatorships...” Notice that democracies and dictatorships are both in plural forms. Bahmueller (1995: 2), in describing the National Standard for Civics and Government in the U.S. states, “Finally, students should be aware of alternative ways other countries organize constitutional government”.

Global outlook is a broad term. It denotes transcending one’s national and cultural confines to much broader framework of consideration and interaction. It involves considerations of linguistic pattern<sup>50</sup>, customs, way of life; knowledge of other states and their cultures; attitude to foreigners and reflections on own identity, from beyond a parochial “we versus them” dichotomy.

Byram (1997) explains in a model the knowledge, skills and attitudes involved in

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<sup>50</sup> See Byram (1997): *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*.

intercultural competence. It points to the importance of political education and cultural awareness in nurturing the competence.

Due to the focus of the present study, I shall confine the discussion to international perspectives of understanding politics. In this light, politically, people should acquire knowledge, not just of own government, political culture and polity, but also of those in other countries, and not just of those with the same political philosophy, but also those with opposing ideologies and views. Besides, one should be able to judge the strength and weakness of political systems, using this international framework of understanding. Such judgment shouldn't be biased due to one's own national belonging and may involve an equally critical attitude to one's own and others' government and the related policy practices.<sup>51</sup>

The need for Hong Kong people to have international perspectives is evident considering that it is an international city and a place the East meets with the West. In view of the above discussion, some pertinent questions to ask about the case of GPA teaching in Hong Kong are:

- How far does GPA teaching contribute to students' capabilities to understand politics with international perspectives?
- What sort of international perspectives is GPA offering to the students?
- What are the strength and limitations for GPA if it is to enhance the international perspectives of the students in the political sense?

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<sup>51</sup> In a broad sense, this is in line with the knowledge and attitude dimension requirement of Byram's intercultural competence model. See Byram (1996).

### 3.4 Literature about GPA teaching in Hong Kong

Literature about the teaching of the subject Government and Public Affairs in schools is best described as scanty though there is occasional reference to it in the discussion about civic education in Hong Kong.

The following are summaries of some of the pertinent works:

Tao (1986) concludes that though GPA was first proposed as a curriculum improvement, the founding of the subject was the result of political changes within Hong Kong. The impending change of sovereignty and the implementation of democratic reforms in Hong Kong allowed what otherwise would have been a “shelved plan”<sup>52</sup> to be adopted, as this could help the government to answer the public request for political education. By far, this seems to be the only literature devoted entirely to the study of GPA. The research is quite old and involves only the planning stage of the subject. It concerns only how the subject began, instead of how it is being implemented and the impact of such implementation. It doesn’t cover anything about learning and teaching processes in the classroom, as well as other factors that may have an impact on such processes. Thus, it may not be of much help if the aim is to understand beyond the level of intended curriculum and the history that brings it into being.

Other literatures that cover GPA only do so in a piecemeal manner when other topics are being studied. The following are the more important examples.

Tse (1997) makes the following comment. “The official reports of students’ performance in the social subjects like Chinese History, EPA and GPA showed that they usually committed the errors or regurgitation of facts and were generally poor in their

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<sup>52</sup> See Chapter two, 2.2.

analytical, critical and communicative abilities in answering examination questions...there is only modest success in transmitting knowledge to the students. As to attitudes and values, the effects are even problematic (p 33).”

Lee and Leung (1999) say that some of the students, noticeably science stream students, are deprived of the chance to study subjects like EPA and GPA. This differential access is taken as a constraint on carrying out civic education through the formal curriculum.

Morris and Chan (1997), in discussing relative status of subjects in schools, comments that GPA is of low status as they do not link clearly to further study in school and university.

We should note from the above examples that statements about GPA are made either based on general observation or reporting on documents.

On the other hand, Lo<sup>53</sup>, despite the fact that he didn't study GPA directly, did cover some of the difficulties the subject encountered during implementation. Making use of his experience of teaching politics in the university, he also explained the sensitivity of teaching politics in Hong Kong<sup>54</sup>.

Lo (1997) mentions that GPA is offered only in a minority of schools and schools do not favor political teaching. Besides, some of the teachers didn't really specialize in the study of politics. Instead, they studied history or sociology before. Besides, the social ethos is not supportive to the teaching of politics in schools as politics often is taken as dangerous and dirty.

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<sup>53</sup> Lo taught GPA briefly before he made himself a lecturer of Political Science, first in Macau, and then in the University of Hong Kong.

<sup>54</sup> In fact, Lo kindly helped as an informant in this study to speak on the sensitive nature of GPA teaching and the impact of such sensitivity. He didn't want to be anonymous and thus his name is quoted in both the transcript and in Chapter Six.

Lo (ibid.) further explains the difficulty of teaching politics (in the university) as:

1. students' lack of basic knowledge of politics
2. students' poor command of English<sup>55</sup>
3. difficulty to strike a balance between objectivity and prejudice

Another comment made by Lo (ibid.) is particularly worth noting. "There now seems to be more psychological stress in teaching Hong Kong politics than previously. Universities in PRC have Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cells, and a similar situation may arise in Hong Kong where researchers or teachers of sensitive subjects may be informally monitored. In 1994, one of my former graduate students who came from the PRC told me explicitly that his friends, who were also studying in Hong Kong, were CCP members. In May 1997, a political scientist in a local university told me that his mainland student revealed that regular meetings among students who were CCP members did take place..."

In another unpublished article by Lo entitled *From Dependency to Independent and Critical Thinking: Teaching Hong Kong Politics in Hong Kong*, the views of university students with regard to political education in secondary school are reported<sup>56</sup>. A large majority, or 76.7 percents of the students, believed that secondary school had failed to prepare them for independent thinking on current affairs, including Hong Kong politics. The following is a summary of comments by the students (quoted from Lo's work selectively):

1. "The courses at secondary school did not cover political matters and they covered little about current affairs, with the exception of Government and Public Affairs and

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<sup>55</sup> Lo is teaching in the University of Hong Kong, where English is used as the medium of instruction.

<sup>56</sup> Lo did his study to 30 students of the University of Hong Kong who took the module *Hong Kong Politics* in the academic year 1997-8.



Economic and Public Affairs, but they were boring and had inadequate coverage.”

2. “No politics could be mentioned in my school. Teachers did not talk about politics at all. I had to explain to my history teacher why I put a poster of Hitler on a wall for advertisement of a club activity. The principal saw the poster and asked me for a reason.”
3. “Most of the teachers were very neutral and they might be afraid of talking about politics.”
4. “No teacher was responsible for (teaching us) such current affairs and politics was banned by the previous educational rule.”
5. “Academic results were emphasized and the school did not stimulate us to be concerned about current affairs.”
6. “Secondary school teachers did not talk about public affairs or their opinions.”

It is highlighted that only a minority of students disagreed with these statements and most of them who disagreed revealed that they had taken courses in either History or GPA. It is argued that civic education should be revised so that interest in Hong Kong politics can be stimulated. Besides, secondary school teachers should take courses in politics and undergo training on how to teach students to think freely, creatively, independently and critically.

The researcher believes that the total lack of literature on how GPA is being taught by teachers and how it may have an impact on the students has created a vacuum to be filled by research efforts. The present study is aimed at casting light over such areas where little has been found. Hopefully, this can be useful as general reference to understand the complexities involved when politics is being taught in schools as a part of the formal curriculum.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher reviews with the help of literature the development of civic and political education in Hong Kong, as this history will have its impact on the teaching of politics in schools. Teaching methods and the issue of indoctrination are studied because knowledge about the way the subject is taught will help us understand the subject beyond the level of the intended curriculum. National identity, patriotism, democracy and international perspectives in political understanding are deemed to be important objectives for civic and political education and it is interesting to review the impact of GPA in this light. This chapter is meant to give the necessary background and focus to inform the investigation and the analysis of the findings in Chapter Five and Chapter Six of this thesis.

## **Chapter Four: Methods and Procedures**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This study examines the perceptions of GPA teachers regarding how the subject is being taught in schools and the impact such teaching has on the students and does so by working in the tradition of grounded theory.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) define grounded theory as the “discovery of theory from data” (p1) while substantive theory as “theory developed for a substantive, or empirical area of inquiry” (p32, adapted). On the other hand, Strauss and Corbin (1990) define theory as “A set of well developed concepts related through statements of relationship which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena” (p15).

The researcher doesn't aim at testing a pre-constructed theory. The aim of the researcher is to generate a theory based on “the reality” unearthed in the course of the study. The researcher is trying to generate a theory that informs the understanding of findings related to the study. It should be noted that the researcher's interpretations and conclusions are neither meant to be final nor exclusive.

To accomplish the objective, interviews were conducted with GPA teachers and ex-teachers. Curriculum planners (planners of the Syllabus and Teaching Guidelines) and academics, whose studies were pertinent, were also interviewed to provide the needed information to inform the understanding of the teachers' discourses. Important curriculum documents, including the Syllabuses, the Teaching Guidelines, public examination papers and examination reports were also analyzed.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the development of the research

instrument, identify the population for the study, explain procedures used in administering the study, discuss the approach in data analysis and explain how measures are taken to enhance the validity and reliability of the study.

A flow chart is given at the end of this chapter to provide a bird eye's view of the design and implementation of this study.

## **4.2 The research instrument**

Interviews and documentary study are used in this study.

Interviews have been chosen as the means of data collection mainly because of the following reasons:

- Since the target population is small<sup>57</sup>, the use of quantitative method like survey by questionnaires, which normally is aimed at getting standardized answers from a large population, may not be appropriate.
- Grounded theory building is based on the belief that the truth is yet to be unearthed. Thus, a semi-structured interview, that enables the informants to give their account freely, apportion time according to their own choice, or even change topics, will allow unanticipated concepts to emerge and to be studied. This will be difficult to achieve if a more quantitative approach in data collection, say through survey by questionnaires with defined answers, is adopted.
- Interviews allow the researcher to get not just answers from informants but also understand the way the informants speak (intonation, volume, pauses, repetition and hesitation) and body gestures etc. These can also be helpful in understanding the

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<sup>57</sup> There are only a little more than 20 serving GPA teachers and a small number of ex-teachers.

meaning of the informants.<sup>58</sup>

Wengraf (2001) explains that depth interviews can be partially prepared and jointly produced by the interviewer and the interviewees. Glesne (1999) makes a similar point and proposes that new questions that emerge in the course of interview can be added to or even replace the pre-established ones. In line with this spirit, the interviews of the present study were semi-structured. A list of questions was prepared to guide the interviews with each of the following parties: teachers, curriculum planners, and question setters of public examination.

The aim of this study is to fill the gap of literature about GPA teaching in Hong Kong's schools. It is also hoped that findings and conclusions of the study can provide reference to teaching politics as a part of the formal curriculum in schools (Section 3.4 refer). This aim gives rise to the research questions as reported in Chapter One (Section 1.5). The discussion of the important concepts (national identity, patriotism and indoctrination etc.) pointed out a number of pertinent questions (Section 3.3 refer). These guided the framing of the interview questions.

The interview questions were intended to provide information that helps to answer the research questions. The interview questions were first drafted by the researcher and were submitted to the Supervisor for comments. After discussions with the Supervisor between November and December, 2001, the initial draft was improved. The instruments were then pilot-tested in January 2002 with two ex-teachers, one of them used to be a setter while the other is still working with the setting work. Minor modifications, mainly with wording, were added in the final version.

The questions were open-ended that allowed the informants to express their own

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<sup>58</sup> During the course of interviews, such changes were sometime used as hints to guide the researcher in the asking of questions. In the transcripts, repetitions, pauses and change of tone of the informants are recorded so that the readers can know what happened.

ideas, instead of choosing between defined options.

These questions were used in a flexible way. The informants could, if they deemed fit, talk on topics of their own choice. The researcher was ready to pick up new and unanticipated concepts that grew out of the informants' discourses. The researcher would not insist on covering all questions or asking every question in an equally detailed way. The reaction of the informants and the circumstances determined the actual shape of the interview.

Personal particulars (age, teaching experience, highest degree obtained etc) about the informants were ascertained in the telephone contacts with the informants before the interviews. In case that the informant was a serving teacher, background information of the schools was also obtained.

An outline of the interview questions, together with their concern, is given below.

#### **4.2.1 Preset questions to teachers**

(Q1-10 below *concern about aims of the teachers, pedagogical issues and indoctrination*)

1. What do you intend to do and what do you want to achieve through teaching the subject?
  2. Do you take the subject as an academic subject (Politics) or do you see the subject as preparation for political participation (politics)?
  3. Do you consider the aims and objectives in the Syllabus to be important in guiding teaching activities and do you consult them before preparing classes? Are you familiar with such aims and objectives? Do you agree to such aims and objectives as reasonable
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and sufficient?

4. Do you follow or consult the recommended teaching methods and activities as listed in the Teaching Guidelines?
5. How do you teach the subject in class?
6. What are the actual factors that determine your choice of teaching methods?
7. What is the desired method of teaching the subject if it is different from the method actually adopted?
8. How will you handle controversial issues in class?
9. Do you help students see politics from different perspectives and compare and contrast different political beliefs?
10. What does indoctrination mean to you? What should be done, if needed, to guard against it in the course of teaching GPA?

(Q11-15 below *concern about* the impact of GPA teaching: democratic learning, fostering national identity and patriotism and developing international perspectives etc.)

11. What do you think national identity shall be like? Do you think the teaching of GPA can foster such sense of national identity?
12. Should patriotism be aimed at in the course of teaching GPA? If so, what does it mean?
13. Do you allow and welcome divergent thoughts in matters of politics and political issues in the course of teaching?
14. How will you handle the teaching of politics in relation to Hong Kong and China, if in your own views, there are significant conflicts with democratic principles?
15. Do you lead, encourage and provide chance for students to participate into politics

with what they have learned? If affirmative, can you give examples?

(Q16-20 below *concern about* examination and assessment)

16. In what ways are public examinations important in the teaching of GPA? Do public examinations foster or hinder the teaching of GPA?
17. How do you assess your students in school?
18. What are important considerations when you are setting questions for the subject's tests and examinations in your school?
19. What are the criteria of a good answer in test and examination?
20. How will you define a successful student of the subject?

(Q21-23 *concern about* school and social ethos)

21. Do you think the government has actively promoted GPA?
22. Do you think that the attitude of the school administration and the overall ethos of the school are favorable to the teaching of GPA?
23. How do you think the social ethos is having an impact on the teaching of GPA in schools?

#### **4.2.2 Preset questions to GPA's curriculum planners**

(Q1-5 were designed for planners of the Syllabus while Q6 was designed for planners of the Teaching Guidelines. Q7-8 were to be answered by all planners)

1. Is the subject helpful to prepare the students to be effective citizens of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region? If so, in what ways is it helpful?



2. Do you find the aims of the Syllabus satisfactory? If you were free to change the aims of the subject in whichever way you like, would you like to change the aims? If so, what change would you like to make?
3. Do you find the content of the subject satisfactory? If you were free to change the content of the subject in whichever way you like, would you like to change the content? If so, what change would you like to make?
4. Do you find the assessment mode of the subject satisfactory? If you were free to change the assessment mode of the subject in whichever way you like, would you like to change the assessment mode? If so, what change would you like to make?
5. Which part of the Syllabus do you think is most satisfactorily written? Which part is the least satisfactorily written? Please explain your answer.
6. Do you find the suggested pedagogy of the Teaching Guidelines satisfactory? If you were free to change the suggested pedagogy of the subject in whichever way you like, would you like to change the suggested pedagogy? If so, what change would you like to make?
7. What will you see as the possible obstacles to the smooth implementation of the subject in schools?
8. The subject has not been able to grow, considering its adoption rate. Why are schools unwilling to adopt the subject?

### 4.2.3 Questions to public examination setters

(Q1, 4 & 5 *concern about* the views of the setters about the desirability of the public examination mode. Q2-3 *concern about* the practical consideration in setting questions.)

1. How far do you think the present mode of assessment in the public examination of GPA is appropriate in relation to the aims of the subject?
2. In setting questions for the subject's public examination, what are the most important factors in your consideration?
3. In relation to your experience in the moderation work, what do you think are the most important consideration in accepting / rejecting questions for use in the public examination?
4. Describe your feeling about the qualities of GPA questions asked in public examinations?
5. If you were free to change the format of the subject's public examination, would you like to change it? If so, what changes would you like to introduce?

### 4.3 Population and sampling

The primary population chosen for this study consisted of the contingent of Hong Kong secondary teachers who were experienced in teaching GPA. This comprised serving teachers<sup>59</sup> and ex-teachers of the subject. Snowball (or chain) sampling was used to find the informants. With the recommendation of the Subject Officer of Hong

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<sup>59</sup> Due to low enrollment both of schools and students into the subject, there should be only about 20 GPA teachers in the serving list.

Kong Examination Authority and the chairperson of GPA's A Level subject committee (HKEA), the researcher got in touch with a number of serving and ex-teachers of the subject who might be willing to help as informants. The researcher then contacted each of them, briefed them and confirmed their participation in the study.

Curriculum planners and public examination setters were needed as their views could inform the understanding of the teachers' discourses. Convenience sampling was used to select informants. Merten (1998) defines convenience sampling as choosing informants to participate in the study because they are readily available. A number of teachers who took part in this study were serving concurrently as curriculum planners or had got such experience before<sup>60</sup>. As such, they could provide information on both roles. Other curriculum planners and setters of public examination questions were friends to the researcher<sup>61</sup>.

Four informants, comprising three academics and one GPA teacher, were invited to give their views on concepts and theories that emerged in course of the study. These informants were chosen mainly because they could help to cast light on the concepts discovered in the course of the study. Either due to their peculiar background or to their prior study and work, the informants became an important source of information. This actually was a form of theoretical sampling, often required in the course of grounded theory construction. The sampling method in this regard was intensity sampling. Merten (ibid) describes intensity sampling as identifying sites or individuals in which the phenomenon of interest is strongly represented. In this study, such individuals were

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<sup>60</sup> It might be good if the teacher group and the planner group were totally different. But, in the case of GPA, this proved not to be possible. Due to the small size of the contingent, many of the teachers would be involved in the planning work of the subject.

<sup>61</sup> The researcher had worked with the subject on its curriculum development and setting work since the subject was first launched. As such, the researcher had the chance to befriend some of the members in the committees.

chosen because, due to their study and researches in the specific areas, they became rich sources of useful data.

#### 4.4 Implementing the interviews

The interviews were conducted at time and place the informants found agreeable. The researcher would entertain the informant's suggestion (if any) as far as possible. Most of the interviews were conducted in the workplace of the informants. But, on a few occasions, the informants didn't find it comfortable and suggested that the interviews be held in a nearby cafeteria or restaurant<sup>62</sup>. Most of the interviews were about one hour. But, in some occasions, they might take two hours to finish. In these cases, the researcher gave occasional breaks to ensure that the informants would not become too exhausted to continue with the conversation. The researcher would continue only if the informant didn't find it unpleasant. The interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the informants and were transcribed by the researcher, without the help of an assistant.

In the actual course of interviews, the researcher would tell the informants that they could talk on any topics they deemed appropriate or worth talking about, as the questions in the list were only tentative.

The researcher didn't try to rush to finish all questions if time did not permit or the informant would not like to talk about them. Neither was the researcher confined only to the preset questions when it happened that, out of the informants' discourse, there should be other concepts worth exploring. The researcher used the questions in a

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<sup>62</sup> There was only one exception. One GPA teacher was interviewed through the telephone, as she preferred it that way. The interview was transcribed in point form, based on notes the interviewer jotted during the telephone conversation.

flexible way and did not mean to apportion time equally on the questions. In a way, the preset questions represented a region bounded by dotted lines in which data are collected. The researcher kept himself alert, not just to the content of the informants' discourses, but also to other features such as the change of tone, the delay in response etc., as they were also revealing and could help the interviewer to plan for the flow of the dialogue. Besides, what the informant said before and after the interview could also be considered if they were deemed to be informative. This could be what the informant said when he led the way to the room where the interview was held. It could also be the comment he made when the researcher was brought to the door after the interview had been finished.

In short, the conversations in such interviews had not been confined to the predetermined questions.<sup>63</sup> On the contrary, points and concepts raised by the informants had helped shaped the researcher's questions in the subsequent interviews. New concepts that emerged in preceding interviews could become ready topics to be explored and confirmed in succeeding ones. As explained earlier, the researcher also used theoretical sampling to invite pertinent informants to share their expertise and understanding.<sup>64</sup> In that case, the informants would be invited to comment on the specific concepts that emerged, as well as to share their views and analysis.

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<sup>63</sup> There was one occasion that a teacher was so outspoken that he actually took over the control of the dialogue and strongly articulated his personal views on the subject. The interviewer then turned himself into a listener and only commented occasionally to facilitate the informant's discourse.

<sup>64</sup> Teachers during interviews brought up the following concepts: *depoliticization of education*, *gender impact in political class*, *sensitive nature of teaching politics* and *subject background of teacher*. Three academics (who had studied the first three concepts) and one GPA teacher (with higher degree study in politics) were invited to give their views and comments.

#### 4.5 Data analysis procedure

In Chapter Five, the researcher will report the teachers' stories about how the subject is taught and how it might have impact on the students. The researcher will show the spread of the responses and identified the mainstream opinions if they can be discerned. A quantitative account about the distribution of the responses will be given. Initial analysis of the responses, mainly with regard to emerging patterns, will be conducted. Unanticipated and outlying cases will be highlighted. In a sense, open coding and axial coding work (Strauss and Corbin *ibid*, chapter 8&9) are completed in this stage. The categories and subcategories in this stage are developed directly from the interview questions. However, new categories and concepts that emerge will be pursued and studied with the help of theoretical sampling.

In Chapter Six, the researcher will try to explain the findings reported in Chapter Five. This will be done by widening the data base by taking into account the total discourses of the teachers on the one hand, and by incorporating the discourses of other pertinent parties, namely curriculum planners, question setters and academics etc. on the other. New categories will be worked out to cater for the widened data set in order to subsume the concepts in the data set. A paradigm will be offered to explain the stories the teachers told so as to turn the teachers' stories into an explanatory picture. The researcher will thereby proceed to construct a model that can summarize the salient features of the paradigm. Drawing conclusion on the paradigm will represent the completion of the theorizing work in this study. Based on the findings of the study, some practical recommendations will be given to improve the teaching of GPA in schools. Interface between the findings of this study and those as reported in the literature will be outlined.

#### **4.6 Validity and reliability of the study, and the issue of anonymity**

It is important that the result of the study could be both valid and reliable in view of what it was planned for.

Merten (1998) explains validity and reliability in qualitative research in terms of credibility and dependability. Credibility refers to the correspondence between the respondents' perceptions of social constructs and the researcher's portrayal of their viewpoints. It hinges on respondents being asked the right questions that they can understand and that can solicit the right information. Secondly, the respondents must have the room needed to profile the images and concepts they actually have. Dependability on the other hand refers to stability of results over time. This hinges on obtaining true and trustworthy results from the study. Furthermore, the judgment of the researcher has to be traceable and well explained.

To enhance the credibility of the present study, the researcher took up a number of measures.

Firstly, the questions used in the interview were turned out after careful discussion with the Supervisor to ensure that they could be understood and they could help to bring out necessary data. Pilot interviews were run and amendment to the interview questions was made to enhance their effectiveness and minimize the chance of mistaken responses.

Secondly, the researcher tried to cover informants of different backgrounds in order to gain more perspectives in relation to the subject. For example, teachers of both sexes and at different ages were covered. They had differential experiences in teaching the subject too. In some occasions the informants were doing well in the schools they taught while there were also cases in which the informants believed that their schools

would soon close the subject. Besides, the views of curriculum planners and public examination setters were brought in to inform the understanding of the teachers' narratives.

Thirdly, the researcher tried to be open and receptive to the emergence of new and unexpected concepts and theories in the informants' discourses. When deemed necessary, the researcher would use theoretical sampling to locate new data sources in order to understand emerging concepts. In the course of interviews, the informants were also allowed to speak on topics they deemed fit, instead of being confined to the pre-set questions. This would allow the informants to best speak their mind and express the views they had.

On the other hand, the researcher remained alert to the way the informants gave their accounts, including delay in response and the change in tone etc. This, together with what the informant said before and after the interview, could also be of help to understanding the informants' mind.

To enhance the dependability of the study, the following measures were taken:

First, the procedures of the study were outlined. These included how the population was defined, how informants were chosen, how interviews were implemented and how findings were reported etc.

One important consideration for making the study dependable was to ensure that the informants would speak what they really had in mind, considering that teaching politics in schools could be a sensitive thing. In this regard, the researcher tried to assure the informants in a number of ways. On top of the usual provision of anonymity<sup>65</sup>, the researcher promised the informants that the transcription of the

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<sup>65</sup> One academic who gave his view about sensitivity of political teaching in a theoretical sampling based interview specified that he needed not remain anonymous. As a corollary his name was quoted in the interview. In a similar token, the Subject Officer (HKEA) agreed to be quoted in the thesis after I had



interview would be done by the researcher himself, instead of by a hired assistant. This would ensure that the voice of the informants would not be identified. Before commencement of the interview, the informant would sign a consent form that specified all these provisions<sup>66</sup>.

Full transcriptions were done to enable the readers to interpret the narratives in their own way and develop their own version of truth in line with the spirit of hermeneutics. During the transcription, the researcher also translated the conversation, which was in Chinese, into English for the ease of inspection.

Bias and mistakes of the researcher, inclusive of errors in translation, could affect the effective transcribing of the interviews. To ensure that the narratives of the informants were fairly represented, the researcher sent the draft transcripts to the informants for their verification and correction before such transcription was accepted for use in the study. All the transcriptions were handed in together with the thesis.

Finally, triangulation was built into the study to guard against unfounded and biased presentations. The narratives of serving teachers were studied together with that of the ex-teachers of the subject. This would help to ensure that bias due to stake holding could be identified. In a similar token, views given by curriculum planners and public examination setters were studied against those expressed by their counterparts who were no more in the serving list.

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explained that anonymity, in his case, might not be a full cover of identity.

<sup>66</sup> A sample of the consent form is given in Appendix 5

#### **4.7 A brief account of the administrative procedures**

In January 2001, the researcher started to discuss with the Supervisor about the topic and content of the study and a drafted proposal was later submitted to the University. In August, the Graduate School formally approved the proposed field of study of the researcher. In November, the researcher submitted the *application form for research ethics approval* for consideration by the Ethics Advisory Committee of the university. The application was accepted. Potential informants were contacted and a schedule of interviews was built up. The research instruments were pilot-tested in January 2002 and minor modifications, mainly with wording, were added in its final version. The interview to teachers and other parties commenced thereafter.

#### **4.8 Role of the researcher in the study**

The researcher assumed different roles in the course of the study. During the stage of interview and data collection, the researcher tried to be a friend to the informants. The background of the researcher as a former drafter, planner and teacher of the subject was a bonus here. The fact that the researcher had no power relationship with the informants and that the researcher did work with some of the informants in different committees before also helped to build up the trust and rapport with which the informants could speak with ease.

In the interpretation stage, the researcher allowed his views to be shaped by and changed by the data collected. This required the researcher to discard whatever preconceptions and precepts he had in mind and to examine the data collected as a disinterested researcher. From time to time, this proved to be difficult.

In the theory building stage, the researcher would need to integrate pertinent concepts into a theory. In this process, the researcher would need to review the data at hand, decide on their relative significance, as well as determine the shape of the relationship. In this rather subjective part of the exercise, the researcher has to draw on his insight of the subject, developed through a long period of service in relation to the subject. While on the other hand, the researcher had to remain vigilant to his own vulnerability to bias and prejudice.

**Figure 4.1 A flowchart to depict the sequence of planning, data collection and analytical work in this study.**

Step One: Setting the research topic



Step Two: Developing the research questions (Chapter One: 1.5)



Step Three: Planning data collection (adopting interviews and documentary study to collect data; contact possible informant etc.)



Step Four: Developing the Instrument (preparing the interview questions from the research questions) (commencement of documentary study)



Step Five: Pilot testing and modifying of interview questions



Step Six: Implementation of interviews



Step Seven: New important concepts emerge in the course of interviews are spotted



Step Eight: Theoretical sampling and related interviews carried out



Step Nine: Data saturation perceived <sup>67</sup>



Step Ten: Reporting teachers' discourse and initial analysis (Chapter Five)

- categories (pedagogies, indoctrination, national identity etc.) are developed directly from interview questions
- open and axial coding are carried out
- only the teachers' discourses related to the categories are considered and reported
- ex-teachers' views are used as triangulation to understand those expressed by the serving teachers



Step Eleven: Theory building (Chapter Six)

- a widened data base is built up
- the teachers' discourses on other topics are incorporated
- the views expressed by other pertinent parties (curriculum planners, public examination setters, GPA Subject Officer and pertinent academics, who are invited because of theoretical sampling etc) are incorporated and this provides additional means of triangulation

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<sup>67</sup> Data saturation here refers to the stage at which the researcher found that relevant data needed for theorizing had already been collected. This was evident when no new and significant information could be obtained from the new data collected.

- findings from documentary study are considered
- new categories (milieu, teachers' own personal beliefs and curriculum) are worked out to cater for the widened data set and to subsume the significant concepts
- a paradigm is constructed and teachers' stories as reported in Chapter Five are explained against the newly constructed categories or core factors



Step Twelve: Theory refining and model generation (Chapter Six)

- identify salient features of the paradigm
- capture such salient features with a model
- selective coding is finished at this stage



Step Thirteen: identifying the interface of present study with findings reported in literatures (Chapter Six)



Step Fourteen: reflections and making of recommendations to improve GPA teaching based on the analysis of the present research (Chapter Seven)

# Chapter Five: Data Presentation and Analysis

## 5.1 Introduction

This study aims at exploring from the views of the teachers how the subject GPA is taught and the impact it has on the students. In this chapter, the discourses of the teachers and ex-teachers about GPA teaching and its impact are reported.

In reporting the data, the emphasis of this chapter is to show the spread of the responses and identify the mainstream opinion as far as possible. Whenever possible, a brief quantitative account of the responses will be added to show the comparative weight of the various responses. Initial analysis of the responses will be conducted with the aim of exploring the implied meaning or hidden theories of the informants. In return, these will help us to understand how an overall picture shall be portrayed in the next chapter.

The data collected from the interviews with GPA teachers and ex-teachers are reported with reference to the following categories, namely:

1. Pedagogical issues
2. Indoctrination
3. National identity
4. Patriotism
5. Democracy
6. International perspectives

These categories are derived from the research questions as discussed in Chapter One (1.5 refer). Pedagogical issues and indoctrination are important because they may have significant effect on the outcome of learning. The remaining four categories are

discussed in relation to the impact of GPA teaching. They are important objectives for political and civic education in Hong Kong because of the transfer in sovereignty in 1997 and the development of representative government (3.2.2 and 3.2.3 refer). Other categories and concepts identified in the course of research will be considered in the Chapter Six.

## 5.2 Pedagogical Issues

**Introduction:** Chapter Three (3.3.1) outlined a number of questions relevant to the present study. The questions that findings as reported in this section help to answer include:

- What are the salient features of the GPA curriculum and how do such curriculum features affect the way politics is taught?
- How do GPA teachers understand their task?
- How do the ethos of schools and the conventional beliefs about class teaching affect the teaching of GPA in Hong Kong?
- Will political teaching in class become sensitive?

A total of 10 informants speak on pedagogical issues. Eight of them are serving teachers. Two of them are ex-teachers.

### a. Role of the curriculum documents

There are two sets of curriculum documents for the subject at each level.



The Syllabus is the official examination syllabus that prescribes the aims and objectives of the subject, the content, and the examination rubrics. This is published by the Hong Kong Examination Authority. The syllabus at each level is looked after by a subject committee. The committee is headed by the Subject Officer and is composed mainly of teachers and university lecturers.

The Curriculum Development Council (CDC) publishes the Teaching Guidelines. To facilitate the job, a committee is formed at each level. The committees are composed mainly of teachers and academics and are headed by the officials of the CDC. The Teaching Guidelines prescribe how teaching can be implemented, including teaching methods, sorts of activities and time allocation etc.

Nine informants (8 teachers and 1 ex-teacher) speak about the curriculum documents. Interestingly, despite the fact that a lot of meeting time was spent to turn out these official documents, they do not seem to play a significant role in guiding the teaching and learning in the classroom.

None of the teachers say they will often consult the Syllabus' aims and objectives in planning their teaching. Three reasons are given.

First, the Syllabus is deemed important only for beginning teachers. Serving teacher and Syllabus planner (Subject 4) says, "*I think I would, especially in the beginning. At first, you don't have the experience. I would then refer to the official documents to ensure that I had taught the things and achieved certain things. It is not the case now as I know the whole syllabus so well as I am dealing with it everyday...*" (Bold printing in excerpt of discourse refers to key points.)

Second, the Syllabus' aims and objectives are deemed not having practical value. It may be due to its generic and idealist nature. Subject 10, a serving teacher explains, "*They are very generic in fact. I do read them but only to get a brief sketch... Instead I read them every*

year...*The call for students to analyze and think rationally can be achieved. But, those related to action and participation may be too idealistic.*"

It can also be that such aims and objectives can't help in preparing students for examination. Subject 12, an ex-teacher, expounds, *"Back to the basic, you need to see what sorts of questions are asked in public examinations and where the focus is. Those aims and objectives basically are not linked directly to the questions asked (in the public examination). So, I won't pay much attention to them."*

Third, there is an extreme view that the Syllabus' aims and objectives are fake. They are written in a way to please the higher authority. Subject 7, a serving teacher and Syllabus planner complains, *"I can tell you this. I have been taking part in the writing up of these aims and that. When we did it, it was XXX who did it alone. He just worked out the things from imagination. Some of the things there are absurd. There was then a sixth form education reform committee and it asked for ten aims. It required committees of each subject to link the subject with such aims...In fact, I believe you cannot teach civic education in one subject."*

In fact, these represent a range of attitude towards the usefulness and correctness of the Syllabus' aims and objectives. Not reading the Syllabus' aims and objectives may mean that they are fine and the teacher can remember them so well that he/she does not need to read them any more. It may also mean that the teacher has worked out a better version of teaching, due to own experience. The latter is in line with the comment that the Syllabus' aims and objectives cannot practically guide teaching in class. The last quote is really different. It expresses that the Syllabus' aims and objectives are simply the tool to please the higher level. They are not true statements of what can be done in GPA. Thus they are fake and not worth reading anymore. One way or the other, if the Syllabus' aims and objectives are not given high accord, the teachers are likely to teach according to their own conception of what should be and what can be achieved. The

impact of GPA teaching can be substantially different from what officially it has been planned for.

The Teaching Guidelines, likewise, do not mean much in directing classroom teaching. None of the informants say that they will follow the Teaching Guidelines closely in teaching.

Three of them believe that the Guidelines are idealistic and cannot be really implemented considering the time and circumstances. Subject 4, a serving teacher and a planner of the Teaching Guidelines, comments, *“Of course, there is also a degree of exaggeration. For example, in teaching each topic, it says that students should do some visits. In teaching District Councils, students are asked to visit the District Councils. The same is true when students are asked to visit the Legislative Council when the topic is being taught...”*

Two informants feel very negatively. They describe the Teaching Guidelines as “junk”. The remark made by Subject 8 (serving teacher) is remarkable. The teacher says, *“That’s junk. I read it before when I was writing something and would like to see the suggested activities there. But, I find the activities suggested in the Guidelines, like using the boards (for display) and drawing of flow charts etc., useless. I either find them too simplistic or that the activities suggested cannot serve the objectives I have in mind. Take asking the students to draw a flow chart as example. What is the purpose of it? This will not enlighten the students with regard to helping them to refine the way they see things.”*

It should be noted that this remark is fundamentally different from the one above that says that the Teaching Guidelines are unable to be implemented. This one actually negates the value of the activities prescribed, as they are too superficial and uninspiring.

The only real use of the Guidelines seems to be marginal, say as loose reference and as materials that can add color to the year plan to be submitted to the school head. Subject 10 (serving teacher) expresses, *“I do read them as reference to make the year plan and*

before teaching a topic... *But, I will not necessarily follow the methods in teaching.*"

We can see from these responses that, as the Teaching Guidelines are not strictly adhered to in the course of teaching, the teachers in concern actually play a determining role in designing how the subject is to be taught. A variety of teaching patterns will result, depending on the teacher's pedagogical choice. Such choice reflects the personal style of the teacher as well as the situational factors he or she encounters.

#### b. Teaching the subject in class

One spectacular feature of GPA teaching is that all 10 informants, 8 teachers and 2 ex-teachers, unanimously emphasize that current issues are very important materials in the actual course of teaching. How important is it? The quote in the following excerpts can help to cast light to it.

*I: You mean you are chasing the current issues.*

*S: No, to be exact, we are riding with the current issues. Say, even if I am doing the teaching of politics of China, I would still spare some 20 minutes or a lesson to discuss with them what the Chief Executive in Hong Kong has just said.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject6, a serving teacher)*

At which level are current issues more important? Subject 7, a serving teacher comments, *"I think up to form five, whether there is textbook and whether you listen in class may not be very important. What count are basic linguistic skills and a good mind. You need to know current affairs. The textbook alone may not help you to answer the questions at Certificate Level well. On the contrary, if you are good at language and well versed with current issues, you may handle them well...In A Level, there are concepts... You need to study the textbook. This is also true for Paper Two, which is about USA and China. You need to study the texts. It is more academic and theoretical."*

The saying that theoretical learning is not needed in Certificate Level may be an exaggeration. But, the notion about increased reliance on conceptual framework at A Level is rather commonly upheld among the informants.

Apart from keeping the subject matter more updated, this emphasis on current issues sometimes will affect the study in other ways.

Subject 4, a serving teacher, explains her use of current issues, *“I myself will use news and sometime I will immediately photocopy them the news if I find it special... For instance in the September 11<sup>th</sup> Incident, I would tape the news and ask them to discuss apart from ruins what did they see in the United States. They would tell they found (US people) love their country very much as they queued up to sacrifice by giving blood. Both lower and upper form students could see this. So, I feel the current materials have greater impact.”*

Noteworthy is the fact that this practice may help to arouse students' alertness to major events elsewhere in the world that strictly speaking may not be within the Syllabus. In a way, this is a blessing to promoting the international outlook of the students.

The students will be brought into the critical realm with this issue approach in teaching. Subject 12, an ex-teacher and setter, describes this quite vividly when he says, *“So, it is better to learn through the study of real cases. You may go into the cases related to the topics and pick up the most heated points for discussion... In the discussion about election, the actual events of election are more attractive to the children than the pure theories of election. For example, in the election of the District Boards, the Government explained that it would be more democratic to have a number of appointed members than having all members elected. Is this true? So, here in interpreting this issue, I shall express my opinion. Besides, I shall give the chance to the students to think of the issue themselves... You (the police) played the music (Beethoven's symphony) through the loud speakers to cover the voice of the demonstrators. The police claimed that this was a move to calm down the tense*

*climate. The demonstrators believed that it was their right to have their voice heard. This also represented a value conflict for students to think about.*

Using current issues means a less institutional and a more dynamic way to study politics. But, at the same time, the issues are often controversial and conflict-laden. This exposes the students to critical judgment. In the quote above, we actually see that the teacher likes to see the students have to think and critically judge over the controversies.

By moving away from the study of institutions to actual political issues, another side effect is that, though the teacher never aims at arranging political participations for their students, individual students may initiate certain participation on their own once they are particularly convinced by a cause. Subject 4, a serving teacher, recalls, *“It happened before that we talked about current issues in class and they organized their own participations outside. For example, they joined organizations to visit and help the refugees (Vietnamese boat people). There are students who helped elected members as election campaign assistants by their own choice.”*

How do the teachers describe the way they teach their students?

Most of the informants say that they are using some sorts of traditional methods, such as lecturing and questioning, to teach. The reliance on expository method varies among the informants. Current issues are used on top of the textbooks. Some teachers will add discussions on an occasional basis. Visits are real special events, which are organized by individual teachers only occasionally. The informants do not mention that pedagogical change will be needed in the teaching of classes at different levels. On the other hand, a smaller number of students at A Level may allow individual teachers to teach with a different method. Of course, if a school is doing PAS at its A Level, research method will be adopted over the relevant part of the syllabus. But, this doesn't

mean that the same teacher will not use traditional expository method, over other parts of the syllabus.

The following quotes may help to illustrate the points I make in the last paragraph.

Subject 6 (serving teacher): *First, there will be lectures and explanations. Notes and other references will augment this. Sometime, there will be discussion, group discussion I mean. It's like giving them background information and then they discuss. It's like lecture and dialogue and then discussion. Used to a lesser extent are debates. Sometime, we see films too. Video and AV (audio visual mediums) are of help.*

In this quote, we find the teacher is willing to add discussion after basic information has been delivered through lecturing. This is markedly different from the teacher quoted below, who believes that lecturing should almost be the only acceptable method.

Subject 8 (serving teacher): *I want the students to see it and judge and evaluate etc. If you leave it to the students, it will waste a lot of my time... This is not covered in the textbook that deals mainly with the institutions... I think I can do this in a better way through lectures. If I give them discussion, they will talk and talk and at the end can give me back only a factual account... The best I tried before was to bring them to see the Legislative Council meeting with you. (The researcher was then the GPA panel chair in the school, working together with the informant. That had to be more than ten years ago!)*

The teacher in the above quote, we should note, is not trying to be bookish, though being bookish is one of the usual attributes that define a traditional teacher. On the other hand, he tries to go beyond the book and allow his students to evaluate and judge. However, the way he perceives his students, i.e. being weak and passive, has led him to resort to almost pure lecturing of own interpretation.

In the excerpt below, Subject 7, a teacher who works with Project Assessment Scheme, tells an interesting story of how he teaches the remaining parts of the syllabus and the classroom atmosphere he encounters.

I: *And you don't see them (the students), especially the girls, to be interested in politics.*  
S: *No. And they even sleep (in class). The discipline problem is related to the lack of good learning*

*attitude... In fact, I always have the feeling that I have been very unsuccessful (in my teaching)...I cannot lead the students to actively engage in discussion. I cannot lead them to think on the questions. There is no (not much) interaction in the classroom... They lack interest and do not give much response too. This applies to all forms.*

It is noted here that despite the adoption of PAS, the teacher turns back to highly didactic method in teaching other parts of the syllabus and this seems totally unable to raise students' interest and some fall sleeping while some bring discipline problems. Neither does this drive his students away as he says in the same interview, "*Out of my observation, they are only very average in class performance. They are not that interested. But, they are driven by results (to take GPA). When the certificate examination results come out, they (knowing the good results) will come to do the subject (in A Level). Like this year, I have 28-29 students in my class.*"

In a nutshell, learning with interest seems to play at most only second fiddle in the matter of pedagogical choice of the teacher and subject choice of the students involved.

Another teacher Subject 14, who is not doing Project Assessment Scheme, describes (in the excerpt below) how a change in class size allows her to change the pedagogy and move away from a more traditional expository method.

*Subject 14: The fact is I am having smaller class now. I get eleven students in my (A Level) class. This enables me to change my mode of teaching. Instead of lecturing to them, I try to be student-oriented. I will use a number of different methods. For example, sometime, I will ask them to do role-play. For example, they are put into groups of three. Then one will be the presenter, the other two are respectively the observer and the critic. I ask them to play their roles. I work just as a recorder, like a secretary. I will type their conversation out and the day after I ask them to compare the different viewpoints. I will then analyze and put together their views and share mine with them too. The students like it too... It's difficult to do it in Certificate Level as it is a big class of more than thirty people.*

We can see that it is not the change to a more advanced level that drives the pedagogical change. Instead, it is attributed mainly to class size.

Visits and projects also have a role to play in some cases though they can't be a regular item in the teaching schedule. The quotes in the following excerpt can help us understand how they are used and the constraints the teachers encounter.



*Subject10: "In Certificate Level this year, I require the students to do a project in summer. You know that (in Certificate Level) the students need to study one policy area. Before I find the information for them... I shall group the forty students, into groups of four... There can be better care of the projects as a result because teachers can have the time in a lower ratio (teacher-to-projects)... Apart from introduction and outlining the methods of carrying out the study, actually the teachers will be heavily engaged in the process, say in answering students' questions. Without these (intense teacher support), all result will only be a heap of information. There will not be much thinking and analysis. As such, there is nothing to gain after the projects have been finished... Actually this is also true of visits... I don't find it easy to invite other teachers to help too. You simply can't lead too many students to visit a place, say a law court.*

In pedagogical terms, desirability may not move in tandem with feasibility. This can be discerned in the above statement. Besides, it should also be noted that to force through something positive like project, without having the necessary pre-condition, i.e. a low student number, can even be counter-productive. In the above example, what turn out are project reports being no better than a "heap of information".

### c. The constraints and factors that may affect the choice of pedagogy

Are teachers satisfied with the pedagogy they are using?

There seems to be a strong preference in favor of adopting a livelier and interactive mode of teaching, such as teaching through discussion, and facilitating a more active form of learning, such as project based learning. The Project Assessment Scheme, now available as an option to study a part of GPA's A Level, is considered very positively by many teachers. Yet, it should be noted that most never seriously think of joining and some did try before and withdrew later.

The following quotes may help summarize the views of the informants, with regard to what they think is the best way to teach GPA to their students and the factors that finally shape their pedagogical decisions to the contrary.

*Subject 6: I once thought of joining the (PAS) scheme. We did apply and then later withdrew our application... Frankly speaking, the students were not good at self-directed learning. Besides, they were weak at basic knowledge. As a result, it was not as easy as I had first believed. I was not confident to shoulder the work of "pulling them to finish the work". (Actually, the Subject used the Chinese proverb "pulling the cow up the tree" to express his feeling). At the end, we withdrew.*

*I: What are the greatest difficulties your students encounter when they study the subject?*

*Subject 6: The ability to express, I think. I mean the ability to write their ideas out in particular. This poses a great constraint. Besides, they have a low starting point as they do not have such study before...*

*I: Will this be related to the political apathy, lack of general political knowledge of Hong Kong people as a whole?*

*Subject 6: Absolutely. For the students I taught in these few years. The students who came from the mainland are definitely more politically conscious than the local students. On the one hand, it might be due to their early political class, say in primary and junior secondary level.*

Here, the withdrawal from research work is attributed to students' lack of basic knowledge and weakness in self-directed learning and expression skills. Weak basic knowledge stems equally from a lack of political education in primary and lower secondary as well as from political apathy in the society. A late start in political education, that has public examination as one of its goals, in this case seems to have pre-empted the choice of pedagogy in favor of the unilateral teacher-centered mode.

Another teacher explains the difficulty of teaching GPA through interactive mode, such as discussion, against the ethos of the school in concern.

*I: There are Teaching Guidelines for the subject ... Will you follow the Guidelines in your teaching?*

*Subject 5: Absolutely not. This is an impossible thing... Yes, what it says like discussion and activities and etc...are good I think. But, it has to depend on the time it is implemented. For example, as for my kids, when they discuss, they don't discuss but only quarrel. Ha ha... Why? It actually goes back to their cultural background. Yes. The kids of this school, in fact, come from the bottom of the society. Many are new immigrant (from the mainland). Their culture is the hard one. They quarrel once any thing comes up. You know that type. That is not discussion based on good reasons. So, they put forth an argument and you don't accept it and they think it is wrong. They don't know how to...say...accommodate difference in opinion. So, they say, "I think this is the reason and then this must be the reason" ... So here...I will use most of the time and ...I think this is true of every subject here and I also think is very laughable... Here, when we have classes, we cannot make noise. The principal does not accept this. So when we have*

*discussion and so... (making noise means bringing in trouble)... Then the principal will stand outside, dropping ears in and looking in. After the class the principal will ask why in the class it is so noisy and the children seem not keeping order. Thus here we are very traditional and classes concern mainly the delivery of knowledge."*

The cultural background of the students and their lack of tolerance to contrary beliefs in this case turn the discussing class into a battle of shouting and quarreling. This again runs into intolerance of the principal toward noise and lack of order in the classroom. He is so eager to restore peace and order that he stands outside the class and looks into the classroom for what is happening. This, together with the "aftermath enquiries", exerts enough pressure to disallow the use of free discussion in class. Actually in the same interview, the teacher also emphasizes the difficulty of moving through discussion as this is not in line with the learning habit of the students. He says, "They are used to reciting things... This is different from their learning method." In a way, this is a way to say that the conventional way of teaching secondary students, in the schools concerned at least, is by teacher-centered and didactic methods.

Last, though not the least, the curriculum structure in school and the design of PAS itself may also be a hindrance to a move away from didactic mode of delivery.

Subject 4, a serving teacher, mentions that GPA projects are effectively "crowded out" by project works done in other subjects when she says, "*I think we have to look at the combination of the subjects. If we have more than three subjects based on projects, we also come into deep trouble... The sixth formers already complained to me that they have to cater for my project as well as projects in other subjects and that they are running out of time. At the end, I have to compromise to them that if they are doing projects to English and Chinese too, it will be fine if they find a similar topic. So, English and Chinese (subjects) look after the language and I concern about the content. Remember this is not a compromise between teachers of subjects. They just tell me this and GPA allows them to do something about culture.*"

In the case above, we can see that the call for project work, which is now a fashion in Hong Kong's education reform, has ushered in numerous project works to schools. This means GPA may need to compete for its share. However, GPA cannot compete with other "more important subjects" on an equal footing due to its "inferior" status. Crowding out here refers to the teacher having to take what she is given, even against her own choice. In a sense, this helps confirm the saying of some teachers that GPA is relatively marginal in schools.

The same crowding out effect can be seen in the following case and once again GPA, an inferior subject, has to succumb to the requests of other subjects. In this case, the PAS prescription, which rigidly requires participation on a school-by-school basis, has helped to disallow at least some of the students from taking the PAS and doing research work as part of their study.

Subject 14, another serving teacher recalls the experience of pulling out from the PAS and says, "*Some students are doing English Literature at the same time. English Literature requires the students to take some project work. It is not a matter of choice. It will be too burdensome if students are to work on two projects. Then after conferring with the students, it was found that those students taking English Literature would not like to do the PAS. I talked to the HKEA (to see whether it would be possible to have part of the students to take the PAS). But, the reply was that the school as a unit should be uniform, either in taking PAS or not. It could not be that some students took the PAS while some would not. So, under such objective constraints, I had to give up.*"

**Sectional summary:**

The followings are some of the key points in the teachers' discourses:

**1. Both the aims and objectives in the Syllabus and the Teaching Guidelines, that specifies teaching methods and time allocation etc, are not regularly consulted and closely followed. The former is too general while the latter is too idealistic. As a result, the subject will be taught in a variety of ways.**

**2. The teacher's own pedagogical choice is important. Such choice may reflect the belief of the teacher and the circumstances he/she confronts.**

**3. The teachers are quite pragmatic and examination is an important consideration. Most of the informants depend on an expository method of delivery, though the degree may vary. In some cases, students are reported to lack even the most basic interest and some are found sleeping in front of their teachers. Some teachers use discussions. Visits and projects are added only occasionally. Interestingly, teachers do not see older students in senior forms as a strong factor that requests a change from a highly didactic delivery mode to a more heuristic mode, say to discovery or discussion based teaching. Besides, even for a teacher who is leading his students to do projects by enrolling into PAS, teaching can be reverted to a highly didactic mode in the non-PAS parts. All these may point to the fact that conventional style of teaching is popular among many schools in Hong Kong.**

**4. The number of students in class is considered important if a more student-oriented mode of teaching is considered. Large classes make it virtually impossible. On top of this, it has been repeatedly pointed out that GPA is simply a marginal subject and as such is bound to loose if it is to compete with other subjects for room and resources.**

**5. School ethos, in terms of expectation of how subject should be taught and how order should be enforced in class etc, can limit the parameters for discussions and projects etc.**

**6. Current issues are used very broadly. As current issues are sometime chosen from different countries, students' alertness to major world events may be strengthened. Using current issues also means a less institutional and a more dynamic way to study politics. But, at the same time, the issues are often controversial and conflict-laden. This exposes the students to critical judgment. Such critical judgment can be directed against the actual decisions taken by the government, like whether it is right for the government to play classical music aloud to cover demonstrators' voices when leaders of China's central government visited Hong Kong etc. Besides, individual students may initiate certain participation on their own once they are particularly convinced by a cause.**

### **5.3 Indoctrination**

**Introduction:** Chapter Three (3.3.2) outlined a number of questions relevant to the present study.

The questions that findings as reported in this section help to answer include:

- What does indoctrination mean to the teachers of GPA?
- Do GPA teachers see it as a risk in the course of teaching politics?
- Do GPA teachers share their political views and beliefs with students?
- How would such beliefs of the teachers affect the way they teach the students?
- Do GPA teachers encourage students to arrive at their own conclusions?

Ten informants have chosen to speak on the issue of indoctrination. These comprise 8 serving teachers and 2 ex-teachers; one of them is also serving as a setter of public examination.

Informants often give their definitions of the concept. Some of the definitions

dovetail with important attributes of indoctrination we can find in the literature.

A few examples of such definitions are given here.

An ex-teacher and current setter of examination (Subject1) defines indoctrination as *“selective disclosure; abusing authority and being hostile to one side of the argument”*.

A serving teaching (Subject10) says, *“Indoctrination is forcing one’s belief through and imposing it on others, without relying on reasoning. It is the promoting of a thing (belief) by emphasizing its merits, without good reasons behind.”*

Another serving teacher (Subject 14) explains, *“To indoctrinate means you compel your students to take up your point of view in a wholesale manner. You aim at ensuring wholesale acceptance without resistance or divergence.”*

It should not be assumed that the teachers are unanimous in opposing the teaching of the teachers’ own interpretation of political events and showing of the teachers’ own political inclination. Some teachers in fact believe the contrary.

As an example, Subject 12 (ex-teacher) says, *“ In reality, if you teach the lower forms, say form four, and you just teach the knowledge in the book without adding elaboration and your things (interpretation etc) and the students just do it as knowledge, it is also a form of indoctrination... The students only take what the facts are without much questioning and understanding. This will also be internalized to become part of their future value and affect their behaviors in return.”* Thus accordingly, if a teacher just let the students receive the information in the books and documents, the teacher is training docility. The student in concern will be trained to accept the information therein without a questioning mind. The informant considers this unhealthy.

Another informant, Subject 6, a serving teacher, explains, *“I cannot rule out...that in the process I will show my inclination. But, this is also acceptable. In the process of knowledge delivery, I think there should be no bias. Fake objectivity, on the other hand, is not good. To pretend to*

*be neutral when you are not is not ethical.*" In this quote, we find that the teacher does not just think that showing one's stance is permissible. In fact, not showing it when you in fact have it, is for a teacher, immoral as it is a form of pretence, or an act of deception

More interestingly, it is found that some informants are thinking of the government, and not of themselves, when they are making sense out of the term indoctrination.

For example, a serving teacher (Subject 5) says, "*In politics, I guess, it is the rulers who want the people to accept their ideology. In the process it is to transfer the entire ideology and hope that the recipients just absorb everything like a piece of paper. I think...generally... not welcoming divergent views and voices.*"

Another serving teacher (Subject 6) explains that, "*indoctrination in the teaching of the subject should be construed more as the subject could be used by the government to sell its ideas to the students instead of the other way round.*"

Subject 8, another serving teacher says, "*To accept uncritically the present system and the policies and beliefs pursued by those in power. I think this is not good. We have a duty to let the people know not all policies and political figures are worthy of admiration and trust.*"

Reinforcing popular check against authoritarian government by educating students to be critical is a sensible notion. But, another way to understand the above is that the issue of indoctrination has been externalized. Taken this way, the issue is considered real, but it is not considered a teacher's problem.

Three informants agree without reservation that indoctrination is counter-productive in education.

Subject 14, a serving teacher, for example, says, "*I think indoctrination must be a negative thing. To indoctrinate means you compel your students to take up your point of view in a wholesale manner... Taken this way, I deem it problematic even if you think what you believe is very*





*true. You must allow room for people to think and make their own choice rationally. It will be much better that way.”*

Subject 5, another serving teacher, explains, *“As for I myself...if it is the same as not to tell black from white, it will be a negative thing.”*

Two informants do not give their view on whether indoctrination is negative or not.

Two informants believe that indoctrination is negative. But, at the same time they have reservation. As quoted above, Subject 6 speaks about the need to show the teacher's inclination and stance or else it is fake objectivity, which is immoral.

Another serving teacher (Subject 10) says (after some hesitation), *“Put it this way, I don't find it desirable, considering from the perspective of (developing) a reasoning mind. But, I don't know. My own understanding is that our education is more in favor of the Western notion of democracy. It is more inclined to take it as more satisfactory. I may be speaking more on this side (Western democracy). This may affect the students though I resort to reasons. I may explain more on this side. Is this ... (indoctrination)? I know democracy of the West better. As for that of China, though we know it structurally, there are in fact many things inside we don't know clearly. Is this indoctrination? The students listen to this side (Western democracy) more. This may affect the students as they may think the Western version, or the United States' version, may be better.”*

This is an interesting point. The conventional way of thinking about indoctrination is that the indoctrinator withholds one side of the story with intention. However, it is pointed out here that indoctrination can as well result from the imperfect knowledge of the teacher concerned. The teacher's insufficient knowledge, plus perhaps a convention of favoring Western notion of democracy, affects the teacher's discourse. By expounding more about Western notion of democracy, the teacher in concern may effect a more positive view toward liberal democracy amongst the students.

Two informants are in fact quite supportive of certain level or form of indoctrination.

A serving teacher (Subject 8) explains, *“Yes, there can be story behind such facts and I want the students to see it and judge and evaluate etc... They may not be able to do it... Let's say when I talk about the Communist Party of China and the problem of transfer of political power. This is not covered in the textbook that deals mainly with the institutions. I shall bring out this based on my own understanding nonetheless. You can say I am doing inculcation or indoctrination. I think I can do this in a better way through lectures. If I give them discussion, they will talk and talk and at the end can give me back only a factual account.”*

In this case it is the need to go to depth of analysis and the need to be critical that drives the teacher who seems to have a strong resentment to authoritarian regime to adopt indoctrination in the course of teaching!

Subject 9, another serving teacher, explains, *“Part of the political culture and particular political values, such as freedom and democracy and the rule of law etc, you can say it is indoctrination (i.e. can be passed on through indoctrination)... You can say I will impose these on them in a forceful way... This is to ensure that they will accept.”*

Once again, the care of democracy has brought forth a compromise on the issue of indoctrination!

Regarding how to avoid possible indoctrination in the course of teaching, the informants give a variety of possible methods, ranging from methods of teaching, open attitude to inner reflection.

Subject 12, an ex-teacher, for example, says, *“It depends on how you do it...But, if in the course of teaching them, I draw more things to discussion and explorations, you may say I am not indoctrinating them.”*

Subject 14, a serving teacher, explains, *“I will do self-reflection repeatedly. This reflection*

*covers both the matter of human nature and the limitation I face in understanding the world. This is a continuous process. It is important because if you set aside your subjective judgment and stance, your room (of understanding) will be enlarged substantially. Besides, I really think that no system of beliefs is completely correct and is worthy of compelling the students to believe. I emphasize that students should have the chance to explore and find the beliefs they think are most suitable to themselves, in both daily living and the making of choices. They will then live their life without regret. This is important.”*

**Sectional summary:**

The followings are some of the key points in the teachers' discourses:

1. *Almost all teachers can give a workable definition for indoctrination. They do it without any difficulty. This may mean that the notion is not new to them. In fact, this should not be new at all as far as teachers of politics are concerned. Most of the teachers relate indoctrination to intention and to the process of teaching (3.3.2 refer).*
2. *However, it is interesting to note that teachers usually associate indoctrination with the government's attempt to promote its ideology and policies, instead of relating it to their teaching inside the classroom.*
3. *There is a belief that teachers should introduce their own views to students. One teacher says that fake neutrality is immoral.*
4. *Only a minority of informants takes indoctrination in teaching as negative without reservation. Interestingly, a teacher points out that she may slip into indoctrination as really she doesn't know China's version of democracy that well and she may expound more about Western notions of liberal democracy.*
5. *There is a view that some forms of indoctrination, instead of free discussion and conclusion,*

*should be accepted when students are required to accept basic premises of democracy, like freedom of speech and thought, and rule of law etc. A teacher points out, as students are not "smart enough" to transcend the factual account in the textbook to discern the authoritarian nature of communist rule, the students should not be given time to discuss and instead should simply listen to the teacher's theories.*

## 5.4 National identity

**Introduction:** Chapter Three (3.3.3) outlined a number of questions relevant to the present study. The questions that findings as reported in this section help to answer include:

- Turner (2000) reminds us that national identity may need to be nurtured hand in hand with critical awareness. Is this view shared by the GPA teachers?
- Does the teaching of politics, Chinese politics in particular, work to build up a sense of national identity among the students?
- What stands in the way of promoting national identity?

To the question whether the teaching of GPA can help foster a sense of national identity, or identifying oneself as China's citizen, a total of 11 responses are collected, 3 from ex-GPA teachers (inclusive of the Subject Officer of GPA) and 8 from serving GPA teachers.

Two teachers are affirmative that teaching GPA can help enhance the sense of national identity among the students. Both explain in terms of an increased concern level of the students though the actual meaning of concern differs in the two cases.

A serving teacher (Subject 8) gives his account in the following excerpt.

*I: Do you think you are helping the students to build up a sense of national identity in the course of teaching this subject?*

*S: I think so. I think so. It may not be that related to the subject matter. It does not cover that much of China indeed as China is only one of the parts. But, out of my contact with the students, I understand that some of them have become more concerned about China and the questions she encounters. To concern, of course, may not be equivalent to rendering love to the country. But, I guess such increased concern can reflect the affection bond with and hence implied responsibility to the country. This is not a direct result of the coverage of the subject. This depends on the teacher and how he interprets the issues... (Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject 8, a serving teacher)*

It should be noted that the teacher is not saying that knowledge about China is crucial as only a part of GPA covers the politics of China. Concern is raised. Concern here is construed as the concern of how China fares and the problem she encounters. The teacher also points out that this concern, which can be a sign of affection bond, may not lead to loving the country.

Another serving teacher (Subject 4) comments as follows:

*I: Do you think that teaching this subject will have the effect of helping student acquire a sense of national identity?*

*S: Yes, it will. I feel strange too. For the sixth formers, every year they will be required to do a project. This year, they pick up the topic nationalism themselves. At first, I tried to persuade them to find a topic easier to manage. This topic is a bit more difficult. I mean on the academic side, it is more difficult. But they said they would like to see how much Hong Kong people would see themselves as Chinese. I think we have built up something amongst them. This proved that what we did in GPA in the past years takes effect...I guess it is more difficult with CE level GPA. Actually I heard from colleagues that they felt there was too little coverage on China and citizenship education. It is my feeling too...On the contrary, I find the chapter on Hong Kong's status as a part of China to be more helpful as this enables me to bring out the relationship (between China and Hong Kong)...Yes, it is really helpful. But I think in the long run, the syllabus will need to be changed and need more and more and more China's elements.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject 4, a serving teacher)*

It is important to note that the concern the teacher talks about is different from the concern expounded by Subject 8 above. Concern here refers to being aware of and interested in the national identity issue. It is interest shown in understanding how Hong

Kong people feel about their new relationship to China. In a way, this can be seen as an academic concern, engendered by the return of sovereignty. In a way, this may explain why the teacher sees that the chapter dealing with the relationship between Hong Kong and China as so important. Again, at this point, no automatic assumption should be made between this concern and love of the country.

Three responses are more or less neutral in nature. The points given are that the subject concerns mainly with knowledge and whether students will pay attention to it and identify with China depends on their value.

When the Subject Officer of GPA at HKEA, an ex-teacher of GPA himself, is asked to comment whether GPA can contribute to building up a sense of national identity, he gives the following opinion.

*I: Will this subject have an impact on or help with enhancing the students' sense of national identity?*

*S: I will see it this way... **This subject will provide a form of hardware or infrastructure on the relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland. I mean knowledge about the structure of the relationship. The understanding of the students will become stronger as a result of studying this subject. But it is another question whether they accept and identify themselves with this (relationship). ...it is their own value orientation.***

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject 15, ex-teacher and currently Subject Officer in HKEA)*

It should be understood from the statement that the subject adds to knowledge, which by itself is not a sufficient condition for identification. Instead, the final outcome depends on the judgment of the students, which reflects their value.

A serving teacher comments that knowledge may raise the concern level of the students. But, the increased awareness and concern level will finally cut the circuit as, out of worry, the students give up the acquiring of knowledge about China. The key point is printed in bold in the excerpt below.

*I: I remember there is study of Chinese politics in both CE and A Level. So, do you think this study of politics in China can help students to accept that they are Chinese citizens?*

*S: It... should be ...able (Subject seems a bit reserved). But, the problem is that when my students study about China, everyone is very afraid. They even give up.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject5, a serving teacher)*

It is shown in the above example that concern about China can take a more extreme form and turn into fear. When this happens, the quest for further knowledge about China will be undermined.

The majority, or six responses given, is negative. It is believed that studying GPA will have no effect on raising the sense of national identity. Some even point out that it will have negative impact on such development.

A serving teacher gives the following comment, which is typical of this view.

*I: Do you think in the course of teaching GPA, you will help your students to build up a sense of national identity...*

*S: In this matter, frankly speaking, we encounter difficulties... They do not have the positive feeling to state and nation, such as the sense of belonging as we will like to see. On the contrary, the other side, that of resistance is very strong indeed... They have always been thinking that China is very backward, corrupted and has many negative things. It is very difficult to change this as it is strongly rooted in their mind... Knowledge (of China) must increase. But, whether there will be a rise in identification (with China) with an increase in knowledge? This is not a must. Some may be more radical and reject China more because, out of knowing more, they find her ugly.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject6, a serving teacher)*

It should be noted from the above excerpt that knowledge work not on the side of national identity building as students have strong belief that China is a negative example. Worse still, if students confirm such belief with their knowledge of China, now available through the study of GPA, they may conclude that China is ugly and reject it altogether. This of course is one possibility under the rational approach to study the subject.

A woman teacher speaks also negatively, using argument that identification with China requires identification with her culture. This is not equivalent to knowing her polity, which GPA is trying to offer. Besides, it is tremendously difficult to overcome the deeply held “Hong Konger” identification in the heart of the students.

*I: Will you agree that this subject will help students to build up a sense of national identity?*

*S: Do you mean Chinese citizenship?*

*I: Yes.*

*S: I ask this question as they (the students) often think that they are Hong Kong people. So, the self-identification you ask is about the country?*

*I: Yes. I am asking about whether the teaching of the subject will contribute to the self-identification of students as Chinese citizens. Do you think there will be such an effect (when GPA is taught in school)?*

*S: No. Not much as I can see... Even up to Certificate Level, you are only teaching China's political system to the people. On the other hand, the self-identification as China's citizen depends on a lot of things such as identification with Chinese culture and other factors...*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject10, a serving teacher)*

A total of six responses are given in relation to the question of how national identity should be construed.

Three serving teachers explain that national identity should be open and critical.

The comment made by Subject 14, a serving teacher and the Chairperson of A Level GPA Committee (HKEA), is particularly revealing.

*S: I think globalization is more and more real in this new era. National identity is simply a matter of blood and skin color as these are things we cannot change. On top of that, the thinking and mentality should be dynamic and changing. It should not be that we think China must always be good and superior in relation to other countries. It is only that we appreciate our common root, i.e. the common origin of our cultures and values. But, in the course of their development, we have to know they are affected by and do merge with other cultures. Thus, I think this national identity should be a progressive and not a static entity. I mean not static, in terms of time and space. Perhaps I can put it this way. We are now talking about the concept of global citizenship or being a citizen in the global village.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject14, a serving teacher cum committee chair)*



The “dynamic and changing” conception of national identity is interesting in the sense that it compares starkly with the conception of pride and superiority that national identity was often construed of in the past. It encapsulates the “global village” spirit in the post-modernist paradigm. However, starting from this, we have to come against other far-reaching attributes of post-modernism, namely divided loyalty, internationalism and the readiness of a particular culture to talk to and possibly take in or absorb discourses and practices in other cultures. Thus in this context, national identity cannot command unity in the traditional sense of protecting a unique and superior culture or belief or race. It must come into terms of its own shortcomings and be flexible enough to grow by learning. Without this openness, national identity may finally succumb to other forms of identities, which are competing with it for affection and loyalty. Noteworthy is the fact that this version of national identity, which is global and cosmopolitan in nature, may contradict that as promoted in the mainland, which construes citizenship as local and ethnic in nature.<sup>68</sup>

One serving teacher emphasizes that the students must first know the close relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland.

Two responses, one from an ex-teacher and one from a serving teacher, discuss the concept in relation to “One country, Two systems”.

Subject 1, an ex-teacher, emphasizes that it is not to be construed as total subservience to the mainland.

Subject 5, a serving teacher, emphasizes the need to make students understand that the difference between Hong Kong and the mainland is built on many factors, including history. The following excerpt illustrates the point.

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<sup>68</sup> See Baehr, P. (2001).

*S5: I think we are a bit special now. May be it is due to the fact that we have "One country, Two systems", the kids cannot accept themselves as Chinese citizens, just as those in the mainland, mainly because they believe as Hong Kong residents they are really different. Say, when the people in the mainland come, they have to apply for documents etc. even that Hong Kong is a part of China. This helps the students to maintain that mentality. Thus to sell the thing (national identity), we have to explain why we should have different economic and social system...and explain that we were under a long period of British rule and thus are more used to a different system. This is not easy to change. It needs time.*  
(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject5, a serving teacher)

The point about difference in rights between Hong Kongers and their mainland counterparts is noteworthy. It dovetails with what Smith (1991) says about a common economy with geographical mobility for all members being the foundation of national identity. (3.3.3 refer)

**Sectional summary:**

The followings are some of the key points in the teachers' discourses:

- 1. Generally speaking, teachers believe that national identity should be open and critical in nature. One defines it specifically as one form of identification amidst other forms of loyalty in a globalized world and it must be flexible enough to borrow and learn from other cultures. Two teachers emphasize the "One country, Two systems" element in the understanding of Hong Kong people's identification. One stresses that Hong Kong should not just play a subservient role in her relation to the mainland while the other emphasizes that Hong Kong must be special.**
- 2. The majority view is that teaching GPA will have no positive impact on promoting national identity amongst the students. It is commonly felt that teaching GPA will increase the knowledge about China and raise the level of concern of the students toward China.**
- 3. However, as far as national identity is concerned, the steam is lost almost**

**immediately because of three reasons:**

**First, initial knowledge and concern about China makes students focus and talk about the country. This arouses the worry of the students and in return suffocates the process of learning to know China.**

**Second, GPA may help some students to confirm that China is a negative example in many ways and this helps to bring about alienation.**

**Third, GPA can only bring about knowledge of China's politics. This doesn't help with national identification as it requires identification with China's culture.**

**These points have much to do with the fact that GPA is taught in a rational way that emphasizes analysis and critique. It also seems that the crux is whether China gives a positive impression to those who study her.**

**4. Two teachers believe that GPA can help promote national identity. It is pointed out that students' concern about China and her problems increases. Besides, some students are also interested in the national identity issue of Hong Kong's people.**

**Upon a closer look, it can be discerned that this positive view may not be completely different from the majority view. It is only that the concern about China and Hong Kong people's national identity has been taken as a sufficient proof of national identity while in the case of the majority, the thinking has been extended to cover what actually happens after the initial concern, i.e. inclusive of rejection of China due to not approving her.**

**5. One interesting point we may derive from our findings here is that national identity requires much more than mere citizenship status. The transfer of sovereignty in 1997 has given the Chinese students a clear citizenship status. However, national identity seems a long way off. The most important factor for alienation appears to be the lack of affection for China. A strong local identity also stands in the way of**

***national identity building.***

## **5.5 Patriotism**

***Introduction:*** Chapter Three (3.3.4) outlined a number of questions relevant to the present study.

*The questions that findings as reported in this section help to answer include:*

- **How do GPA teachers think about patriotism?**
- **Will the teaching of politics, say through GPA, help to enhance patriotism amongst the students?**
- **If patriotism is one of the key tasks of education after the political handover, does the call for patriotism sensibly differentiate between loving the country and supporting a regime or the policies it pursues? Is the call for patriotism primarily rational or emotional?**

There are 10 responses on the relationship between teaching GPA and promoting patriotism among students. They come from 7 serving teachers, 2 ex-teachers, inclusive of the Subject Officer at HKEA.

Six responses deal with the nature of patriotism. It can be discerned that the informants give a hard-and-fast line between the concept, which is loving the country, and rendering love and support to the government and the ruling party.

A serving teacher comments as follows.

*I: Thus as to you, what is patriotism?*

*S: I think it refers to the love of one's own country's history and culture and support to its unity and sovereignty. But, it is not safeguarding the interest of individual leaders or a political party. They should be separated.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject9, a serving teacher)*

From the above excerpt, it should be noted that the teacher differentiates between loving a country, i.e. patriotism, and supporting the interest of the ruling party or individual leaders. Also noteworthy is that the love of the country concerns its history and culture but no mention of the political system is included.

An ex-teacher speaks even more vividly on this distinction between love of the country and love of the government and party. The ex-teacher says that GPA teachers need to emphasize the distinction to the students.

This is shown in the excerpt below.

*S: We shall also mention in class to the students that loving the country doesn't mean loving the political party. But, the fact is that I feel the influence of what we say may not be as great as the effect as what the people are doing outside our classroom. If there are voices in the society that emphasize that to love the country is equal to loving its party, I think there is not much meaning for us to say our version a hundred or a thousand times in the classroom.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject12, an ex- teacher)*

More than this, it is also pointed out that in the society there is a deliberate attempt to confuse the two in the call for "loving the country". Seemingly the ex-teacher believes that GPA teachers are riding against a powerful force in the societal level that aims at blurring the meaning of the two notions. This is echoed many times by other informants.

Another serving teacher in an independent account picks up this deliberate blurring of "loving the country" and "loving the government and party". His comment is as follows.

*S: I think if you are talking about affection to the country and the land, it's still acceptable. That's normal. I also show such emotional bond with my country when I talked about June 4<sup>th</sup> (i.e. Tiananmen Incident 1989) and so... I don't like the formal call of "love the country", say made by the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong<sup>69</sup> because these people fuse the love of the country and love of the party (Communist Party of China) into one regardless of what the government and party have done. If*

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<sup>69</sup> This is the main pro-Beijing leftist Party in Hong Kong.

*the government has suppressed the people and freedom, what is the point of loving it? If it is a matter of implied obligation, I cannot approve of it.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject8, a serving teacher)*

We should be able to conclude from what this teacher says that love of the country actually drives one to oppose rulers that suppress its people. The country is thus equated with the general well being of the people and not with the authority of the regime. Thus any attempt to combine the two is deemed inappropriate and objectionable.

With regard to whether patriotism should be one of the aims of the teachers, in the course of teaching GPA, only 1 out of 7 responses given is affirmative.

The teacher who supports this notion believes that increased knowledge of China can be the foundation of affection to the country. Her point is illustrated in bold in the excerpt below.

*I: Do you believe that one of the things we should do in the teaching of GPA is to promote patriotism, the love of one's own country?*

*S: I think this is the topic Hong Kong has long tried to avoid. **Maybe, it's only my personal view... if we are to love a place or a person, we have to start with understanding it...Or they may think the country and the government are not that good and what is the point of our reunification. Then my job will be to let them know a country has both its good points and bad points. The same applies to Hong Kong that has its bad side too.** So, I guess when I teach, I may not be that very much on "love your country".*

*Instead, I will help my students to develop a fairer view. **The other thing is that I may not be just doing it with the subject, as I am also the coordinator of the civic education committee of the school. I'd rather do more on these activities.***

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject 4, a serving teacher)*

If we look more carefully at the statement above, we shall find that the Subject actually says that she has to interfere into the students' understanding so that they will not think badly of the country and doubt the reunification in 1997. She thus says, "Then my job will be to let them know a country has both its good points and bad points. The same applies to Hong Kong that has its bad side too." Also noteworthy is that she hints that she has to work with other means, say civic education, to effect the development of

patriotism and she prefers to work with these other means.

Other teachers reject that promoting patriotism should be an aim of the subject. Different reasons are given. One teacher says, in the excerpt below, that GPA is a subject that deals with knowledge and must therefore be neutral as knowledge itself is neutral.

*S: As a subject, it (GPA) should have the neutrality knowledge should possess. It should cover the knowledge of political systems. The discourse must be objective... **As for whether we should promote a particular inclination, comprising identification and sense of belonging, I have reservation considering from the point of view of a subject.***

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject6, a serving- teacher)*

Thus it follows that, to teach inclination is not to be welcome. This remark is printed in bold in the above excerpt.

When I ask the HKEA Subject Officer about whether promoting patriotism is an aim of the subject. He answers in the following way.

*S: I think the subject and its aims are not on this. It is not aiming at promoting their sentiment of loving the country or supporting one side or one ideology. Absolutely not... **The subject trains the students the skills of critique and analysis. These are the foci and it is not things like patriotism you pointed out.***

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject15, HKEA Subject Officer)*

This emphasis on critique and analysis (marked in bold above) dovetails with the knowledge and rational approach raised by other informants.

Many informants think that (even if there was such an aim) it would be practically impossible to foster patriotism by teaching the politics and government of China to students.

One teacher gives her account of the story this way:

*S: It is difficult (to take patriotism as an aim of the subject). We talked about this in the morning. The principal mentioned that the Korean football team was supported by the nationals not that because they liked football. It was more because the Koreans loved their country. On the contrary, people here only said they supported China's team. Behind your back, they actually placed their money on Brazil's team in soccer gambling... **I think it is difficult, as this subject is rational in nature while national feeling is mainly a matter of affection. When students become more rational and understand more, their***

**resentment of China may increase. This is because China may be negative in a number of areas, such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion and press etc. This may happen. But, our job is to analyze the information with them... It is not possible. Teachers' own affection to the motherland may be low due to a long period of colonial rule and education.**

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject10, a serving- teacher)*

From what she says above, we find that the difficulty of promoting patriotism is attributed to the rational nature of the subject. By helping students to acquire knowledge in a rational way, teaching China may mean exposing the negative side of the country with respect to freedom of speech, religion and press. Moreover, from her comments, we can also discern the sense of alienation of the people after reunification. Even teachers, according to what the teacher says, have a low level of affection to the motherland due to “a long period of colonial rule and education”. These remarks are printed in bold in the above excerpt.

**Sectional summary:**

The followings are some of the key points in the teachers' discourses:

- 1. Generally speaking, the teachers emphasize that patriotism, or loving one's own country, should not be taken as loving its government or ruling party.**
- 2. Interestingly, some point out specifically that such love should be defined in terms of the country's history, sovereignty and culture while obviously polity has been left out. While this may reflect a lack of identification with China's political system, we should also notice the remark that teachers' own affection toward China may be low as a result of a long period of colonial rule.**
- 3. Most believe that promoting patriotism through teaching GPA is not possible. Firstly this is not an aim at all. Secondly, GPA is taught in a rational way that emphasizes analysis and critique. Thus, if China is negative in many ways, studying**



**and knowing her by rational study may lead to resenting her. One teacher remarks that she prefers going by the more emotional approach in other forms of civic education activities, like the singing of the national song in assemblies etc., if promoting patriotism is the issue.**

**4. Some teachers are eager to point out that in society there are "voices" that try to confuse by deliberately blurring the differences between patriotism and loving the government and the party. One even suggests that this must be brought out in class and clarified to the students.**

## **5.6 Democracy**

**Introduction: Chapter Three (3.3.5) outlined a number of questions relevant to the present study. The questions that findings as reported in this section help to answer include:**

- Do GPA teachers respect divergent views of the students?**
- Do GPA teachers encourage their students to participate into politics?**
- How do GPA teachers understand democracy and how will their beliefs affect them in teaching GPA?**
- How will the ethos of schools affect GPA as far as learning democracy through the subject is in concern?**

### **5.6.1 Tolerance of divergent views**

Respecting divergence is fundamental to the well being of a democratic system. Open-mindedness of the teachers seems to be important for students if they are nurtured

to be willing to express their views and to respect equal rights of other people. As reported in 3.3.2, Hahn (1998) argues that there is a positive relationship between learning in a class that respects different views and their expression and political efficacy in adulthood.

Ten teachers and ex-teachers have chosen to speak on divergent views, or more specifically, whether divergent views of students on political issues should be tolerated and respected. This is a topic in which we find both a division of opinions, as well as a difference between reality and ideal.

Four out of the ten informants are very affirmative on supporting students to express own views in studying GPA, even if such views contradict that of the teacher or the main stream opinion in the society.

A teacher gives her account in the following way.

*S: I think in teaching GPA, what is important is that the students will find that they have freedom of speech in front of the teachers. If the teacher shows his/her temper to dissonant views of the students, it will be most discouraging. I try to exemplify this myself. They are free to look at me (my reasoning) and point out any disagreement. Actually every three to four lessons, I will confer with my students to get feedback about whether they find discussions in class agreeable and whether improvement can be made. (Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject4, a serving teacher)*

When she is asked to comment on the relationship between democracy and teaching GPA, she gives the most non-ambivalent reply.

*I: Do you find any relation between teaching and learning GPA and democracy?*  
*S: Yes there is a relationship. There is a relationship. I believe there is a correlation in between. The correlation is positive. I don't know whether in teaching dictatorship, I can use democratic method or not. My belief is that only through (democratic method) can we bring out the voice from the bottom of the heart. My experience is that when I was young, my father already allowed me to speak up and let me choose. But, he would show me that if I chose this I needed to do this and this to maximize the benefit and avoid (adverse) outcomes.*

We can note from the above comments that if GPA teaching is to encourage divergent views and foster democracy, two factors need to be considered, namely

teacher attitude and the method of teaching. A teacher who teaches with an open mind and is willing to discuss with the students will be more conducive. In this case, the teacher's open attitude results from the teacher's own childhood experience (being raised in a family marked by open and democratic ethos) and this supports the teacher's preference to discuss with the students in an eye-to-eye manner.

Other teachers who share this affirmative stance to divergence also exemplify a favorable attitude to difference of opinions. This attitude in return affects their choice of teaching methods.

The teacher who chairs the A Level Subject Committee (HKEA) expounds as follows.

*S: My stance is that I shall remain objective and open. I will not be particularly supporting a particular standpoint. I will bring to students different perspectives... The fact is I am having smaller class now. I get eleven students in my (A Level) class. This enables me to change my mode of teaching. Instead of lecturing to them, I try to be student-oriented. I will use a number of different methods. For example, sometime, I will ask them to do role-play. For example, they are put into groups of three. Then one will be the presenter, the other two are respectively the observer and the critic. I ask them to play their roles. I work just as a recorder, like a secretary. I will type their conversation out and the day after I ask them to compare the different viewpoints. I will then analyze and put together their views and share mine with them too. The students like it too. It's difficult to do it in Certificate Level as it is a big class of more than thirty people. I will use the method of questioning. (I ask the questions and) students who are interested answer my questions. But, of course, this is confined to a few students who are interested in this subject and are eager to air their opinions. Their opinions will then become like the mainstream (in class). But, I do take the views of my students as important.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject 14, a serving teacher cum committee chair)*

We can see from the above comments that the teacher remains open and expose the students to different views. Methods are designed to encourage the students to speak up in the lesson in a respected way. More important, we should also understand that the teacher's alternative is defined by class size. A smaller class size is more supportive of a

more interactive, student-centered mode of teaching.

How divergent should the students be allowed?

Those who support the notion tend to see laws as the boundary to such freedom. Thus non-violence and non-extremist divergence is what taken as “should be encouraged”.

Four informants reply in a “yes, but” way to the question of whether divergence should be allowed. None of them feel negative about students being able to see things and conclude differently. Their reservation results from practical considerations. The most important constraint cited by the teachers is the low standard of the students.

A teacher elaborates her view as follows.

*S: I approve of such divergent views. We only examine the reasoning behind in marking students' papers. Yet, students complain that they are in a weaker hand when arguing with me (because of their knowledge deficiency). They said, “We won't be able to win by debating with you”. I think we can have different views and talk about our reasons behind. But, they believed that they could not win the upper hand, as they didn't have enough information.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject 10, a serving teacher)*

We should note that in the above case, the unwillingness to express divergent views actually stems from the students who feel powerless due to their knowledge deficiency in front of their teacher.

Another informant, with experience in teaching the subject, extends the point further to include teacher's role in the real context. His account is interesting in the sense that he draws our attention to the difference between ideal and reality.

He explains as follows when he is asked whether allowing divergence can be easily accomplished in the course of teaching GPA.

*S: Take A Level teaching as an example, in the course of the teaching, the students always had such room. But, owing to their standard, they might not be able to use such room they were allowed. It was difficult for them just to remember all the things. They also needed to elaborate and express and write. Worse still, they needed to answer four questions in the course of three hours... Out of their internal*

*examination papers, only two were better (in the sense of having own views articulated). All the rest just duplicated what I told them in class. They wouldn't give up a single word and put them all down in the script.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject12, an ex- teacher)*

It can be understood from the above statement that the freedom to express divergent views is a granted and yet unexercised right. To exercise the right requires certain basic abilities and knowledge. Without this prerequisite, the students may simply forgo the right of being divergent and resort to duplicating teacher's theories in order to be successful in examinations. Of course, we have to bear in mind that to duplicate answers given by one's teacher may mean the student in concern gives up the thinking that will lead to a divergent view. On the other hand, it may also mean that the student in concern actually thinks in one way and expresses in another way. This then is a form of learned dishonesty to oneself. The former is a form of trained passivity.

As for whether teachers welcome such divergent thought wholeheartedly, the same informant's account is revealing.

*S: In my A Level class for example, they were usually large due to school's politics. I might have thirty or twenty something... As for my marking, in theory I would not care about the conclusion. Instead, I would just care about the argument. But, in reality, I did mind. I would find the work very hard. It was because of the number of students. If there were thirty students in A or AS Level, I would have up to twenty-eight. It would be very difficult job to me, as I needed to mark each student on two papers, each of four questions. This would be a difficult job for me in marking (if I took different conclusions). The number made it a difficult job. I was also angry with the number of students I got.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject12, an ex- teacher)*

The ex-teacher above tells the difference between ideal (of not minding divergence) and reality (big class size) very vividly. The class resembles a factory and in a factory, standardization is the only way to keep the production line go and to keep the cost down. This contradiction can be felt in all endeavors to implement personalized teaching in massive classes. It should be noted that, the wish and ideal of the teacher in concern may not be decisive in determining the outcome as it may be a form of

response to structure that finally dictates the outcome.

Two informants are more in the side of not allowing divergence.

Concern about student ability is the argument a serving teacher uses to explain why he does not encourage students to air their views.

The teacher describes in the excerpt below how he is constrained by the lack of ability of his students and has to resort to lecturing and giving his own discourse.

*S: I think research is not important in the GPA class. It is rather a one-way business. I will first introduce the factual background. Then I will present my view and explanations of such facts. Discussions are rare... Time is not enough. Besides, it may be due to language. I tried before. But, it hardly worked. (Actually the subject used the Chinese proverb "it's like pulling the cow up to the tree")... Yes. I think that's a waste of time (given that the students are not up to the standard in English and they have to converse in English in discussion). I gave them time to talk about issues. Then they mumbled for a long time and didn't really come up with anything. So I think I should do it for them... Some of my students may be like a mess. They won't read more things when they go home on top of notes and things you assign... there are students who don't really know what is going on despite your teaching them for a long time...*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject8, a serving- teacher)*

It should be noted from the discourse above that the teacher actually has attributed the one-way instruction to certain weaknesses of the students and not to his personal preferences. Language problem in this case is construed as the inability of the students to converse in English, as the school is an English medium school. But, it should be highlighted that the school in concern is renowned particularly for its high level of English proficiency. The teacher complains about the lack of initiatives to pursue study and the lack of abilities to carry out analysis. But, it should also be reminded that the school in concern is one of the topmost granted schools in Hong Kong, taking in and turning out some of the most talented students.

If we follow what the teacher says, we will find that the teacher in concern has a

self-perceived mission. Let's look at what he says in the excerpt below.

*Subject 8: I also say we should go beyond the outward appearance of facts. Yes, there can be story behind such facts and I want the students to see it and judge and evaluate etc. If you give it to the students, it will waste a lot of my time. They may not be able to do it too. I should do it, say when I talk about the Communist Party of China and the problem of transfer of political power. This is not covered in the textbook that deals mainly with the institutions. I shall bring out this based on my own understanding nonetheless.*

The teacher actually wants his students to be able to analyze in depth and unearth truth that rests beneath the sheer description of facts. It can be truth that reveals certain undemocratic practices. However, he has lost the patience of allowing students to discover such truth on their own. Thus, he simply has to give the students "the truth behind"! This is done notwithstanding that, prima facie, his students seem to be the group most able to do so!

Interestingly, a strong commitment to the value of democracy may also make a teacher disallow divergence, which is the basis of democracy itself.

A serving teacher gives his account of how he emphasizes the value of democracy. We can see it in the excerpt below.

*S: Part of the political culture and particular political values, such as freedom and democracy and the rule of law etc... You can say I will impose these on them in a forceful way... This is to ensure that they will accept... Usually I will indoctrinate the value of democracy but not the version of democracy. For example, you can mention to them different versions of democracy in practice and let them reflect upon the best form of democracy, say whether presidential form or parliamentary form of democracy is better. (Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject 9, a serving- teacher)*

From the above statements, we can see that the teacher, due to his insistence on (liberal) democracy, has adopted an attitude of intolerance towards possible deeds of non-believing. Ironically, the longing for liberal democracy (which is grounded on tolerance of difference) has brought to its doorstep the attitude of intolerance!

### 5.6.2 Political Participation

Political participation is another essential element of democracy. This is evident from the discourses of Crick (1989) and Bottery (1995) etc. as reported in 3.3.5. It is interesting to look at whether GPA teachers will encourage and promote political participation of their students, as these can be helpful to the development of positive attitudes and skills related to political participation in adulthood.

Ten informants have chosen to speak on the topic, “whether GPA is more an academic subject or a preparation for political participation?” This comprises 3 ex-ex-teachers (inclusive of 1 ex-setter) and 7 serving teachers.

Rather unanimously, the replies all point to that the subject is academic in nature and preparation for political participation is not an important aim involved, at least when it is being studied in schools.

This is clearly expressed in the answers given by the informants.

A serving teacher (Subject 6) for example says, “The aims are not related to students being prepared to work as politicians. This subject will not do this... GPA is more an academic subject (than a form of preparation for political participation). Students aim at getting higher grades and the subject is very examination-oriented.”

Another serving teacher (Subject 5) describes that GPA, in his school, is actually being used to pre-empt other forms of civic education where some sort of students’ engagements may be needed. This is evident in the following excerpt. Note the hesitation to answer, which is not unique in the responses given by the teachers.

*I: If I ask whether GPA is simply an academic subject or a preparation for political participation, how do you think? (After a lapse of about ten seconds, I supplement my question). Which side do you think the subject is more alike?*

*S: To the school, it is the former. It is just a general subject... For our school, we have a civic education committee. But, it only asks the teachers to give talks. It is quite just formalities. It has neither commitment nor perseverance.<sup>70</sup> If there can be a match between the two, it may be different. I mean*

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<sup>70</sup> It should be noted here that the informant has made a distinction between formalities such as “giving



*especially if the activities can match with this subject, it can be better. But we have no such a thing. We thus become simply a subject. ... They think you talk a bit about government and that already is civic education.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject5, a serving teacher)*

However, some teachers are saying that what the students learn may inspire them to become more concerned and even volunteer for activities that are political in nature.

A serving teacher (Subject14) comments, *"I don't think GPA is aimed at preparing the students for political participation. But, it may be a related product. Students may have the inclination (of political participation) when their political knowledge increases. After learning about politics, they may want to exert their influence through political participation. But, this is not an aim of the subject itself...some students will help individual elected representatives in the election campaign. They did it out of their own interest."*

However, the same teacher also brings out the limitations this sort of participation will encounter. Her explanation can be found in the following excerpts.

*S: But, it will be difficult for students to participate into politics, as they are already busy with their study. There is a lot of homework too...I think that there is a directive issued to school about organizing students in election campaigns. I will not deliberately tell the principal that the students do take part in such activities (out of their own initiative). I shall not initiate such activities.*

*I: Will the leadership be alarmed if it sees that a lot of the students are doing it?*

*S: I think it will. I think it will. (repeated 2 times here)...*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject 14, a serving teacher)*

We should note from the above excerpt that the difficulties for students to learn real political participation in the course of doing GPA are two-fold. First they need to do a lot of homework as the subject is an academic subject which takes public examination preparation as of paramount importance. Second, we should also discern from the way

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talks" and "commitment and perseverance". It is the personal belief of the informant that the school sticks only to the formalities, such as organizing some occasional talks, the teacher does not agree with this.

the teacher answers the question that political participation is a sensitive issue in the eyes of the school head. Thus the teacher dodges talking to the principal about students participating into politics and emphasizes she will not initiate these activities. Alarming the school head is a very troublesome matter and this may be why it is repeated two times.

Another informant Subject 2 (an ex-teacher) who used to set questions for the subject's public examination expounds the contradiction between being good at the subject and being good at political participation even more vividly.

The following extracts may help to highlight the contradictions the informant has in mind.

*I: Do you think that those students who do well in GPA will be more likely to have the propensity to participate into politics?*

*S: It does not seem to me to be so. If they do well (in the subject), obviously their language is good... I don't think he must be of the participatory style. It can be that he stays away from the scene, not participating into the process, and just be an observer and analyze... Usually there are characteristics related to people who are good at language. The characteristics do not match well with those who participate into politics... They are reading a lot and are critical (in reading). But, they are not participating. On the other hand, those who are participating are not likely to do well in the subject... Those who are actively participating may be good at verbal communication, but not with language. Besides, because they are active in participation, they don't read a lot.*

*(Extracted from transcript of interview with Subject 2, an ex-setter of public examination)*

### **Sectional summary**

The followings are some of the key points in the teachers' discourses:

**1. Slightly less than one half of the informants support, without reservation, that divergent views of students should be accepted. There are both a division of views and a conflict between ideal and reality among the teachers.**

**2. A teacher mentions her relatively open style in teaching against the way she was raised. In a way, those teachers who are more open-minded will try to teach in a more interactive way and provide room for the students to discuss and arrive at their own conclusions. On certain occasions, the teacher concerned may even allow the students to comment and criticize on her way of teaching. Noteworthy is that small class size is commonly seen as a facilitating factor.**

**3. More teachers have reservations and negative feelings toward divergent opinions. Low standard of the students is a common cause for disapproval. It can be that the teachers feel obliged to present their theory instead of allowing the students to think and discuss theirs because the teacher feels that the students can do no more than just giving a factual account. According to a comment given, students may also withhold using their right to give divergent views as they can see that given what they know, they can never succeed launching a view different from the teacher's. Class size is also important as a constraint. A teacher admits that, though personally he favors divergent view, the reality that he has to mark a large number of papers makes him prefer students give answers which are more standardized.**

**3. Interestingly, staunch belief in liberal democracy and determination to counteract authoritarian rule may become a ready reason for not accepting divergence, which is often taken as an essential ingredient of democracy. This is evident in the response of teachers who suggest that democratic value must be imposed in a forceful way and that students, though already the cream of cream, should listen to the teacher's discourse (against authoritarian practices) rather than discussing and coming up with their own conclusions.**

**4. There is a consensus that GPA is more an academic subject while preparing political participation is not important either as an aim or a result.**

**5. Students want good grades and, according to an informant who had experience in setting public examinations, political participation and getting examination results are two different things. He even says that those keen on participation and those who are good at results are two different groups. The reason he gives is that one needs perhaps to sit down and think and study rather than going out to participate in politics if one aims at good grades.**

**6. Besides, though individual students may initiate their own limited participation, like helping in election campaigns, it seems that the teachers will not actively support these as this is deemed sensitive by the school head. A teacher even says she will not tell the principal this even if she knows of it. This reflects the "save the trouble" mentality. The trouble may be a big one so the teacher above repeats two times when she says that school leadership will take students' political participation as an alarm.**

**7. Actually, in the course of interviews, many teachers do not give a prompt answer to the question "whether they encourage political participation". Either I have to wait relatively longer for their answer or they ask me to define "political participation"! This should not at all be a new term to a teacher teaching politics. Thus, a plausible explanation for this is that they find this touchy or that "promoting political participation" has really never been an aim in their mind. The former thus makes them speak with a lot of care, up to the point that they seek clarification to a term actually quite familiar to them. The latter means I have caught them by surprise and this is why there is a lag.**

## 5.7 International perspectives in Understanding Politics

**Introduction:** Chapter Three (3.3.6) outlined a number of questions relevant to the present study. The questions that findings as reported in this section help to answer include:

- **How far does GPA teaching contribute to students' capabilities to understand politics with international perspectives?**
- **What sort of international perspectives is GPA offering to the students?**
- **What are the strength and limitations for GPA if it is to enhance the international perspectives of the students in the political sense?**

Eight informants talk about GPA's possible contributions towards allowing students to understand politics with international perspectives.

In general, the view is that GPA, especially at its A Level, is helpful in enabling the students to see politics with an international sense.

A majority of five informants give an affirmative response with some reservation.

A serving teacher (Subject 4) says, *"I guess comparative study is very important as it is only through comparative study we can understand many concepts. In the past years when we did the entire A Level rather than the AS Level, we covered Paper Two which is about US, China and US-China in comparison. I found that good. They would not be confined to a compartmentalized approach. But now as we only do the AS Level, we do a little political concepts and theories, but really quite little. We do only Hong Kong and a little about China because of Hong Kong's relationship with her. The problem you just said surfaces as students have the compartmentalized tendencies: seeing Hong Kong's politics only in Hong Kong's term etc."*

We can see from this quote that teacher believes that concepts can be fully understood through comparison or a diversity of contexts the concepts are applied. China and the USA are very good way for comparing and contrasting many concepts,

like state powers, human rights and role of constitution etc. Without this diversity of contexts, on the other hand, the teacher believes as in the case of GPA at its Certificate and AS Level, a parochial outlook can arise. So the teacher uses the description, “compartmentalized tendencies: seeing Hong Kong’s politics only in Hong Kong’s term”.

Subject12, an ex-teacher, who is helping with the setting work, has a similar view that international perspectives is underdeveloped in Certificate Level because it is very localized. However, he is much more positive about A Level as students can learn much from concept teaching (which feeds on world-wide reference) and the teaching of United States (a ready Western example to compare and contrast). He also pinpoints that in the A Level’s questions about concept, there first appeared a question about globalization recently.

Another serving teacher (Subject 6) gives more or less the same account when he says, *“I think it is better with A Level. For Certificate Level, it may be a bit difficult as not much about other polities are covered. It is very much grounded on Hong Kong. As for A Level, there may be a coming curriculum change in the direction of abolishing the USA-China comparison part. So, the paper will comprise China and USA, each being one half of the script. But, I think for us, who are used to the teaching, we shall retain this part as discussion with the students. I think exactly the comparison between Eastern and Western political cultures are meaningful.”*

Noteworthy is the point he makes that, even if no questions are deliberately set on comparison, the teacher will do it if the content of the subject has covered different polities.

Is GPA helping with a certain sort of international perspectives and not the other? The following two informants may help us understand the case with their comments.

Subject 14, a serving teacher, comments<sup>71</sup>, “GPA *can allow the students to understand political institutions, ideologies and process in a comparative sense, by drawing reference across China, Hong Kong and United States in particular. However, the subject will not be able to allow the students to gain a worldwide view or knowledge of trends of political and diplomatic development and, say understand how President Bush strategically posits USA toward Middle East and Iraq.*”

Noteworthy is the fact that the informant defines the meaning of international perspectives in understanding politics. What GPA can contribute is a certain form of international perspectives, i.e. in understanding politics of China, Hong Kong and United States in an East-West comparative sense. It won't make students automatically aware of current international issues, especially that of diplomacy.

An ex-teacher (Subject 1) explains, “*By international perspectives in understanding politics, I think you may mean either the knowledge of alternative political institutions or that of alternative political thoughts or ideologies. As far as I can remember, the F5 and F6 GPA curriculum have covered the former, of course with different level of depth and width. However, in the F5 curriculum, though we would cover the topic on the comparison between presidential system and parliamentary system, we usually didn't spend much time on it and never expected that it would be examined. For the latter, almost nothing would be covered in the normal curriculum. So, in the Certificate Level GPA, “international perspectives”, either broadly or narrowly conceived, in my opinion, are underdeveloped. The situation in A Level is different, at least, in the curriculum. More in-depth understanding and discussion of politics from international perspectives, both on the institutions and the ideological level, can be achieved.*”

Just like Subject 14, Subject 1 defines such international perspectives. This means GPA can be helpful only in a certain way. He measures it in different levels too.

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<sup>71</sup> This quotation is not found in the interview transcript. It came in a post-meeting supplement sent by the informant when the researcher sought for more views on international perspectives.

Institutional level being stage one and ideological level is stage two. Like the rest, he thinks such international perspectives are seen in A Level mainly. In Certificate Level, as he says, it is underdeveloped. He adds that though it can be taught in the Certificate Level, it is not expected to turn up in public examinations. The corollary is that no teacher will seriously concern about it.

Three informants firmly support the notion that GPA can give international perspectives to the students.

Subject7, a serving teacher, explains, *“Definitely yes. There are many cases and evidence (that we can draw from the world to help the analysis)... It may be the best subject... For example, in answering the questions related to the concept of sovereignty, you cannot give more than 1000 words, with only the few paragraphs you find in the textbook’s explanation. You have to give different examples from different countries to elucidate your point. Even when we mark, the universities’ markers tend to give higher marks to students, who in the discussion of internal and external sovereignty, give good examples from different countries of the present world...This is certainly of help to nurturing international perspectives... Say, in the teaching of China’s constitution, you will have to compare it to the West. You won’t teach it per se. Instead you will compare the concept of constitution in socialist country and its counterparts in the West...It will also be more interesting. For example, if you talk of Congress in the USA, you will also remind students there is a congress in China and the difference between them are... Though not in the Syllabus, you will also mention the Parliament in the UK.”*

We should note that the teacher is talking more about the subject at a higher level because that requires the students to analyze concepts in some depth. The “universities’ markers” in the quote is another hint. The importance of public examination is echoed here too.

Subject 15, the ex-teacher-turned Subject Officer, comments this way, *“I think that’s positive...In the A Level, they will know more about the way United States’ government operates. More*



*or less, this will be related to the way human rights are perceived. We also have the section on comparison between United States' and China's government. For instance, in the case of relationship between government and the people, the two countries can be different. This also applies to the relationship between the legislature and the government etc. The students will then understand the differences. But, knowing the government structure and values of the United States will be helpful to the developing of international perspectives...Actually in dealing with the political concepts of the papers, they will also need to draw examples as references and the comparison (between different polities) will come out naturally."*

Once again, we can see from this quote that it is the difference between polities from which the students can grasp the meaning of how politics works out. Besides, even if no specific questions are asked on comparing polities, this will come out naturally in the dealing with political concepts.

**Sectional summary:**

The followings are some of the key points in the teachers' discourses:

- 1. All the teachers believe, in different degrees, that GPA can contribute to understanding politics with international perspectives.**
- 2. The majority opinion is that GPA at its A Level will be particularly helpful. First it covers more concepts and concepts can be better understood when it is displayed against a number of different contexts. This is exactly why teachers draw their references from both the East and the West to substantiate the points they make to enable their students to see how concepts, like human rights, constitutions etc. are construed markedly differently across cultures. Teachers also believe this will be appreciated in the marking work of the A Level examination. Secondly, a more**

***in-depth study of United States' politics, together with the need to answer questions specifically on China-USA comparison, has been important in inspiring students to reflect in an international sense. This will enable the students to see a political system and its practices from different perspectives.***

***3. However, it is pointed out GPA at the Certificate Level does not have the same merit. It is too Hong Kong based and according to what a teacher says, it may mean that students will understand politics in a parochial and compartmentalized way.***

***4. A remark is made that though GPA may bring international perspectives in understanding political institutions and practices. It will not allow students to gain much knowledge about international political events and diplomatic issues though these may also be considered a form of international perspectives.***

***5. Public examinations have been reported to be important in directing teaching and learning in this case.***

### **5.8 A brief summary of the all the sections in this chapter:**

#### ***Pedagogical issue***

- ***The majority of teachers adopt a didactic approach in teaching that emphasizes expository methods.***
- ***Discussions, outings, projects are only added occasionally and for some teachers, these are rarely used.***
- ***There are many reasons behind this choice. First, the class size is deemed too large for interactive mode. Second, school ethos and the preference for order limit the parameter for organizing discussions and projects. Third, GPA will lose out in the competition for necessary resources, as it is only a marginal subject in school.***
- ***Teachers in general do not see more senior students to be more in need of an interactive mode of teaching. Instead, class size is taken as more important factor in pedagogical choice.***

#### ***Indoctrination***

- ***All teachers can give a working definition to the meaning of indoctrination. It does not seem that the term is new to them.***
- ***However, the teachers in general only see indoctrination as a problem related to the government when it tries to force its ideology and policies through. Indoctrination is not deemed a problem with teaching GPA in the classroom.***
- ***It is opined that teachers should let their political views known to the students. One informant even says that fake objectivity is immoral.***
- ***Some teachers believe that certain form of indoctrination is needed. This occurs in the course of promoting the basic premises of democracy, like freedom of thoughts***

*and rule of law etc. This is also needed when students are not “smart enough” to transcend the factual details of the textbook to discern the authoritarian nature of communist rule.*

### *National Identity*

- *In general, teachers believe that national identity should be open and critical in nature.*
- *Some teachers emphasize that Hong Kong should not just play a subservient role under the “One Country, Two Systems” model.*
- *A teacher points out that in a global village, loyalty is somehow divided.*
- *The majority view is that teaching GPA cannot promote national identity of the students though initially concern and knowledge about China may increase.*
- *As the subject emphasizes a rational, critical approach in learning, the students will get worried when they find China is a negative example in many ways. Besides, identification with China’s culture, a necessary element of national identity, will not be enhanced.*

### *Patriotism*

- *In general, teachers emphasize that patriotism, or loving one’s own country, should not be mistaken as loving its government or the ruling party.*
- *Interestingly, some point out that, in the case of Hong Kong, such love should not comprise the polity of China.*
- *Most believe that it is impossible to promote patriotism with GPA teaching, as the subject emphasizes analysis and critique and resentment of China may increase if she is found negative in different ways.*

- *It is further opined that in Hong Kong, there is an attempt to blur the difference between loving the country and loving the regime.*

### *Democracy*

*In this study democracy is studied only with reference to its two attributes, namely tolerance of divergence and promoting political participation.*

- *Only a minority of teachers believes, without reservation, that divergent views of the students should be encouraged.*
- *Low standard of the students in analysis and language, the need to enforce a consensus on liberal democratic values, and big class size are among the reasons given.*
- *There is a consensus among teachers that GPA is academic and promoting participation is not important, both as an aim and as a result.*
- *Though individual students may initiate certain participation on their own, teachers do not actively support such attempts and some find that these can be sensitive in the eyes of the school leadership.*

### *International perspectives in understanding politics*

- *All teachers believe that studying GPA can help the students to understand politics from international perspectives.*
- *The subject, at its A Level, is particularly helpful, as the concepts there, like constitution, human rights etc., can only be understood against application in different polities. Besides, it requires students to study the United States' politics in some depth and compare China and United States politically.*

- *The subject at its CE Level, is felt to be a bit parochial as it is mainly related to politics of Hong Kong.*
- *On the other hand, it is opined that the subject will not be able to enhance the students' knowledge about international political events and diplomacy though these are also important for international understanding.*
- *Public examination requirement is taken as important in affecting teaching and learning.*

## Chapter Six: Discussion

### 6.1 Introduction

This study focuses on the perceptions of GPA teachers about how politics is taught as a subject in Hong Kong's schools and the impact it has on the students. As explained in Chapter Four, pedagogical issues, indoctrination and the subject's impact on national identity, patriotism and international perspectives are the key areas of concern in the study. They are also the important categories under which concepts collected in the course of interviews are subsumed. In Chapter Five, these key categories and the concepts they subsume are reported and initially analyzed, particularly in a way to make sense of what the teachers said. In this light, Chapter Five represents efforts of open and axial coding. However, it should be noted that coding efforts in Chapter Five is confined to the teachers' narratives directly about the categories under study. This is true both for the reporting and the initial analysis. Teachers' discourses on other matters, which can be revealing, have not been fully represented. Neither is there an attempt to bring in discourses of other related parties to inform the understanding of the teachers' discourses. This important work of understanding with a wide base is left to the present chapter.

The aim of this chapter is to proceed sequentially to the building up of a substantive theory that represents an attempt of the researcher to explain the findings as reported in Chapter Five. Strauss and Corbin (1998) use the term "paradigm" to mean the analytical tool that enriches understanding by relating process (or what happens) to structure (or why something happens). Strauss and Corbin (*ibid*) explain, "Why would one want to relate structure with process? Because structure or conditions set the stage,

that is, create the circumstances in which problems, issues, happenings, or events pertaining to a phenomenon are situated or arise. Process, on the other hand, denotes the action/interaction over time of persons, organizations, and communities in responses to certain problems and issues. Combining structure with process helps analyst to get at some of the complexity that is so much a part of life.” In this chapter the researcher aims at offering his paradigm with regard to what has been reported in Chapter Five. What the teacher said, together with the discourses of other pertinent parties covered in this study will be used to facilitate the theorizing work. Procedurally, the researcher will first identify the core factors from the wider narratives of the teachers, as well as from the discourses of other involved parties (curriculum planners, setters and academics etc.). These core factors are actually a set of new categories derived from the widened data set. They are able to subsume the significant concepts within the data set. After that, the findings as reported in Chapter Five will be related to and explained against the core factors as identified. At the end of this chapter, salient features of the paradigm will be examined to give further insight about the picture.

## **6.2 Paradigm building (step one): outlining the underlying structure**

The core factors constituting the underlying structure are worked out by looking into the wider narratives of the teachers, and by examining the discourses of other pertinent parties, inclusive of curriculum planners, public examination setters and academics.

Three core factors are identified, namely: the milieu, teachers’ own beliefs, and curriculum features. Each of the core factors subsumes a number of sub-factors. What



follows is the discussion of the core factors. Original quotes from informants will be given to highlight the points established.

### **6.2.1 Core Factor One: The milieu**

Milieu is defined here as:

1) The ethos which works in different levels to affect the teaching of the subject.

Social ethos represents the macro-level dimension while school ethos represents the micro-level dimension.

2) The actual operational context in schools where the subject is delivered. This involves practical considerations, such as class size, logistic supports and teacher training etc.

#### **6.2.1.1 Social ethos**

##### **i) The underlying political division**

The political division of the society was originally grounded on difference in political affiliation in the years after WWII. Those who supported the Nationalist Party of Taiwan were at odds politically with those who supported the Communist Party that took control of the mainland in 1949.

In a sense, the division is of diminishing importance for the younger generation, considering that the Nationalist Party has lost control of Taiwan's presidency and that the Taiwanese government seems to be pursuing a course of political alienation. Yet, it is found that such a division still persists in the mindset of parents whose students are

studying GPA in secondary schools. Political discussion relating to China and the return of Hong Kong to Communist China arouse much concern among the parents. This can be evident in the teacher's accounts given below.

Subject 4 (serving teacher) explains how the students of this subject may have to encounter the political affiliation of their parents. Subject 4 says, "I also heard about students saying that their parents were very pro-Taiwan and they often said that it was very bad for Hong Kong to become a part of China again. It was thus very wrong for Hong Kong to reunite with China. The students said they would often argue with their parents on such matters."

The issue of political affiliation could also extend to influence the attitude of school leadership. Subject 5 (serving teacher) gives an account of how political inclination of the school leadership once affected the way the subject was delivered. Subject 5 says, "When I first came to the school, I found there was a newspaper "Shang Gang Shi Bao" (a pro-Taiwan newspaper) in the library. Then, I said it would be good to have also, say the Wen Wui Bao or Tai Kung Bao (both are pro-Beijing newspapers), and students could read them as well. Once heard (by the school administration), their face changed (this is a Chinese expression to describe disapproval and rage). I don't know why. We could first have such newspapers, starting a couple years back, because there was a change in supervisor. In the past, I guess it was a political question. Out of what I heard the previous one...can't be sure... had strong connections with Taiwan."

More important, however, is that this old division of loyalty has taken up a new face and the population is increasingly divided between the democrats who cherish a government built on democratic principles (or Western democratic tenets such as popular elections, check and balance and constitutionalism etc.) and those who are pro-Beijing and are more in favor of confining the pace of democratization. Apart from

the undemocratic way the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council were elected after 1997, a number of issues have heightened the controversies between the two groups, the latest one being the enactment of national security bill in relation to article 23 of the Basic Law. In that case 500,000 people took to the street on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2003 to fight against the passing of the bill. The fact that the pro-Beijing elements have been loyal supporters of Tung, the Chief Executive, who has failed both to fasten the pace of democratization and to create social consensus and cohesion, has widened the rift between the two camps. The inability of the government after 1997 to promote economic growth has added fuel to their quarrels.

**ii) Sensitivity about political education:**

Social attitude toward political education can best be described as being sensitive. This sensitivity is rooted in history. As reported in Chapter Three, political education was for a long time banned by laws. The difference in political affiliation of the people reported above and the political turmoil in the 1960's also underpin such sensitivity. The lack of political consensus and the tense political debate that flared up after the return of sovereignty in 1997 make the discussion of political issues particularly controversial. It seems that the sensitivity is shared by different parties: teachers, students, parents and school heads alike, though the reasons behind may not be identical.

The following discourses are revealing in this light.

Subject 6 (serving teacher) explains how he needed to skillfully conceal his study of politics to comfort parents and relatives when he was admitted to the university. S6 says, "I have such inclination to politics. Actually I did my Higher Level study myself

to make my way into Chinese University...I chose the subject (in the university) because it was more interesting... Yes, telling mother and relatives that I did public administration will be better as there won't be so much (worry and sensitivity)."

Subject 4 (serving teacher) portrays the concern of parents against teachers possibly leading their students to adopting certain political stances. Subject 4 says, "There will be seminars to explain to parents what subjects we offer. When they come across with GPA, they would immediately become very concerned and ask what exactly we are teaching to the students. I think the parents will not consult the Syllabus in details and find out what the objectives are and what the content will be. But, when they come across the term "government" and "public affairs", they will become very sensitive... I feel that there is the inference among parents that we are giving a political stance to the students when we teach the subject."

Subject10 (serving teacher) describes the sensitivity of students as they have ideas about certain topics that China will not like to be discussed in class. Subject 10 says, "I don't really feel the pressure. However (ironically), students will tell me not to talk of them, as they are sensitive. (The Subject laughs). This happened when I criticized China. This also happened when I talked about the Taiwan's independence issue as people related with China had criticized that we (Hong Kong people and press) should not promote and talk about these."

In a similar token, Subject 14 (serving teacher) also describes how the school head may be alarmed by politicization of students. (Transcript12: S (26) and S (27) refer).

Sonny Lo (Subject16), who teaches politics in the University of Hong Kong, comments on the vulnerability of teachers due to the lack of protection. Lo says, "Because the teachers have to talk about Chinese politics and that will be most sensitive here. To talk about China's history, political development and Tiananmen incident etc.

are all sensitive. Sensitivity to secondary teachers should be more serious than that to university teachers... because he has to get in touch with students who come from all over Hong Kong... They (the secondary teachers) are not protected in their role by academic freedom (as we university teachers are)... On top of that, the age of the teachers on the average should be in the range between forty and sixty... For this age group, the issues will become even more sensitive. They saw what happened in China in 1970's and 1980's or even the time before that... The impact will be tremendous. From their own experience and socialization, the teachers will believe politics is turbulent and perhaps dirty too. Teaching politics is both sensitive and potentially risky to these people."

### **iii) The official promotion of patriotism**

The promotion of patriotism is in fact understandable in view of the reunification with China in 1997. Chapter Three has reported the growing importance of the concept "nation" in the development of Hong Kong's civic education since 1990's. Now, it is important to know the nature of this call from discourses collected in this study.

Sonny Lo (Subject 16) explains the uncritical nature of this aim against his observation of the development of a proposed subject known as Integrated Humanities. Lo says, "Yes, the Education Department has already made guidelines. The guidelines even say there should be patriotism. I mean in the part about Chinese politics or China. In the part of Hong Kong, people are to know what participation is and what values are good for Hong Kong. It may be in line with what you have been saying... Yes, it is strange that critical thinking has not been mentioned. In the part of China, there is even a direct call for patriotism."

Subject 11 (a Civic Education Guidelines drafter) sees the call for patriotism as uncritical, emotional and apolitical. Subject 11 says, "In both the 2001 document and the speech given by Tung Chi Hwa (the Chief Executive), there is a strong emphasis on national education. There is a very heavy dose of national education in the 2001 document...National education can be very political. But now such national education is only built on culture and not politics...If you go by culture, you go with history. This, together with a touch of affection, you move toward affection education. This thus becomes love and belonging to the land and the common blood, the sense of root. This is affection only. No, it is not related to rational critical judgment."

#### **iv) A new phase of depoliticization**

In Chapter Three, a discussion of how Hong Kong was once depoliticized after the internal turmoil in the 1960's was given. Here, the notion that the new regime, that took control after 1997, has been re-pursuing a depoliticizing policy after the handover, for reasons other than that of restoring order after chaos, is discussed.

Subject 6 (a serving teacher) explains that Hong Kong is undergoing a depoliticization process. He attributes this to the attitude of the new ruler. Subject 6 says, "It is the society as a whole. It is the ethos of depoliticization... Yes, now the government and Mr. Tung are actually depoliticizing Hong Kong. Mr. Tung says he is working for the good of the people and doesn't like politics. As a teacher trained in politics, I feel very bad about this. I think they are polluting the meaning of politics and this is the social ethos we face."

Subject 8 (a serving teacher) gives an interesting account of how this depoliticization might have shed its ripples in schools especially on what should be

achieved. He narrates in a rather emotional way, "The best thing (the new principal deems) will be to hoist the national flag. The best thing is to hoist the national flag! (The Subject says this two times.) Yes, she said this to me many times. She asked me to attend seminars that explained the national flag. She spoke to me face-to-face about how we can organize the raising of the flag (in school) and salute etc. Now she is thinking in this way. Put to this the termination of GPA and other things, you can take that she is an important character in the depoliticization concept."

Due to the concept coined by the above informants, an experienced civic education worker (Subject 11) was invited to give his view on depoliticization and education. Subject 11 (a Civic Education Guidelines drafter) gives a detailed account of this notion, based on his long experience of working with civic education in Hong Kong. He emphasizes that the new phase of depoliticization is backward looking, conservative and is aimed at marginalizing dissident views. Subject 11 says, "The fact is that Hong Kong's civic education is moving back to square one through "re-depoliticization". This is my perception of the development after 1997, especially in these few years... I believe we are making a U-turn through re-depoliticization to become once again what we were many years back... In the documents released, this is particularly clear. In the "Learning to Learn 2001", civic education is mentioned repeatedly, but only in terms of moral/civic education and that means the independent identity of civic education is gone... This turning back (depoliticization) reflects the social ethos and the leaders' reservation on rights and democracy. Mr. Tung does not want the thing to go too fast. Whether he tries to turn the clock back is, of course, debatable. My personal view is that at least he does not encourage a relatively fast pace toward democratization... It is not just absorbing politics into administration. Absorbing politics into administration implies absorbing the dissident elites. What's

here now is suppressing and marginalizing those dissident voices, especially those arising from the grass root.”

**v) The room for free political discussion**

There seems to be a difference in views concerning whether the room for political discussion is tightening up after the return of Hong Kong to China. Some teachers believe that so far the freedom of speech and political discussion is still intact.

For example, Subject 14 (serving teacher) describes that Hong Kong is still relatively liberal as far as freedom of speech is in concern. She says, “Anyway, as in Hong Kong, up to now, we are still relatively more open, as there are less restriction on freedom of speech, the mass media and Internet etc. ... we may get hold of different views relatively easily.”

However, a number of informants have already raised their concern, particularly in view of new developments in Hong Kong, inclusive of the impending passing of national security laws that are related with Article 23 of the Basic Law of Hong Kong.

Subject 8 (serving teacher) believes that the freedom needed for the teaching of politics in school has been gradually lost, as the new government has become less lenient. He also believes this is true of the entire political landscape of Hong Kong after 1997. He thinks this is setting the clock back. Subject 8 says, “Of course, it was the period before the handover that gave a better ground to teach this subject. During the period of the British rule, though there might be political agenda for the colonial government, the political and administrative reforms then gave us a much better context to do the subject. The space was there. Besides, there was a much stronger voice for the



political organizations. Though the elected places came out slowly, the ethos was so much different... Yes. So, though some people scolded Chris Patten, I believed he worked to our good. How he acted himself out was another thing. He contributed a lot to the political culture of Hong Kong. Now, it has been withdrawn totally..."

Sonny Lo (Subject16) explains that once the national security laws have been enacted teachers will have to play safe and toe the official line. Besides, many topics may become taboos to be discussed in class. Lo says, "This will make the teachers to go, potentially and sub-consciously I mean, to political correctness. For example, topics about Falun Gong etc will be very sensitive. The same may apply to the churches in Hong Kong and relationship between the Central Government and Hong Kong etc. In these issues, they may toe the (official) political line.

#### **6.2.1.2 School ethos**

##### **i) Pragmatic consideration**

The education system of Hong Kong is marked by tense competition for tertiary places. Whether a student can eventually gain access to the universities is taken as the yardstick to measure how successful he is as a student. In return, whether a school can help its students to get good scores in public examinations is often the most important factor affecting the school's esteem. This utilitarian consideration has tremendous impact on the attitude of the school leadership, as well as that of the students.

For school heads, public examination result is often the most important consideration whether a subject should be adopted.

Subject 14 (serving teacher) for example tells that she becomes so nervous and has

difficulty falling asleep every year when the public examination is about to come out. She explains how in reality the importance of public examinations predominates over all other considerations. In fact, the principal even hints that the subject may be closed if it fails to turn out good grades. Subject 14 says, "Any principal will be very concerned with the results in the public examinations. This applies to every subject, and not just to GPA. The school principal will not be willing to see the reputation of the school being tarnished by a subject, whose results are falling... We stress a lot on independent thinking. But, I guess, once we are in public examination, the principal will resort to using another standard. It is not then to determine the importance of this subject in terms of its meaningfulness... Yes, (it is) in terms of marks. It becomes that of passing rate and credits etc."

Students are also reported to have put highest, if not all, concern on public examination results. Some informants believe that they are motivated by grades and not interest.

Subject 7 (serving teacher), for example, tells that his students are bored by the subject, but he still gets very good enrolment because of the good grades the subject yields. He points out that despite he may be a failure in teaching, the subject goes strong because of good results. (Transcript 5: S (13) line 1-3 and S (19) refer)

On the contrary, Subject 9 (serving teacher) explains that failing to yield good results has caused the closing of the subject in the coming year as it is not likely that the subject can attract students. (Transcript 7: S (55) refer)

## **ii) Seeing GPA as a marginal subject**

In this study, it is found that GPA is taken as nothing but a marginal subject in

schools.

The school leadership sees GPA as marginal. As a corollary, the subject will be a loser if it is to fight with other subjects for resources, in terms of both money and class time etc.

Subject 5 (serving teacher) for example explains how he has to work with less resources. Subject 5 says, "Frankly speaking, in the eyes of the school, it doesn't matter whether the subject exists or not. It exists because it has been there... There is no emphasis on it as the subject is best described to be marginal... This subject is not taken as the key subject. In terms of resources, I find that practice tells more. The school cuts back everything we have when it finds that Education Department is giving \$1200 for the subject to purchase books. Other subjects do have the monies, says a thousand something."

Subject 7 (serving teacher), on the other hand, says that teaching time has been unduly cut. Subject 7 says, "Yes. GPA here has long been in a weaker hand. We have eight periods each week in a 6-day cycle... Chinese History gets nine periods. Geography gets nine periods. Only GPA gets eight... Yes, it gets the least among all subjects."

There can be many reasons for this marginal status. Very few schools are taking it as one. It is only an optional subject taken by a small amount of students is perhaps another. Besides, it cannot bring the same prestige that other well established disciplines like English Literature and History carry.

### **iii) Conservative attitudes towards classroom teaching**

There has been a strong call by educational reformers for adopting a heuristic

approach in classroom teaching so that a more open and interactive atmosphere can be developed. Besides, learning should be facilitated in a way that it can transcend the confines of the classroom.

However, in reality, such aspirations may come up with conflicting demands of the schools.

Some schools still emphasize that classroom should be quiet and orderly. Subject 5 (serving teacher), for example, tells noise in his school brings trouble. Subject 5 says, “I think this is true of every subject here and I also think that is very laughable...Here, when we have classes, we cannot make noise. The principal does not accept this.”

Besides, sometimes there is also a preference that learning should take place safely within the classroom. Subject 4 (serving teacher) explains how the school tries to protect the students by keeping them in. Subject 4 says, “Yes, the school loves the students and does not that encourage students to take the hardship of going out and seeing too much. There is also the fear that they may see some people (get into wrong company) and turn bad.”

These will certainly impose a limit on the teachers’ choice of pedagogy.

### **6.2.1.3 The operational context**

Operational context here refers not to the relatively intangible ethos, but to the concrete reality against which the subject is delivered in schools.

Firstly, teachers need to prepare their own teaching materials. Unlike other subjects, GPA has no standard textbooks. There is no textbook for use in A Level in either English or Chinese. In Certificate Level, the only textbook in English was written in the 1980’s while the Chinese counterpart is also getting outdated. It is practically

uneconomic for publishers to cater for GPA as the number of students is so small.

Secondly, the class size in schools is considered by many teachers to be unfavorable for more interactive mode of teaching to be implemented. It also hinders the adoption of project work commonly deemed appropriate for students in more senior forms.

Finally, the efficacy of the teachers and the availability of training should also be considered.

Many of the serving teachers did not really take Political Science when they studied in university. Some of them did their first degree in History, Sociology and even Social Work. Few did research work before though the Project Assessment Scheme option clearly requires teachers to guide their students in their research work.

The researcher was first alerted of the problem of efficacy when Subject 7, a serving teacher and a History major, mentioned that he was handicapped in the job due to insufficient command of the discipline. Subject 7 says, "The thing I regret is that I am not sufficiently trained in this discipline in college. I guess I like the subject gradually. I don't have the time to redo it... Without the formal training, my grasp on the discipline may be weaker... We are of course very familiar with pedagogy and curriculum. But being familiar with them doesn't mean you can go very deep as you depend just on own reading and not university training."

To further understand the problem, Sonny Lo, a Political Science teacher in the university was invited to give his view. Lo believes Political Science training is crucial for the teachers. The lack of such training will impact teaching in two ways. First, the teacher in concern will find the subject too sensitive to handle. Second, he will not know how to let the students learn through debates and will only resort to teaching in a didactic manner. Lo narrates, "They will only teach in a reserved manner. This will

constrain the classroom atmosphere for discussion. They may not dare to organize debates. Even if there are such debates, the atmosphere is tight... It may take a long time to change, say with new teachers with background in political study to emerge, as they are more open... But, if on-the-job training is not provided in these matters about how to deal with sensitive topics in class, say in whether to provide views and guidance to students etc... some teachers may think about what will happen when their students may at the end go home and tell their parents that their teacher supports the Taiwanese self-determination cause. This may bring about complaints and risk to the rice bowls (i.e. job). It may be better if the teachers do know how to proceed with a debate format.”

Subject 17 (serving teacher with both higher degree in political studies and research training) was invited to share her views as a frontline teacher.

The following are the key points she gave over the telephone:

- Teaching GPA can be difficult for teachers who have no Political Science background, particularly at A Level. At A Level, some political theories and concepts can be quite abstract. Besides, you need to be academic and objective in your analysis.
- Even at Certificate Level, though the Syllabus looks more factual, the long questions (conventional questions) require application. Hence a high level of understanding and interpretation (of the subject matter) is needed.
- The government is not doing enough to help the teachers when they find the subject difficult. There is neither enough teaching aids nor comprehensive textbooks. Only one or two seminars were organized in the past ten years.

In fact at least two teachers told that they were first put to teach GPA against their will. Subject 5, for example, first thought that he would teach Economics when he joined the school he worked for. Subject 7, on the other hand, says, “Tell you how I got

started with this subject. It was during the summer holiday that they (school administration) asked me to come back and, without consulting me and without asking my preferences; they asked me to teach it.” Both also indicated that they would be happy teaching other subjects.

## **6.2.2 Core Factor Two: Personal beliefs of the teachers**

No one is value free no matter how neutral he tries to be. The following are some of the more important conceptions of the teachers that may impact the delivery of the subject.

### **6.2.2.1 Views about students' abilities**

In general most of the teachers tend to think that their students are very weak in many different ways.

The mostly mentioned weakness is that of language, especially English in case the school is an English-medium school. At the same time, teachers share the view that language is of paramount importance in studying GPA as students need to read a lot and write a lot.

Analytical power is another deficiency mentioned.

Subject 8 (serving teacher) says, “When I first came the students were very proud but they were brilliant. Now, they are still proud, but they are simply under the wrong belief that they are like those who graduated from the school 20-30 years ago... But, they study, say by rote, to get over the examinations.”

In a sense, Subject 15 (ex-teacher and serving GPA Subject Officer at Hong Kong Examination Authority or HKEA) also makes comments on students' abilities in the same direction. So, he expounds, "They do worst with analysis, in Certificate Level and particularly in A Level. They are very bad in critical thinking. Of course, individual students may be good. But, on the whole, it is disappointing. Actually the assessment will change in 2003. So, you can say that we are lowering the standard to suit the students' ability."

Even the manner and the attitude of the students are sometimes found to be appalling.

Subject 5 (serving teacher) gives a remarkable comment in this direction. He believes that due to the fact that his students are drawn from the bottom of the society, they only see things in a youth gang's perspective and can only quarrel among themselves if they are to discuss on things. (Transcript 3: S (19) and (21) refer).

It is interesting to see from the discourses of teachers that from time to time, the students are addressed as "kids" by their teachers despite the fact that they are already in senior forms. Of course, there are exceptions to this negative understanding. Individual teachers can be very proud of and appreciative of their students.

#### **6.2.2.2 Views about female students**

While the teachers interviewed generally do not think highly of their students, in terms of interest and abilities in studying politics, some of the teachers are particularly negative in case of female students.

Subject 4 (serving teacher) for example believes girls naturally are passive and ignorant about the society. Subject 4 says, "In the case of our school in particular, there



are only girls (female students). They are rather passive. They know very little of the society. I always have the impression that girls do not know much. They should know more about things in the society so that they can safeguard themselves. I find that they will simply recite things given them.”

Subject 10 believes that girls are passive, obedient and they learn better under didactic approach, say by following their teacher and taking notes etc. Subject 10 says, “Boys have more questions to ask and more to say while girls are more passive and obedient. They just listen and take all you give them...I think this is in line with how girls study in school at large. They usually stay quiet; listen to all you say and take notes. Reaction is thus not satisfactory.” In a sense this is shared by Subject 7 (serving teacher) who also emphasizes that politics is not a thing that interests girls. Subject 7 says, “The girls, you know, do not have much interest in political things. The boys are comparatively more interested in asking things. Very few girls will ask questions.”

Subject 13, an academic who is active in researches about gender and education in Hong Kong, points out that the modeling effect of teachers, peer group influence, and primary school experience are all important. Subject 13 says, “(The primary teachers’) concern falls relatively more on the boys. This also leads to girls being relatively more passive...Women teachers concern more about non-political matters, say hobbies and entertainment etc. Men teachers are relatively more interested in current affairs and politics...So when boys and male teachers get together with their peers, it is more natural that they talk more about current issues and politics. In the same token, female students and women teachers will talk more on shopping, entertainment and making up etc.

### 6.2.2.3 Views about China

A lot of pertinent teacher' comments have been quoted in Chapter Five in relation to the subject's impact in promoting national identity and patriotism. The researcher chooses not to repeat them here.

Among the teachers and other informants interviewed, Chinese identity in historical and cultural sense seems the least disputed. But, behind this consensus, there is a split of opinions. While individual teachers may show positive attitude to China and to reunification, many informants are highly critical of China's polity.

The authoritarian nature of China's government is often a cause of resentment. Such resentment sometimes can be rather emotionally-charged.

Subject 7 (serving teacher) shows his disapproval of the fusion of the state apparatus and the ruling communist party. He says, "A question in Certificate Level asked the student: 'The Communist Party of China is interlocked with the state. Give one good point and one bad point about it.' In fact, from my own point of view, there is no good point at all. If there is good point, the whole world will do it. If there is good point, it will not have become blurring the line between the party and government."

Subject 8 shows that he should lead the students to understand undesirable processes related with and the policies pursued by the Communist Party. He says, "I never scold the Communist Party for being the Communist Party. I criticize it for the process and policies I can see. For this, I think I should enlighten the students."

Subject 10 (serving teacher) explains that China may be more successful with managing her economic growth than with managing her politics. Subject 10 says, "Teachers' own affection to the motherland may be low due to a long period of colonial rule and education. We only rationally analyze different political systems and explain

their strengths and weaknesses. The only positive thing we talk about China nowadays is her economy. She is really successful in this area. We depend on her nowadays.”

Sonny Lo (Subject 16) makes a similar comment that teachers do not seem to be patriotic themselves. Lo says, “The objectives of the subject do not involve patriotism. Besides, the three parties involved, namely setters, curriculum planners and teachers are not patriotic either.”

#### **6.2.2.4 Views about Hong Kong’s politics after 1997**

Despite the fact that there is a range of different opinions, many informants are rather critical of the political development in Hong Kong after the change of sovereignty. Often the criticism is focused on the development of Hong Kong after the return of sovereignty in 1997. The failure to build up an open and democratic system and the inability of the government to foster economic development are important behind the resentment.

Subject 10 (serving teacher) feels that that Hong Kong is gradually abandoning her long-established pluralistic principle. (Transcript 8: S (109) refer)

Subject 12 (ex-teacher and serving setter) makes a similar statement about how dissident voice can now be stigmatized as being “anti-China”. (Transcript 10: S (20) refer)

Subject 14 (serving teacher), in her discourse, also expresses that the performance of the new government, particularly in the economic area, is disappointing. (Transcript 12: S (11) line 5-10)

Subject 9 (serving teacher) explains how discontent of the people develops and how it turns into political apathy. (Transcript 7: S (66), (67), (68) and (69) refer)

### 6.2.2.5 Views about the subject in the eyes of the government

Almost all the informants believe that the government does not emphasize this subject and does not actively promote the subject. It is accounted for in different ways. The following discourses are pertinent to understanding the teachers' views.

Subject 4 (serving teacher) thinks the government has forgotten the existence of the subject. Subject 4 says, "I don't even think the government is aware of the existence of the subject...Neither do I think the Examination Authority or the government is trying to bring the subject up under favorable terms."

Subject 6 (serving teacher) thinks the government has simply left the subject to schools and does not help it to succeed there. Subject 6 says, "I understand that the government's stance is a school-based one. Okay, the subject is there. If you want it, take it. There is no active promotion."

Subject 15 (ex-GPA teacher and serving HKEA Subject Officer) also points out that the government fails to promote the subject. So, he expounds, "It is falling as you said...But, I think the most important reason is that (the Subject says aloud) our education authorities does not see the good point of this subject... It does not see the good point of having this subject and has not done anything to reinforce this subject... This will also make schools and students unable to be brave enough to accept this subject. Without the encouragement and resources of the government, this is not possible... I think it is a bit foolish."

### **6.2.3 Core Factor Three: Curriculum**

A brief sketch of the subject is given in Chapter Two. The discussion below attempts to outline salient features of the curriculum that is found to have profound influence on the delivery of the subject in schools. The views of the curriculum planners will be particularly considered. These planners include the HKEA Subject Officer, the members of the subject committees that look after the Syllabuses (i.e. examination syllabuses), the planners of the Teaching Guidelines, and lastly the setters of public examination questions.

#### **6.2.3.1 An overloaded syllabus**

A syllabus can be overloaded in two ways. First, it can be overloaded with reference to the time allotted. Second, it can be overloaded as it has more than what the students need. In this study, the difference is important. There is a commonly shared view that the subject is overloaded with reference to the time it has. According to Subject 15, the HKEA Subject Officer and Subject 14, serving teacher and the Chair of HKEA Subject Committee (A Level), the subject is having too much to teach within too short a time period. Subject 4 (serving teacher and a member of the HKEA subject committees) makes a similar comment when she says, "I guess in CE Level, we are in a real tight situation and the time frame is always in our mind. There are so much time and lessons for this and so. No discussion this time as we need to rush through the topics and so."

However, it should be understood here that there is a dilemma here as the subject may not be considered excessive in view of students' need. Subject 15 (HKEA Subject

Officer) explains this when he says, “That is tight. But, the dilemma is that politics must be related to different things. There are a large number of political actors. There are say, the government, the people, the political parties, the mass media etc. We cannot see one thing independently. Besides, behaviors of the actors are related to political concepts.” Subject 4, a serving teacher, on the other hand, while understanding the schedule is already tight, believes that more about China should be taught. She says, “I think in the long run, the Syllabus (of GPA) will need to be amended to incorporate more elements about China.”

#### **6.2.3.2 A difficult curriculum**

The curriculum is also considered difficult due to a number of reasons.

Firstly, as the subject concerns mainly with politics and policy issues that change almost everyday, the teacher will need to read a lot in order to keep the students informed of the latest discourses. Besides, the importance of current issues in the public examination also means good result is difficult to guarantee. Subject 15 (HKEA Subject Officer) also agreed to this. He also gave his personal account of the story. He narrates, “Yes. Absolutely agree. In fact I encountered the same problem before (when I was a teacher). I then told my students, ‘You may come to topics that I have never taught before’ ...I said to them, ‘Don’t come back and ask why I did not teach you in class.’ You know that a teacher cannot teach all possible things, considering the complicated nature of the subject. Besides, it is related to current issues. It is actually a matter of whether the students have the habit of following them... If they miss these issues, they will run into troubles, as they cannot have the depth in their analysis.”

Second, the subject, especially at A Level, demands heavily on linguistic skills.

The students will need to read a lot and write fast and well while it is commonly believed that students are getting less proficient. This renders good results in public examination, the key to survival of both the subject and the teacher, both difficult and uncertain.

Third, the subject, especially at A Level, is rather conceptual. Subject 15 (HKEA Subject Officer) explains, "A Level study concerns not just structural things, but also a lot of conceptual things. I think the curriculum is very rich in nature. There is enough to teach if you are thinking about teaching politics... For example, liberty and justice may be too difficult and cannot be taught in the course of secondary education... They are very philosophical."

### **6.2.3.3 The official aims and recommended pedagogies**

What do the curriculum planners have in mind when they work out the official aims and the pedagogies of the subject? Answers to these questions may help us to understand why, as reported in Chapter Five, that teachers in general think that such provisions in the official documents are irrelevant to them in teaching.

Subject 15 (HKEA Subject Officer) believes that the subject aims at serving as a platform of knowledge and the stress is on critical analysis. He explains, "Yes (the subject is a knowledge platform), and the subject also trains the students the skills of critique and analysis." Both Subject 15 and Subject 14, who chairs the A Level Subject Committee, believe that the aims of the subject should be generic, broad and idealistic to give the audience a good impression. Subject 14 says, "I think they must make people feel the Syllabus will have room to develop. These aims must then be open and reflect the reality. Besides, there can be room for more development. If you look at the

Syllabus and immediately find it is very old-fashioned and is not dealing with contemporary issues, I deem this hardly acceptable.” Subject 9, a member in the HKEA subject committees, gave almost an identical answer independently, “They are broad, abstract, generic and rather universal and positive. These can readily be accepted by most of the people. There is no need to change them, as they are basically correct and broadly accepted”.

As for pedagogies, Subject 14 who helped work out the Teaching Guidelines and who had been involved in the work groups till recently commented that student interest, and not practicalities, was the most important thing in mind when the pedagogies were proposed. She narrates, “I think it is the interest of the students that counts, especially the part where students will likely to have reactions. When we wrote those things up, this was the thought in my mind. I would see it from the eyes of the students. So, in the course of dealing with the concept of constitution, we invited the students to have a look at the constitution of the school, its content and the process it was passed and the role of the principal in the process etc... We tried to work out the best.” Note that she does not mind that it can be a bit idealistic. Another teacher Subject 9 who has been active in the Teaching Guidelines work group emphasizes the idealistic nature of the proposed pedagogies. He says, “Basically, they are too idealistic. With regard to the activities, you won’t have so much time to implement them, considering the tightness of the subject’s schedule.”

#### **6.2.3.4 Public examination**

Teachers’ belief about the importance of public examinations has been reported earlier. So, what are the key concerns of the setters when they decide on the questions



for GPA's public examination?

Subject 15 (HKEA Subject Officer) explains that the more important consideration is being in line with the syllabus and that things asked should be current. The questions set should match with the abilities of the students. (Transcript 13: S (78) refer)

Are the questions that come out difficult? Sonny Lo (Subject 16), who is teaching politics in the university, comments, "The subject is too difficult. The setters are mainly university teachers. There is the problem of mismatching. The setting work is based on the perspective of the university. The level of secondary schools was not addressed." Lo taught GPA briefly before joining the university. He also had experience in A Level setting work.

In Chapter Two, the issue of repetition of questions in the public examinations of GPA has been raised. Examples of such repetitions are reported in appendix 3. Such repetitions in fact are well understood by those who have a role in setting the questions. Subject 15 (Subject Officer) who heads the setting work explains the consideration behind. He expounds, "We do not have a regulation that forbids asking questions already asked before. The second reason may be that the students did not do it well before. It could be due to the students or the teacher's teaching. We will then like to ask that again in another way in another year." Subject 3 (a serving setter) explains that repetition can be attributed to the limitations brought about by syllabus that restricts the area from which questions can be set. (Transcript 1: S (25) refer)

Would such repetition of questions lead to rote learning? The view of the setters seems to be that this is possible but not particularly detrimental. Subject 2 (ex-setter) believes that students may discern the pattern of cyclical repetition and recite key points in advance. But it is not a problem as the students can still learn something and such

repetition will not cover the entire paper. Subject 3 (serving setter) believes this is a problem for all subjects. GPA should not particularly be a case of concern. She expounds, "Our subject is good in the sense that it asks about current issues and applications of learning on such issues. This makes it difficult to just recite. You have to know the current issues and how it relates to your subject matters. Even if the wordings are the same, what are required may differ."

### **6.3 Paradigm building (step two): understanding GPA teaching against the underlying structure**

In Chapter Five, GPA teachers' direct discourses about pedagogical issues and impact of GPA teaching has been reported and initially analyzed. Now the researcher tries to offer a comprehensive explanation to the teachers' stories as reported in Chapter Five with the help of the core factors identified. It should be highlighted that the core factors are identified by the researcher from the wider discourses of the teachers, as well as that of other informants, inclusive of GPA curriculum planners and academics whose works are pertinent to the present study.

A list of tables in the following pages will be used to summarize the researcher's perspective. The first column on the left recapitulates the findings reported in Chapter Five while the two columns on the right attempt to explain what has happened.

### 6.3.1 Pedagogical issues (Table 6.1)

Findings reported in Chapter Five	Pertinent factors	Possible impact of the factors
<p><i>The majority of teachers adopt expository methods. Discussions, outings, and projects are rare.</i></p>	<p><b><u>Social ethos:</u></b> The underlying political division</p>	<p>Allowing the students to actively participate in politics may bring them to the forefront of such division. Besides, discussion on the most heated political topics may elicit tense debate between the students. If order is insisted or that time is short, it is unlikely that the teacher can afford to teach with a lot of discussions.</p>
	<p>Sensitivity about political education</p>	<p>Teaching by lecturing will give the teacher better control of the classroom discourse. Otherwise, it may become highly confrontational and controversial. This in return will alarm the principal, especially if he is not particularly liberal-minded. If public concern is aroused, scrutiny may follow.</p>
	<p>The room for free political discussion</p>	<p>For some teachers at least, the worry about sensitivity is well grounded because the room for free political discussion is perceived to be closing after the handover in 1997. Thus, allowing students to hold dissident views, which is a precondition for discussion, may be more politically risky than before.</p>
	<p><b><u>School ethos:</u></b> Conservative attitude towards classroom teaching</p>	<p>Order and discipline concern of schools in general and of conservative school heads in particular are in some cases an very important reason why a unilateral mode of delivery is a sensible option. Class teaching will be more orderly and students will not become too active politically.</p>
	<p><b><u>The operational context:</u></b></p>	
	<p>Teacher training and background</p>	<p>It is opined that teachers of the subject lack the right training to know how to implement teaching through interactive mode, say debates, effectively. Besides, some teachers are quite authoritarian in style themselves. This makes didactic teaching a sensible option.</p>
	<p>Class size impact</p>	<p>Large class size makes interactive mode of teaching difficult ( already covered in Chapter Five)</p>

	<p><b><u>Personal belief of the teachers:</u></b> Views about Politics in China and Hong Kong</p> <p>Views about students</p> <p><b><u>Curriculum:</u></b> an overloaded and difficult subject</p>	<p>Some teachers may resort to a unilateral mode of instruction because they want to explain to their students the real meaning of democracy and make sure that the students are able to understand the drawbacks of politics in Hong Kong and China in a critical way. Because of this commitment, they think they have to expound to the students their version of understanding.</p> <p>The belief is that students are not well disciplined and are only interested in good examination results. They have little ability to analyze and lack interest in politics (especially for girls). These are powerful reasons for some teachers who believe they can only teach in a didactic mode.</p> <p>The need to rush in order to cover the required subject matters makes some teachers give up discussion etc because they are costly in terms of time. Besides, students need to be given the right arguments so that they can cater for the examination. A unilateral mode of delivery is useful in speeding up the teaching process.</p>
<p><i>Teachers in general do not see more senior students to be more in need of an interactive mode of teaching</i></p>	<p><b><u>Personal belief of the teachers:</u></b> Views about students</p>	<p>Some teachers actually do not see students in senior forms as more mature learners and have more ability to study and analyze. They sometimes call their students as “kids” despite that they are already in senior forms.</p>

### 6.3.2 Indoctrination (Table 6.2)

Findings reported in Chapter Five	Pertinent factors	Possible impact of the factors
<p><i>Many teachers believe that they should let their political views known to the students. The teachers in fact do not deem indoctrination a potential risk related to the teaching of GPA.</i></p>	<p><b><u>Social ethos:</u></b></p> <p>The official promotion of patriotism</p> <p><b><u>Operational context:</u></b></p> <p>Teacher training and background</p> <p><b><u>Personal belief of the teachers:</u></b></p> <p>Views about students</p> <p>Views about politics in China and Hong Kong</p> <p><b><u>Curriculum:</u></b></p> <p>Public examination</p>	<p>For some teachers at least, the perceived official call for a form of patriotism that is non-critical in nature is not acceptable. The backlash becomes that the teachers resort to instilling the students with critical thoughts, say through sharing own critical point of views with the students.</p> <p>It is opined that the teachers do not have sufficient knowledge in Political Science to know:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) how to conduct a lesson through letting students debates on issues</li> <li>2) that teaching one's view to the students in a power relationship may mean imposing such views on the students</li> </ol> <p>As students are considered uninterested and weak in analytical skills, teachers cannot leave them to make their own judgment.</p> <p>Some teachers are rather critical of politics in China and Hong Kong. Their own resentment is readily translated into critical discourse they like their students to share so that the students can be "intelligent". In some cases, it can be seen that the teachers are pre-occupied with the worry that the government is indoctrinating the students.</p> <p>Examination is important. The public examinations are difficult, especially at A Level, as they are conceptual and ask for judgment based on sound arguments. This becomes a very difficult job. But, many questions asked in public examinations repeat themselves over the years. Thus, if teachers can give a ready and good enough answer to the students. It may help the students substantially to get good grades when similar questions turn up in the public examination.</p>

	<b>The officially recommended pedagogies</b>	<b>The pedagogies in the Teaching Guidelines, in principle, can guide the teaching process and avoid excessive indoctrination. However, both the teachers and the curriculum planners have pointed out that the recommended pedagogies are idealistic and lack practical consideration to become real guidelines in the field. This helps create a vacuum for the teachers to fill according to their own understanding and preferences.</b>
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### 6.3.3 National identity (Table 6.3)

Findings reported in Chapter Five	Pertinent factors	Possible impact of the factors
<p><i>Teachers believe that national identity should be open and critical. Some teachers emphasize that Hong Kong should not just play a subservient role under the "One Country, Two Systems" model. The majority view is that teaching GPA cannot promote national identity of the students though initially concern and knowledge about China may increase.</i></p>	<p><b><u>Social ethos:</u></b> The underlying political division</p> <p><b><u>School ethos:</u></b></p> <p>Pragmatic consideration</p> <p>Seeing GPA as a marginal subject</p> <p><b><u>Personal belief of the teachers:</u></b> Views about China</p> <p><b><u>Curriculum:</u></b> Aims and Public examination:</p>	<p>The underlying political division, be it the more traditional split of loyalty between those who support the Nationalist Party of Taiwan and those who support the Communist Party of China or the newer split between support to democracy and to Beijing, has made the promotion of national identity, even if it was one of the aims, difficult to achieve. Some parents may find it difficult to accept due to their own affiliation to the Nationalist Party of Taiwan. On the other hand, an attempt to inculcate a sense of political identity may trigger the alarm of students who see China as undemocratic.</p> <p>Schools consider GPA as a regular subject and consider public examination results as of paramount importance. Thus, the teaching focuses on the preparation for examinations rather than on nurturing national identity of the students.</p> <p>Good result can attract students and please the school head. Thus, equipping the students to do well in examination is the key for the subject to survive (and for the teacher in concern to keep the job). National identity enhancement is thus not an item in the teacher's agenda.</p> <p>Though teachers generally see themselves as Chinese in a cultural sense, many teachers do not find polity of China agreeable. This may be due to their pro-Western understanding of politics or their own lack of understanding of China, or both. One way or the other, they are unlikely to take the promotion of (political) national identity as of high priority.</p> <p>National identity is neither a part of this subject's aims or an element in the setter's consideration. There is no reason for national identity promotion to be normally considered in the course of teaching the subject.</p>

### 6.3.4 Patriotism (Table 6.4)

Findings reported in Chapter Five	Pertinent factors	Possible impact of the factors
<p><i>Most teachers believe that it is impossible to promote patriotism with GPA teaching. In general, teachers emphasize that patriotism, or loving one's own country, should not be mistaken as loving its government or the ruling party, or even the polity of China.</i></p>	<p><b><u>Social ethos:</u></b> The official promotion of patriotism</p> <p>The underlying political division</p> <p><b><u>School ethos:</u></b> Pragmatic consideration</p> <p>Seeing GPA as a marginal subject</p> <p><b><u>Personal belief of the teachers:</u></b> Views about politics of China and Hong Kong</p> <p><b><u>Curriculum:</u></b> Aims and Public examination</p>	<p>Some teachers seem to resent against the call for patriotism as they see it is mixing up the love of the country with that of the government or the ruling party. Thus, they make a strong assertion against possible blurring which is conceptually unacceptable.</p> <p>It is difficult in view of the division among the students. More difficult now as a number of issues, such as the disappointing performance of the government, and the way the national security bill is being passed, have further split the people, inclusive of the teachers and the students</p> <p>Public examination results are of paramount importance. Thus, the teaching focuses on the preparation for examinations and patriotism is not counted there.</p> <p>Teachers have to strive for good results in public examinations in order to survive. This requires students to analyze critically rather than with a patriotic-emotional appeal.</p> <p>For some teachers at least, the negative view they have about politics in China and Hong Kong after 1997 has been a powerful reason for them to believe that teaching politics or political reality to the students will not enhance the love of the country. The fact that the teachers are more in favor of the Western version of understanding politics and democracy also makes it unlikely that they will approve of an uncritical form of patriotism, which allegedly is being promoted by the government.</p> <p>The subject emphasizes analysis and critique and both its aims and its examination do not emphasize patriotism, especially if they are based on emotional</p>



	<b>An overloaded syllabus</b>	<b>appeal.</b> <b>If patriotism requires nurturing and a lot of activities inside and outside the classroom to encourage the students to feel themselves as members of the nation. There is simply no time to do it even if the teachers would like to. All time has been spent rushing to finish the required syllabus for sitting the examinations.</b>
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6.3.5 Learning of democracy: Divergent views (Table 6.5)

Findings reported in Chapter Five	Pertinent factors	Possible impact of the factors
<p><i>Only a minority of teachers believes that divergent views of the students should be encouraged.</i></p>	<p><b><u>Social ethos:</u></b> Underlying political division <b>and</b> Sensitivity about political education</p>	<p>The subject is sensitive in the eyes of students, parents and school heads, and perhaps also the government. If divergence is encouraged and students are free to articulate their views, particularly in areas where political division is found, the teacher may have to face enormous pressure if there is confrontation between him and the students or confrontation among students. Parents will be alarmed if their children confront them on views over political matters.</p>
	<p><b><u>School ethos:</u></b> Conservative attitude toward classroom teaching</p>	<p>Tense debates on political views, students holding own views and showing no deference to even their teachers etc. are certainly not in line with the orderly classroom environment based on authority and powers of the teachers. As such, it may not easily be welcome by school leadership.</p>
	<p><b><u>Operational context</u></b> Class size (large class size)</p>	<p>Large class size makes tolerating and encouraging divergence unpractical because teachers can't cater for it both in teaching and in marking. (discussed in Chapter Five)</p>
	<p><b>Background and training</b></p>	<p>Lacking sound Political Science background and training, some teachers simply do not understand how to proceed with teaching by making use of political debates among the students. Too, divergence may not be merit to teachers as some of them allegedly are authoritarian in style.</p>
	<p><b><u>Personal belief of the teachers:</u></b> Views about Students (lacking standard in terms of abilities and manner)</p>	<p>Students are perceived to be weak and hence it may not be worth allowing them to judge independently (discussed in Chapter Five).</p>

	<p><b><u>Curriculum:</u></b>  <b>An overloaded syllabus</b></p> <p><b>Examination</b></p>	<p>Even though teacher respect students' views, there is simply not enough time to listen to all of them if the syllabus is to be completed and completing the syllabus is crucial for examination.</p> <p>To obtain good grades in the public examinations, one need to give an answer based on sound arguments in written form. It does not matter whether it is the students' own stance or the teacher's that come with the answer. If similar questions will come up years after years, students can secure better results in examinations if they reproduce the discourse of their teachers. This is particularly true if the students are weak in both language and background knowledge. This may also be the reason why in some cases students' prime concern in lesson seems to be the copying of notes.</p>
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### 6.3.6 Learning of democracy: Participation (Table 6.6)

Findings reported in Chapter Five	Pertinent factors	Possible impact of the factors
<p><i>There is a consensus among teachers that GPA is academic and promoting participation is not important, both as an aim and as a result.</i></p> <p><i>Though individual students may initiate certain participation on their own, teachers do not actively support such attempts.</i></p>	<p><b>Social ethos:</b> The underlying political division</p> <p>Sensitivity about political education</p> <p>Depoliticization</p> <p><b>School ethos:</b> Pragmatic consideration</p> <p>Conservative attitude toward classroom teaching</p> <p>Operational context</p>	<p>Encouraging the students to actively participate in politics may bring them to the forefront of such division. This is difficult if the students are not considered mature or that the principals are not perceived as favoring the politicization of students.</p> <p>The subject is sensitive in nature as it deals with politics. So far if it is confined to knowing politics, the sensitivity can be confined as it becomes academic study. On the other hand, if students take to actions, the worry of different parties (parents, school heads and government) will be activated and the subject will be placed under closer scrutiny. There can also be less support for continuing the subject.</p> <p>Turning out students who are very active in political participation may not be in line with the new official line of tuning politics down in the societal level. Teachers may need to be brave enough to justify what his teaching has led to, particularly in view of the new tide of conservatism the authorities try to impose.</p> <p>Public examination results are of paramount importance. Thus, the teaching focuses on the preparation for examinations. Political participation may not contribute, and actually may not be positively related to good results in public examinations. In a pragmatic calculation, promoting participation is normally the forgone option.</p> <p>As reported by some teachers, their schools would like to see students learn quietly inside the classroom. This would make political participations rather impossible to be incorporated. Teaching with participation comprises students speaking out and acting out, both inside and outside the school premises. This does not dovetail with the wish of the school.</p> <p>The lack of Political Science background and proper training, according to a political scientist, has meant that some GPA teachers lack a right perspective of political participation, which they may deem risky and dirty themselves. Thus, it is most unlikely they will contemplate it as a part of their teaching.</p>

	<p><b><u>Personal belief of the teachers:</u></b> Views about students</p> <p><b><u>Curriculum:</u></b> An overloaded syllabus</p>	<p>Leading students to act out in politics and learn from experience presumes that the students are interested in politics and that they are capable of managing such participation. This, however, runs contrary to the negative views teachers commonly hold about their students whom the teachers see as immature, lacking self-discipline, uninterested and unintelligent. This is particularly the case for female students who are considered passive and apolitical.</p> <p>Even with teachers' and schools' approval, political participation will be difficult as the teachers and students need to rush through a long syllabus within a short time. In other word, political participation may only come at the expense of teaching time and reading time, which are deemed crucial for doing well in the public examinations.</p>
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### 6.3.7 International perspectives in political understanding (Table 6.7)

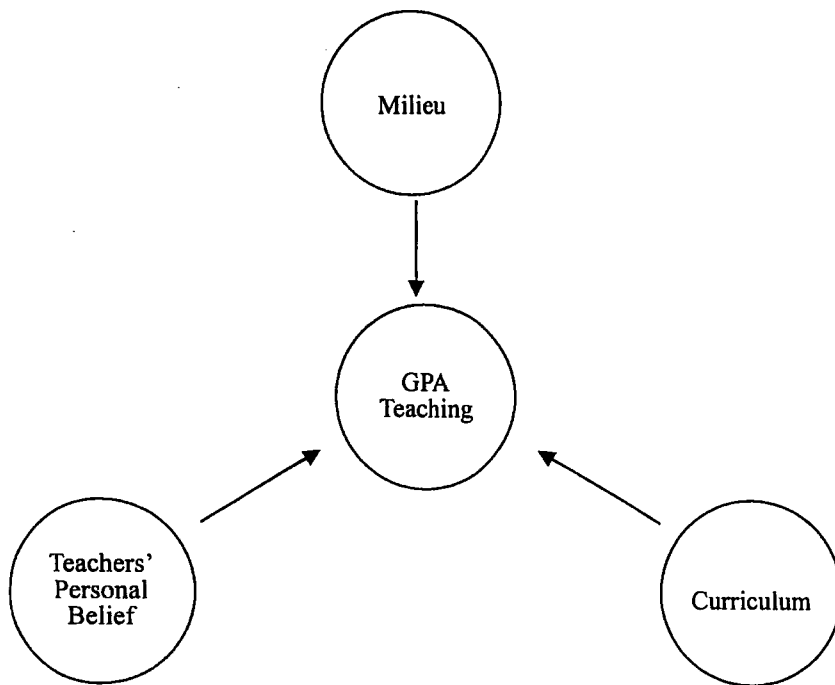
Findings reported in Chapter Five	Pertinent factors	Possible impact of the factors
<p><i>All teachers believe that studying GPA can help the students to understand politics from international perspectives.</i></p> <p><i>The subject, at its A Level, is particularly useful. The subject at its CE Level is felt to be a bit parochial as it is mainly related to politics of Hong Kong.</i></p>	<p><b>School ethos:</b> Conservative attitude toward classroom teaching</p> <p><b>Operational context</b> Class size (large class size)</p> <p><b>Personal belief of the teachers:</b> Views about students (lacking standard in terms of abilities and manner)</p> <p>Views about the subject in the eyes of the government</p> <p><b>Curriculum:</b> An overloaded syllabus</p> <p><b>Examination</b></p>	<p>The wish of some schools that their students can learn orderly and quietly in the classroom, and that they should learn safely inside the school premises may make it difficult for students to go out and gain first hand experience about how politics is understood by people from different cultures. It is likely therefore that the international perspectives the teachers talk about is simply one which is based on textbook knowledge.</p> <p>Large class size, particularly at CE Level, has made it highly difficult for teachers to organize activities, like organizing study trip that may allow students to actually see foreign political institutions and processes.</p> <p>It is unlikely that the teachers will seriously consider encouraging their students to actively interact with foreign nationals in order to understand their perspectives of politics as teachers in general believe that students are passive, immature and very poor in language, especially English.</p> <p>It is also very unlikely that the teachers will consider seeking funding and other support from the government to encourage cultural interflows in matters of political perspectives as the teachers believe that the government simply doesn't care for and support the subject.</p> <p>Thus largely what can be done is what is confined to the content of the curriculum and since the syllabus is already very tight, only USA and China can be studied in some depth. Thus the so-called international perspectives are reduced to a simple USA-China comparison.</p> <p>Since the examination is important and it covers largely institutional matters instead of processes and development, the students' so-called international perspectives in political understanding is confined to institutional matters.</p>

#### **6.4 Capturing the salient features of the paradigm in a model**

GPA is an unpopular and marginal subject in the case of Hong Kong as it is taken up by only a small amount of schools and students and it has the minimal say within schools. In the following model-building effort, we shall assume this to remain unchanged. The importance of this assumption is for us to concentrate on how GPA is being affected by the core factors, instead of needing to consider the possible impact GPA may have on the core factors. This assumption is reasonable in relation to the status quo of the subject and in fact can be inducted from the data of the study.

With this assumption in mind, it is easy to derive from the analysis of this study that the core factors are exogenous factors that act independently to shape the teaching of GPA in schools and help determine the impact of such teaching. Figure 6.1 on the next page depicts this simple view of what happens.

**Figure 6.1: A simple paradigm with a non-interactive structure**



**KEY**

→ : Influence



However, a closer examination will point to the fact that the core factors themselves are endogenous and are being shaped by one another, within the system under study. What follows are some examples of this interrelationship.

**Milieu and Teacher's personal beliefs (examples of relationship):**

Depoliticization after 1997, together with the promotion of patriotism based on mere emotional appeal, as reported by some teachers, has been one of the reasons why they think that GPA, which is based on rational study of politics and critical analysis, is not moving in tandem with the official line. This is a reason to explain the subject's inferior status.

In the other way round, the sensitive nature of political teaching related to GPA will be highlighted due to the fact that some teachers are emphasizing that they have to share their political views with their students and that the teachers' views are often highly critical of both the politics of China and of the political development in Hong Kong.

**Curriculum and Teacher's personal beliefs (examples of relationship):**

The excessive length and difficulty of the curriculum makes it very demanding and helps to make teachers believe that their students are incompetent both in language and analysis. This perceived incompetence actually is a mirror image of the task the students face, rather than being a judgment based on objective measures.

In the other way round, the fact that the teachers deem the subject difficult and lengthy has been a driving force toward modification of the curriculum in the direction

of down-sizing and simplifying.

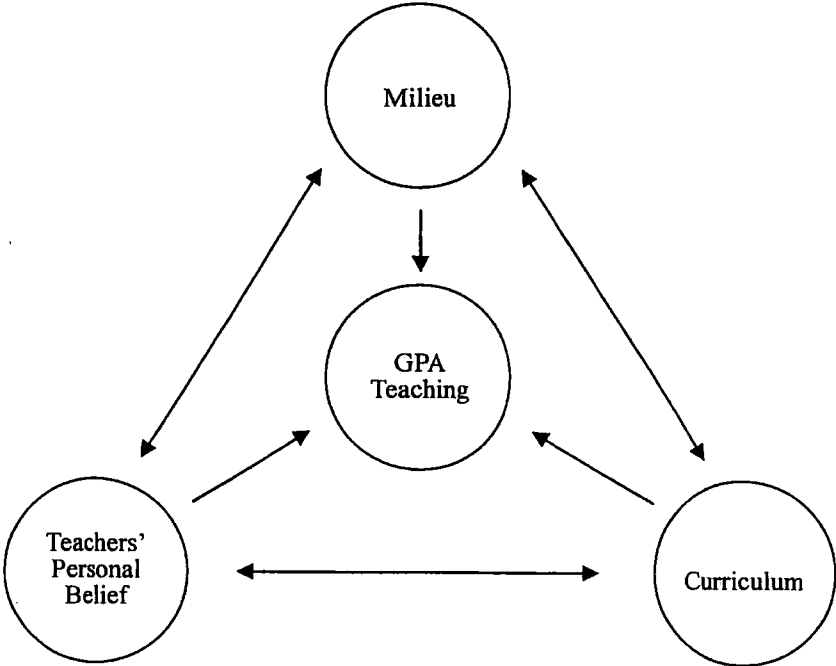
**Milieu and Curriculum (examples of relationship):**

The lack of Political Science background and training of many GPA teachers has meant that the subject will be deemed a difficult subject to teach. As reported by some informants, teachers without Political Science training can know the curriculum well without having a firm grasp of the subject matter. One should not be surprised that the students will not find the subject easy to manage, if the subject is difficult even to their own teachers.

On the other hand, the lack of practical guidelines for teaching the subject has meant that the teachers are burdened with having to design what they actually have to do in the classroom. Thus, the teachers' own lack of study in Political Science will become even more serious as they do not have such a repertoire of skills that normally could be acquired by students of Political Science in the university, from observing Political Science classes at work. The almost total lack of on-the-job training has made the deficiency even worse.

In view of the interrelationship between the core factors, Figure 6.2 on the next page may better depict what actually happens.

Figure 6.2: A paradigm with interactive structure



**KEY**

→ : influence

↔ : mutually influence

In fact, one should not take that the paradigm discussed in this chapter as static. In the discourses of the informants, importance is accorded to changes. Changes in the core factors have taken place over time that has the effect of altering the landscape of GPA teaching. Some of the changes are believed to have come with the handover in 1997.

What follows are some examples of the changes described by the informants:

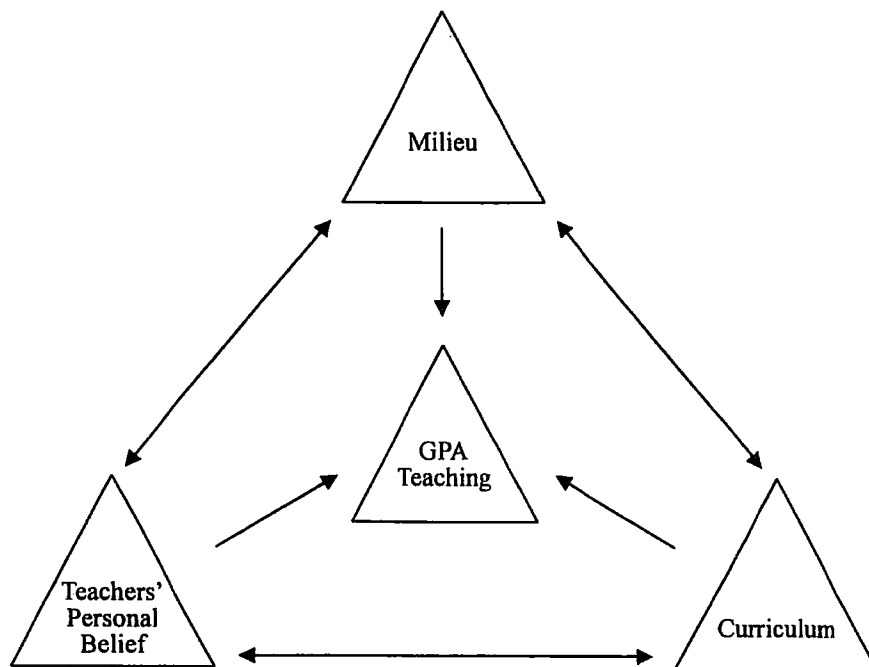
**(Milieu):** In terms of education at least, there has been a trend towards depoliticization after 1997. National identity building and promotion of patriotism have been actively pursued and they are based primarily on cultural-emotional appeals, rather than on a politically critical framework. Room of free political discussion, according to some informants, is also negatively affected by political development after 1997, particularly in view of the impending passing of the national security law.

**(Teachers' personal beliefs):** Teachers' view about students' abilities reportedly has been changing with time. Students' standard, in both language and analytical skills are understood to be deteriorating rapidly. The students are perceived to be inferior to their past counterparts. On the other hand, broadly speaking, resentment has also been building up among some teachers who find recent political development in Hong Kong and the performance of the new administration disappointing.

**(Curriculum):** The curriculum has been changing too. It has been constantly modified to make it more attainable to the students. More abstract concepts that once were a part of the curriculum, say social contract theories of Locke and Hobbes, were deleted. Some long questions are going to be broken up so that more hints can be given to guide the answers etc. Besides, relatively simpler questions are set so the students can cater for the examinations.

Figure 6.3 below may better capture this “change” element, and make our graphical presentation better convey the dynamism of the paradigm.

**Figure 6.3: A dynamic paradigm with interactive structure**



**KEY**

- : influence
- ↔ : mutually influence
- △ : a variable that changes with time

## 6.5 Interaction between teaching and learning

A straight forward interpretation of the paradigm developed in this chapter may convey the wrong impression that students are passive recipients and how they learn will have little impact on how the subject is taught and the outcome such teaching will bring. In fact, by examining the discourses of the informants, one should note that teaching and learning are helping to shape one another and how the students learn definitely will affect the way the subject is taught and the consequences it brings.

On the one hand, we should note that the way the teacher chooses to teach will undoubtedly affect what students will undergo in class. If didactic approach, say by board and chalk teaching, is adopted, students will not be able to speak their own views and see views of other classmates. When the voice of the teachers becomes the only voice in class, the chance of indoctrination is maximized and that of participation and respecting divergence minimized.

However, there is another side of this picture. From the discourses of the informants, we can also see how the teachers act themselves out is also partly defined by the students. The following are some examples about the impact students can bring that can be derived from the informants' discourses.

First, the strong Hong Kong identity the students bring to their class and the fact that some of them really see their fellow countrymen in the mainland as competitors (especially if they come to Hong Kong and take away jobs and benefits) have made it difficult for teachers to directly call for patriotism among the students, even if the teacher choose to do so. Subject 4 (a serving teacher), for example, comments, "I think it is not appropriate to say, 'Mother China is great' as this will just cause embarrassment. They would boo at the practice. This is not that good."

Second, the lack of confidence among the students and their passive learning style may hamper any attempts of the teachers to implement heuristic teaching. The following extracts from interviews with teachers can illustrate this point. Subject 10 (serving teacher) explains the difficulty of inviting her students to speak up. Though she can take divergent views, the students abstain from airing a different view because they find themselves deficient in terms of knowledge (Transcript 8: S (63) refer). Subject 12, an ex-teacher explains how the learning style of his students helped define the way he taught. He says, "It is easier to do (the discussion). But, the number of such discussion should also be kept down. It happened that I had planned (the use of discussion to) one topic, say housing, very well in advance. I got their co-operation in working it out. Then, if you introduced (discussion into) another one, say education, in a short period, they were not happy as they thought you wasted their time. They would tell you that... That is to say that the students can accept a variety of methods. But, the general direction is that we may not take a grossly different approach. Besides, it is very hard if you want to."

As discussed earlier, the lack of interest among the students and their lack of self-discipline during discussion may be a contributing factor toward the adoption of a unilateral way of classroom teaching. On the other hand, when students are positive and interested in more lively forms of teaching, the teacher in concern will be highly motivated to teach in a heuristic way. Subject 4 (a serving teacher) recalled her pleasant experience of teaching in a lively way. She says, "Besides, in form 6, students will need to go out to do their interviews. They go out to visit elected representatives like Emily Lau, elected member of the Legislative Council etc... They feel very happy and this maybe why the subject attracts them... I feel myself successful as this is going out of the classroom."

Many teachers have pointed out that their students are very concerned with examination results. This is understandable in an education system where competition for places in higher education is so keen. This concern for examination results in return will influence the way the teachers teach. The following extracts from teachers' discourses are helpful in illustrating this point.

Subject 10, a serving teacher, says, "Students aim at getting higher grades and the subject is very examination-oriented... Actually, I am mainly rather examination-oriented. For Certificate Level, the answers expected are shorter. Say, it may be three marks for each point. The stress is how to grasp a number of points rather than to develop on the points... As for A Level, the question is short but the answer is long. The skill is mainly how to understand. There is a need to understand different perspectives because of the need to answer longer questions." Subject 5, another serving teacher, explains, "In fact they tie things down. It is a very realistic thing. The school cares about the examination results. So in the course of teaching, what we do is to...so-called...take care of the public examinations... Yes, yes... So, you have to care for the examinations. I dare not go... what to say... (being too imaginative, different or divergent). Or else, they fail in the examinations."

So what are the limits of the range within which teachers' teaching and students' learning are mutually shaping and defining each another?

On the one hand, students will not compromise on the prospect of getting good results in public examinations. This is evident from the discourse of Subject 9 as reported in 6.2.1.2 (i) that unsatisfactory results have driven away students and brought the subject down in his school. This is understandable as the education system of Hong Kong is both highly utilitarian and competitive. Besides, since the number of schools that offer GPA is so small, students who do not do well in public examinations will be



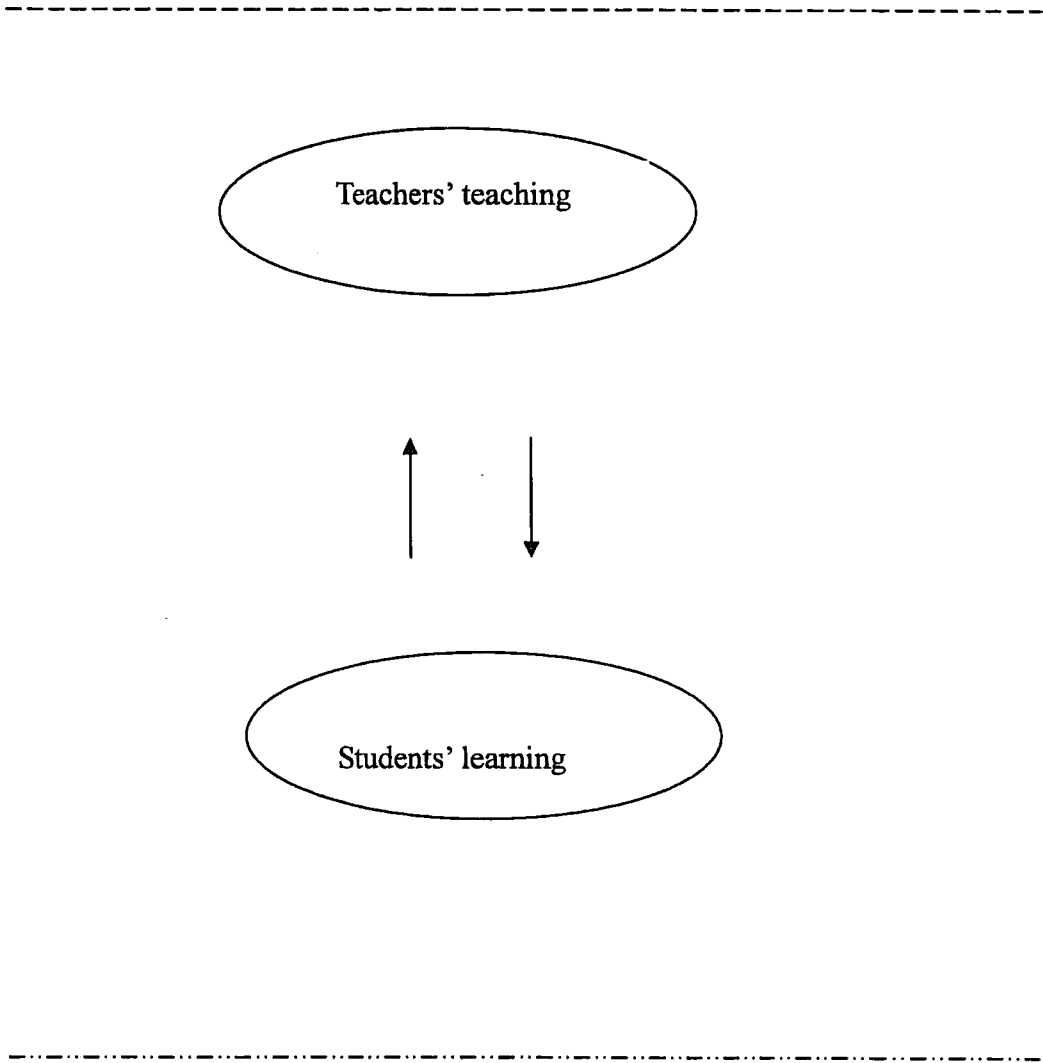
penalized as they will not be able to find another school to study GPA again. It has also been reported that students' resistance can result if the teaching of the teacher is to be too unfamiliar in style or that it will bring too much extra work.

On the other hand, though teachers admit they are actively helping and training their students for examinations, they will not succumb to pressure from their students and speculate upon questions of the upcoming public examinations and teach only the content related to such speculation. Alarming the school head either because that the students are too actively participating into politics or that they are too intensively involved in excessively heated debates are other things the teachers will try their best to avoid.

Figure 6.4 on the next page depicts the mutual influence between teaching and learning discussed in this section. Note that the dotted lines represent limits within which teaching and learning influence, direct and define one another. The lines are dotted because very strong personalities on either side may, under extraordinary circumstances, bring the transaction beyond the limits.

**Figure 6.4 Interaction between teaching and learning**

(Limit teachers can bear)



(Limit students can bear)

**KEY**

- : direction of influence
- : limit (teacher- imposed)
- - - - - : limit (student-imposed)

## **6.6 Interface between this study with other literature on political education in schools**

Interestingly, this study has shared and verified many of the concerns in the literature when the issue of incorporating political education in schools was debated. Cohen (1969) believes that worry of parents will arise as politics is a sensitive subject and such worry will be intensified if the teacher in concern shares an opposite political conviction. Thomson (1969) believes that parents can object while knowing little about what will be taught because they mix up political teaching with party politics. In this study, parental sensitivity toward their children's political study and possibly adopting an opposite attitude is also found. For instance, as reported in section 6.2.1.1 (ii), a teacher (S4) says that parents would be alarmed, even they didn't know much about the syllabus, that their children were going to take political class. There were occasions about pro-Nationalist Party parents arguing strongly with their children about reunification in 1997 that was a part of the subject.

In this Study, some teachers point out that the lack of appropriate formal study in politics is a problem to effective teaching. As report in section 6.2.1.3, Sonny Lo, a Political Science teacher in the university, has emphasized that the lack of appropriate training in Political Science has been one of the greatest hindrances for effective teaching of GPA in schools. It is not just because of the lack of subject matter mastering, but also because of not knowing how to teach with debates between students on political issues while remaining a chairperson to maintain procedural fairness. This comment actually echoes Heater's (1969) and Crick and Porter's (1978) advice that the pre-requisite for successful implementation of political teaching in schools will be

teacher training, or more specifically the amassing of a team of teachers with appropriate training. The notion of neutral chairperson is in common with Stenhouse's recommendation in relation to the role of teacher in the Humanities Curriculum.

The Project Assessment Scheme in GPA's A Level study, which requires students to analyze a public policy issue on their own and writing up of a report, has been lauded by most of the informants in my study. It is taken as meaningful as the work is interesting and can help students in concern to develop both research and analytical skills. Though because of practical considerations, the PAS has never been popular, all GPA teachers said they taught with issues in class (Chapter 5: 5.2b and 5.2c refer). These have somewhat verified the arguments of Stradling and Porter (1978) when they put forth that issue-based study would be the best way to teach political literacy as students would learn both political concepts and skills of inquiry. This emphasis on the teaching of issues had worked its way to the influential Crick Report on citizenship education (1998)

Langeveld (1981) explains that indoctrination in political education can be interpreted both ways and progressive teachers may resist it, not for fearing teachers' bias, but for the worry that students will be indoctrinated by the government which will make use of the subject to legitimize itself. This fear can also be found in my study. Section 5.3 of Chapter 5 reports the teacher's conception about indoctrination. There are comments by teachers that the responsibility for watching out for indoctrination should be placed on the side of the government. On the other hand, Sonny Lo, a Political Science teacher in the university (6.2.1.1 v refer), points out that once the laws related with state security were enacted, there might be an official line the teachers would need to toe in teaching politics in schools. Accordingly, political correctness would be dictating the teaching of political classes, especially considering that teachers lack

training in Political Science and the fragile nature of their academic freedom.

Stradling (1984) believes that the teaching of political issues may have to encounter a number of constraints. The more important ones are teachers' excessive commitment to certain values, school ethos, classroom setting and social climate. All these factors in fact are reflected in my study. But, in my study, it is found that curriculum per se will also have an impact. The way the subject is designed, its depth and breath in relation to students' and teachers' capabilities and the way it is assessed in public examination in particular, will be significant in affecting the delivery of the subject in schools (6.2.3 refer).

Political climate has been much emphasized in this study as a factor affecting the teaching of GPA in Hong Kong's schools. Change in sovereignty in particular has tremendous impacts, as the agenda of the post-1997 government seemingly is much different from its colonial predecessor under Governor Patten. This overture is by no means singular. Kerr (1999), in re-examining citizenship education in England, explains that the ebb and flow of political education in England has also been subject to changes in party politics. The drive to enlist political education in schools that gathered much steam in the 1970's and 1980's had aroused much suspicion from the political right. The anxiety about possible indoctrination (by the political left) resulted in the inclusion of clauses 44 and 45 in the 1986 Education Act that imposed a statutory responsibility on teachers to be even-handed in teaching issues in the classroom. Finally it was the victory of the Labour Party in national election in 1997 that turned on the green light to the teaching of political literacy in schools.

Lawrence Baum (2000) warns against over-teaching and the confusion of topical coverage and achievement in the course of teaching politics. This is relevant in understanding one of the curriculum drawbacks of GPA when rushing to finish the

syllabus seems to be a hindrance to interactive teaching in many cases (6.2.3.1 refer).

In brief, my study has generated findings and conclusions that are broadly in line with many of the concerns and comments of academics who work on political education in schools though the peculiarity of Hong Kong and cultural differences make the exact content of our arguments differ. Besides, by making use of the experience of GPA teaching in Hong Kong, it is found in this study that the key factors, namely milieu, teachers' belief and curriculum, are not just impacting the teaching of politics in schools, but are also being shaped by one another in a dynamic way. Finally, in the discussion about transaction of influence between teaching and learning, the mutual influence between teachers' teaching and students' learning is explained. These relationships are summarized in the model generated in this chapter (6.4). The interaction between learning and teaching is further discussed in 6.5. A summary of the findings of this study will be given in Chapter Seven as the basis for the researcher's proposals for further studies and improving GPA delivery in schools.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

In brief, this chapter has made an attempt to explain the teachers' stories regarding how GPA is taught and how it may have an impact on the students. It does so by offering a paradigm (or perspective), that should be construed as one of the possible ways the picture can be portrayed. Salient features of the paradigm are summarized through the model generated from the paradigm which shows that the teaching of GPA is both interactive and dynamic in nature. The interface between the present study and other literature on political education is explained. The present study has verified some

of the concerns expressed earlier on the teaching of politics in schools, particularly on the need to reinforce teacher training and to address the possible worry of the parents. This study extends the concern to the design of the curriculum, which has an impact on the delivery of the political education per se. Based on the findings, some recommendations to improve the teaching of GPA in schools are given at the end of the next chapter.

# **Chapter Seven: Summary, conclusions, and Recommendations**

## **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter comprises the summary of findings, conclusions, a discussion of the study's limitations, and recommendations for further study and for the improvement of GPA's implementation. At the end of the chapter, the researchers' own reflection on the research is given. The summary of findings sketches the teachers' discourse and reports the initial analysis on such data as reported in Chapter Five. Conclusion, on the other hand, refers to the discussion on such findings. The discussion is based not just on the teachers' discourses but also those of other pertinent parties, inclusive of curriculum planners and academics invited through theoretical sampling. This corresponds with Chapter Six of this thesis. Limitations of the study refer to the limitations of the present study which the researcher deemed important but nevertheless had to work with due to the constraints the researcher encountered. Recommendations for further study are derived from the perceived limitation of the present study while recommendations to improve the delivery of GPA in schools are derived directly from the findings and conclusion of the study. In the section about researcher's own reflection, the researcher's perceptions about his own weakness and growth in the research process is reported.



## 7.2 Summary of finding

This section summarizes the data collected from the teachers' discourses and the initial analysis on such discourses as reported in Chapter Five.

(1) The Teaching Guidelines had little influence on guiding classroom teaching. The majority of teachers adopted a relatively didactic approach in teaching that emphasized expository methods though many teachers believed in the merit of projects. Circumstantial factors, such as large class size and resource constraints, were important for the teachers' choice. On the other hand, current issues were popularly used as topics for classroom study.

(2) Teachers could give a working definition to the meaning of indoctrination but they related indoctrination more to the government than to teaching of the subject. It was also opined that teachers should make their political views known to the students. Some teachers even believed indoctrination was needed in teaching.

(3) On the whole, teachers believed that national identity should be open and critical in nature. The majority view was that teaching GPA would have no positive impact on promoting national identity amongst the students. Teaching GPA made the students more aware of China's politics but at the same time might intensify the students' worry when China did not give them a positive impression. A strong local identity also stood in the way of national identity building.

(4) Most teachers believed that it was impossible to promote patriotism with GPA teaching as the subject emphasized analysis and critique and students' resentment of China might increase if she was found to be negative in different ways. On the other hand, teachers stressed that patriotism, or loving one's own country, should not be mistaken as loving its government or the ruling party and some teachers believed that in the society there was a deliberate attempt to blur the line.

(5) Only a minority of teachers believed without reservation that divergent views of the students should be encouraged. This was attributed to the low standard of the students in analysis and language, the need to enforce consensus on liberal democratic values, and big class size etc.

(6) Teachers believed that GPA was academic and promoting participation was not important, both as an aim and as a result of GPA teaching. Though individual students might initiate certain participation on their own, teachers did not actively support such attempts.

(7) Teachers believed that studying GPA, particularly at its A Level, could help the students to understand politics from international perspectives. Concepts, like constitution, human rights etc., could only be understood against application in different polities. The United States' politics would be studied in comparison to China. On the other hand, it was opined that the subject would not be able to enhance the students' knowledge about international political events and diplomacy

### 7.3 Conclusions

This section outlines the conclusions drawn on the teachers' discourses as reported in Chapter Six. The conclusions were arrived at from examining not just the teachers' discourses, but also the discourses of other pertinent parties, namely the curriculum planners and academics chosen through theoretical sampling.

- (1) Three new categories, or core factors, namely milieu (composed of social ethos, school ethos and operational context), teachers' own personal beliefs and curriculum, were used to accommodate the important concepts of the widened data set.
- (2) These core factors constitute the structure against which what the teachers said, as reported in Chapter Five and summarized in 7.2 above, made sense.
- (3) The common use of expository method in GPA teaching could be accounted for by the following:

Social ethos: The underlying political division made political discussion potentially explosive. Sensitivity about political education put the teachers into caution. Besides, some teachers believed that after 1997, less room was allowed for free political discussion.

School ethos: Conservative attitude towards classroom teaching required class to be orderly and quiet.

The operational context: Lack of teacher training and Political Science background meant that teachers didn't know how to teach by taking up the role of a neutral

chairperson and large class size forbade interactive mode of teaching.

Personal belief of the teachers: Negative views about politics in China and Hong Kong made some teachers feel obliged to give their critical views through lecture. This was reinforced by negative views about students' ability, especially in the case of girls.

Curriculum: An overloaded and difficult subject necessitated speedy delivery of subject matters through lectures.

(4) Many teachers believed that they should make their political views known to the students and they did not deem indoctrination a potential risk related to their teaching. This could be accounted for by the following:

Social ethos: The official promotion of patriotism had backfired against itself as some teachers did not find it agreeable and felt obliged to give their students a critical interpretation of politics.

Operational context: The lack of appropriate teacher training and Political Science background had made some teachers unaware of the risk of indoctrination due to their power relationship with students.

Personal belief of the teachers: Negative views about students' analytical power made some teachers believe they had to spoon-feed their students with conclusions. Negative views about politics in China and Hong Kong also made some teachers feel it an obligation to give students a critical interpretation of what happened.

Curriculum: Public examinations were deemed very important and questions often repeat themselves. Thus, giving students a ready interpretation of political affairs might help them achieve good grades. The Teaching Guidelines were not appealing to the teachers at all because they were too idealistic.

(5) Most teachers believed that GPA could not enhance national identity, which, according to the teachers, should be open and critical. This could be understood against the following:

Social ethos: The underlying political divisions (Pro-Nationalist versus Pro-Communist in the old days and Pro-democracy versus Pro-Beijing in the present days) made it difficult and sensitive to attempt promoting national identity to the students.

School ethos: Under the pragmatic consideration of schools, as GPA was only a marginal subject, teachers needed to aim at good examination results in order to survive.

Personal belief of the teachers: The teachers' own affinity to China was often only cultural rather than political in nature and they were not likely to consider promoting national identity their task.

Curriculum: Promoting national identity was not an aim in the subject's Syllabus and was not asked in examination as GPA was taken as a subject to train rational analysis.

(6) Most teachers didn't believe GPA could enhance patriotism, which they considered should be different from loving the government or party or the polity. This can be understood against the following:

Social ethos:

The official promotion of patriotism: The official call for patriotism had caused much resentment among teachers, especially because they believed there was an attempt to blur the love of the country with the love of the ruling party and the government.

The underlying political division: Move to promote patriotism would be difficult considering the underlying political division in Hong Kong. Current development, such as the impending passing of the National Security Bill only sharpened such division.

School ethos: Pragmatic consideration of schools meant that teachers of a marginal subject like GPA had to focus instead on getting good grades in examinations so that the subject could survive.

Personal belief of the teachers: Many teachers were more pro-Western in belief and shared a negative view about politics in China and Hong Kong. This meant that they were not likely to accept an uncritical form of patriotism and believe their political classes would yield such an effect.

Curriculum: There was really no room for such patriotism enhancement even if teacher had had this thought in mind as the Syllabus was overloaded and patriotism neither turned out as aims in the Syllabus and as questions of the public examination.

(7) Only a minority of teachers believed without reservation that divergent views of the students should be encouraged. This could be accounted for by:

Social ethos: Encouraging unlimited expression of divergent views would be potentially explosive in view of the underlying political divisions in the society.

School ethos: Conservative attitude in favor of classroom teaching that should be quiet and orderly also discouraged the allowing of tense debate, based on divergent political views of students.

Operational context: Teachers lacked appropriate training to lead debates, which was made even more difficult in big classes.

Personal belief of the teachers: The “weak students” conception discouraged teachers

from allowing room for students to formulate a different view.

Curriculum: An overloaded Syllabus didn't give the time to work with divergence.

Besides, in examination it would already be good enough for students to give a well-supported stance, though it would be that of the teacher.

(8) Teachers did not take promoting political participation as an aim and would not actively support their students if they initiated such participation on their own initiatives. This can be understood against:

Social ethos

The underlying political division: Encouraging students to participate in politics could be highly sensitive to school heads and parents considering the underlying political splits in the society.

Sensitivity about political education: To make the sensitive subject more tolerable, there was a need to confine it as an academic subject that dealt with knowledge and knowledge only.

Depoliticization: Turning out students who were very active in political participation would not be in line with the perceived official line of tuning politics down in the societal level, which actually was a new tide of conservatism.

School ethos: Promoting participation might not serve the pragmatic consideration of examination results. Besides, it would not dovetail with the requests of some schools that students should learn quietly within the classroom.

Operational context: Some teachers, due to the lack of Political Science training, might mistake participation as risky and contaminating.

Personal belief of the teachers: Teachers believed students, especially girls, to be incapable due to their unintelligent and apolitical nature.

Curriculum: An overloaded Syllabus couldn't afford the organizing of participation after all as all time was needed for class teaching.

(9) All teachers believed that studying GPA, particularly at A Level, could help the students to understand politics from international perspectives. However, the researcher's belief was that such international perspectives could only be a very limited and bookish form of perspectives because of the following:

School ethos and operational context: Conservative attitude toward orderly learning that took place within the classroom meant the international perspectives under discussion were likely to be obtained through books. Large class size also made the arrangement of real intercultural activities difficult.

Personal belief of the teachers: Real encounter with foreign institutions and nationals were also unlikely due to the poor perceptions the teachers had about their students' language abilities and maturity. Application for government's funding in support of trips was unlikely due to the teachers' conviction that GPA was only marginal in the government's mind.

Curriculum: The overloaded curriculum could only require students to study USA and China and they were supposed to stand for the world in terms of politics. Besides, knowledge about the USA and China was only institutional in nature as the questions in public examinations dealt only with institutional matters.

(10) Different elements of the three core factors (milieu, teachers' own personal beliefs and curriculum) were drawn in order to decipher the teachers' discourses. A paradigm was thus built up with the core factors as the structure against which GPA teaching, the process, was explained.



(11) Actually a model was derived to capture the salient features of the paradigm, particularly with regard to how the three core factors were inter-related and how they together affected GPA teaching in schools. In the model, which was built on the assumption of GPA being maintained as a marginal subject taken by few schools, the three core factors that shaped GPA implementation and its impact, were actually mutually affecting each other in a dynamic, rather than static setting.

#### **7.4 Limitation of the present study**

The following are some of the shortcomings of this study:

There were many access points to study how GPA was taught and how it might have an impact on the students. Teachers, students, school heads and parents could all give their narratives about what had happened. A multi-dimensional perspective would allow the portrayal of a more precise picture because more facets of the truth could be revealed and more triangulation can be done. However, this study was confined to mainly the study of the teachers' perspective due to constraints of time and resources.

Even if the study was to focus on the teachers' account of how they taught and the effect such teaching might bring, classroom observation would be very useful to augment interviews as data collection tool. This would also allow the researcher to verify the claims of the teachers. However, the teachers turned down the request for class visit, as they believed it would be too sensitive to their schools.

In fact, the possibility that the teachers might not tell what they actually believed and did in the classroom could not be dismissed as they had a stake at hand. The risk of receiving unrealistically "favorable answer" should not be easily discounted. To counteract this problem, triangulation was incorporated into the study. Ex-teachers who

had no stake at hand were invited to give their views. Curriculum planners and public examination setter were also invited to give their narratives. Likewise, whenever there were significant concepts that emerged from the teachers' discourse and such concepts proved to be important, theoretical sampling was used to select appropriate informants (academics etc) to provide data needed to understand the teachers' narratives.

Finally, though parties such as curriculum planners and public examination setters were invited to give their views to inform the understanding of the teachers' discourse, this sort of triangulation was not perfect due to role-doubling. It should be noted that many of the curriculum planners and some public examination setters were actually drawn from the serving teachers and ex-teachers.

#### **7.5 Recommendations for further studies**

Based on the findings of this study and taking into account its limitations, the following studies are suggested:

A study can be undertaken to understand from the students' perspective how GPA is taught, what they have learnt and how such learning may have an impact on their beliefs and behaviors.

A study can be carried out to discover how the head teachers, whose schools offer GPA, view the importance and limitation of the subject, how it is being taught and how it creates an impact on the students.

A study can be carried out to discover whether parents of students who take this subject will find the subject sensitive and what such parents will understand as the advantage and disadvantage of taking this subject.

A study can be carried out to find out the difference in terms of political attitude and

behaviors between students who study GPA and students who don't.

A study can be carried out in schools that offer GPA to see how their civic education program is being implemented and discover from it whether such program will support the teaching of politics in GPA class.

Besides, an ethnographic study that focuses on one school only and will examine not just the way the teacher teaches, but also the views of the students, parents and school head, will be very meaningful to carry out. A multi-dimensional picture about teaching politics in school through GPA can result from this study.

#### **7.6 Recommendations for improving GPA teaching in schools**

With regard to improving the teaching of GPA in schools, the researcher's propositions, derived from the analysis of this study, are:

##### **Teacher training:**

Many GPA teachers lack both Political Science background and appropriate training and this deficiency affects both the attitude and teaching behavior of the teachers.

Universities and teacher training institutes should take up a more active role in preparing teachers for the teaching of politics in schools, both in terms of formal Political Science training, and in terms of pedagogical training, particularly about how to teach current issues in an open debate format. The skills of doing research and project works, which are so vital to the Project Assessment Scheme, should be part of the program too. Besides, the issue of indoctrination should also be addressed and

teachers' alertness to the possible impact of a power relationship between them and the students should be enhanced. The training programs should comprise both pre-service and in-service courses. Seminars on sharing of teaching experience and teaching skills should also be convened, both to keep the morale of the teachers and to help build up the teachers' repertoire of teaching skills. Teaching staff of the tertiary institutes can also help with the project work in schools, say in guiding teachers to cater for such research projects.

### **Economies of scale and government support:**

Teaching GPA is a difficult task for teachers as there are no updated textbooks, little resources and very few chances to attend seminars that deal with the teaching of the subject. This is the direct result of being an unpopular subject that can be easily ignored by the commercial market and the government. Inside schools, GPA is often taken as marginal and thus is destined to be a loser if it has to compete with other subjects, say for class time and for the chance to do projects. This is partly due to the fact that few students are taking the subject. In fact, a vicious cycle can be clearly discerned. The difficulty in teaching the subject discourages schools and teachers to launch it on the one hand. On the other hand, the students are frightened off when they see the subject is so unpopular and they know the hard reality that if they do not do well in public examinations, it will virtually be impossible for them to find another school that will offer GPA to them again. Thus, an unpopular subject drives away students and this makes the subject again more unpopular.

Government support and promotion are needed to break this vicious cycle. Some

of the works the government should consider include:

- Promoting the teaching of politics as one of the missions of civic education
- Sponsoring commercial publishers to publish textbooks for GPA before the size of market makes it economically viable
- Funding the universities and the teacher training institutes in the provision of programs on politics and political teaching
- Encouraging the holding of seminars for sharing of experience and skills in teaching political classes
- Improving teacher-student ratio in order to allow a more lively and interactive mode of teaching
- Organizing or encouraging schools to organize intercultural programs on political understanding

Of course all these will depend on the government's conviction that national identity and patriotism cannot be reduced to mere emotional appeal of an apolitical nature and in fact it will be both futile and counter-productive to do so. What's more, the government should convey this message and her willingness to build up an informed and critically aware populace in the most non-ambivalent manner to alleviate possible worry of teachers, school heads and parents about the sensitive nature of talking about politics in schools.

#### **Curriculum revisions:**

It is important to discern the dilemma GPA is facing. On the one hand, the Syllabus

is both difficult and heavy in terms of content. On the other hand, there is also a belief we should teach more, particularly about China's politics to the students. Besides, if GPA is to have the prestige other established subjects carry, it must have certain academic rigor.

In this case, the real problem is a late start of the subject or the teaching of politics in schools which makes the students ill-equipped in background understanding and jams the Syllabus in the senior secondary level. As such, the real solution is to spread the teaching of politics across a longer period of time. Another way of saying this is to start political education, or GPA, at a much earlier stage. Starting political education at junior secondary level or even primary schools can be considered, especially considering that researches have pointed out that children in very young age have already begun the picking up of political concepts (Ross, 1984). If political education or GPA can start early, there is no serious need to compromise on academic rigor and there will be more room to incorporate the teaching of politics of China which is much needed and much requested by the teachers.

Apart from this, the Teaching Guidelines may need to be reviewed particularly with reference to their practicality (considering the time constraints and reaction of school heads etc.) in order to make them more helpful to teachers in class preparation.

### **7.7 Reflection of the researcher on the research**

I chose to write on GPA both because of my interest in political education and because I had been working for the subject in various capacities since its planning stage. At first the thought was that my experience would definitely be an advantage in the research as I would be more able to understand the views of the teachers and curriculum

planners as I had lived their experiences myself.

However, it was later found that my own involvement could best be described as double- edged. True, my experience allowed me to have a better understanding of the background setting and promised me access to some informants (teachers, Subject Officers etc.) But, at the same time there was also a form of emotional tide between me and the subject which could also have affected the way I interpreted the data collected during the course of the research. The strongest interference might be the normative disposition to think positively of the subject and to report on it in a favorable light with the personal wish to see it survive and grow.

To counteract this problem, the following measures were taken.

During the interviews, I would abstain from giving my own opinions and I would try to seek clarifications from the informants should ambiguity arise instead of just interpreting the discourses in the way I believed it should be.

In the course of data analysis, I would try to understand it as an outsider. Should any new concepts or themes arise, I would resort to theoretical sampling to seek experts' opinion instead of construing it with my own insights.

I reported to my Supervisor every time I had finished with writing out a part of my thinking so that any bias on my part could be pointed out.

In the course of data reporting and discussion, I would quote the informants' discourses so that the reader should know why I thought in the way I thought and any biases could be seen. In fact all the interviews were fully transcribed and translated, approved by the informants, and handed in together with the thesis.

These measures might provide a form of triangulation to the researcher's own discourse in the study.

As for the findings of this study, some of the points discussed could be interesting

topics for further reflection. Teachers pointed out that the teaching of GPA would not work to enhance a sense of national identity and promote patriotism amongst the students, mainly because of their disapproval of the politics in China. This seems to suggest that the teaching of politics is by itself an antithesis to the promoting of national identity and patriotism. Perhaps, this may well be one of the reasons why, as some informants pointed out, the government is trying to promote through emotional means depoliticized national identity and patriotism (3.2.3 refer). However, we should remind ourselves that national identity is a form of self-identification in relation to a state, and patriotism being the devotion to the state. A state is by definition a political entity with its own polity and politics. As a corollary, any calls for construing national identity and patriotism in an apolitical sense will neither be meaningful nor effective as they are ontologically self-defeating. I would suggest instead that the political knowledge and judgment political education brings will provide a necessary condition for the building up of national identity and patriotism. To make the necessary condition a sufficient condition, the government has to be able to win the hearts of the people. In the case of Hong Kong, despite the fact that socialism may be both strange and perturbing to some Hong Kong's people, I think Hong Kong's people will much appreciate if their voice and interest are respected by the central government. Considering the recent political development, inclusive of the mass rally on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2003, I believe the development of a democratic government that stands firm in matters of human rights and freedom will be in accord with the popular wish and will be most reassuring to the people of Hong Kong. The development of an open, democratic government in Hong Kong in return will also serve China's national interest as this can be the best example of the "One country, Two systems" Principle, by which China wants to have peaceful reunification with Taiwan.



I think the benefits I get from this research project are twofold. First, I have understood the subject matter better. Second, I have acquired the skills of doing qualitative research, particularly with regard to knowing my own shortcomings and the importance of maintaining a professional distance in the research process. Both will be very useful in my future academic career.

## **Appendix 1: Updated GPA Syllabuses \* (Source: Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority)**

**\* Please note that these represent the most updated Syllabuses for students who are to sit for the 2005 GPA examinations. The Syllabuses (2002) effective at the time teachers were interviewed were explained in Chapter Two**

### **GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS Certificate Level**

#### **AIMS**

1. To develop knowledge and understanding of the society and polity of Hong Kong, the political and administrative institutions of Hong Kong, as well as the distribution of power among these institutions.
2. To develop understanding of some of the political concepts related to the government and public affairs of Hong Kong.
3. To develop understanding of the relationship between the Central Authorities of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), and the political system of the PRC.
4. To develop the skills necessary for the study and intelligent discussion of issues of current interest and importance.
5. To promote candidates' social awareness and responsible citizenship.

#### **THE EXAMINATION**

There will be two papers.

Paper 1 (1½ hours) will consist of structured/essay questions. Candidates will be required to answer 3 out of 5 questions. This paper will carry 60% of the subject marks.

[Note : The maximum paper mark is 99. Each question carries 33 marks, of which 30 marks will be awarded for subject content, and 3 marks will be awarded for effective communication.]

Paper 2 (1 hour) will consist of multiple choice questions, all of which are to be attempted. This paper will carry 40% of the subject marks.

[Note : Only one out of the seven public policy areas in topic 6 (Major Social Issues and Policies) of the syllabus will be required. The area that will be examined each year will be made known to schools when the syllabus handbook is published, about 2½ years before the examination takes place.]

## THE SYLLABUS

### The Preamble

This syllabus requires candidates to have an understanding of the government and public affairs of Hong Kong. Candidates are expected to apply their knowledge on basic facts and understanding of related concepts to a discussion of the latest concepts, ideas and issues.

<i>SYLLABUS TOPICS</i>	<i>EXPLANATORY NOTES</i>
1. Resumption of the Exercise of Sovereignty over Hong Kong by the PRC	
(a) The principle of 'one country, two systems'	Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong and the autonomy of the HKSAR
(b) The Sino-British Joint Declaration	(i) a brief understanding of the Sino-British Joint Declaration (ii) the role of the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group
(c) The Basic Law	(i) a brief understanding of the making of the Basic Law (ii) the emphasis lies on the relationship between the Central Authorities of the PRC and the HKSAR
2. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and its Political Structure	
(a) The constitutional document of the HKSAR	(i) the meaning and purposes of a constitution (ii) the roles and functions of the Basic Law (iii) the Basic Law and its relationship with the Constitution of the PRC
(b) The political structure of the HKSAR	(i) the concepts of state, government, executive, legislature and judiciary

*SYLLABUS TOPICS*

*EXPLANATORY NOTES*

- (ii) the Chief Executive: selection, power and roles, and the Executive Council
  - (iii) the Legislative Council: formation, structure, functions, power and its relationship with the Chief Executive and the Executive Council
  - (iv) the executive authorities
  - (v) district organisations: formation, structure, functions and power of the district organisations, and their mutual relationship, e.g. District Councils, the Heung Yee Kuk and other communal organisations
  - [N.B. Candidates are expected to analyse and evaluate the relationships among the different institutions within the political structure of the HKSAR. (i–v)]
3. Government and the People
- (a) Rights and duties of citizens
    - (i) civil rights: the rights necessary for individual freedom
    - (ii) political rights: the rights to participate in the exercise of political power
    - (iii) social rights: the rights to a minimal economic and social well-being
    - (iv) duties
    - [N.B. Candidates should be able to apply these concepts to the situation in Hong Kong. (i–iv)]
  - (b) Representative governments
    - meaning and characteristics of representative governments e.g. the parliamentary system in the United Kingdom and the presidential system in the United States of America
  - (c) Elections
    - (i) direct and indirect elections and their relative merits
    - (ii) conditions of free and fair elections
    - (iii) importance of elections to a representative and accountable government
    - [N.B. Candidates are also expected to apply these concepts to analyse the Hong Kong situation. (i–iii)]
  - (d) Representative government and elections in Hong Kong
    - (i) the development of representative government in Hong Kong since the 1980s
    - (ii) elections in Hong Kong
  - (e) Communication, consultation and the redress of grievances in Hong Kong society
    - (i) the need for communication between government and the people
    - (ii) communication as a two-way process: consultation and redress of grievances

*SYLLABUS TOPICS*

*EXPLANATORY NOTES*

(f) Mass media, public opinion, interest groups and political parties in Hong Kong

(iii) formal and informal channels of communication and their effectiveness

(i) the role and influence of the mass media

(ii) the formation and expression of public opinion

(iii) the formation and role of interest groups

(iv) the formation and role of political parties

[N.B. Candidates should learn to analyse and evaluate information from such sources, to differentiate between fact and opinion and to identify garbling in reporting. (i-iv)]

4. Law and Justice in Hong Kong

(a) The rule of law and principles of justice

(i) the need for law

(ii) meaning of the rule of law and principles of justice

(iii) their significance and relation to a liberal democratic government

(iv) protection of human rights and promotion of justice

(v) major sources of Hong Kong laws

(b) Types of courts and their jurisdictions

(i) law enforcement and interpretation

(ii) structure of the judiciary

(iii) civil and criminal jurisdiction of each type of court

(iv) significance of trial by jury

(v) legal aid: the need for legal aid and types of legal aid services available

(c) Penal institutions

(i) crime, punishment and reform: their relationship and effects

(ii) correctional services and rehabilitative services

5. Government and the Economy

(a) The role of the Hong Kong government in the economy

(i) the orientation of government economic policy in Hong Kong

(ii) provision of infrastructure

(iii) maintaining stability and encouraging economic growth

(iv) promoting equity, e.g. expenditure on education, housing, medical services and social welfare

(b) Public finance in Hong Kong

(i) the making of the budget

(ii) factors affecting the determination of priorities in the allocation of government funds

(iii) major items of government revenue and expenditure

(iv) effects of government revenue and expenditure

6. Major Social Issues and Policies

## SYLLABUS TOPICS

Detailed analysis of one out of the following seven public policy areas is required:

- (a) education
- (b) medical and health
- (c) housing
- (d) environmental protection
- (e) social welfare
- (f) transport
- (g) labour

In 2005 the topic is *labour*

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

Candidates are expected to acquire the basic knowledge, and to develop the appropriate skills and attitudes in approaching local social issues:

- (i) locating, gathering, organising, analysing and evaluating information
- (ii) evaluating the public policies concerned and suggesting possible alternatives
- (iii) participating effectively and responsibly in social and political processes relating to the social issues and public policies concerned

Framework for approaching social issues:

- (i) identify responsibilities of government
  - major issues and their causes
  - reasons for government's involvement
- (ii) understand the decision-making process
  - major decision-making agencies
  - consultation process
- (iii) describe major current policies and the main agencies implementing such policies
  - agencies implementing policies
  - current policy programmes of the government
- (iv) recognise limitation of resources and conflicting interests among groups and sectors
  - resource limitation but may competing ends
  - demands and expectations from competing groups and sectors
  - setting of priorities
- (v) evaluate the major current policies and suggest possible alternatives
  - evaluate the effectiveness of current policy programmes of the government
  - examine the possible consequences of the proposals made by competing groups and sectors on major current issues
  - suggest possible alternatives
- (vi) participate as a student and a citizen in social and political processes related to the social issues and public policies concerned
  - suggest ways and reasons for participation
  - participate effectively and responsibly

*SYLLABUS TOPICS*

*EXPLANATORY NOTES*

7. The PRC and the HKSAR

(a) State system of the PRC

- (i) the Constitution
- (ii) the National People's Congress
- (iii) the State Council
- (iv) the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference

(b) Organisational system of the Communist Party of China (CPC)

- (i) the National Congress
- (ii) the Central Committee
- (iii) the Political Bureau

(c) The relationship between the CPC and the state

- (i) political and ideological leadership of the party over the government, army and society
- (ii) their interlocking relationship at different levels

(d) Recent developments in China and their impact on the HKSAR

The emphasis lies on the major political and economic developments which have significant impact on the HKSAR.

## **Appendix 2: GPA Examination Reports**

### **Certificate Level**

As for Paper 1, two sets of almost identical recommendations are given to candidates (1998-9). These include:

1. Candidates should read the questions more carefully in order to understand the main idea.
2. Candidates are reminded that salient and clear arguments which demonstrate candidates' proficiency in effective communication will be important.
3. Candidates are encouraged to improve their analytical and comparative skills, rather than simply rely on factual recall and enumeration.
4. Candidates should keep themselves updated on current issues and changes in public policies implemented by the government, with particular emphasis on the social policy issue assigned.<sup>72</sup>

As for paper 2, the following advice is given to candidates (1999-2001):

1. Candidates should have a good grasp of the political structure of China. (1999)
2. Candidates should pay more attention to the current events in Hong Kong. (1999, 2000, 2001)
3. Candidates should acquire a better understanding of different types of electoral methods. (1999)
4. Candidates should keep themselves updated on political development in Hong Kong. (2000)
5. Candidates should have better understanding of the relationship between the Central Government of China and Hong Kong. (2000)
6. Candidates should have better understanding of the Basic Law of Hong Kong. (2001)
7. Candidate should have a more critical and dynamic approach in analyzing current social issues. (2001)

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<sup>72</sup> In the recommendation for 1998, it is further pointed out that candidates should note the impact of such policies on the region, and the pros and cons of such policies need to be considered together with other relevant sections of the syllabus.



## Advanced Level

With respect to A level, an analysis of the comments on candidates' performance from 1996-2001 is carried out. The following table summarizes the comments.

**Table A2.1 : GPA Examination Reports (Advanced Level)**

Year	Overall	Strength	Weakness
1996	satisfactory	Make use of examples; Describing concepts	Factual inaccuracies, particularly about development in Hong Kong;  Need more critical analyses
1997	satisfactory	Descriptive skills in Discussing political events and political concepts; Follow current affairs and apply political concepts to explain political phenomena (better candidates)	Need to be more analytical;  Too descriptive
1998	satisfactory	Adequate command of basic facts about Hong Kong's politics before handover;  Could follow important development in current issues and give appropriate examples (better candidates)	Explaining things  Knowledge of Basic Law
1999	satisfactory	Use current issues to support or illustrate arguments;  Giving descriptive accounts of political theories	Factual inaccuracies and selection of irrelevant materials  Lacking analysis and critical thinking
2000	satisfactory	Defining basic concepts;  Describing theories and reporting facts;  Institutional knowledge of Hong Kong government and politics;  Grasping political principles and practices operated in China and the US	Predominantly descriptive in style and content;  Unable to explain and evaluate theories;  Lacking critical appraisals of basic concepts and theories  Unable to give argument for and counter-argument against a stance
2001	satisfactory	Describe basic concepts and theories of politics;  Grasping of institutional and legal aspects of the political	Having occasional difficulty in understanding demands of questions;  Paying inadequate attention to

		<p>systems;</p> <p>Adequate understanding of the political systems of China and the United States, especially in presenting such structures and facts</p>	<p>behavioral and conceptual dimensions of Hong Kong politics;</p> <p>Not enough understanding of the developmental and evolutionary processes about politics of China and the United States</p>
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**Appendix 3: Repetitions of Public Examination Questions (1996-2000, with 2000 as the base year of comparison)**

**Certificate level**

Table A3.1 Repetitions of Public Examination Questions (Certificate level)

Questions asked in 2000 GPA CE Level	Similar questions asked in GPA Certificate Level in (other years)
<p>Paper 1</p> <p>Q2(b) Identify and explain one role of each of the following in the law-making process in the HKSAR: (ii) the Executive Council; (iv) the Chief Executive</p> <p>Q4 (a) In order to win a seat in the 1999 District Councils Election, Miss Wong joined a political party.</p> <p>(ii) Give two reasons to explain why Miss Wong believe that by joining a political party she would have a better chance of being elected</p> <p>Q4 (b) According to the Basic Law, the Chief Executive of the HKSAR is elected by the Election Committee and appointed by the Central People's Government.</p> <p>(ii) Give one reason why the Chief Executive of the HKSAR must be appointed by the Central People's Government.</p>	<p>Identify and explain one executive power and one legislative power enjoyed by the Executive Council. (1997 Paper 1 Q1 (a) (i))</p> <p>Explain two powers enjoyed by the Governor in law-making. (1996 Paper 1 Q1 (b) (ii))</p> <p>A District Board member commented, "Candidates with the support of political parties have a better chance of winning elections than independent candidates who do not have the support of political parties." Do you agree with this comment? Give two reasons to support your answer. (1996 Paper 1 Q2 (c) )</p> <p>Identify and explain two arrangements made in the Basic Law which ensure that the PRC(People's Republic of China) can resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong after 1<sup>st</sup> July 1997. (1996 Paper 1 Q6 (a) (i)).</p> <p>Identify and explain two things the central People's Government has done in exercising its sovereignty over the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. (1998 Paper 1 Q2 (a) (i) ).</p>

Q5 (a) The Chief Executive of the HKSAR pointed out in his 1999 Policy Address, "Despite the high unemployment rate, some jobs remain vacant."

(ii) Give two reasons to explain why some jobs remained vacant even though a high unemployment rate was recorded.

A newspaper editor argued that people relying on the CSSA (Comprehensive Social Security Assistance) Scheme should be encouraged by the government to re-enter the labor market. Give two reasons to support her argument. (1999 Paper 1 Q5 (a) (i)).

## Advanced Level

**Table A3.2 Repetitions of Public Examination Questions (Advanced level)**

Questions asked in 2000 GPA A Level	Similar questions asked in GPA A Level in (other years)
<p><b>Paper 1</b></p> <p>Q1. Distinguish between the internal and external aspects of state sovereignty, and discuss the relationship between them.</p> <p>Q2. To what extent is constitutionalism compatible with democracy?</p> <p>Q3. Is nationalism a source of political conflict or is it an essential element in the creation of solidarity among members of a state?</p> <p>Q4. "In contemporary societies, the power of interest groups has grown so strong that it prevents governments from adopting policies that are in the interest of the society as a whole". Discuss this statement.</p> <p>Q7. Identify the constitutional safeguards for a high degree of autonomy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). Do you think that the exercise of the power to interpret the Basic Law by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in the "right of abode" controversies has undermined the HKSAR's high degree of autonomy?</p> <p>Q10. The Legislative Council, which shoulders no executive powers and responsibility and is therefore oppositionist in nature, cannot contribute to good governance." To what extent do you agree with this statement?</p>	<p>What are the internal and external sovereignty of a state? Discuss the relationship between them. (1997 Paper 1 Q3 ).</p> <p>"Without constitutionalism, democracy is just the tyranny of the majority." (1996 Paper 1 Q2 ).</p> <p>Discuss the relationship between the state and nationalism. (1996 Paper 1 Q1 ).</p> <p>Discuss the importance and limitations of interest groups as a form of representation in a liberal democracy. (1998 Paper 1 Q6 ).</p> <p>Discuss the autonomy of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in terms of its constitutional relationship with the Central Authorities. What are the political conditions for the realization of this autonomy? (1998 Paper 1 Q11 ).</p> <p>The Provisional Legislative Council is a rubber stamp of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region." Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. (1998 Paper 1 Q12 ).</p>

Q12. The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has provided adequate protection of human rights in theory and practice." Discuss this statement.

Paper 2

Q2. "The Communist Party of China is politically more powerful than the National People's Congress." Discuss this statement with examples.

Q4. The political role of the Chinese military expanded significantly during the Cultural Revolution. How has this trend been reversed in the post-Mao era?

Q5 What were the shortcomings of the cadre system in Mao's period? To what extent have these shortcomings been corrected by the state civil service reform?

Q7. How is "check and balances" principle realized in the relationship between the US Congress and the President? Will this principle inevitably lead to conflicts between these two branches of government?

Q10. "Legitimacy can only be achieved through direct elections". Evaluate this statement by comparing the situation in China and the USA.

Identify the laws and institutions for safeguarding human rights in Hong Kong, and assess their adequacy. (1998 Paper 1 Q11 ).

"The National People's Congress is important in Chinese politics not because of its constitutional position, but because it can provide legitimacy for government policies." To what extent do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. (1997 Paper 2 Q1 ).

" The People's Liberation Army is so influential that the Communist Party of China could not govern effectively without the support of the Army." Do you agree with this statement? (1998 Paper 2 Q6).

Compare and contrast the criteria for recruiting cadres in Mao's period and Deng's period. How do you account for such changes or continuities? (1998 Paper 2 Q6).

Discuss the positive and negative impacts of separation of powers on public policy-making in the USA? (1999 Paper 2 Q8).

Compare and contrast the functions of elections in the political system of the PRC and that of the USA. (1997 Paper 2 Q10)

<p>Q11. "Political parties in the USA aggregate the interests of the people, while the Communist Party in China dictates what the interests of the people should be". Discuss this statement.</p>	<p>Compare and contrast the roles of political parties as channels of political participation in the PRC and the USA. (1997 Paper 2 Q11)</p>
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#### **Appendix 4: GPA candidature (including school and private candidates)**

**Table A4.1 GPA candidature**

<b>Year</b>	<b>CE Level</b>	<b>A Level</b>	<b>AS Level</b>
1988	NA	196	NA
1989	500	198	NA
1990	842	166	NA
1991	969	186	NA
1992	965	194	NA
1993	979	279	NA
1994	1012	165	192
1995	963	147	219
1996	945	190	170
1997	1014	156	158
1998	992	180	145
1999	1066	171	166
2000	1168	199	171
2001	1069	167	157
2002	1083	205	132

The proportion of school candidates and private candidates varies across the years. In 2001, for example, private candidates accounted for 20 AL candidates, 19 AS candidates and 124 CE candidates.

Source: Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority



## Appendix 5: Consent Form (Sample)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (name of subject)

Thanks for being one of my interviewees for the research I carry out as part of my dissertation requirement for the study of Doctor of Education in the University of Durham.

My dissertation title is "Teaching politics: a study of the subject 'Government and Public Affairs' in Hong Kong's schools".

It aims at examining the curriculum of the subject Government and Public Affairs and exploring the conception of the teachers in teaching the subject.

To safeguard due confidentiality, the following measures will be taken:

- 1) Anonymity, both of the subject's name and the subject's school name
- 2) Tape recording will be done only with consent of the subject
- 3) Destruction of tapes after transcription has been finished
- 4) Transcription will be done by researcher
- 5) The transcription will be sent to the subject for suggesting possible amendment

This form needs to be filled out before the commencement of interview

Reply

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of Subject) agree to be an interviewee, taking into consideration the provisions stated above

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (signature of Subject)

Date:

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# **Book of Transcripts**

**Handed in together with Ed D Thesis**

*Teaching Politics: A Study of the Subject 'Government and Public  
Affairs' in Hong Kong's Schools*

*By Timothy Yuen Wai Wa*

**(This is not part of the thesis)**

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**KEY:**

**I = Interviewer**

**S = Subject**

**( ) = number of turn**

**Side Note: It is not part of the taped dialogue. It records the following:**

- **Impression of the interviewers of the interviews**
- **What the Subject says after the tape recorder has been turned off**
- **What the Subject says in follow-up telephone conversation or e-mail message**

**All the transcripts were written and translated by the researcher. With the exception of side notes, all have been checked and verified by the respondents.**



## Transcript one

Date of interview: 9/1/2002 a.m.

Subject interviewed: S3

Class: question setter

Background of subject:

- Secondary school principal (female)
- Former planner of GPA Subject Syllabus and Teaching Guidelines
- Present setter of GPA public examination at Certificate Level (with many years of experience in the job)

Length of interview: 40 minutes

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

### Content of interview

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): The five provisions you see (in the consent form) are meant to protect confidentiality. I will do the transcription myself...and will send you the transcription for examination. In case that I have biased on what you mean or that there is a loss of meaning in translation, you can let me know and seek correction. This (the interview) is for my dissertation and is not meant for publication or release in the newspaper. If you have understood these and have no objection, please sign (the consent form).

S (1): Ha... (OK)...The date here (in the form) means today?

I (2): Yes

S (2): Thanks

I (3): In brief, the interview is related to my dissertation that is concerned with the implementation of the subject GPA in schools.

S (3): I have a question. I have never taught the subject before and my school doesn't offer the subject. As such, what I can offer may be rather limited.

I (4): That's a good question. In fact, I am interested in interviewing 3 parties: GPA teachers, curriculum planners and question setters. I am interested in interviewing you as the third party in order to understand how the setters view the public examination. Besides, as you worked on the curriculum before, I will also be interested in inviting you to have a look at the curriculum planners' questions to see whether they are readily understandable and whether they can be improved.

S (4): O.K.

I (5): I am not going to interview you over the curriculum planners' questions as our involvement was at the early stage, quite a long time from now.

S (5): Right.

I (6): Should we move right into the topic now?

S (6): Good.

I (7): I think you are helping with GPA public examination setting working mainly at the Certificate Examination (CE) Level.

S (7): Yes, it has always been so.

I (8): The subject (at CE Level) has its own assessment mode. It comprises a conventional question part and a multiple-choice part. How do you think about this assessment mode? Is it in line with the aims and objectives of the subject?

S (8): In fact, in a way it is quite traditional. Every subject is like this. But, in the case of GPA in which part of it is about issues, mere written examination may be a problem. I don't think we can test students on all we want them to learn.

I (9): Yes.

S (9): How to say it? The curriculum is very broad and varying. There is a big time gap in between setting questions and answering such questions. Besides as for skills, the examination can only train them (the students) to tackle the questions, rather than they achieve understanding and have "some else".

I (10): Yes

S (10): Besides, I think sometime there can be no model answers to the questions. Then how can you assess how much the students have learned and whether the standard can meet the expectation? In some areas, I have a little... (doubt). We cannot test the ability of the students that much.

I (11): Yes, actually, this conversation is meant to be an open one. And in case you want to talk of anything, please feel free to go into it and stop my flow whenever you want to.

S (11): O.K.

I (12): You mentioned that written examination alone can only assess students' skill in tackling questions while GPA requires students to understand and have their own stance etc.

S (12): Yes. (In a way, the Subject has confirmed that "something outside" above refers to or includes own stance)

I (13): Then, let me ask a hypothetical question. If you were the final decision-maker over this subject, would you like to change the assessment mode in any way? If you wanted to change it, what change(s) would you like to make?

S (13): Yes (in a rise of tone), I understand many subjects in A Level are now using TAS (Teacher Assessment Scheme), that is a form of continuous assessment. I believe this

may be of help in GPA.

I (14): Yes

S (14): This is similar to the case of GPA in its A Level. There is a part on project work.

I (15): That is the Project Assessment Scheme (PAS).

S (15): Yes, the PAS part. This is particularly relevant to the learning of students nowadays. If we just request students to learn by... reciting or so, I don't think they can learn much. No matter with GPA or EPA (Economic and Public Affairs), if we are promoting a sense of civic awareness among the students or we are helping them to develop social and personal responsibility etc., I don't think we have achieved much. GPA has been with us for so many years. We should have developed a lot among the people with so many years. The social awareness and responsibilities among the youngsters should be rather strong. But, we cannot find this in reality. So, would it be that from the point of view of examination, it is just like a subject and handled like as just a subject. To handle an examination will then be to recite it and "full stop and that's it" (in English)". How the subject matters reach the students and how much the students can understand from the subject to facilitate self, character and social development etc ...is not important. If the assessment mode can be more continuous in form and is not in a one-go basis, say by a test of one or two-and-a-half-hours (2 papers together), we may end up in another scenario.

I (16): In brief, that is to say, GPA, at Certificate Level, has not achieved what it can get?

S (16): I am a bit disappointed. Helping to start the subject and then subsequently working with its examination, I can see from the situation with the society and the students that we are not meeting the objectives of the subject.

I (17): O.K. when we set questions, we are each responsible for a part of the paper.

S (17): Ha...Everybody gets a part.

I (18): Yes, each of us does our homework, that is to say prepare drafted examination questions and then bring them to the moderation committee. Can I know in your case, when you are doing your part of questions setting, perhaps also deciding which question to take and which are to be given up, what will be the more important consideration? What factors are you considering then?

S (18): What factors? Actually there are no special ones. Sometimes I would think I set similar questions the year before...But I would consider the topic and the gist...There are things which are very important in the topic which students must learn and know and I would consider these things first. Besides, I would think of things that happen recently that are relevant and see whether students can use what they learn from the subject to see their society. These things would come first before others.

I (19): First, you said that you would see whether the questions did come out last year.

S (19): No, I would not look at what turned out last year. This depends on my memory. You see... You do it every year. If you see that it has always been the same sort of question, you don't want to make questions out of it... Then you would look at the present situation for planning your questions.

I (20): Yes. I understand. When we bring our draft questions to the moderation committee, there can be three possible outcomes. Either the questions get accepted or that the questions are modified. It may also be the case that the questions are dropped.

S (20): Yes.

I (21): In your opinion, what are the criteria of the committee in accepting, modifying and rejecting? I mean what is the collective thinking at work then?

S (21): You are also one of us. Ha ha...

I (22): Yes, I have my own view. But, I am interested in yours now.

S (22): First of all, whether it is in line with the Syllabus is considered... Then, whether it is a new style instead of being very traditional is considered. If it is innovative, then perhaps it is worth trying. Then repetition is considered. If it has been repeated many times, we may drop it. Then it is the presentation and the consideration is to enhance or choose the (appropriate) presentation.

I (23): Talking about repetition, I have studied the questions asked in the past 5-6 years. There have been many cases of repetition. It may not be exact verbatim repeating. But questions of very similar nature may turn up again. For example, in 1996, we asked the powers of the Governor in question 1b. Now we have the Chief Executive. In 2000, we asked the power of the Chief Executive in law making etc. Such repetition, as I have spotted, occur over the course of a few years. How do you think about this phenomenon and what do you think will be its impact?

S (23): I think... How to say... The Syllabus itself is a restriction. It set the limits to us. Besides as for the questions you cited, I immediately think of that actually the things are different because the political powers changed hands.

I (24): You mean there was a political transfer. We now have chief executive instead of ...

S (24): Yes. Thing can be different. I cannot see that students taking it can see the difference. But, the setter might want to. I don't know. It was not me (who set this question). It could be one of the considerations then. I don't know. Maybe the point is that political powers changed hands and there could be similarities and differences. This might well be the subject to tell the students the direction, or better say the frame has changed.

I (25): Understand.

S (25): As for other repetition, I guess it is very difficult, very difficult, very difficult... It is difficult to blame about it. The Syllabus has not been changed for so

many years. I think it may be good to have modifications. From time to time, I did find it very hard to set questions as the Syllabus is very outdated. What you can asked actually is very little and very restricted. If you ask a little more, then the concern of asking questions outside the Syllabus emerges. Then you will go back to the original circle and ask similar and similar things.

I (26): Understand. Then it seems that the Syllabus itself is the crux and the same story will happen again and again. Do you mean this?

S (26): Yes, some parts of the Syllabus are very rigid and restraining and we as setters will not dare to go off the track or else the results can be beyond what we can shoulder.

I (27): Yes. This is what turns out. Some questions will be asked again after a certain period of time. Do you worry that some teachers and students will accordingly know that some answers to questions can be prepared in advance? This will reinforce the rote learning tendencies and the drilling practices?

S (27): I don't share this view. Of course you can see it from another angle and believe that students will study with wit and consider this. When I was a teacher some years ago, I would also examine with students the questions asked in the previous ten years and see how the topics were asked (in examination) and prepared with them. I would do this and I believed many teachers are still doing this now. This doesn't apply only to this subject. It is basic to many subjects. But, whether this brings about transferring same materials across questions depends on how setters present the questions that ask for same materials. Our subject is good in the sense that it asks about current issues and applications of learning on such issues. This makes it difficult to just recite. You have to know the current issues and how it relates to your subject matters. Even if the wordings are the same, what are required may differ.

I (28): Understand.

S (28): Finished?

I (29): This maybe the last question. Your school doesn't have GPA.

S (29): No.

I (30): We have worked on this subject since its beginning though our roles are different. Can I know why your school is not taking it and whether you plan to take it in the future?

S (30): Actually when the subject first came into being we intended to offer it. We bought the books and so. But, right after the summer holiday, we were told that it would not be started as there were not enough students. We allowed them to opt for their subjects. I guess the promotion was not enough at the time it was needed. Another point is that even in the days of EPA, students were more interested in taking the part of economics than the part of public affairs.

I (31): What was the reason for this?

S (31): The students found it was difficult, as you needed to find a lot of information and read the newspapers. In answering the questions, you might not be able to meet the requirements. That required a lot of language ability too. Besides, the answer was not always straightforward and direct. I guess our students were not excellent in language and this had eventually affected their choice. If it needed only reciting, they could try hard and get through. But, I guess GPA is not based on reciting. You need understanding and application to get high marks. On top, in comparison with economics, they felt that economics was more practical in a money-minded society.

I (32): Perhaps one very last question. Our questions (examination questions) have to face the public. Which types of questions do you think will be more readily accepted by the public and there will be little resentment.

S (32): I guess in such a politically sensitive society and for a subject like this which is basically on government and politics, it is very important to remain neutral and refrain from taking side. To remain in a reasonable and legal level is very important. The questions must be within the Syllabus.

I (33): So, it is important to refrain from taking side...

S (33): That is also to stay away from being too critical. Or else you bring in consciousness or interpretation which may not be too good.

I (34): Thanks very much for accepting my interview. In the interview I have been addressing you by name sometime. This will be deleted in the transcription in order to keep your identity confidential.

S (34): Fine

## Transcript Two

### A brief sketch of the school

- One of the prestigious grant schools in Hong Kong, with a long history and foreign missionary background
- A girl school in Hong Kong Island
- A Catholic school
- A school with its own primary school section (in the same compound) that serves as feeder, typical of the grant schools
- The teacher, as in my impression, has good standing in the school. Thus, I am very courteously received by the clerk/secretary. I can use the meeting room exclusively for 2 hours and the janitor staff serves tea. (This is very different from my later experience in some other schools)
- The students are having examination during the time. But, I can tell by meeting them in the corridor and doorway that they represent sample of students with rather middle class background.
- The school moved to this new site some years ago. The site is not so very big. It is quite next to Tai Koo Shing.
- The meeting room is in the first floor. Display boards about civic education and knowing China etc. are seen in the ground floor.

Date of interview: 9/1/2002 p.m.

Subject interviewed: S4

Class: GPA teacher / curriculum planner

Background of subject:

- Secondary school teacher (female)
- GPA Syllabus planner and Teaching Guidelines writer
- Well-experienced in the field (started teaching the subject when it was first started)

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

Length of interview: 2hours

#### Content of interview

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): The interview is related to my dissertation. I have chosen to write on this topic as my career has been so intertwined with the subject GPA. Part of the dissertation is about how teachers with experience in teaching GPA perceive the teaching of the subject. This includes both teachers with prior experience and teachers who are currently teaching the subject. My University has demanded that we seek a written consent from our interviewees. We take steps to protect our interviewees, mainly in the direction of ensuring confidentiality. As we talked over the phone before, I understand that that you are actually very experienced with this. We mainly try to ensure anonymity of both the interviewed and the school. There will be tape recording mainly because of the need of transcription. The tape will be destroyed after the transcription, which will be done by me. No assistant will be hired to do the transcription, as the interviewees may not like someone else to hear their voice.

S (1): Actually, I don't mind

I (2): After I have finished with the transcription, I will send it to you for your checking. This will ensure that you can see whether I have misinterpreted you or whether any meaning has been lost due to translation. All these are meant to ensure anonymity and guard against possible biases on my part.

S (2): Ha... Guess Hong Kong laws do not oblige this. My understanding is that anyone knows of a message, s/he just writes it out and that's okay. As long as the other party has no question, it's fine to continue. Otherwise, there is the need to appeal to laws...Ha...



I think you have been very cautious. I did my study the way I said it.

I (3): Yes (you have a point), there is no such provision (of checking of draft) when I subscribe my article for release in the newspaper.

S (3): Guess you can ignore this.

I (4): Well, as I have promised this to my supervisor, I would try this out.

S (4): Well then

I (5): If you have no question, you need to sign this (the consent form) before we start. Here...

S (5): Fine. (The interviewee signs the form)

I (6): O.K. Thanks for helping with the interview. First of all, I am interested in knowing some basic information. Is it true that you have been teaching GPA at both Certificate and Advanced Level?

S (6): Actually both Certificate (CE) and Advanced Supplementary (AS) Level. At first we did take Advanced Level. But later, as you know, schools are trying to put up more subjects, and accordingly some subjects were changed to AS level and GPA was among them. So, I also have experience of teaching GPA at A Level, though now I am only teaching it at AS Level. I now do one instead of both papers of A Level.

I (7): AS Level is one half of A Level.

S (7): Yes. It does not cover Paper Two, the one concerned about China and the United States.

I (8): Yes. Have you ever been involved in the curriculum planning work?

S (8): Yes, I have been working for it all these years. I can't tell which year on which level that precisely. It has been on and off, and then on again, depending the tenure requirement. But, basically, I have never stopped.

I (9): Would you mind if I try to be a bit greedy and try to interview you first as a teacher of GPA and then as a curriculum planner of the subject?

S (9): O.K. No problem... no problem.

I (10): I would first start with the part related with GPA teachers. Actually, it is supposed to be a casual conversation

S (10): That's better indeed.

I (11): In case you are not interested in what I am talking about, simply stop my flow and feel free to pick up whatever topic you feel like to talk about. I shall ask my questions in relation to teaching GPA in general. In case you want to differentiate between that of teaching it in CE Level and A Level, please specify in your answer.

S (11): Fine

I (12): Actually, there are aims or things we want to achieve in teaching a subject. So, what do you want to achieve when you teach the subject GPA in school?

S (12): In the case of our school in particular, there are only girls (female students).

They are rather passive. They know very little of the society. I always have the impression that girls do not know much. They should know more about things in the society so that they can safeguard themselves. I find that they will simply recite things given them. So, I think it's important to have some social subjects so that they can care about the society. That is the first reason why I will not give up EPA or GPA. The school thinks so too. The second thing is that especially for A Level or AS level, I can provide more chance for them to exercise critical thinking. I feel that from my own study as well as in planning that not many subjects can provide the room for critical thinking as does GPA. It allows you to agree / disagree and like / dislike in so many issues. You can make your own choice as long as you are well reasoned. I think this is very important for our students as well as for Hong Kong people in general. This is the most important thing. Subject content only comes next. Any thing can train critical thinking. We are now using government and public affairs as the means to train up the thinking skills. I think this is most important.

I (13): In your opinion is GPA more a political subject or more a form of preparation for political participation. What would you say?

S (13): I would first come up with a definition. What is political participation and what is politics? Your definition may be different from mine. In my view, politics is about things of the public and we as members of the public will settle the public concern. What is the sharing (of powers) and who have more powers and say. Construed this way, GPA is a rather political subject.

I (14): Yes.

S (14): Using the answer to the first question, teaching students critical thinking to solve public problems will ensure that students think and understand and then to involve and deal with the things.

I (15): In other words, we help train up new generation with critical mind and...

S (15): Once they are very social-minded, they will initiate their own participation. They may even push other people or use other means to achieve what they want to achieve. For instance, they see something is going wrong with the media as vulgar language is used in the TV programs. They may feel concerned. They may find that it is affecting the whole social setting. They will then have the courage to raise the problem. This sort of involvement maybe a form of political participation though I cannot be sure. In my understanding, this is.

I (16): O.K. I have just asked about what you want to achieve.

S (16): Yes

I (17): Actually, the subject's Syllabus specifies a set of aims and objectives.

S (17): Yes.

I (18): When you teach your GPA classes, do you see and follow the aims and

objectives as specified in the official document?

S (18): I think I would, especially in the beginning. At first, you don't have the experience. I would then refer to the official document to ensure that I had taught the things and achieved certain things. It is not the case now as I know the whole Syllabus so well as I am dealing with it everyday...

I (19): So, you mean the whole thing has been internalized.

S (19): Yes. I don't often check the Syllabus as often now. But, there are systems in our school to ensure that we do work (in an appropriate way). For example, our students' workbooks (assignments) are checked and so are our meetings and examination papers. All these can remind you to review the scheme of work and the objectives etc. Besides, when I attend the subject committee meeting, we would also be reminded about whether the Syllabus will be changed in the coming two to three years and we will discuss the Syllabus and all related questions.

I (20): So, how do you find the aims and objectives as in the Syllabus? Do you find them appropriate? Or, do you find some of them to be better amended, say to be deleted or changed or supplemented?

S (20): Do we need to delete or change... Ah...

I (21): Or, do you think it is generally acceptable?

S (21): In general, I think they are acceptable. As this subject involves a lot that is related to civic education, they can't be explained in a few words. In fact, if they are too long and include too many things, it isn't too healthy to me if I am judging from the perspective of a planner. Besides, you should view it from the eyes of the followers. If there are more than one hundred items, you will find them hard to use. So, to a certain extent, they are acceptable to me.

I (22): Do you believe that one of the things we should do in the teaching of GPA is to promote patriotism, the love of one's own country?

S (22): I think this is the topic Hong Kong has long tried to avoid. Maybe, it's only my personal view. But, I remember that (is mentioned) in the last subject committee meeting. More can be done in A Level than the CE Level, because in paper two of A Level, one half is about China and one half is about USA. In comparison, only one out of the six chapters in CE Level is about China and that seems pretty little. Some brought this out and we felt to talk more about China would be quite normal in the case of Hong Kong. Our Syllabus maybe a bit threatening to the students and their parents and we are worried whether our "business" can grow. This is our big problem. Once the students take this subject, they usually like it very much. But, it is difficult because we cover topics like rights that are very vague. Concepts like the rule of law need a lot of time to deal with. Even definitions are time-consuming. Sometime, we hope that it can be more related to daily living. We hope that it can be more simple and concrete. It may be better

this way. If we have difficulty with these (concepts), we may find it rather difficult to touch upon China. But, if we are to love a place or a person, we have to start with understanding it. Now, when I deal with this chapter, what I want to do is to let the students settle with their misunderstandings. First (let them) deal with it. Or else, they would think about new immigrants (from the mainland) with all sorts of discriminations. Or, they may think the country and the government are not that good and doubt the point for our reunification. Then my job will be to let them know a country has both its good points and bad points. The same applies to Hong Kong that has its bad side too. So, I guess when I teach, I may not be concentrating that much on loving the country, but instead on helping them to develop a fairer view. The other thing is that I may not be just doing it with the subject, as I am also the coordinator of the civic education committee of the school. I'd rather do more on these activities. Actually this year the work is rather exhausting.

I (23): I see that there are display boards downstairs (about civic education and knowing China etc)

S (23): Yes, the school loves the students and does not that encourage students to take the hardship of going out and seeing too much. There is also the fear that they may see some people (get into wrong company) and turn bad. Actually, this year, after many years of talking to the school, there is the permission that we can take a trip to China. We are now planning very rigorously to have a trip to Shanghai. June last year, we made a trip to Jiangxi. I hope that in the course, the students will see that the people there are just like us. To love them (people in China) can be easy and I think we should start this way. In our school, we sing the national song once every cycle in the morning assembly. The theme of the assembly may not be related to China. But after the assembly, we sing the national song. As we are a Catholic school, we sing the hymns normally. But, the national song comes once a week. We hope that they will get used to it and deal with it in respect and then we can move slowly onwards. We would emphasize patriotism in civic education rather than in EPA or GPA. I think in the long run, the Syllabus (of GPA) will need to be amended to incorporate more elements about China. I think in the course of knowing more about China, they will love her. I think it is not appropriate to say, "mother China is great" as this will just cause embarrassment. They would boo at the practice. This is not that good.

I (24): Do you think that teaching this subject will have the effect of helping student acquire a sense of national identity?

S (24): Yes, it will. I feel strange too. For the sixth formers, every year they will be required to do a project. This year, they pick up the topic nationalism themselves. At first, I tried to persuade them to find a topic easier to manage. This topic is a bit more difficult. I mean on the academic side, it is more difficult. But they said they would like

to see how much Hong Kong people would see themselves as Chinese. I think we have built up something amongst them. This proves that what we did in GPA in the past years takes effect.

I (25): Do you think it is the case that they learn more about the country and hence they will find it easier to be a part of mother China politically? Does GPA work out in this way?

S (25): I guess it is more difficult with CE Level GPA. Actually I heard from colleagues that they felt there was too little coverage on China and citizenship education. It is my feeling too. I guess it touches only the skin (extraneous) level. It is just like studying a place but not the country of one's own. On the contrary, I find the chapter on Hong Kong's status as a part of China to be more helpful as this enables me to bring out the relationship (between China and Hong Kong).

I (26): You mean the part on relationship between Hong Kong and China.

S (26): Yes, the part that is related with Basic Law and so. Yes, it is really helpful. But I think in the long run, the Syllabus will need to be changed and need more and more and more China's elements.

I (27): You just mentioned the subject could be threatening to students and parents. Is it so because the concepts are abstract or that they are about politics?

S (27): I draw my understanding in relation to the streaming process when students are promoted to form four (secondary 4). Now we include the parents into the streaming process more than before. There will be seminars to explain to parents what subjects we offer. When they come across with GPA, they would immediately become very concerned and ask what exactly we are teaching to the students. I think the parents will not consult the Syllabus in details and find out what the objectives are and what the content will be. But, when they come across the term "government" and "public affairs", they will become very sensitive. I also heard about students saying that their parents were very pro-Taiwan and they often said that it was very bad for Hong Kong to become a part of China again. It was thus very wrong for Hong Kong to reunite with China. The students said they would often argue with their parents on such matters. I feel that there is the inference among parents that we are giving a political stance to the students when we teach the subject. But from EPA in the past to GPA at the moment we are not giving them a stance. We give them facts, the current issues and things and ask them to collect further information and they will decide on whether something is worthy of trust and how things should be and so. So, unless they are really very interested in knowing my own stance, I seldom let them know mine.

I (28): I understand that. I will now ask some things about methods. I understand that that GPA has got its Teaching Guidelines in both CE and A Level. Will you deliberately follow the guidelines with reference to its suggested methods, activities and time

allocation etc.?

S (28): Actually I am involved in building up the guidelines.

I (29): Ah.

S (29): Actually my involvement is quite enormous, and in both CE and A Level. So, I myself am quite alert of the guidelines and the proposals. I think as for a new GPA teacher, it's good for him/her to consult the documents. Of course, there is also a degree of exaggeration. For example, in teaching each topic, it says that students should do some visits. In teaching District Councils, students are asked to visit the District Councils. The same is true when students are asked to visit the Legislative Council when the topic is being taught. It is really wrong to assume that students will be able to do it. I will, on the contrary, try to enrich the students on current affairs and events. I think and hope that GPA teachers in Hong Kong will be using current and updated stuff as materials to assist the course of teaching. We have the newspapers and now we can get access to the Internet, even in class. I myself will use news and sometime I will immediately photocopy them the news if I find it special. Sometime it may not concern about China. For instance in the September 11th incident, I would tape the news and ask them to discuss apart from ruins what do they see in the United States. They would tell they found (US people) love their country very much as they queued up to make sacrifice by giving blood. Both lower and upper form students could see this. So, I feel current materials have greater impact.

I (30): You think current things and issues are lively materials that can be brought out in class. When we talk about methods now, often we are talking about expository versus discovery method etc. So back to the reality, how will you describe the way you actually teach your class?

S (30): I think there should be two dimensions in this discussion. As for CE Level, I guess the Syllabus is a bit tight. I feel it is really very tight especially considering that students had no prior training. They have to know and then ha...to think critically. I guess this would be very painstaking and hard. But, I would try my best to use some discussion or use some current affairs and then motivate them, say by using comparisons. For example, in talking about Hong Kong economy, especially when I talk about the budget, the students really doubt how it can be relevant to them. They don't even know what it is. OK, I will ask them to think of their own income and expenses. I mean their pocket money. You know. Even the school uniform was bought. They can then estimate their monthly expenses. They then will come up to a sum and say "Wow that's four digits, 6 or 7 grand". I am using that much of my mother's money." I would then say: "I don't want to know your (family) income. But, judging from the figure you have at hand, you can estimate how much income is needed to make ends meet." Then, they will start looking at receipts and so. Then, I will tell them

this is the very purpose of budget and so. Then I will tell them: “Your parents may not have shown you the budget. But as a big girl, do you think you should concern about this?” I guess that abstract things will be difficult to them. But once in the sixth forms, things can be different. I can simply put the news out and we can start the discussion outright. It is much happier that way. They will feel ashamed because they miss a piece of news yesterday. Because of their training in form four and five, they know which ends to think about and they will be self-motivated after I start off with a few questions. They feel happy with it. Yesterday, I did a revision on the topic of legitimacy with the form seven classes. I said it would be easy if they looked at whether Tung Chi Hwa (the Chief Executive) was welcome by the public. Then they were to make up two questions, as simple as possible, so that the questions could be finished off in one lesson. They then felt very happy and came up with two seemingly simple and in fact rather difficult questions. Then I said to them, “Fine, now go out to ask the people around”. They then started off, asking fellow form seven students in library and the janitor staff. They actually could ask different sorts of people at their own choice. They were very happy and showed me answers from, say the female janitor staff, which came with even explanations. The explanations given were very reasonable, say “Tung is not all that bad as he has done this and this” . . . , and even (can be put) in countable terms. One said that of course it was not enough to elect him (Mr. Tung) with eight hundred people unless there were only eight hundred people in Hong Kong.

I (31): Ah . . .

S (31): Then I showed them what their two questions were trying to address and they would find out the answers themselves. Then they would conclude on what legitimacy was all about. I think the lesson yesterday was a very happy lesson. First of all they had activities and could move around. Second, they set the questionnaire themselves. I said to them that it was actually remarkable that they could enable the female janitor staff and the students not taking GPA, who were not likely to be interested in current (political affairs), understand what they tried to ask. They then felt very proud of themselves. Besides, the conclusions came out from themselves. So, next time they are to analyze the same questions, say in test and examination, they will be more confident. I think I can do it in the sixth forms, as their lessons (overall for all subjects taken) are not plentiful. It is no more the same case as for form four and five when you have to rush through the chapters and the items. I can tailor the curriculum in terms of depth and difficulty and this is better.

I (32): Yes, I understand that that. GPA is a subject with public examinations, both for CE and A Level. What do you think is the impact of such public examinations on your teaching? Do you see such public examination as help or hindrance to your work?

S (32): Seemingly you are asking about the two syllabuses, the teaching one and the

examination one. The two are different. The teaching syllabus (Teaching Guidelines) is more flexible and involves more activities. But, the examination syllabus (Syllabus) worked out by the Examination Authority will not consider these. I guess in CE Level, we are in a real tight situation and the time frame is always in our mind. There are so much time and lessons for this and so. No discussion this time as we need to rush through the topics and so. But, what should I say? ... I guess as for A Level, the writing out of the setting is a bit different. I think it is easier to handle. I don't know that whether it is due to the fact more lessons are given or that they already have the background and so. I find it easier to manage the sixth forms. The Syllabus, we hope, will be trimmed down to a manageable scale. Actually we are working in this direction. Now, to an extent, it is better than before.

I (33): Going back to the question of teaching politically controversial topic. It is possible that the students will develop their own opinions that can be different from the mainstream opinion in the society. Such opinions may also be radical in a way. Seeing this, what will be your response? Or, will you see this as acceptable?

S (33): In fact, I would rather that they have more different voices. The more varied the voices, the more they are able to clarify whether they understand the topics. But in the CE Level, I guess time is the constraint. Besides, it maybe their level, they don't have much which can challenge me. Ha ha... I would simply say: "Just tell it... There is not much which can be said to be right and wrong. Just speak out." Maybe our students are not bad, they will not think out very weird things. But if they go to the level as saying that "I really hate him very much". What I would do is simply to remind them from behind that there are laws. So, as long as they go with the law, in principle, they should have the right to difference in discourse. Thus, I will encourage them to speak out. But, as they speak out, I will use different methods to ensure that they will respect other people's opinions. This is what I have always emphasized. I would say to them that: "Good, your point is rather innovative. But, when you see thing this way, are you aware that the person next to you see it differently? Maybe you judge from the perspective of a rich person and he, due to experience, concerns the perspective of a poor person. Thus, when they think, they can have more approaches to think out the same thing. This, I think will be better as they become more considerate. But, I think the qualities of my students are that they are girls who are more compassionate and will not like to attack others or oppose others for the sake of good relationship. Thus, I cannot have too many counter-arguments sometime.

I (34): This is interesting. Let's take a recent example. Mr. Tung is said to come out to contest for the office of the Chief Executive again. There is a division of opinions. Some support and there are people who oppose Mr. Tung's move. So, in class, how can you encourage the students to speak out their minds over this controversial issue? I



mean if you are teaching this very topic in class.

S (34): Of course, if I teach this topic, I would consider the level too. I would immediately conjure up pictures with different parties holding banners of “Support Tung” and “Down with Tung”, say in a big hall. I will ask them (the students) what these students are doing. What are their causes and what are the arguments behind etc. Then if I am really teaching this and, if it is needed, I would analyze with them the conclusion about their supporting or opposing Mr. Tung ( in his bid for office). Maybe they can come to certain statistics about how many of us are so inclined and then they will come to whether as a result we need not respect the voice of minority and so. Normally, the conclusion will end here. Normally, it is not the conclusion that is important. I would emphasize that as for study that is examination-oriented, don’t worry whether you say yes or no. I always remind them that as for discussion, the conclusion is not important. What is important is whether you can put forward strong arguments.

I (35): Yes, I understand that.

S (35): I will, on the other hand, ask them what methods they will use to support or oppose Tung. Will they use the methods people are using now, say demonstration etc., or that they will choose a different way to express? Maybe here they will also point out whether an 800-strong electoral college has problem. I would then ask them to point out what they would like to bring out to improve the method of election in the long run. I mean if they feel something is wrong, they must want to improve it. Maybe they will then say, “use direct election or so to replace the electoral college.” Then I may go to the point of amending the Basic Law and the matters related. This depends on what I will like to go. If I intend to talk also of the Basic Law, I will proceed. Or if I am dealing with the mass media at the moment, I will then examine the role of the mass media in this campaign of supporting versus opposing Tung. Normally, it is like this and the discussion commences this way.

I (36): We talked about national identity a moment ago. What do you think is the sort of national identity our students should develop? What attributes do you think such an identity should have?

S (36): Ah...(silent for a moment)

I (37): What descriptive terms will you use in relation to this identity?

S (37): Maybe some don’t even accept this fact. For children nowadays, maybe the older ones reject the idea. It can be among the younger ones. I guess they begin to see that around them are people with different accents. They begin to see the usefulness of Putonghua. Actually, three or four morning assemblies of our schools will be conducted in Putonghua every year. We also have a little Putonghua in our activities. For instance, we have organized a Putonghua Day this year. I believe up to this moment, most

students still feel themselves Hong Kong people rather than Chinese nationals. I don't deem this good and I will like to organize more activities so that they can have more contacts with China.

I (38): You mean more in-depth contact.

S (38): Yes, for example, they can trace the source of our water and find that they come from the "Eastern River" of the mainland. Then they find out that at the upper course the water is clean, and they see what happens midstream and then... I guess this is how the relationship between China and Hong Kong really begins. This will be the smoother way to start. If I go outright to China, they may not accept. I am quite worried that if the whole thing stops, it will be quite unhealthy. I would like to see that in the civic education in these few years, more emphasis is to be placed on China.

I (39): In our GPA Syllabus, is it true that we have quite a large part on Hong Kong and China?

S (39): Yes, but that's mainly about Hong Kong, especially for the case of CE Level. Out of the six parts there, only one is about China. You know we have no textbook.

I (40): Yes, I understand that Shum Ngai Ling (a long time ago) wrote the last textbook (English version).

S (40): Yes. More than 10 years ago, I guess.

I (41): Yes, Shum left Hong Kong a long time ago indeed.

S (41): Yes, just think of how long ago it was written. There are six chapters in the book and only one covers China. But actually, only one half of the chapter talks about China as the other half is about Hong Kong's relationship with China. Thus, it actually covers a little only as it is about one twelfth of the total content. It is only one twelfth out of a two-year study! That's really too little.

I (42): In the study at A Level, we get the following parts: Hong Kong, China, USA and China and US in comparison. Do you think in teaching it, we can help students to see politics from different perspectives. Or, do you think only a compartmentalized approach results as we only see Hong Kong political system from the view of Hong Kong; China's from the view of China and US's in terms of the US etc.

S (42): I guess comparative study is very important as it is only through comparative study we can understand many concepts. In the past years when we did the entire A Level rather than the AS Level, we covered Paper Two which is about US, China and US-China in comparison. I found that good. They would not be confined to a compartmentalized approach. But now as we only do the AS Level, we do a little political concepts and theories, but really quite little. We do only Hong Kong and a little China because of Hong Kong's relationship with her. The problem you just said surfaces as students have the compartmentalized tendencies: seeing Hong Kong's politics only in Hong Kong's terms etc. I don't know as we cannot test it out. But, if

they study other countries' politics, they may also only try to make meaning out of Hong Kong's terms. I remember asking a form five GPA class last week about, what they would do, if they have found something is worth reforming in China. They said (as in the case of Hong Kong), they would stage demonstration and protest and use the mass media and then people would know through watching TV etc. Ha ha... They don't know in China, another polity, how the same thing will be viewed entirely differently. So, I think there is a dilemma. The Syllabus cannot be further lengthened. But, it will otherwise be very piecemeal and inadequate if we don't. So, I really want something can be done in civic education to assist GPA. But, it will be rather selfish as civic education is not only about GPA. There are other things too.

I (43): So, GPA is too Hong-Kong-based.

S (43): Yes, it has too little about China and I don't know what to do. Just to cover Hong Kong will mean too many questions already.

I (44): Teaching GPA or politics is often related to a concern about indoctrination. The term often is taken as a negative educational term. How do you define indoctrination? Will you take up any measures to guard against it in the course of teaching GPA?

S (44): So, you take this as negative too?

I (45): I don't take side here. My apology if I mislead you to think so. But, some people do.

S (45): On the contrary, I will define it this way. The crux is whether I use lecture or activities, as I have just said, to help students bring out and clarify something of their own (inclination or stance) which is vague at the beginning. So, I will not particularly say China is good or bad. I will only say China does these and her polity is as such. The polity as such is not a matter of good or bad. It is equivalent to Hong Kong's having a polity as such and it is not a matter of good and bad. The important point is, given the scenario as such, what can we do to adapt to it? What can we do to make living more comfortable?

I (46): Yes, I understand that. In this few years, at least some commentator point out there are political affairs and development in Hong Kong and China that are not in accord with democratic principles. In teaching such topics, how will you handle these? Do you find these touchy?

S (46): The question is that the Syllabus does not specify whether we should teach these and how many comments to give. I guess when I teach these, I would try my best to give both sides of the argument.

I (47): So, you will not try to avoid these controversies.

S (47): No, I won't. I think in teaching GPA, what is important is that the students will find that they have freedom of speech in front of the teachers. If the teacher shows his/her temper to dissonant views of the students, it will be most discouraging. I try to

exemplify this myself. They are free to look at me (my reasoning) and point out any disagreement. Actually every three to four lessons, I will confer with my students to get feedback about whether they find discussions in class agreeable and whether improvement can be made. I will do this even to lower form, say form one class. If there is a chance, I will ask them whether I can do it better and ask for suggestions. They will for example say this lesson is interesting and the last one is a bit boring etc. They are free to say it and we must keep the promise not to be angry with them. If they see this all through the years (you teach them), they feel assured and can be more willing to bring out their stance.

I (48): Do you find any relation between teaching and learning GPA and democracy?

S (48): Yes there is a relationship. There is a relationship. I believe there is a correlation in between. The correlation is positive. I don't know whether in teaching dictatorship, I can use democratic method or not. My belief is that only through (democratic method) can we bring out the voice from the bottom of the heart. My experience is that when I was young, my father already allowed me to speak up and let me choose. But, he would show me that if I chose this I needed to do this and this to maximize the benefit and avoid outcomes (adversaries). Now, I love my students and I don't want them to be in danger or that I will mislead them in any way. I will assure them that it is safe to speak to me within the school. They don't need to be afraid or hate a person or so. When they speak to me, it is one of the opinions. The same applies when I comment. It's equal.

The tape runs to an end. There is a disruption of about 10 seconds and the interview resumes.

I (49): So, can I say that GPA teaching and learning can promote democracy because it can bring out the conflict of ideas and learners can learn from the debate?

S (49): Yes, you can say so. I believe one attribute of democracy is to respect different stances and opinions. In fact, I am not happy that my students have not got enough opinions, especially that of varied sorts. Maybe, girls view things in a narrow perspective and they still do not know enough of current affairs. Sometime, I find that they do not have enough common sense. We cannot have enough time to discuss all current news in class. We may not have even the time to discuss all the important things.

I (50): One more question about the public examinations. As we know, results of the public examinations are important in affecting chance of future study. I have studied the examination questions in the past years, say 1996-2001. I have found that as for all levels, CE, AS and A Level, some questions will turn up cyclically in a course of a few years.

S (50): You mean similar questions.

I (51): Yes. So, do you think this repetition will affect the way of teaching and learning as a pattern can be discerned?

S (51): Wow, a pattern can be discerned. I can't do it. But, your analysis is right. My own way of studying is not to tip on and select topics and questions. I might not be as wise...

I (52): I think you just try to be humble.

S (52): Ha ha... I studied all (when I was a student). So, when I teach my students now, I don't allow them to study selectively either. But, I think this is only my unilateral wish. I don't know whether they study selectively or not. But, I guess my students are not that able to do the analysis. I don't know whether other subject teachers are doing this. For me, this is not a restriction. But, I can discern a change in approach when same topics and same questions are asked in examinations. It has become more situational while formerly it was very theoretical and brief. For example (now) it says what happens from this year to that and even some statistics are given, say the turnout rate in Legislative Council election etc. Though these are simple things, they are becoming more situational. This maybe attributed to teachers' complaints about questions being theoretical and students not knowing exactly how to handle. This change may be taken as the result of teachers' opinion. I take this as a good thing. They are becoming more concrete. When I set questions, I deliberately combine different topics in the same question, instead of one on Hong Kong's economy and one on China, or one on mass media and one on Legislative Council structure etc. It can be that one question comprises different parts on different things. They (the students) thus have to study all to get through.

I (53): There maybe many methods to determine whether a student is successful or not. In your own terms, what define a successful GPA student?

S (53): You mean examination?

I (54): Examination is a way of assessment. I now want to know your opinion about what a successful GPA student should be like.

S (54): Exactly I want to ask you in return. I have many students who are good at GPA but they are not able to stand in the external examinations. Basically, many students fear the examinations. The performance in the external examinations is very different from their performance in schools. I had 2-3 very outstanding GPA students who ended up with poor public examination results.

I (55): Why would it be like this?

S (55): They were basically very tense and they had to organize their time well. They had to very systematically write out the answers. This is particularly true with A Level that is very different from CE Level. CE Level questions guide them to answer but A

Level questions do not. So, they have to remain very calm and think and organize their own points (answer) and present systematically. So, they get scared and can't answer (appropriately). So, I will not look at examinations. I will tell the students to compare themselves with what they did their last time, in terms of their understanding of questions. If they improve in this matter, they make progress. A good GPA student to me is one who concern about society and will develop something (opinion) and will be inclined to react (act out). These students will make progress in discussion. But, I am worried that these students may not be successful in examinations. Maybe their language is weak or that they get scared and read examination questions carelessly and made all answers incorrect. There was one student whom I expected to get at least a C in the examination. But, she got F. She said sorry to me. I said to her, "No, I am really proud of you because you are real good." I said this from the bottom of my heart. There are a few such students and they now are good friends of mine.

I (56): We now talk about life-wide education and learn beyond the classroom. Do you think in the course of teaching GPA, we should arrange students to take up some forms of political participation?

S (56): Such as... When you first introduced this, my thinking is that we are already going outside the classroom in the sense that we bring current news into the classroom. Besides, in form 6, students will need to go out to do their interviews. They go out to visit elected representatives like Emily Lau, elected member of the Legislative Council etc.

I (57): So, they do go out to visit politicians

S (57): Yes, they do. They feel very happy and this maybe why the subject attracts them. They will also interview lower form and outsiders. Even my form three class will do it but they are not too proactive and the scale is much smaller. Form six students really volunteer to do their interview and design their own questionnaires etc. My role is simply a facilitator and I ask them whether they will like to do it. Usually, they will give affirmative reply and I will help them when they act out their plan. It happened before that we talked about current issues in class and they organized their own participations outside. For example, they joined organizations to visit and help the refugees (Vietnamese boat people). There are students who helped elected members as election campaign assistants by their own choice.

I (58): They do it out of their own initiative?

S (58): Yes, and this is not part of the homework required. I feel myself successful as this is going out of the classroom. I will not bring them out to attend the June Fourth Night Gathering. Instead, I will remind them that they can care for others in many ways, apart from donating money. They can study the pamphlets prepared by election campaign team and analyze and compare them. I am quite interested whether they are

doing this indeed. I will only actively answer the questions if they raise them. It can be questions about how they should answer the press to clarify certain points they wrote to the press. It can be questions related to unfairness when working for the World Vision etc. On the whole, I only lead them to do visits.

I (59): The last question perhaps. Do you feel that the government has actively promoted the subject and do you see the chance of survival of the subject? I remember you mentioned about the growth of the "business" .

S (59): I don't even think the government is aware of the existence of the subject.

I (60): Haha...

S (60): Yes, I don't think Tung knows of it though he should be aware of EPA as he has been in Hong Kong for so long a time. Neither do I think Examination Authority or the government is trying to bring the subject up under favorable terms. It is only one of the subjects, meant to replace a subject lost. I don't know whether you know the history. Actually at the beginning we were working with EPA (in its curriculum planning). We found it was going nowhere as it didn't look like anything. So, we deliberately wanted to "kill" it. We had to work out a new subject and made it look better. This would be in line with the culture (of curriculum development). But, it (EPA) did not die off altogether and new subjects came out, such as Economics. Now we heard of the IH (Integrated Humanities). Now, you see that it is just like filling up the gaps. Political education is taught by no one and thus we brought out GPA. Another GPA teacher once asked me when she studied the origin of the subject. She asked me whether the subject surfaced as a result of 1997. My understanding is that the subject came out of the need to fill up a gap, made more necessary by the chance of self-rule. It was not that related to 1997 indeed. GPA actually came out because of the convergence of a number of developments.

I (61): Do you think transfer of sovereignty will change the scenario, as you know national identity etc becomes more real than ever?

S (61): No, it is still one of the subjects. I am lucky that the new principal, who came to office this year see that national education maybe important after the transfer and keeps the subject. In other schools, school heads may see that few students take the subject and then replace it with other more practical subjects like business or so. For me in my case, I have always insisted on the subject and its contribution to critical thinking. The subject can also be very helpful to enhance our students' civic development, as they are so passive.

I (62): Yes, I will turn off the tape now as the first part of the interview has ended.

I (63): This part of the interview concerns your role as a curriculum planner. I will bring out the question in a comprehensive way. Should you want to differentiate between CE,

AS and A Level, please just specify in your answer. The first question is... (My cellular rings). Sorry (I turn the phone off). Do you think the subject will help nurture effective citizens in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region? If affirmative, in what way will it help?

S (62): I feel it should be of help. What you want Hong Kong to be in principle has been systematically outlined in our GPA Syllabus. Say in CE Level, we have talked about the various aspects of the situation, the different thoughts and a little account of the historical background to the children. With this knowledge, it will be easier for them to grow up and decide out of their own choice their own development and the sort of citizen they want to be. This makes GPA very special compared to other subjects. Subjects like Chinese, Math and English do not tell you how to choose your own direction. GPA can do so. The same applies to sixth form GPA study. The only difference is that more theoretical background is given them to help them (students) in their own construction. This, I deem is also meaningful.

I (64): Do you mean the subject enriches the students' understanding of their own habitat and thus make their own choice more effectively?

S (63): Yes.

I (65): This subject has its official aims and objectives. We dealt with it in the first part of the interview. You said that generally speaking such aims and objective are on the whole O.K. Let's say, you became the boss of the subject and could decide every single change of the subject. Would you then consider changing such aims and objectives in the direction of, say adding or deleting or amending existing ones etc. If so, what changes would you try to effect?

S (64): Actually, if you change the aims, purpose and objectives of the subject, it will be like affecting the whole body by lifting one's hairs (a Chinese proverb meaning that you affect the whole by disturbing the parts). The whole body in this case is the curriculum content. If viewed from the direction of education, I would quite want to see it could take on more things, say China. I would like the students to understand more about China though I would not ask them to love or not to love her. To be patriotic is to build up the affection out of understanding and then they decide on whether or not to love. The problem is if I move the hairs this time, the body so affected is really gigantic. The curriculum will be very long and so even without examination. I may not be able to cope with it. Remember, if GPA is put in the secondary school as a subject starting from form four, it has only 2 years to finish at form five. There will be not enough time to concretely deal with the details to ensure that concepts, understanding and free choice based on critical thinking are achieved. I doubt whether this will be possible. I think time is the factor. And in the matter of depth, if we stop at the touch-and-go level, it maybe even worse. Thus, if I were to change it, I would consider this. If a balance



would be needed, I might keep things the way it is. The point I just made is that I want to put in more things, like discussion and China or things like personal conduct. The children nowadays are not keen on moral/ value consideration and are not interested in the matters of the world. Though I am interested in adding these things, I may need to compromise and trim down the size of the body for the fact that I cannot deal with such a big body (curriculum content).

I (66): Put it another way. You mean it will be better if we can have an earlier start, say at form one.

S (65): Yes, if it starts at form one or something like national or civic education starts even at primary school and becomes integrated that it goes up step by step and converge upward, it will be much better. The problem will then be minimized. There will still be a problem if it is meant for examination. But, as a teaching syllabus, it is fine then.

I (67): Understand.

Now as for CE Level, the assessment mode, i.e. the public examination, is in the form of a written examination. There are two parts: a multiple-choice part and a conventional question part. Do you find this written assessment mode satisfactory?

S (66): As a planner, I go back to the same question I just pointed out. What will be the effect of such an act? Before the coming out of GPA and in the days of EPA, we already believed there should be other assessments like a project assessment or other forms of assessment. It was funny when someone pointed out that we could count the number of times the students went out to sell flags for charity. Ha ha... the idea actually is whether we can have alternate form(s) of assessment that involve them in some sort of social activities. Now, I also think in this way in my form six and seven classes. Their chances of social contact are plentiful and more, the number of students is smaller.

I (68): You mean form six and seven.

S (67): Yes, our form six and seven classes are much smaller as we have offered a large number of subjects for them to choose. So on the average we have 5-6 students. Now, I have 7 students in form seven. Thus, having taught them for two years, I can tell the 7 students, "You have made progress again this year..." They can know what improvement they have made over different areas. They can feel very satisfied with themselves, the subject and me. But can we do the same to a bigger class or junior forms? Can project work be done in this subject as well as in other subjects? When we have to consider so many other questions, we may need to move back to square one.

I (69): I understand that. So the size of the class is very important.

S (68): Yes.

I (70): Did you join the subject's Project assessment Scheme?

S (69): No.

I (71): But you do have projects (in teaching the sixth forms)?

S(70): Yes.

I (72): So, class size is the important factor.

S (71): Yes. Actually the school is currently discussing the matter of project-based teaching. The feeling is that if other schools are already moving in this direction, we get to follow suit. We are already thinking how many groups of students each colleague will lead. We are thinking of this. We get more than one thousand students to be shared between 50 or so teachers. Some teachers will not do this because they are hired to teach other things like English. So, each teacher will have to take so many students and we are thinking about the feasibility. Even if we are real great and can take ten groups, we may not be able to take the number of heads in each group. There will be a lot of problems.

I (73): I don't know whether my concept is correct. Your school takes AS level. Is it possible for you to take the PAS scheme?

S (72): Yes.

I (74): So, what are the reasons for not doing it?

S (73): Actually, the principal does not know that well what is being done in the subject. So the question does not rest with the principal. But, whether she would opt for it even if she knew that is also a question. I feel the students of our schools are very passive. You may even need to teach them how to make sense out of a set of prepared notes distributed to them. So, if they are to find a topic and research for it, I am really afraid. Time permitted may not be enough. The project (in our school) is only a part of the marks of the whole subject. The six formers already complained to me that they have to cater for my project as well as projects in other subjects and that they are running out of time. At the end, I have to compromise. If they are doing projects in English and Chinese too, it will be fine if they find a similar topic for GPA. So, English and Chinese look after the language and I concern about the content. Remember this is not a compromise between teachers of subjects. They just tell me this and GPA allows them to do something about culture. This may not be our preference or in line with the wish of the GPA teacher. This (time allocation) is also a problem for any subject or part of every subject that takes up project.

I (75): If...I mean if not part of a subject is based on project but the entire assessment of the subject concerned is project-based. That is to say 100% of the mark comes from the project, would it be better?

S (74): Even given this, I think we have to look at the combination of subjects the students are studying. If we have more than three subjects based on projects, we also come into deep trouble. Teachers, like me, will follow quite closely. Say, if they have meeting, I also try to attend. As for me, this does not matter, as I don't mind working harder. But the colleagues may not welcome the idea. I think it must be grounded on the

teachers' own initiation. If they feel it worthwhile and start it, it can have better chance of working out.

I (76): In a more evaluative sense, which part of the Syllabus do you think is most satisfactorily written and which part most unsatisfactorily written? What will you say if you are asked to comment?

S (75): I have to answer you by referring to the Syllabus in details. (Subject silent for a few moments)

I (77): Let say there are the parts: concepts, Hong Kong politics, China and USA etc.

S (76): How well written is the Syllabus? (Subject repeated the question another time)  
In Hong Kong, the writing of Syllabus now often comes with side notes that tell the depth teacher should go. This maybe needed in GPA too. For instance, if you teach democracy, it can be one sentence or it can be that you can't finish with ten books. Such notes can help teachers grasp the depth expected and what models to use midway, say in teaching political socialization or so. This can clarify everything. I am able to understand the Syllabus, as I am involved (in its planning). Otherwise, I may need this to know the exact syllabus. For instance, in the Teaching Guidelines, there is a part that reminds teachers to maintain a democratic and open environment in the classroom.

I (78): This is only found in the Teaching Guidelines and not the Syllabus.

S (77): Yes, the Syllabus only concerns the depth and what should be included. This is better than nothing as before we requested more should be given to teachers as reference about the depth they should go.

I (79): I have been reading figures about the subject's enrolment. It seems that there has been no growth.

S (78): You mean students taking it.

I (80): Yes.

S (79): Our school started with one class, say in CE Level. Later we increased to two classes. But a couple years ago, due to the need to put in another subject PA (Principles of Accounting), which seems more practical and appealing, we rolled back again. I guess it is fortunate that GPA is not withdrawn. As far as I know there were schools in Tai Po that ended the subject because of the need to put in PA and the saying was that there were not enough slots and GPA should be scrapped as not many students opted for it. The teacher then was let go to teach other subjects, like Civic Education, EPA or other social subjects. I also feel that if this subject is dropped, I may become unemployed. Ha ha...

I (81): Apart from what you said as market competition, what do you see are possible obstacles to the subject's smooth implementation in schools.

S (80): Actually, we have quite good reputation. Talking with other schools (teachers), I found that students taking this subject often recommend it to others. It is interesting and

classes bring happiness. Examination results depend on many factors. As you know you need to be good in language.

I (82): You mean language proficiency is very important.

S (81): Yes. I can tell you experience of students getting quite good results though their concepts are not as good. This might be due to good language. Thus students have to consider this. They may first say: "Wow, I need to read so many news. There is no book! Other subject seems more certain than this one as one knows how much she gets after reading." This may cause panic before they pick up the study. There is another problem. Not all students come back (to study form six) after the Certificate Examination. But, not many schools offer GPA (in sixth form) and the students get afraid. Besides, I also find that this subject depends a lot on the teacher. There are students telling me that if I come back (for sixth form), I shall definitely take GPA. On the contrary, I definitely will not, as I am used to your teaching methods. You see there is a great flexibility in the way you teach it. This is rather different from subject like history in which you can expect more or less the same thing wherever you study it. I guess it maybe grossly different if you take GPA at different schools. It may not be a matter of whether they like you as a person but rather the teaching method is in concern.

I (83): This is my last question perhaps (I am interested in the talk. But, I realize the Subject is not feeling well and it will be hard for the Subject to carry on now that the talk has been almost two hours in total). I have read the Teaching Guidelines, especially the A Level one. I found that a lot was said about how students should look at their own school, say the student union etc. This brings in the ethos of the school directly. Do you think the school administrator will become more sensitive as a result because it seems that the examining of the student union or so are so connected to the way the school is governed.

S (82): Yes, I think so. But we can think it the other way round. Actually, I was also responsible for writing it out (when in the course of writing the guidelines). We were then asked to put down activities and I said it would not be possible to ask every participating school to visit, say Tung Chi Hwa (the Chief Executive of the HKSAR), and we must start with the surrounding. This is meant to help. But, of course, this has to depend on the setting of the very school is in concern. If there is no student union at all, this is not feasible. This maybe discouraging to some new teachers who maybe worried about what to do. I guess it will then be discouraging to the teacher rather than to the students or the school in concern. We also have the worry that as one teacher retires or emigrate there will be one less school taking the subject. Even looking back at my own school, fellow teachers may see me differently as I am teaching in this field and democracy and rights etc. maybe very important to me. For instance, I may argue with the discipline teacher why students are not permitted to go the toilet in their recess time

etc. The discipline teacher may say that students disappear in groups to the toilet to play there. I may argue that it is human right and you must cater for possible physiological need. Yes, you are right. This is important when schools decide to take or not to take the subject. In the case of HK, I guess this depends a lot on the principal and what its leadership is like. We are fortunate that when we took the subject, the then principal took my advice very much. I gave her the confidence I would not unduly disturb things and she trusted me. If we got a new principal who believed that the leadership depended on her only and she thought the subject was too sensitive, the subject could be closed. I guess it is possible. It happened in other schools, as I know.

I (84): I understand that you studied ...

S (83): Sociology. Actually I have been teaching almost 30 years and all the way in this same school. I saw changes in principals, systems and moving into this new campus. I started teaching EPA and language but I opted to take this subject. I saw the flaws in the then EPA and I found this subject to be acceptable. I also persuaded the school to take Economics as well. I saw the establishment of Economics in Hong Kong. But, long after the establishment of Economics, our school did not take it. The reason was that our school was small and if we were to take Economics, we had to hire new teachers. This wouldn't be possible if no teachers left the school. The principal asked me if I was interested in teaching Economics. I asked her to change from EPA to GPA instead. I didn't know that EPA would be withdrawn in the sixth form. After our application (to GPA) was filed, I knew that EPA would be trimmed down. I knew I made the right choice. The school (administration) didn't mind the subject I taught was so political. They trusted me. The only worry at the beginning was that there was a left-right division in the society. As you know it was some 20 years ago.

I (85): You mean they trusted you personally.

S (84): Yes, actually I had a lot of involvement (social involvement and duties) outside. (Actually, the Subject uses a Chinese proverb: "have as many legs as a centipede") They felt that, as such, the choice I made could be the right one. Up to now, they (teachers) will come to me on social and civic matters. They take me as an expert though I am confused sometime.

I (86): I agree with you that GPA teachers may have advantage in civic education matters. This may be my personal comment. Maybe I will turn off the tape and converse with you out of the record. Thanks for the time.

(Interview ends. Time spent: 2 hours, all pauses inclusive)

## Transcript Three

A brief sketch of the school

- An old school with more than 40 years of history
- A subsidized Confucian school
- A Chinese medium school
- The school is located in Hong Kong Island
- Old school premise, very Chinese in style, with pavilion etc.
- Have fewer classes (with 3 classes per year group), with plans for reconstruction and expansion.
- With own primary school (very small in size with only about 12 classes)
- Primary graduates normally do not come back for secondary education (because of the low standard of the secondary section)
- Recruiting the lowest band students from outside, with a lot of the intake being new immigrants
- Teacher originally intended to teach Economics; found needing to do GPA after joining the school

Date of interview: 24/1/2002 p.m.

Subject interviewed: S5

Class: GPA teacher / Subject Syllabus planner

Background of subject:

- Secondary school teacher (male)
- In early 40s
- GPA Syllabus planner
- experienced in the field (with about 10 years' teaching experience in the subject)

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

Length of interview: about 1.5 hours

### Content of interview

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): First, thank you for accepting the interview. The interview is composed of two parts. The first part is about you as a teacher of GPA and the second part concerns your role as a curriculum planner of the subject. I gathered from our conversation (prior telephone contact) that you work in the curriculum development team and I am interested in knowing your thinking as a planner. First, I start with the part of you as a teacher. The whole process is simply a conversation. Please do stop my flow if you deem appropriate.

In the course of teaching, we have aims. So, what do you want to do and what effect do you want to get in teaching the subject?

S (1): I think I can pass knowledge to students through teaching the subject and in the I can also course arouse their interest.

I (2): Yes

S (2): And I hope they learn something. Of course as the subject has public examination, I definitely want them to get a pass or other good results. Mainly, I think it is to pass on knowledge and make them know the society and to have views on society and concern about the society and things around them. In terms of public examination, it is to have good performance.

I (3): So, is public examination result very important in the eyes of the school, I mean school administration, and the students.

S (3): Frankly speaking, in the eyes of the school, it doesn't matter whether the subject exists or not. It exists because it has been there. Besides, the ability of the students is not good. Our school did think of replacing it with Economics. But, it was not done as it was worried that students couldn't cope with it. So, the subject is kept for the while. There is no emphasis on it as the subject is best described to be marginal. As for the

students, the majority, I think, are not that interested. But, not for this subject alone. I think it is the ability of the students. Most of them are not suitable for grammar school. They encounter problem in their learning. It is their language. Besides, they feel that the subject involves a lot of activities involving politics, concepts and theories and current affairs that they are really not that concerned. They are used to reciting things and this may contradict the aims of the subject, I think. I think this subject is not to recite a lot of...(the Subject hesitates for a while)...what to say...That is to say it is to emphasize understanding instead of remembering factual information. This is different from their learning method.

I (4): So, can I say the problems are twofold. First the students cannot cater for the concepts and theories. Second it is the language problem. The subject is thus different for your students who are not suitable for some sort of grammar school education.

S (4): Yes. Sometime they are interested in hearing a little because, apart from the textbook, I will talk about current news. They are interested in hearing stories. In class discussion, sometime they are also interested...(the Subject hesitates for a while)...to be involved...to a certain extent. Interest for the subject as a whole is really not too good.

I (5): If I ask whether GPA is simply an academic subject or it is preparation for political participation. How do you think? (After a lapse of about ten seconds, I supplement my question.) Which side do you think the subject is more alike?

S (5): To the school, it is the former. It is just a general subject.

I (6): Yes

S (6): I also feel that as for our school, it seems that we are lacking...consistency. For many other schools, they will also carry out many civic education activities at the same time (when the subject is implemented). For our school, we have a civic education committee. But it only asks the teachers to give talks. It is quite just formalities. It has neither commitment nor perseverance. If there can be a match between the two, it may be different. I mean especially if the activities can match with this subject, it can be better. But we have no such a thing. We thus become simply a subject. You can't just do with the book and achieve that and that.

I (7): Maybe, can we say in the other way round? Is it true that the school takes that this subject is already civic education?

S (7): Yes. They think you talk a bit about government and that already is civic education.

I (8): O.K. and then as you just said there were no activities to come with it and that was not sufficient.

S (8): Yes

I (9): I leave this for a while. Do you think this subject GPA can allow our student to get



a sense of national identity?

S (9): Yes, it can. If... My feeling is that this subject can have good development if the government wants. After the reunification, the colonial educational system of the past, that disallowed even the talk of politics in class, is gone. Now the government looks like trying to do a lot of things. I don't know why. But, after so many years, nothing has been done really. I think that's very common for a country to inculcate the feeling of statehood and things like that.

I (10): So, which part of GPA do you think can do this?

S (10): I think apart from the curriculum, it is the activities.

I (11): So, which part of the curriculum do you think will be particularly involved?

S (11): I think we do talk about it in the curriculum. For example, we talk about what a state is, isn't it? In the part of China, we talk about state and nation, say in form four and five. Just that we do not go into depth. If we look at primary school, there is nothing, say in the subject General Studies. So the students will find it difficult and don't know how to accept this.

I (12): I remember there is study of Chinese politics in both CE and A Level. So, do you think this study of politics in China can help students to accept that they are Chinese citizens?

S (12): It... should be ...able (Subject seems a bit reserved.) But, the problem is that when my students study about China, everyone is very afraid. They even give up.

I (13): Yes.

S (13): They even give up say preparing for the questions on China in the Certificate Examination. I think from their point of view, the political system of China is very different from ours. For example, their institution which resembles Western representative assemblies, I mean the National People's Congress, looks weird (in the eyes of the students). When I talk about the Communist Party (of China), it is...very difficult, very difficult... to accept this. May be... may be...I feel perhaps they do not touch this in their daily life. So, in form five, when we give them this, they find it very difficult to absorb as this thing is completely new to them and they will not ....try to adsorb these them. So, when you teach them now, they find these hard to accept and understand. The fact they resist it at heart makes it difficult to do this...and that.

I (14): May I follow this line of thought to ask my question. Now, a lot of people are talking about patriotism, the love of one's own country. Do you think one of the aims of GPA should be to promote things like patriotism?

S (14): Yes, it should. As a country, it should.

I (15): So, what, in your opinion, should patriotism be?

S (15): I think, first, it should be for the persons to identify themselves with the country. I think to the people of Hong Kong it is really... I talked to my students. I find that they

realize Hong Kong has become a part of China already. But, as for themselves, I don't know whether it is due to their parents or not, they resist the fact and still emphasize themselves as Hong Kong people. That is...to say that there is a contradiction here. Thus, it is real funny that the first thing the students say about their nationality is Hong Kong and not China. Ha ha...

I (16): Ha ha...

S (16): So, I have to explain Hong Kong is not nationality. I think this...this...needs efforts.

I (17): Yes.

S (17): I guess this arises mainly from the fact that they do not grow up with such (education).

I (18): I understand that this subject (GPA) has its official aims and objectives. Will you consult them in details before you teach your GPA classes or courses? (The Subject doesn't answer outright so I supplement.) I mean whether you will read such aims and objectives in preparing your classes, thinking of activities and schedule etc.

S (18): I do read it but I may not be able to follow it fully. This may be...my personal view...I guess its aims etc are very vague. Besides the reality can be really different (from what you get from the Syllabus). Schools ...differ in the situation they face and ...the same methods can generate different results in different schools.

I (19): I understand that.

S (19): On the whole, they are very vague, I guess. I remember one of them is to make students know and concern about the society. I think this is very difficult to achieve. To put it simple, I say when I enter the classroom, the floor is so full of rubbish. Even this is not done (i.e. taking care of own classroom), not to say doing the right things outside (in the society). For example, I also tried to talk about the New Year Eve's event, i.e. the policeman and slapping incident, in class. I found my students were divided. Some thought the policeman was wrong from the outset. Some believed the kid should be taught a lesson. You know throughout I could not see any sign of the spirit of observing the law. (The incident happened in the New Year Eve of 2002 when there was almost a youth riot breaking out in Causeway Bay. In the incident a police was seen to have slapped and pushed down a teenager who acted in a way that might disturb the order, say by pushing and hurling things in a crowded area. The kid then yelled back and seemingly wrangled with the police on the spot. Later, the senior level of the police explained that the kid only tried to say "Happy New Year" to the cop. The officer, it was alleged, simply gave a gentle pat on the teen's head!) They often only see things from the eyes of the youth gangs. You know my school also has such youth gangs. Their only feeling is that the police are bothering them. The experience they recollect is being stopped and interrogated in the streets. The world troubles them etc. So...you know...

things like this. I think in this school, it will be even more difficult than other schools because of the background of the students.

I (20): There are Teaching Guidelines that specify how the subject can be taught, the activities, time allocation etc. Will you follow the Guidelines in your teaching?

S (20): Absolutely not. This is an impossible thing

I (21): Why then? Is it too idealistic or ...

S (21): Yes, what it says like discussion and activities and etc...are good I think. But, it has to consider the actual circumstances. For example, as for my kids, when they discuss, they don't discuss but only quarrel. Ha ha... Why? It actually goes back to their cultural background. Yes. The kids of this school, in fact, come from the bottom of the society. Many are new immigrants (from the mainland). Their culture is the hard one. They quarreled once any thing comes up. You know that type. That is not discussion based on good reasons. So, they put forth an argument and you don't accept it and they think it is wrong. They don't know how to...say...accommodate difference in opinion. So, they say, "I think this is the reason and then this is the reason".

I (22): Then following the Teaching Guidelines is not possible as it is too idealistic and then discussion is impossible.

S (22): Yes.

I (23): So, in general, how will you teach this subject GPA?

S (23): So here...I will use most of the time and ...I think this is true of every subject here and I also think that is very laughable...Here, when we have classes, we cannot make noise. The principal does not accept this. So when we have discussion and so... (Making noise means bringing in trouble.)

I (24): The students' quarrel?

S (24): Yes. Then the principal will stand outside, dropping ears in and looking in. After the class the principal will ask why in the class it is so noisy and the children seem not keeping order. Thus here we are very traditional and classes concern mainly the delivery of knowledge. Thus... look at the situation...We sometime use the so-called multi-media. This I find really quite good. In talking about the Basic Law, we have some tapes for them to watch. Then it will not be just straightforward description. Instead, it takes more than just story telling. I also tried to ask them to do information research. But, I had to surrender later. They either did not hand in. Or, they just handed in things pasted onto a piece of paper. Things I didn't really know what they were. You ask them to search for things in the library. They cannot do anything at all. Thus, I regret to tell that now it (GPA) is a rather general lesson.

I (25): Can I say that your ideal teaching methods, if no compromise with reality is needed, will be more related with discussion, sharing, activities and project etc.

S (25): Yes. I did try. But in the situation of this school, this is out of the question.

I (26): Now, I want to follow up with a point you just made. You mentioned about your students being unable to accept different views. Instead they quarrel with the points they put up. Can I know your opinion about how you as a teacher can possibly help them to see things from different perspectives?

S (26): I will try to give them some questions. I will ...try my best to...I guess a way more effective here is by comparison...use cases they...encounter personally. For instance, soon we shall have the election of the Chief Executive. Generally, my method will be to chat with them. We have just dealt with the topic. I would...I would...take it as a chat and asked them how they would think if Tung made another five years. Many of them would, like the people outside, say, "He has done it five years and we have already become like this and if he makes another five, we are sure to die". I would talk with them...and said, "You mention that he is not fit". Okay, tell me who is fit (for the job)". Then I said, "How do you think if Martin Lee do it? Or, Emily Lau do it?" (Both Lee and Lau are prominent figures in the democratic camp.) Then they also said no. I asked them why they could not do it either. They then said they did not seem to have good relationship with China. If they made for the post, they would...they would... Then I would start here and talk to them "OK, you see there is a contradiction, isn't it? On the one hand, most of you don't want him (Tung) to have the second term. On the other hand, you can't think of someone able to replace him. So, what should be done?" Thus I made them think. Then I told them whoever made for the post would find it a difficult job because the economy was in a bad shape. I continued, "Besides, though the Special Administrative Region has been established for a number of years, the old political culture lingers. Isn't it? Then whoever makes for the post will find it difficult." Then they would find what I said make sense. This was not one person's work. Many factors should be considered. Another thing I said was about Clinton. He passed his term mainly with things went on smoothly. This did not mean the man was very smart. But, luck was with him. This allowed them to know that apart from the ability of the political leader, his/her luck should be looked at too. Right? The environment should be considered. If the economy was in good shape, who would put the blame on Tung? If everyone made a fortune from stock and the property market speculation... Right? So doing, I think I am in a better position to change them.

I (27): So, can I say that you point out that if we allow them (students) to talk among themselves, they will only quarrel.

S (27): Yes.

I (28): So, in the so-called controversial topics, you will bring out their different voices and then as teacher you conclude for them. So, there can be different opinions but no quarrel.

S (28): Yes.

I (29): OK. So, can I ask whether you will appreciate if their thinking is varied and divergent and very different from yours? Do you think it is healthy?

S (29): I think it is quite good. On the contrary, it is quite good.

I (30): So, you will allow this.

S (30): I think this is absolutely good in fact. I really don't want the students... what to say... just follow what is told. (Actually, the Subject uses the Chinese expression "tell white when told white and black when told black"). On the contrary, I like to hear that they have different opinions. The point is I will analyze the question with them and they think of the answer themselves. I may not like it. May be I find theirs' to be totally unacceptable. But, as a teacher I guess I should remain objective. I have encountered a lot of teachers. What should I say... who are very insistent. I mean insisting own ideas. For instance, in handling student, the class I take this year is really very mixed. (The Subject actually used the Chinese expression, a mixture of dragons and snakes, which means good ones blended with bad ones). But I still find that they have a lovely side though the students are a kind of what.... Isn't it? I don't know what to say. But I think teachers should think of how to appreciate the students. I think it will be very bad if teachers have a pre-conception about students.

I (31): Yes, yes. So in the course of your teaching, or you may use a real example if necessary, will you try to stimulate them so that they have their own unique way of thinking? Such thinking may be different from others as they are the students' own thinking.

S (31): Generally, I will find issues from the newspapers once every two weeks. I usually like to give them the clipping with a few questions. I then ask them to go home and think about them. After that, they usually refuse to write on it because once they write they mess things up. They also think that you have so much grammar and so. So, I tell them there is no need to write. Instead I will invite a few of them to come out during class to talk about it. Say, in the recent question about the right of residence in Hong Kong (of those mainlanders born to Hong Kong parents who attained residence after the child's birth), or question like whether the Lo Wu border should be open around the clock, I asked them to talk about them. I asked the other students just to listen. This time it was different from what happened before when the students who stayed seated just shouted out to those who talked. What happened before was that I had to say to them that yelling meant the lack of respect. I wanted them to learn how to listen and they could think by themselves the matter of right and wrong. Just listen with a humble and open heart was what I reminded them and I said to them that they could decide for their own. In fact normally there is a lot (of quarrel and strong expressions). In the issue of new immigrants, they would immediately say, "Don't come or Hong Kong people will lose their jobs etc." But there were others who thought differently, as

they were new immigrants themselves. They would be inclined to that of sympathy to the new immigrants. This sort of thing is quite useful in bringing out different opinions.

I (32): You said that other teachers might not think this way, am I right?

S (32): Yes.

I (33): Now, I want to ask the question about indoctrination. In your own understanding, what is indoctrination? What does it stand for?

S (33): In politics, I guess, it is the rulers who want the people to accept their ideology. In the process it is to transfer the entire ideology and hope that the recipient just absorb everything like a piece of paper. I think...generally... not welcoming divergent views and voices. I think...political indoctrination so called...will be like this. Isn't it? In China, it will be like this. Even in the USA, it will be like this. Because the government... Isn't it?

I (34): Do you think this is positive or do you think this is negative? I mean in the field of education.

S (34): As for I myself...if it is the same as not to tell white from black, it will be a negative thing.

I (35): Then, what methods can be used to avoid being a means of this indoctrination. I remember in the course of teaching the subject, we will use a lot of official documents and information. They come with a certain spirit or mentality.

S (35): True. My method is ... Say, in the teaching of the Basic Law, I will remind them that though...in the text of the law you find everything is beautiful. Hong Kong is not an independent country after all. There is a need to note the extent self-rule can go and in fact I will remind them such self-rule is limited. For example, democracy is often talked about with them. I will remind them democracy means different things when President Bush and President Jiang said it. It is like this. I guess I will use this method to remind them when people talk about democracy, it can be real democracy or it can be another thing. At the same time though the students may find me seem mean. I can be very sharp in talking about these topics. In the case of Afghanistan, which is related to the talk about anti-terrorism, I will ask why Bin Laden will do so much? There is a need to think of the other side. We may think of Bin Laden as a terrorist. But, if he sat here, he might feel differently about what he did.

I (36): I understand that.

S (36): It is to think of the other side. I prefer this way. For example, in the current conflict between Israelis and Arabs, I will tell them that the land originally belonged to the Palestinians. But, it was later given to the Israelis and that's so. And they (the students) will then think, " Oh yes, it is like you have your house and then it is given away and you end up sleeping in the street" and the feeling will be...

I (37): I will now ask about the public examination, since you are dealing with both CE

and A Level. Do you think public examinations are a help or a hindrance in the course of teaching GPA in your school? Are such examinations important?

S (37): From the bottom of my heart...

I (38): Sure of course please.

S (38): From the bottom of my heart, they are big obstacle.

I (39): Big obstacle, why?

S (39): In fact they tie things down. It is a very realistic thing. The school cares about the examination results. So in the course of teaching, what we do is to...so-called...take care of the public examinations. Say the questions that ask the students' opinions. It is originally good, real good. But, the problem is...I feel...what to say...I don't know whether it sounds reasonable. I did mention it in the Examination Authority. On the one hand, it is claimed that there is no "one correct answer" and all answers with good reasons are to be accepted. My students came back to me and said they answered in such a way and that and that, I first felt they did it quite well and quite right. However, when the results came out, it was a totally different story.

I (40): So, you feel that there is only one acceptable answer in the examinations. You have to give such answers or you will be turned down.

S (40): Yes, I think this is exactly the case. Some kids...I feel I appreciate them...they have their own thinking. But in marking the papers...The Examination Authority of course will not admit...But, I feel it has been confined to the (correct answer of) the marking scheme. So, if you are really not....

I (41): You mean things like being imaginative, different and divergent?

S (41): Yes, yes... So, you have to care for the examinations. I dare not go...what to say...(being too imaginative, different or divergent).Or else, they fail in the examinations.

I (42): Talking about the examinations, I want to ask another related questions. The questions asked in the public examinations, say the period 1996 to 2001, which were released to the public, are marked with a degree of repetition...

S (42): Yes they repeat themselves. Yes, they do.

I (43): As a teacher, you say the examination is important to you.

S (43): Yes.

I (44): Will it affect you in the sense that you need to drill your students to prepare for the questions that will "possibly" come up in the examination?

S (44): Yes, yes... and I think not just me. Actually, I think all colleagues taking the subject will need to... prepare them on these questions.

I (45): Practicality counts?

S (45): Yes.

I (46): Train them and preparing answers for them?

S (46): Yes...On similar questions.

I (47): How about internal assessment within school? Do you assess them ...say with tests and examinations?

S (47): Yes.

I (48): Any other means, apart form these?

S (48): As for me 10% of the mark comes from their class performance. The school will not agree to anything in excess of 10%. I use this to encourage them to...think and speak up etc.

I (49): I can understand this. When you set questions for the tests and examinations within the schools, what factors are affecting you in the choice of questions?

S (49): Public examinations. The same. Yes, especially in the mock examinations. Put all previous questions out and see which ones are likely to turn up (in the public examinations) and pick up those questions.

I (50): How about in marking those tests and examinations? What will be the criteria in identifying a good answer?

S (50): I insist ...what to say... reasons. Especially for questions that ask for giving reasons, I emphasize this. I also tell the students everyone can give an answer. But, what tells a better answer is the reasoning behind. (I mean) the reasons behind. Even if the questions ask about your opinion, you must have reasons behind.

I (51): May be a few more other questions. Do you think whether the government has tried hard to promote this subject?

S (51): No, no.

I (52): So, you say the government has not been promoting this subject. Can you give your reasons?

S (52): I think.... The government of Hong Kong is very afraid of being accused of doing a sort of political indoctrination. I feel that the government is really afraid of this. Even when someone proposed that we should start from primary one, I guess the government is having the worry. She does not want to be accused of doing such a thing (political indoctrination).

I (53): We have already looked at the macro environment. How the about the micro one. Do you think the conditions of your school, say the system, attitude of the school administration and the school ethos etc., will help the development of GPA in the school?

S (53): No.

I (54): Why not?

S (54): Because...what to say. This subject is not taken as the key subject. In terms of resources, I find that practice tells more. The school cut back everything we have when it finds that Education department is giving \$1200 for the subject to purchase books.



Other subjects do have the monies, says a thousand something. Besides, as an example though I am not sure whether it is correct, it may be the political background. When I first came to the school, I found there was a newspaper "Shang Gang Shi Bao" (a pro-Taiwan newspaper) in the library. Then, I said it would be good to have also, say the Wen Wu Bao or Tai Kung Bao (both are pro-Beijing newspapers), and students could read them as well. Once heard (by the school administration), their face changed (this is a Chinese expression to describe disapproval and rage). I don't know why. We could have such newspapers, starting a couple years back, because there was a change in supervisor. In the past, I guess it was a political question. Out of what I heard the previous one...can't be sure... had strong connections with Taiwan. Thus, you find upstairs (in the library) many of the books are irrelevant (may be due to their specifically Taiwanese nature). There were even occasions when the supervisor asked me to watch my words when speaking to the students. But, I did nothing (inappropriate). I criticize China and Taiwan as well.

I (55): At an earlier time, we talked about national identity and this subject can be related to it. So, apart from identifying oneself as the citizen of China, are there any things related to this national identity?

S (55): I think we are a bit special now. Maybe it is due to the fact that we have "one country, two systems", the kids cannot accept themselves as Chinese citizens, just as those in the mainland, mainly because they believe as Hong Kong residents they are really different. Say, when the people in the mainland come, they have to apply for documents etc. even that Hong Kong is a part of China. This helps the students to maintain that mentality. Thus to sell the thing (national identity), we have to explain why we should have different economic and social system.

I (56): While at the same time we are all Chinese citizens.

S (56): Yes. We need to explain that we were under a long period of British rule and thus are more used to a different system. This is not easy to change. It needs time. And we should also tell them that we are in the best moment now. In the past, people in Hong Kong despise their mainland counterparts. But, now, do you see that we need the coming of the mainland tourists to bail us out? We are now talking about working in the mainland. This, I think is the best time. These make them understand our differences are due to historical reasons. Gradually, they will change their way of thinking. When Deng Xiao Ping said there would be no change for fifty years, what he meant was narrowing such differences in fifty years' time. We should make them know that China is changing too. The old interpretation is gradually getting unfit.

I (57): We have completed the part of the interview about teacher. (Tape is turned off and a very short break was taken)

I (58): This part of the interview concerns your view of the subject as a curriculum planner. I understand that you are in the committee for both levels (A and CE Level). From the perspective of a planner, do you think that the subject GPA can help our students to become effective citizens?

S (57): Basically, I think it can.

I (59): Why?

S (58): Because, if we look at the whole thing. In principle, every citizen should, more or less, know the government and how it operates. In the Certificate Level, this can be done. Just that I find ...that...not this subject alone...actually every subject...we focus a lot on the academic side. That is the inculcation of knowledge. On the contrary, I think...we lack.... a bit...practical actions or ...that to ensure students come out and do their own discovery. Although there is a call to let students to discuss and collect information, I don't think this is very useful. On the contrary, I will like that part of the public examination will be for students to research something, like the...

I (60): PAS (Project Assessment Scheme)?

S (59): Yes, yes. I think that's good. True.

I (61): To conclude what we have just said, can I say that our subject (GPA) can help students to understand government and politics. But, the part of discussion etc. are of limited use unless the nature of public examinations is changed and students can bring out something of their own.

S (60): Yes. Like a project.

I (62): I can understand this.

S (61): The kids are very realistic. What brings mark in public examinations and they will...(put their efforts). And now you don't (give mark to discussion and etc.)

I (63): So, students already judge which is core (paper test) and which is not (discussion etc.)

S (62): Yes, yes, yes.

I (64): OK, say if you were the boss of the Syllabus and he could change every thing you liked, would you then like to retain the aims and objectives of the Syllabus or would you like to change them? Changing refer to adding, deleting and rewriting them.

S (63): (First silent for a while) I think...maybe...our kids are lacking...a sort of moral education. So, although we are dealing with government and public affairs, I think we can put more of this (moral education) into public affairs. That is moral education. Say, I look at form one to form three, there are youth problems. So, I think ...If I were ...I would add this.

I (65): So, it is to view politics from a moral perspective.

S (64): Yes.

I (66): After talking about aims, I would like to go to content as the Syllabus has a lot to say about content to be taught.

S (65): Yes.

I (67): An "if" question again. If you were to be the overall in charge and could change everything yourself, would you like to retain or change the content? Changing refers to adding, deleting and rewriting the content.

S (66): (Subject remains silent for quite a few moments.) They are almost there.

Because looking at the age of the kids and the time, there is a limit of the depth we can go. It is different from tertiary education. For secondary school, as it is to give basic knowledge base, it is already almost there.

I (68): OK so, content-wise it is OK but direction may be...(needing improvement).

S (67): Yes.

I (69): We have Teaching Guidelines. In 1986, there was only one about CE Level. Now, since 1996, we have also got the A Level one. You said that you would not consult them particularly. Now, we take a hypothetical question again. If you were in charge of it and could change it whichever way you liked. Would you change it or would you not? If you would like to change it at all, how would you change it?

S (68): On the contrary, I think as now the suggestions focus on debates and discussions, I...if I could...would arrange them to go out and see. Say in CE, there is a part on laws (and court system etc). We have always been dealing with a few things. For example, laws and etc... We never show the real importance of laws and what happens if you don't... On the contrary, in this couple years, I was involved partly on our school's so-called counseling committee. We could make arrangements to go out and see the prisons and hear what the inmates say. I believe the kids could get a stronger feeling in that instance. You know...they could see it. Why the guy got jailed? It was because he broke the law. The inmates, on their part, told the kids not to be like them and do be good people. The kids got the message. It is better than just talking of it with the book.

I (70): It is then like going out of the classroom?

S (69): I can't do it. But, I do very appreciate those kids who study in the international schools. Say, in the Western District vegetable wholesaling market, they looked around and wrote and worked with calculation. I asked why couldn't we do it this way. I talked to their teacher (who led the students to the market) why he took the students there. He said, "We are doing wholesaling. This is the way students learn by going to the wholesaling market and see how the vegetables arrive, get sorted and packaged and get out. These can't be learned in the book" So, he took the kids out to the spot to see it.

I (71): As for assessment. This subject is based primarily on paper examinations. In the Certificate Level there is multiple choice test plus a conventional part. In A level, it is

conventional with two papers plus an optional PAS. I guess you are not with the PAS. So do you find these satisfactory? If you could, would you like to change it?

S (70): (The subject stayed quiet for a moment.) Impossible... Actually I am very much against the examination. It does not mean you are really doing well if you get good result. It doesn't mean you are bad if you don't. But scrapping it is not to work. For the while you can't think of anything (to replace it). But can it be that public examination accounts for part of the marks and the other part comes from, say projects? Isn't it? Can it be that it is not like a public examination and they can put their insight ... what to say... to write a project on social issues and government? It is like they are investigators. You know. Just don't confine them...

I (72): So, they set the topic and research for relevant information.

S (71): Yes, yes.

I (73): Now, the PAS is not widely accepted.

S (72): Yes, the main problem is that the teachers do not want students to take it. The reason is that you have to help them to do it. Isn't it? It is to bring extra work.

I (74): So, the number in the class may be important?

S (73): Yes. It happened that in one year, one of my students opted to take PAS. It was not allowed (because if PAS is taken, it must be the school as a whole). But, the previous subject officer made an exception. I said to the kid, "Fine then if the Examination Authority allows". But, it ended up being very difficult, as the student was very weak. It was like I had to do everything for him. But as for Ms xxx (name mentioned deleted for the sake of confidentiality) of Saint xxx (ibid.) her student are stronger and the effect seems good.

I (75): They take the PAS.

S (74): Yes, and the effect is good. (The teacher will be covered later). Yes...real...the students with potentials. But, here...ha...what we have here are kids who will not move even when kicked. They (kids with potentials) can run and fly even if you don't bother with them.

I (76): So, which part of the Syllabus is most satisfactory to you? Which part then is the most unsatisfactory to you?

S (75): I guess I am most unsatisfied with the concept part. The main problem. It may change next year with short questions adopted. Up to now, with the long questions, even I do not know how to tackle them, especially A and AS Level. You don't know how deep to go. But, I think concepts are necessary. You need them to talk about things. But, we should not confine ourselves to a few. There are many that can be talked about. The main problem is if there are too many...the Syllabus is too broad and setting questions and teaching will become difficult.

I (77): I can understand this. So, which part of the Syllabus is most satisfactory to you?

S (76): I feel Hong Kong government and politics.

I (78): Why?

S (77): I think mainly because that it is easy to teach and students will find it easy to grasp. Many things can actually be seen and that... For example, when you are teaching Legislative Council etc., the meeting can be seen.

I (79): What factors, if any, do you think are hindering the smooth implementation of the subject in school?

S (78): The school itself. (Subject speaks rather definitely)

I (80): The school? You mean its attitude.

S (79): Yes, definitely.

I (81): You talked about the school's political stance and its conservative nature. Do you mean these?

S (80): Yes, yes. Because now the kids told me ... that the principal asked them sometime "What did you talk about in GPA?"

I (82): The principal asked the students himself?

S (81): Yes

I (83): Would this mean pressure to you?

S (82): Not to me because I am not promoting anything to them. I feel that... I try my best to be neutral and try to...

I (84): You are experienced?

S (83): Yes and my political stance is neutral and what is good is good and what is bad is bad. I can criticize Clinton as well as Jiang.

I (85): But as for other teachers, do you think this will be pressure if the principal asked the students what the teacher talked about?

S (84): I think so. I think so. For example in our school, it happened... I think there was a student who came from the so-called leftist school. Our Chinese History teacher came from Taiwan and he criticized Mao severely. Then there was a quarrel between them in class (ending in a big problem). So, I think this is a problem.

I (86): I find this subject is not growing. It may be even slowly declining. As curriculum planner, how would you explain these?

S (85): Political apathy. People say, "Don't talk about politics and religion in school".

I (87): You mean even after the transfer of sovereignty in 1997.

S (86): Yes, even after the 1977. I am not afraid to say that the principal is worried something may happen. It happened before. The teacher said something and the parents came...

I (88): And the principal got worried?

S (87): Yes, and not many teachers like to teach the subject. It is demanding but not pleasing.

I (89): Thanks for the talk and I turn off the tape to continue chatting with you.

#### Side Note

The interview lasts for one-and-a-half-hour. It is carried out in a container-turned makeshift function room.

The Subject talks with a manner of alert. That's why there are so many delays in the course of answering represented by...

Occasionally, the subject sits back and speaks with a low voice and I have to push the recorder near him many times.

The Subject is friendly to me so he shares the stories. Thanks for the promises made in the consent form and the friendly relationship I start with him. I guess he takes me correctly as someone who shares the same background and much as an insider and a friend.

When the Subject brings me out, he also mentions if he could choose he would take Economics. Actually, he graduated with study in Economics and Political Science the same way I did. We are both in the same age (early 40s). We both graduated from the University of Hong Kong.

## Transcript Four

### A brief sketch of the school

- An old school with more than 50 years of history
- A subsidized non-religious school
- A Chinese medium school
- The school was first founded in Kowloon.
- It was relocated to Tuen Mun a few years ago
- A new school premise, rather large, colorful and well equipped, and with lifts etc.
  
- Recruiting students mainly from the lower bands
  
- The school is located at a new town where a lot of the people are living in government-built public housing estates, inhabited by the grass root
- Among the intake are significant number of new immigrants from China

Date of interview: 31/1/2002 p.m.

Subject interviewed: S6

Class: GPA teacher / curriculum planner

Background of subject:

- Secondary school teacher (male)
- In mid 30s
- Graduated as a Government and Public Administration major from the university
- GPA Syllabus planner (both CE and A Level)
- Experienced in the field (with 7years' teaching experience in the subject)
- Known by some as having social activist inclination

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

Length of interview: 1 hour

Content of interview

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): The reason for the interview today is that I am doing my doctorate degree and I am writing about teaching politics in schools. I will be using GPA as my example. I will interview teachers and curriculum planners. First thanks for accepting my interview. My university is requesting that you will be duly protected, mainly with reference to confidentiality. These five items (the 5 provisions in the consent form) are the promises we have made. So, there will be anonymity. I shall do the transcription myself, instead of relying on an assistant who will listen to what you say. After the transcription, the tapes will be destroyed.

S (1): I guess this is formality. I know it.

I (2): If you have no questions, please sign here.

(The Subject signs the consent form)

I (3): Thanks. As I have one hour only, I will go to the questions directly. I understand you are teaching GPA at form four and five. Are you also teaching it at Advanced Level (A Level)?

S (2): This year, I am doing form six and seven. My school actually offers the subject from form four to form seven. We do Certificate Level (CE) too.



I (4): So, there are two teachers teaching GPA in your school and you have experience in teaching the subject at both levels?

S (3): Yes. I have done both.

I (5): And you work for the subjects' committees at both levels too?

S (4): Yes.

I (6): When we teach a subject, there are things we want to achieve. So, what do you want to achieve when teaching this subject in school?

S (5): So, your question concerns...(those) apart from the curriculum's own official ones (aims).

I (7): Yes, I mean your own aims, like what you want your students to develop etc.?

S (6): I see the subject in this way. Apart from being an academic subject (a rise in tone spotted), I feel the subject is also related to civic education. The students can have a deeper understanding of the social systems. This is what I deem important. I have been talking with my senior forms, say form six and seven, that though in the past they might have little knowledge about politics, or even resist it, this subject can help to give them the basic background knowledge and develop the interest. So, in the future, even if they are not to take the subject (in further study), their social awareness can help them in their future role, say in doing business etc. One of our studies is concerned with the study of China's system. Now, actually in different walks of life, it is understood that understanding China is very important. Now, we are looking north into the mainland. This is actually basic knowledge. They are growing up. Don't just talk to them like kids. This is very important for them in their future career from which they make a living. To be able to talk with others, this knowledge about China's society and culture is very important. I am very confident that this can be very helpful to the students. This is contrary to the belief that there is no use in learning politics, as we are not aiming at running politics. In fact, this is not the case.

I (8): You seem to have mentioned that they first might resist the study of politics.

S (7): Yes.

I (9): Do you think they first might dislike the study of politics because of worry or that

the subject seems sensitive?

S (8): I think it is more related with ignorance as they never study such subject before or got in touch with it. They didn't read the newspapers. I mean the part on news. Of course, they would not have any understanding about that of China. Wow, so when they hear about China, Communist Party and the National People's Congress etc, they would shut their ears, as they won't come across them in their daily life. Some of the students are in fact forced to take this subject when they get promoted (to senior forms) as they can not find other optional subjects.

I (10): I understand that in the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, only a very limited number of students are doing politics. I know you did Government and Public Affairs in the university (Chinese University of Hong Kong). So, why did you take this subject in your own study?

S (9): As for me, I liked EPA very much when I studied in the secondary school. There was no GPA then. I did my School Certificate Examination in 1982. I took EPA and I also studied EPA in A Level. XXX taught me EPA at that time.

I (11): I get to talk to him (XXX is my department head!)

S (10): Yes. I was then very interested in EPA. It is hard to explain. Anyway, I am very interested in the things in the society. I was also very interested in the history of China as I studied in the arts stream. I have such inclination to politics. Actually I did my Higher Level study myself to make my way into Chinese University. (In the past, there was an independent one-year syllabus that led to the Higher Level Examination that returned successful candidates into the Chinese University, which was running first degree courses on a four-year basis.) I chose the subject (in the university) because it was more interesting.

I (12): Would telling people that you do politics in the university be a bit sensitive?

S (11): Yes. Yes. So, at those days when I was younger, I think telling people in English will be better, as the subject is known as Government and Public Administration (in the Chinese University).

I (13): Yes, I know that the subject is known as Government and Public Administration in the Chinese University. It is called Political Science in the University of Hong Kong.

S (12): Yes, telling mother and relatives that I did public administration will be better as there won't be so much (worry and sensitivity).

I (14): Do you think that patriotism, or loving one's own country, should be one of the aims in the teaching of GPA?

S (13): As a subject, it (GPA) should have the neutrality knowledge should process. It should cover the knowledge of political systems. The discourse must be objective. But, apart from the knowledge dimension, when we come to the value dimension, I think a teacher should make students understand differences in values. Thus, there can be different evaluations of the same system or policy. This is fundamental. As for whether we should promote a particular inclination, comprising identification and sense of belonging, I have reservation considering from the point of view of a subject.

I (15): O.K. Then, what do you think is the meaning of patriotism?

S (14): I think everyone in this planet is a member of a state. As a member, you are entitled to rights as well as duties. Such duties include the most basic things, like obeying the laws and paying taxes. But, as a citizen, I think our participation and sense of involvement in the bigger social group is a part of the quality of living. I think the students should explore by themselves what the relationship with the social group should be. If they find they can build up better attachment with the group's culture and system, it will enhance their quality of living. Some people will think that they live in a global village and is actually a man of Earth. See whether you believe it. But, the story is similar to that of a family. You have stronger affection to it as you grow up and age with it. You can infer this way.

I (16): Some people will relate the teaching of politics with national identity building. Do you think in the course of teaching GPA, you will help your students to build up a sense of national identity, like the willingness to identify with the state and have a sense of belonging etc?

S (15): In this matter, frankly speaking, we encounter difficulties. As a teacher who is also doing civic education in school, I want the students to have more feeling about the state and nation. But in reality, in the course of introducing knowledge to them, we may find that they do not have the positive feeling to state and nation, such as a sense of belonging as we will like to see. On the contrary, the other side, that of resistance is very

strong indeed. I do want to bring them back from this sort of mentality. But there are a lot of constraints. Actually, young people nowadays have very low level of identification with state and nation.

I (17): So, what do they feel about "I am Chinese".

S (16): They have always been thinking that China is very backward, corrupt and has many negative things. It is very difficult to change this as it is strongly rooted in their mind.

I (18): Study of China is a part both of GPA at Certificate and A Level. There is more to study in Paper two of GPA's A Level. Do you think we can help nurture the sense of identification by teaching the state of China to the students?

S (17): I think there will be a little help. Knowledge (of China) must increase. But, will there be a rise in identification (with China) with an increase in knowledge? This is not a must. Some may be more radical and reject China more because, out of knowing more, they find her ugly. They thus will have less identification with China as a result. For some, even if they turn more critical with increase in knowledge, I believe such critical thinking is a good thing. Critical thinking is not necessarily related to disenchantment. The students can also think of a family with parents being poor and poorly educated. Yet, the relationship may not be dependent on such external factors. I use this analogy to discuss with the students.

I (19): This subject has its official syllabuses. Are the aims and objectives of the Syllabuses important in guiding you how to plan for the lessons, say how the lessons will be taught? Will you consult them often?

S (18): Frankly speaking, these are not too important.

I (20): Do you mean you have your own way of interpreting the subject, rather than needing to go through the book (the Syllabus) to find out the way?

S (19): Frankly speaking, there are two approaches. One is more examination-oriented. You take the subject's past papers and see what been asked and get the main points. The other is to decide in different domains, what should be discussed with them. Just like what you said, this can be related to civic education, especially about enhancing their thinking. Actually, we seldom take the Syllabus out. There may be a degree of match

(between teaching and Syllabus aims). But, we seldom deliberately follow suit.

I (21): I understand that you are helping with the subject's curriculum work. Do you find the subject's aims and objective to be reasonable and sufficient? Or, do you feel that they should be changed or supplemented?

S (20): In my impression... (Subject hesitates for quite a while)... It is okay. It starts with basic knowledge and cares for both attitude and sense of belonging etc.

I (22): I can understand this. I understand this subject has Teaching Guidelines, at both Certificate and Advanced Level. These guidelines say a lot about recommended teaching methods, activities and time allocation etc. Would you deliberately consult the Teaching Guidelines (in teaching GPA)?

S (21): No, I will not.

I (23): Can you briefly describe the way you conduct your GPA class? I mean the method you use and so.

S (22): There are a number of usual methods. First, there will be lectures and explanations. Notes and other references will augment this. Sometime, there will be discussion, group discussion I mean. It's like giving them background information and then they discuss. It's like lecture and dialogue and then discussion. Used to a lesser extent are debates. Sometime, we see films too. Video and AV (audio visual mediums) are of help.

I (24): The method you use the most will be?

S (23): Lecture and group discussion is used often, I think. Sometime, it's mixed methods within the same lesson. In the past four to five years, (the tape runs to an end)

I (25): Sorry, please wait for a few moments.

S (24): In these four to five years, I have been doing all GPA classes at form six and seven. I have much freer hands, as I am the panel (chair). I am not that following the scheme of work (to be recorded in school). I would rather tie closely to what happen in the society. I bring these matters to discussion.

I (26): You mean you are chasing the current issues.

S (25): No, to be exact, we are riding with the current issues. Say, even if I am doing the teaching of politics of China, I would still spare some 20 minutes or a lesson to discuss with them what the Chief Executive in Hong Kong has just said. I shall discuss with them about what he has just said and whether he had a point etc. It's like this.

I (27): Okay. This comes as a result of the fact that you do it all and you are the panel chair etc. But, if we come to the desired method, how do you think? Is this the ideal method in your mind? Or, do you think that the present way of teaching is only the results of conditions you encounter?

S (26): I don't know whether I answer your question. There is one constraint in particular. I am using a lot of current issues and hence I have been using the newspapers very heavily. I use the newspapers directly. But, some of the articles are really quite difficult for the students. If it is possible, I guess it will be better if I can first process the information and bring to my students a set of prepared notes. I understand some of the students cannot follow, as the information is so plentiful. As I do not have the time, often I have to push to them a large number of articles without arrangements and sorting. This happened recently, say in the convening of the 16<sup>th</sup> National people's Congress of China.

I (28): In teaching this subject, we may come across different forms of political systems. We may talk about China, Hong Kong, USA, and even the British Westminster model in the course of Certificate Level. Do you think as a result, we can help students to look at a particular political system from different perspectives? Or, do you think the whole thing is compartmentalized in the way that China, USA, Hong Kong etc are simply studied separately.

S (27): I think it is better with A Level. For Certificate Level, it may be a bit difficult as not much about other polities are covered. It is very much grounded on Hong Kong. As for A Level, there may be a coming curriculum change in the direction of abolishing the USA-China comparison part. So, the paper will comprise China and USA, each being one half of the script. But, I think for us, who are used to the teaching, we shall retain this part as discussion with the students. I think exactly the comparison between Eastern and Western political cultures are meaningful.

I (29): Do you think this change will hamper the practice of analyzing through different perspectives? Will there be less chances to compare, say see China from the American

perspective and vice versa?

S (28): Frankly speaking, this makes the teaching work easier. The requirement is not as high. As a teacher, I think it is acceptable. Without this requirement, we may continue the comparison in our teaching if we wish. This also exempts the students from writing. Often this becomes difficult for students, as they are to handle two different political cultures. It is difficult for them.

I (30): But, without the examination, will the incentive of students, or even teachers, be adversely affected?

S (29): There will certainly be such an impact.

I (31): In the course of teaching GPA, we encounter a lot of the so-called controversial issues. This may arouse different views and even heated debates. Take the recent example of Mr. Tung's decision to run for his second term, a lot of views and heated debates result from the issue. In teaching these controversial and somewhat sensitive issues, do you feel the need to avoid something? Or, can you tell me how you will handle them?

S (30): There is nothing to avoid. Exactly a large number of views, both for and against, are existing in the society. I see my role as leading the students to see there exist different points of view. For my case, I have not felt the pressure.

I (32): As you said, GPA is related to civic education. Okay, we take this point. If GPA is a part of civic education, should teachers give chance students to take concrete political participations? What is your view on this?

S (31): What do you mean? What are concrete political participations?

I (33): I mean real activities and actions, not just book study. I guess recently some (students) petitioned the Chief Executive, pleading him not to allow the legalization of soccer gambling in Hong Kong. This transcends the knowledge domain to actions.

S (32): I think this is good. To have this experience is good. This can be more substantial to them. Then...

I (34): Will you worry about the parents and school (feel that it is too sensitive)?

S (33): It depends a lot whether you can find appropriate objects and candidates. In the past, we went to hear Legislative Council meetings. We interviewed Legislative Councilors. And... (Subject hesitates for a while.)

I (35): So, you did lead the students to visit Legislative Councilors before.

S (34): Yes. We visited Mr. Fung when we were in Sham Shui Po. I think experience of leading students away from the classroom to learn is something difficult to forget. It is more real. It is very boring to be confined to the four walls of the school. Bringing them out makes them very happy in the first place. In the second place, so doing makes them feel the subject is very closely related to the society.

I (36): You were not afraid of being felt to be having political inclination.

S (35): To say a bit more, I have all the way been involved in the carrying out of civic education. I have from time to time invited guests to give speeches in our school. In the past six or seven years, I invited speakers of different political backgrounds to talk to us. We invited Mr. Szeto Wah and Mr. Lee Wah Ming (democrats) on the one hand. On the other hand, we also invited Ms. Chan Yuen Han and Mr. Tsang Yuk Sing (leftists). My idea is simple. It is good for them (the students) to get in touch with elites and celebrities of the society. They have different stances and views. This will at the end increase our students' exposures.

I (37): So, your point is to invite and visit people of different stances.

S (36): Yes.

I (38): This help balance out the whole thing and thus there is no strong inclination, say by inviting only the Democratic Party or the leftist union?

S (37): Yes. In these few years, we have been doing less. But, say in 1995, during the election period, we did invite different candidates to a forum here. This was true both for the Urban Council and Legislative Council election. We invited all three candidates here and organized a forum right here at school. I have emphasized a lot of bringing the social events right into school.

I (39): Often the students think differently from us. They can have very divergent views.



So, in the course of talking politics with them, how do you think when they have divergent views? What will you do if they think in a way very different from yours and the mainstream?

S (38): Basically, I don't think this is a problem. Actually, I think it is very difficult to change them anyway. Even if you have such subconscious thoughts as wanting them to give more support to democracy and human rights, their beliefs are rather deep-rooted (to be changed). I also have the inclination. I lead them to think of questions like whether the so-called social good will allow us infringe upon individual rights. I lead them to think of whether this will harm human rights and the rule of law in Hong Kong. Many students will be just like the mass in the society and say that practicalities count and this is the way things should be. They think once the rice bowl is at risk, there can be no compromise. They have a strong belief in this. Even if we are to show to them rights and rule of laws have to be obtained at a cost; it will not be an easy work.

I (40): How about if they think in a radical, say extremist way and their beliefs involve the use of violence and implies racial discrimination? Let's say they actually think that violence should be used to force the new immigrants or boat people away. Will you talk to or do anything to them if this is the degree of divergence?

S (39): In reality, I have not encountered such students. But, if this is the case, I think I will involve myself. I think I will stick to the principle of non-violence. Non-violence is a very important principle in education. We hope there can be peaceful expression of whatever different stances.

I (41): In teaching about politics of Hong Kong or China, we may easily come across criticism about things not being done in a democratic way, especially if Western version of democracy is considered. In teaching, would you avoid these contradictions or would you just teach them? Or, how will you teach your students?

S (40): I don't think there is a problem. I think I should talk with them openly on all these.

I (42): So, if there is a saying that having eight hundred people to choose the Chief Executive is undemocratic, you will still bring out the criticism.

S (41): Yes.

I (43): Even if the government pursues this?

S (42): I think, in fact, this is not my concoction. This is not even my malice criticism. In reality there are voices speaking different beliefs everyday.

I (44): Indoctrination is often a concern in teaching this subject (of politics). Indoctrination is often described in a negative way. What are your views on this matter? Or, what will you do to avoid indoctrinating your students.

S (43): I think I need the awareness and require myself to be fair in bringing out different views. But, I cannot rule out...that in the process I will show my inclination. But, this is also acceptable. In the process of knowledge delivery, I think there should be no bias. Fake objectivity, on the other hand, is not good. To pretend to be neutral when you are not is not ethical. I think I will lead them see different views. They will know that my view is just like any one they find in the press. I will let them know how me as the teacher think. I think under our relationship, this is okay.

I (45): Do you worry that they ask you your views say, whether it is democratic to choose the Chief Executive with eight hundred people etc., and then know your stance and will follow that in their discussion and in answering examinations?

S (44): Ah... I never conjecture that the students will take my stance in order to please me. In the past, during marking, I will not deliberately look at (similarity of stance). What I try to see is whether they write in a logical way. Examination usually requires them to present both the pros and cons. At the end, they can have their own opinion. There is no inclination to make sure where they should go.

I (46): Can I say that you are trying to be open-minded in marking to make them confident of speaking out their mind, even those points that contradict what you believe.

S (45): Yes.

I (47): We talked about the issue of national identity a moment ago. What do you think national identity should be like in the case of Hong Kong? I mean Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region within the People's Republic of China.

(The Subject pauses for quite a while. So I supplement the question.)

I (48): So, what will be the attributes required of them to be effective Chinese citizens as now Hong Kong is a part of China? It can be knowledge, attitude and skills etc.

S (46): This question is real hard to answer. In fact, I did try discuss with the students. We came to the conclusion that as a Chinese citizen, one must have first of all understanding of the nation and the culture. As for the affection side, the sense of belonging etc, there is not much you can do by going over it one or two times. It depends a lot on their own experience and encounters. Besides, I also talk to the students that, even on the most utilitarian ground, they need to know China right now, as this is related to their career need. They need it on practical ground so as to be smart when they come out to work. So, practical need is an incentive. It is not just ideals.

I (49): Yes. Now, we come to assessment. GPA is a subject with public examinations, at both Certificate and Advanced Level. Do you think public examinations help or hinder the implementation of the subject in schools?

S (47): If there are no examinations, GPA cannot be a subject in school actually. If this is the case, it can only be marginalized in the school curriculum. There can be little space for it. Without public examination and a subject status, it can only be marginal. So I think that, on the one hand, we should not go for examination and the pressure it brings, as the subject should be based on discussion and so. But the reality is that if there is no examination, the whole thing will be marginalized and even disappears. So as such examinations are necessary evils.

I (50): I have examined the GPA questions asked in these few years. I have analyzed the questions asked from 1996 onwards. Similar questions, in fact, can be observed as coming up again after a few years. It can be that a few years ago the legislative powers of the Governor were asked. Now, the legislative powers of the Chief Executive are being examined. So, do you think there is a pattern that can be discerned and such pattern can affect the way we prepare students to sit for examinations?

S (48): Yes, that's right. I will try to do it. To teach is to help them obtain knowledge on the one hand. On the other hand, it is to help them get good grades in examinations. It may involve preparing answers for them to do the examinations successfully.

I (51): Apart from tests and examinations, what are your methods of assessing the students?

S (49): I do not deliberately assess them on areas, like attitude, which are not related with examinations. I depend mainly on formal assessments.

I (52): Do you join the Project Assessment Scheme.

S (50): No.

I (53): Why not?

S (51): I can share this with you. I once thought of joining the scheme. We did apply and then later we withdrew our application. The story was that in the past we did only the AS Level and thus would not be entitled (for the PAS). When we moved from AS Level into A Level recently, we applied for the scheme (and were accepted). However, half way through in the sixth form, I found we were in trouble.

I (54): What was it?

S (52): The students didn't that follow. Frankly speaking, the students were not good at self-directed learning. Besides, they were weak at basic knowledge. As a result, it was not as easy as I had first believed. I was not confident to shoulder the work of "pulling them to finish the work". (Actually, the Subject uses the Chinese proverb "pulling the cow up the tree" to express his feeling). At the end, we withdrew.

I (55): What are the greatest difficulties your students encounter when they study the subject?

S (53): The ability to express, I think. I mean the ability to write their ideas out in particular. This poses a great constraint. Besides, they have a low starting point as they do not have such study before. Actually, they first start with the understanding of, say the political system of Hong Kong, in the sixth form. Thus, they may not be able to meet the depth of understanding as required in A Level.

I (56): Will this be related to the political apathy, lack of general political knowledge of Hong Kong people as a whole?

S (54): Absolutely. For the students I taught in these few years, those who came from the mainland are definitely more politically conscious than the local students. On the one hand, it might be due to their early political class, say in primary and junior

secondary level. They thus have advantage in understanding China's political system. On the other hand, they are more conscious and able to understand the politics of Hong Kong. This has something to do (with their early education in politics).

I (57): In what way do you think the school as a whole helps or hinder the teaching of the subject. I am talking about school ethos, administration etc.

S (55): (The subject thinks for a while.) I think our school is comparatively more liberal. Not many constraints are put on civic and political education. The principal is relatively more supportive.

I (58): So, you don't need to fear that the subject is sensitive?

S (56): I have never thought of the principal being sensitive to it. There has been no such worry. On the contrary, it is our limitations in terms of manpower that make us think of how much we can achieve.

I (59): You mean because the school is more liberal, you don't need to worry about how the principal is thinking what you have been teaching and whether the parents are sensitive etc.?

S (57): Yes.

I (60): Do you think the government has been working hard to promote this subject?

S (58): I think absolutely not. I understand that the government's stance is a school-based one. Okay, the subject is there. If you want it, take it. There is no active promotion.

I (61): The following questions are what I want to share from your experience as a curriculum planner. Do you think this subject helps our students to become effective citizen of China?

S (59): Definitely, I think that the subject can be of help. This subject enriches the student's knowledge about the political system and makes them more conscious (politically). As an effective citizen, the students must have basic understanding of the political system and a sense of involvement. I think for youngsters, the basic knowledge will strengthen their analysis when they face the mass media and involve in other forms

of participations later in life. From this perspective, the subject is of help.

I (62): Are you satisfied with the content of the existing curriculum? Do you want to change it, say adding, deleting or amending?

S (60): As for content, I am not particularly satisfied or dissatisfied with the existing one. They are now talking about a new subject Integrated Humanities. There is the concern about whether students can learn enough of the political systems and whether the subject can prepare students to study in Political Science etc in the university. On the contrary, I am thinking of the actual population. Even if the subject is good, if the number of students finally taking it is small, like GPA is now faring, the usefulness is rather limited. If the future Integrated Humanities will capture the present GPA elements, I may have more expectation on it (as it will be studied more widely).

I (63): I am also aware of the Integrated Humanities proposal. I know that it is meant mainly for science students and it is a subject to cover all social science subjects. I think there is a good chance that political elements within it will be very much downsized.

S (61): Yes, this is plausible.

I (64): The political elements may even be marginalized if they are sensitive.

S (62): Yes. This is inevitable. This happens even now that the subject is very comprehensively written. The teacher, in the course of their teaching, may marginalize sensitive things. This involves a lot of things like teacher training. I understand the whole course of civic and political education arose from the colonial period, marked by depoliticization. Most teachers have little knowledge about society and politics. It is difficult to have change overnight except that you change the teachers. But, who replace them will be a cause of worry too. We can't rush.

I (65): If I say that GPA should say more about democracy and different polities, do you think it is a good idea? I think some years ago, we have more there, say USSR when it still existed. We also had more about the United Kingdom.

S (63): I ... (the Subject hesitates for a while) ... think this is not necessarily true. Studying more systems may only bring more factual knowledge. It... may not necessarily result in students having more macro view. The burden will increase as a result.

I (66): So, how can we promote the more macro view you just said? We are talking now about worldview and ability to see things from different cultural perspectives. Or say, from different countries' perspectives.

(The subject does not give an answer for quite a while.)

I (67): Should we say that the USA and China comparison part is a way to do it? Or are there any views you want to share.

S (64): I guess this is not necessarily related to GPA. I have been thinking that in the course of civic education, more should be done on mass media education and higher order thinking skills, like critical thinking. Many schools are feeling the need to educate the students to face the large amount of information they get from the mass media, much of them being fake. Actually, even when we teach the students democracy and so, we do not aim at indoctrinating them. We want them to have critical thinking and analysis. This can be a way ahead. The subject matter may not be that important. What you said about learning more political systems may be very formal political science and may not sound interesting to students.

I (68): So, do you mean the crux is to infiltrate higher thinking skills, especially critical thinking skills, into the subject GPA?

S (65): Yes, students benefit more as a result.

I (69): Do you think these elements (higher order thinking) are lacking in GPA public examinations?

S (66): It can be strengthened. I also read other subjects' questions. I guess we are already much better than some other subjects. Take Chinese History as example, they are very factual and descriptive.

I (70): We provide some space at least?

S (67): Yes, some space.

I (71): Do you find the mode of assessment of this subject appropriate? I understand in Certificate Level, the entire public examination is based on written test. In A Level this is also true, with the exception of a few schools which opt for the PAS.

S (68): Sure, I think the trend should be that of PAS or the like, which take into consideration what they do during their study, like co-operative attitude in doing research project etc. But reality counts. It brings too much pressure to the teachers.

I (72): Is it the number of students that matters?

S (69): Yes. For our case, we used to have thirty students in the class. Now, we have fifteen. It is much better and okay. But, it is the quality of the students that is important. They can't give me the confidence. My students are weak. They get only 10 or 11 points (in the Certificate Examination). This is very different from what you taught in XXX. (I taught GPA in one of the elitist schools before.) They are those that get 20 or more points and they can work on their own initiative.

I (73): So, you think pulling them up is very difficult.

S (70): Yes, they are weak both in English and Chinese. Even now we teach in Chinese, we have to know that their Chinese result is D or E. Reading and writing are difficult for them.

I (74): Last question (as time is up). What do you feel is the biggest obstacle to the implementation of the subject in schools? We see that there is actually little growth in this subject. It is actually facing cut back.

S (71): I think it is difficult to attribute to any single factor. It is the society as a whole. It is the ethos of depoliticization.

I (75): You mean now, as well as in the past.

S (72): Yes, now the government and Mr. Tung are actually depoliticizing Hong Kong. Mr. Tung says he is working for the good of the people and doesn't like politics. As a teacher trained in politics, I feel very bad about this. I think they are polluting the meaning of politics and this is the social ethos we face.

I (76): Okay, it's now one hour. Thanks a lot for your kind help.



Side Note:

The interview has to be finish in one hour as the Subject tells me when I reaches the school that his principal has just assigned him a special duty.

The interview is carried out in a staff common room where staff take their break and prepare their food.

Despite the coming in of other teachers, the Subject does not seem to care and speak in a loud voice, seemingly not finding what he says may be considered as sensitive.

In bringing me out to the door after the interview has been finished, the Subject says that indoctrination in the teaching of the subject should be construed more as the subject can be used by the government to sell its ideas to the students, instead of the other way round. Too, he shares my worry that the new Integrated Humanity can end up being apolitical, reflecting the growing trend of the society.

## Transcript Five

A brief sketch of the school:

- An old school found after the end of WWII
- A subsidized Protestant school
- An English medium school
- The school is located in an old urban district in Kowloon
- Recruiting students mainly from the upper band
- The school was first founded by Western religious body
- The school has a reputation for having a liberal tradition

Date of interview: 7/2/2002

Subject interviewed: S7

Class: GPA teacher / curriculum planner

Background of subject:

- Secondary school teacher (male)
- In the early 50s
- Graduated as a history major from the university
- GPA subject curriculum planner (Syllabus and Teaching Guidelines at both levels)
- Very experienced in the field (started teaching the subject since it was founded)

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

Length of interview: one hour

#### Content of interview

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): Thanks for sparing the time. In conducting the interview, we promise the following to the Subject.

(I show the consent form to the Subject. Then, the Subject signs the consent form and the interview formally starts.)

S (1): You will find me very different from other teachers you interviewed. I did not come from a related discipline. They did. I graduated from Arts. I teach this lesson not as a result of my own initiation. When I first joined this school, there was a subject here called EPA (Economic and Public Affairs). This was a difficult subject. It was not easy to find one with knowledge in both Economics and Politics. My feeling is that the then EPA was more difficult, more difficult, more difficult (actually, the Subject say "more difficult" three times) than what we have now (GPA).

I (2): I also did the subject before.

S (2): You studied EPA?

I (3): Yes, I did, at A Level and so.

S (3): So, it is easy to come up with example. Now, in the lesson, we study China and

America and some Hong Kong. At that ( EPA) time, we had to do as many as six countries. We did U.K., U.S.A., China, France, Japan, and a bit of Russia too.

I (4): Yes, I remember there was a part about Russia. It was called USSR then.

S (4): Yes, it (the subject document) said that students were not supposed to have in-depth analysis about these political systems. But, there was also a very broad and empty expression, saying that students were expected to have knowledge on these countries. You know then we were in the elitist educational mode. It would be difficult to say how deep we should go (under that elitist ethos). Thus it was real hard then. There were teachers who found it very difficult to tackle. Thus, the subject was split into two (Economics and GPA). Tell you how I got started with this subject. It was during the summer holiday that they (school administration) asked me to come back and, without consulting me and without asking my preferences; they asked me to teach it. I don't know whether this was due to...human factor...consideration or that...(the Subject spoke in a very slow and broken voice)...the subject could augment civic education or matched with it. Very few schools would do it. After starting GPA, the school also started the subject Economics. Most schools would then opt for Economics after EPA was broken up. You know Economics was more specialized and the (former) EPA teachers were usually recruited on Economics background.

I (5): You mean the then EPA teachers taught PA (Public Affairs) on an "additional" basis.

S (5): Yes. Actually, in most cases, when EPA was broken up, many schools opted for Economics and the PA part disappeared once and for all, as there could not be so many A Level subjects offered to students. Our school was an exception. Our tradition was to offer many choices to students in the arts stream of form four to five and form six to seven. We did this by squeezing the subjects into the timetable. As a result, we offered a lot of subjects to the students. In the peak period, we offered almost nine to ten subjects to our students in the sixth forms. Thus we could start with both GPA and Economics.

I (6): It would be hard work in allotting classrooms and timeslots.

S (6): Yes. GPA here has long been in a weaker hand. We have eight periods each week in a 6-day cycle. Many schools, as far as I know, should have up to ten or twelve. We get less.

I (7): Due to more subjects in the timetable?

S (7): Chinese History gets nine periods. Geography gets nine periods. Only GPA gets eight.

I (8): GPA gets fewer lessons?

S (8): Yes, it gets the least among all subjects. We have more options to students too.

I (9): I guess the break up of GPA in A Level actually dated back to 1984 or 1985.

S (9): Yes. I started teaching it right from the first year of this subject. Our school is a bit special. We started GPA at both Certificate and A Level together once they got started. Besides, we have been taking part in the Project Assessment Scheme right from the beginning. Almost all my students were taking the PAS scheme and now they still are doing it. Next year onward, it will be compulsory too.

I (10): Fine, then I can share your experience in this area.

S (10): In the past, it was not emphasized at all. Many schools would not touch it. Take for example, Miss xxx of xxx College (the Subject mentioned a personality who led the drafting work in the beginning years and wrote up the only GPA textbook in English.). Her experience in the beginning phase of this subject was certainly very rich. After her, it was Mr. xxx (the Subject mentioned another personality whom the interviewer worked with before).

I (11): I guess he is still with the Education Department, though not necessarily taking care of this subject.

S (11): What I mean is that after these two persons left their school, the successor to them didn't continue the PAS work in the school. Now, I guess there are only three or four schools taking the PAS.

I (12): I know of two, your school and xxx (another school I would cover in this research).

S (12): xxx and xxx too (The subject mentioned the names of two other schools ). But, I think we are getting more important in this scheme as we have more students. Actually,

the number of students taking this elective subject is increasing.

I (13): That's unusual.

S (13): Yes, that's unusual. I don't know why more students are taking it. Maybe, it is due to the fact that our students can get good results (in the public examination). For example, in the Certificate Level, I don't mean they get very outstanding results. But, most of them get upper middle ranks. Students are actually rather a mess. Out of my observation, they are only very average in class performance. They are not that interested. But, they are driven by results (to take GPA). When the certificate examination results come out, they (knowing the good results) will come to do the subject (in A Level). Like this year, I have 28-29 students in my class.

I (14): You mean Certificate Level or A Level.

S (14): A Level.

I (15): That's a real lot.

S (15): Yes, in the past, the minimum number I got was four only. You know, in the admission exercise, after allotting to those who are definitely admitted, the committee will consider those in the margin. In the worst year, we admitted the marginal students, going almost right to the point of telling them that, "If you want to have a place (in the sixth form), opt GPA." You know this subject is not provided outside (as many schools are not offering this subject). So, we have no intake from other schools (in Hong Kong, schools can admit from five graduates from other schools). Besides, our (GPA) students, if they can't come back to do their sixth form, they also suffer badly, as they can't find another schools to do their sixth form GPA. Thus, in the years of bad results, our GPA student enrollment dropped and in A Level, we got only 4-5. In the best year then, there were eight to ten students. But, things changed in these two years. A large number of our students are taking the subject in Chinese and their results are good. About 30-40 percents of them get credit. Thus, the students are attracted as they feel this subject can help them get good result. I don't know how much interest they have. But, often they are not driven by interest; especially there are many girls (in the GPA) in class. The girls, you know, do not have much interest in political things. The boys are comparatively more interested in asking things. Very few girls will ask questions. But more girls take the subject at A Level. Maybe this is due to their better results in form four and five. So, more of them are taking the subject. This is particularly so last year as other subjects'

results were not good but GPA fared well.

I (16): So, the students look at the result and are attracted by results.

S (16): Yes, this is true for this subject. Compared to outside (other schools), we are good. There are few outstanding ones. Not many students get A. But, there are plenty of credits. Thus the students considered the good result (in choosing the subject).

I (17): You mean this is true in Certificate Level or in A Level?

S (17): Both.

I (18): Your experience is very special. Usually schools tell me they have less students taking GPA. Some teachers even tell me that the subject may have very limited space to survive.

S (18): I remember last time we met.

I (19): In the subject committee you mean?

S (19): Yes. The members seemed almost to huddle one another and cry as they deplored that they were teaching a subject that was like a sunset subject. Ms XX did not find this agreeable as she thought the subject was of great value. They saw the problem (of declining enrollment). But, here, we, on the contrary, have more and more students taking the subject. This year, our class has twenty-nine students. The quality is very questionable, very questionable. In class, there are students leaning on the desks. I have big doubt about their interest.

I (20): If they lack the interest to learn (as you alluded), are they willing to discuss in class?

(The Subject shook his head)

I (21): They just showed little interest.

(The Subject nods.)

S (20): In terms of quality, they are behind, way behind the students I taught before. But, in terms of result we are getting more and more stable now.

I (22): Can I say that the subject's result rather than the subject itself attracts the students?

S (21): Yes.

I (23): And you don't see them (the students), especially the girls, to be interested in politics.

S (22): No. They even sleep (in class). The discipline problem is related to the lack of good learning attitude. But, (they take the subject as) the subject gives them the confidence in terms of examination results. I really don't understand. Often, I thought their results should not be that good. For example, in sitting for the examination of university admission (A Level), I expected some of them could at most get a pass. But, it ended up that they could get a B or C. This was more than I expected.

I (24): Could it be that there was something in the way you teach that lead to good results?

S (23): I don't think so. In fact, I always have the feeling that I have been very unsuccessful (in my teaching). I have been very unsuccessful. At least, I broke all the principles of education.

I (25): Why?

S (24): I cannot lead the students to actively engage in discussion. I cannot lead them to think on the questions. There is no (not much) interaction in the classroom. How can this be a success?

I (26): So, you mean that they lack interest and fall asleep in class?

S (25): Yes. They lack interest and do not give much response too. This applies to all forms.

I (27): But, why are they so good in results?

S (26): I really don't know.

I (28): Please forgive me to be a bit frank. Is it true that you tip on the (public examination) questions in an accurate way?



S (27): I don't deliberately tip on the questions. But, I am really quite well targeted. In form four to five, for example, they are really very uninterested. There is a teacher here who turns out very precise notes. But, I don't. Instead I follow the style of the university. You know Hong Kong University prefers the open style questions, one without border. I seldom give precise notes. Even if there are notes. They are the product of the students' own jotting. I don't even correct the notes. But, they may exchange the notes to gain references. The most I do is to send them some photocopied reading materials. The more hard working ones may need to read a lot then. The less hard working ones may not have too substantial materials. In these two years, it becomes better as the other teacher prepares the notes by heart, especially those related with concepts. Anyway, if the students follow and study...(it is okay). You know the GPA questions actually only come from a narrow scope.

I (29): You mean same questions turning up again?

S (28): You don't need exactly the same question to turn up again. You can know the area and focus of the questions (that will turn up). I have been all the way working in the committees and I know where the focus is. I don't know whether this help...

I (30): But, there are good results in examinations.

S (29): Our results compare favorably to other schools.

I (31): So, can I say well-targeted means being able to follow the trend of questions and deal with the focus of such questions.

S (30): Yes.

I (32): I have a pre-designed list of questions here. But, since you have been leading the conversation so well, I shall simply follow the flow and ask questions arising from our conversation. How do you feel about the PAS now that most of your students at A Level are doing it?

S (31): At the beginning, the attitude of the school and that of mine were really different over the scheme. As to me, the scheme represented an additional work. I felt that I had no edge in teaching this subject. But, I had experience of post-graduate study. I thought I could lead students (in their research project). Thus...for the sake of...student's

interest... We took it. I think it is here that I differ from other teachers. I had previous experience of post-graduate study. I did research before. Thus the PAS seems to allow me to develop on my strength. This was exactly the very reason why I opted for the PAS. Once started, I found that my students were not that willing to do it. But, opting this scheme can help us overcome the problem of not having enough lessons as we can work outside class.

I (33): You mean this is a way to save time.

S (32): Because you don't need to do everything in class. Once started, a few students doing this scheme actually planned of opting out. These students were smart but utilitarian in disposition. They found that PAS didn't account much in terms of marks and they could do the paper test question as well. You know the PAS only accounts for 12.5 marks as it only replaces one out of the eight questions in the two papers. Its worthiness is at doubt. This is so because it takes you at least quite some work to finish the project.

I (34): I guess it is one and a half year's work.

S (33): But, once we carried on. I don't know whether this was due to encouragement or other things. The marks awarded were quite high. Had such encouragement been weak, we would have opted out. My feeling, after all, is that we the PAS school can get better result more easily. I don't know whether this is the deliberate arrangement of the Examination Authority or not. In general, it is easy to get 15 marks or above (from the PAS). To answer a question and get 15 marks is real hard. But here (in the PAS), it is real safe. Certainly, the task of the teacher will be increased, especially considering that the language standard of our students is not that good. We have to go through the works with the students many times to ensure that it is presentable. This was not much in the old days when student enrollment was so small. But, gradually, I see the value of this subject as the students' entire life has not been related to writing anything (of their own) and discovery and so. I hear about the university professors, and so, are rather positive to the scheme and feel that PAS students are more independent and autonomous in their learning. I sometime also hear from the students that they become really different after doing the PAS as they are no more afraid of writing essays. The analogy is that you won't be afraid of a few stitches after having experience of major operations. This is a boost to self-confidence and this will make them better adapted to university study. This is not what we anticipated at the beginning. At first, our motive was to find something safe for the students. The positive results made us carry on. In the past, the

students did want to give up this seriously. Now, there is no such voice any more. In recent years, the call for project schemes to be adopted in schools and the emphasis on formative assessments have made PAS very pertinent. In 2003, changes may turn out to the favor of those taking the PAS. There may be a total of six instead of eight questions and the former query about huge input to secure small output can be answered. Besides, if you have ten students doing the PAS on different aspects of politics and policies, you may not need to teach much more about Hong Kong. You need only put together their work. Paper one will be more easily manageable (under this PAS) then. You should know that our students are not too good in quality. This actually is the paper the students are weak in. This may be the reason why our students are not high in standard but the results (in examination) are rather stable.

I (35): Would you mind telling me the banding of your school?

S (34): We used to be in first and second band in the old system (students grouped into five bands). We got more students from the second band then. Now, in the new system (students grouped into three bands), we draw mainly from the first band, which account for almost 70-80 percents of our intakes.

I (36): Is your school an EMI school (English medium instruction school)?

S (35): Yes we are an EMI school. But, our students are very weak in English. I guess the academic aptitude test used for screening students is not accurate. Even for Group One (students diagnosed as suitable to learn in English) , the diversity s very large. Some students will be completely unable to understand a lesson when it is conducted in English.

I (37): By which language is this subject taught?

S (36): We let them choose.

I (38): It means a lot of work.

S (37): Yes, it's real hard. Every year, we turn out two sets of papers (one in Chinese and one in English).

I (39): In the course of teaching, the language used in class will be...?

S (38): We teach in Chinese. But, the materials will be in English. The Chinese

materials (for A Level) will be hard to find and difficult to type. In form four and six, we teach in English. But, in form five and seven, they opt for the language in examination. Most will take the examination in Chinese with materials received from us written in English. We now get more and more students taking A Level in Chinese. The reason is that it will be safer. It also saves a lot of efforts in language polishing. In the past, I spent a lot of time to polish up their work to ensure that they were presentable. Now, it won't be needed. I just implement minor changes to essay structure.

I (40): So, now you give materials in English and students choose the language in examinations. More A Level students are sitting for the examination in Chinese.

S (39): This is also the case for Certificate Level.

I (41): I believe there are no English books for GPA in the Certificate Level.

S (40): You mean textbook?

I (42): Yes.

S (41): No, there isn't any.

I (43): I remember the only one by Miss XXX was written so long ago that it still talks about the Governor.

S (42): Yes. But, we gave it up a long time ago. We have had no textbook for ten years or more.

I (44): There may be one or two textbooks in Chinese. I think Mr. XXX did write up one.

S (43): They were not (too helpful) either. Even Mr. XXX (the author mentioned above) is going to retire this year. His book cannot that keep up with time. It covers only up to form five anyway. This may not be a problem up to form five. I had a student before who would not listen to me in every GPA lesson. He just read his newspapers. But, it turned out that he got A in the Certificate examination. But, his results with other subjects were not good, say getting D and so.

I (45): Why do you think he could get such good result?

S (44): I think up to form five, whether there is textbook and whether you listen in class may not be very important. What count are basic linguistic skills and a good mind. You need to know of current affairs. The textbook alone may not be able to answer the questions at Certificate Level well. On the contrary, if you are good at language and well versed with current issues, you may handle them well. However, this student failed in A Level, after getting A in Certificate Level.

I (46): The same student?

S (45): Yes. In A Level, there are concepts in its Paper One. You need to study the textbook. This is also true for Paper Two, which is about USA and China. You need to study the texts. It is more academic and theoretical. The same skills that get you through Certificate Level may not do the job in the examination at A Level. You cannot get through A Level with (only) common sense. There is a difference there.

I (47): Do you agree that teaching this subject will increase the students' sense of national identity?

S (46): This depends on the way the teachers teach. If the teacher concerned has a very strong sense of national consciousness and teaches with strong emotional input and he can win the approval of the students, he will be able to have an impact on the students' national feeling. If however the teacher takes this subject as an academic subject and emphasizes the delivery of knowledge, I doubt whether this has an impact at all. I believe that in this subject we provide more room to teachers to lead the students to think on a wide range of questions. This subject is relatively more able to allow students to think of their own (political) identity.

I (48): So, do you think you are doing this more as an academic subject and emphasize the delivery of information etc.?

S (47): I think I am not that much on academic teaching as I am not that systematic. I am more on current issues and questions and am more topical in nature. I feel that teaching information and concepts in class is not the way a higher form teacher should do and is not the appropriate way of teaching this subject. I think, as for this subject, to study the information well may not lead to good results. If you do not handle the questions well and think over them, the students may not be able to tackle the questions (in the examinations). The problem is that I have a lot of opinions while the students are

very passive in participating into the discussions.

I (49): Can I say that you are topical in teaching and lead the students with your opinions and they can thus handle the examinations? Can this be the reason for their examination success?

S (48): You can say that the students cannot get from me comprehensive and systematic answers. This forces them to reconstruct. This is true for those who are not too lazy and have a little will to study. They know they have to depend on themselves. The class may represent a kind of stimulation. You know very often I have no notes. I give only reference materials. I teach according to the reference materials. Often they don't know what are meant. They thus have to go home and read up themselves. I guess what they need do by themselves are quite plentiful.

I (50): Do you think the subject can be related to patriotism?

S (49): I do not intend to inculcate or pass on something to them. On the contrary, as a Western history major, I am very much affected by the spirit of Western history that is "fact speaks for itself". Thus, there is no need to deliberately add the element of values to the subject. What's important will be to bring the matters out for students to think it over. In fact, I don't believe there is any thing which is absolutely correct or wrong. There is usually an area between black and white.

I (51): There are Teaching Guidelines for this subject. At the same time, the Syllabuses also have come with statement of aims and objectives. Will you deliberately consult and follow them in the course of your teaching?

S (50): I can tell you this. I have been taking part in the writing up of these aims and that. When we did it, it was XXX who did it alone. He just worked out the things from imagination. Some of the things there are absurd. There was then a sixth form education reform committee and it asked for ten aims. It required committee of each subject to link the subject with such aims. Some of the aims are very fundamental, for example aesthetic education and development view of life etc. In terms of civic education, it is most unnatural to put civic education elements into science, when in the course of teaching, experiments are being conducted. To say that there exist such relations are, in my view, most absurd. I am also doing civic education (in my school). In fact, I believe you cannot teach civic education in one subject. This cannot be achieved through unilateral delivery. On the contrary, it depends on the hidden school ethos, or the way matters are handled or the way of manifestation (teaching by being examples). These

then will help win the hearts over. Teachers should know what the aims are. But, it is not that we come to one objective and then today's lesson will be such and such to accommodate the objective.

I (52): So, you believe that the subject has been linked to civic education in an arbitrary manner?

S (51): Not exactly so. In fact this subject is most related to civic education and what it wants to achieve. But, we should not deliberately aim at a particular objective and teach in a particular way. I guess what's important is that we understand what the aims are. We should not aim at identifying a particular set of values. Instead, we simply accept what most people believe as positive. We shall not use expository methods. Very often, it is to enable the students to understand and think of the matters. Then, they will reflect. This is also true for public examinations. In such examinations, often the questions are so arbitrary that there can only be answers on the positive side. Often I can't agree to them. Give you one such example. A question in Certificate Level asked the student: "The Communist Party of China is interlocked with the state. Give one good point and one bad point about it." In fact, from my own point of view, there is no good point at all. If there is good point, the whole world will do it. If there is good point, it will not have become blurring the line between the party and government.

I (53): But, the question asks the students to give one good point.

S (52): Yes, you have to give one good point. I tell my students I can't. Even if I can, such point can be only very far-fetched. If the question had asked the students to give their own answer, certainly I would answer on the negative side. But, in this occasion, the question forced the student to give one good point. I cannot agree to this. My students also understood my point. Thus, I think we should aim at helping students to perceive things clearly with our teaching. We should not aim at inculcating a particular belief. Even when I talked about Taiwan issue and the relations it had with national sovereignty, there were students who asked whether Taiwan was a state in its own. Then, there were two divergent views. Some students might think in a way similar to that upheld in the West. Say, if I toe the nationalist line, I would not have let them debate about it. Even to talk about it will be a taboo. Actually, these can help my students understand a lot about Western political concepts of sovereignty and nations. We can also relate these to confederate system and how it may help solve the Taiwan problem and why the "one country, two systems" model is not acceptable to Taiwan.

I (54): Can I say you will not avoid these controversial issues, especially when they can stimulate the thinking of your students?

S (53): Yes, you are right. I also have my subjective (judgment). But, I will accept my students' views. What's actually important is the logic behind. It is important to let the students know that I can only represent myself. There is no requirement that they need (follow me and) answer in a particular way. If what they answer makes sense, it will be good enough.

I (55): And they can get high marks from it?

S (54): Yes. I am not using this subject to deliberately inculcate students with values related with national education or other views deemed positive by the society. Actually whether positive views are really positive should be left to the judgment of the students. I hope I can affect my students by being open-minded and open-ended and making them used to such attitudes.

I (56): Can I say that you are giving them incomplete materials and as such they may need to re-organize what they have learned? At the same time your open-mindedness gives the necessary space for them in this reconstruction. Will this training be of help to students so that when they grow up, they can better discharge the rights of citizens more effectively?

S (55): Actually, I think what I am doing is in line with the demands made on modern education. I think I can help my students not just in terms of examinations, but also in the way they handle their daily lives. On this, I can quite assure myself of my contribution. What I am doing is not just simply teaching the books. I think I am teaching the students how to understand things in a scientific way. As for what you said about training them up to become effective citizens, I think it is a matter the whole school is doing and I am only part of it.

I (57): This is the last question as you have told me that you are very tight on time. You mentioned that the whole school is contributing to the training up of the students to become effective citizens. I would like to ask whether you find the school in general, including ethos, administration etc, to be supportive in your drive to promote open-mindedness etc?

S (56): Yes. I think our school is doing a lot in this direction. I guess we are one of the earliest to place effort on civic education. This may be due to the fact that we are a



Protestant school and we have Protestant teachers among the staff. There is a strong emphasis on the ...so-called "love". There is a strong emphasis placed on services.

I (58): So, the key points are to love and to serve.

S (57): Yes, these are our school's motto.

I (59): Are you saying that it is from love and service to openness and perhaps being democratic?

S (58): This is important. The first principal of the school was a Westerner. His educational belief (was very Western). Among the teachers, many are very positive. This may have impact on the students. Besides, we have a lot of activities in the direction of offering services. Our parent-teacher association also organizes such activities. This is very different from counterparts in other schools, which are geared towards entertainment and liaison. I cannot say this affect all students. But, I think many students are joining. As for open ethos, we have students forming their own student association. We allow students to run their own clubs. The students even decide on the places to visit in their picnics. They choose the prefects. May be this is how students are encouraged. In fact, they often talk nonsense. But, we are used to tolerating them. We are more lenient too. We seldom give them demerit points etc. The students are freer as there is little pressure from above. The focus was first on another school and us as we first embarked on the PAS. It was noted that the common point between us was that we had a liberal tradition. Our first principal was a Westerner and the second came from La Salle. You know their background counted as far as the educational belief was in concern. Among our earlier staff were many Westerners too. This had much impact. Tell you one thing. Before the coming of the present principal, we didn't need to sign in when we came back to school. Even now, we do it very loosely. You know the tradition is already there. Unlike other schools, we do not come back in examination time unless you have duties like invigilation. This may not be acceptable in other schools. On the bad side, you can say the school is loose. But, on the good side, the value placed on human beings is great.

I (60): So the liberal attitude of the school helps the subject as the students are to speak out their minds.

S (59): Yes. But, their language is weak. Now, it is better as they write in Chinese.

I (61): Any point you may want to add.

S (60): The thing I regret is that I am not sufficiently trained in this discipline in college. I guess I like the subject gradually. I don't have the time to redo it.

I (62): I understand you are a history major.

S (61): Yes. Without the formal training, my grasp on the discipline may be weaker. This is particular the case when we meet with those lecturers in the curriculum meetings. We are of course very familiar with pedagogy and curriculum. But being familiar with them doesn't mean you can go very deep as you depend just on own reading and not university training.

I (63): Do you think this subject can help give the students to develop worldview in terms of politics?

S (62): Definitely yes. There are many cases and evidence (that we can draw from the world to help the analysis). But there seems to be no particular incentive from the Examination Authority. It may be the best subject. The other one may be liberal education. This subject is even better. When we do America or Hong Kong or China, there is no textbook to give you all the answer you need. If the question is set tactfully, the student must answer the question with their international understanding. For example, in answering the questions related to the concept of sovereignty, you cannot give more than 1000 words, with only the few paragraphs you find in the textbook's explanation. You have to give different examples from different countries to elucidate your point. Even when we mark, the universities' markers tend to give higher marks to students, who in the discussion of internal and external sovereignty give good examples from different countries of the present world. On the contrary, if you can only give examples from history to answer the question about nationalism, you are bound to get low marks. If the teacher in concern knows of the marking scheme and the trend, you will request or urge your students to look at questions in this way. This is certainly of help to nurturing an international perspective.

I (64): I guess that in the coming years the US-China comparison part may be withdrawn. Do you think it may affect the outcome.

S (63): There s no problem. No problem. In the course of teaching, you have to use comparison any way. Say, in the teaching of China's constitution, you will have to compare it to the West. You won't teach it per se. Instead you will compare the concept

of constitution in socialist country and its counterparts in the West.

I (65): Thus it is natural for you to use other perspectives to study China.

S (64): Yes, as such, you will have more to say and the students will have a stronger impression. It will also be more interesting. For example, if you talk of Congress in the USA, you will also remind students there is a congress in China and the difference between them are... Though not in the Syllabus, you will also mention the Parliament in the UK. You even will talk about Hong Kong's case and the accountability issue etc. You may move into comparing the power of the US President versus the Congress and compare it to the Chief Executive versus the Legislative Council in Hong Kong.

I (66): This comes very naturally?

S (65): Yes.

I (67): Thanks, I think the interview will stop here.

### Side Note:

The Subject seems to me to be a rather disorganized personality. More than half an hour before the appointment, my wife received a call at home. It was a call made by the Subject, who seemingly blamed me for not arriving to do the interview. In fact at the time, I was already there. I walked around in the nearby of the school to avoid arriving before the time agreed.

When I go into the school and meet the Subject, he can find no room for the interview, as he did not reserve one. The interview is finally held at a room that I believe is a sort of storage area.

The room, full of sport equipment, is located next to the playground and is quite noisy.

The Subject appears rather impatient and shortly after the beginning of the interview, he is called by his wife. Seemingly, he is asked to hurry. My conjecture is that the Subject forgot the interview or the actual time of the pre-agreed appointment.

The Subject appears first to be rather skeptical too. He is the only one so far to read the consent form by putting the form right to the nose.

The subject is rather a compulsive speaker. Sometime, it seems that I am being asked questions rather than that I am doing the interviewer part. As such, I just follow the narrative the Subject gives and direct it, if possible, to a course I may find useful and meaningful.

After talking for sometime, the atmosphere becomes friendlier.

Though the Subject is a bit cynical, I enjoy his insight and his rich experience and truthfulness.

The interview lasts for about 55 minutes, as the Subject needs to join his wife.

The Subject brings me to the door. I am almost saying good bye when I notice that he is leaving the school too. He is really in a big rush!

## **Transcript Six**

### **A brief sketch of the school**

- One of the most famous grant schools, with a strong reputation as being good at English, and of an upper class background
- A Catholic school founded by foreign missionary
- A girl's school
- An English medium school
- Recruiting students from the first band
- The school is located in an upper class residential district
- The school is undergoing a process of localization, with fewer expatriates and with the headship taken over by local teacher
- The school has its own feeder primary school
- One of the earliest schools to pick up GPA in both A and Certificate Level
- However, the school is to give up the subject in the academic year 2002-3

Date of interview: 7/6/2002 (d/m/y)

Subject interviewed: S8

Class: GPA teacher

Background of subject:

- Secondary school teacher (male) in the mid 40s
- Graduated in the U.K., with study in political science
- Taught the subject at both Certificate and A Level soon after the subject was founded
- Worked with the researcher and then took over the as the subject's chair from the researcher when the researcher left the school for other jobs
- In the researcher's eyes, a very honest, sincere and dedicated teacher

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

Length of interview: 1 hour and 10 minutes

#### Content of interview

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): This interview is mainly related to my study. I am doing my doctorate in the University of Durham in the U.K. and I need to write a dissertation. The University requires us to protect your interest, mainly in the matter of confidentiality. Thus your name, the name of your school etc. will not be disclosed. Even if they are mentioned, they will be deleted in the transcription. I shall transcribe the tape by myself. I shall also send you a copy of the draft transcription to ensure that I shall not misunderstand you in any way.

S (1): No problem. I don't mind if you put my name into it as long as the name of the school is kept confidential.

I (2): I shall conceal both in fact. Please feel comfortable about it.

(The subject signs the consent form.)

S (2): I just hope that it can be helpful to you.

I (3): The opinion can be very helpful to me especially that you are such an experienced GPA teacher.

S (3): Actually, my involvement and interest with the subject has been gradually coming to a close.

I (4): Okay, let's have some basic background information first. Apart from teaching GPA, have you been involved in the committee work of the subject? I mean, say, the curriculum planning work of the Hong Kong Examination Authority.

S (4): Long time ago, I was once involved in the work of Liberal Study.

I (5): But not GPA?

S (5): No.

I (6): Fine then, I can concentrate in your role as a teacher of GPA. In teaching, there are things we want to achieve. So, in teaching this subject GPA, what do you want to achieve? What do you want your students to get?

S (6): First of all, it must be enabling the students to know some facts, say about the political system of Hong Kong and how it works. But, as to me, the most important thing will be that they can see from a critical perspective once they get hold of the facts. They shall not just learn the fact but shall be able to evaluate, criticize and comment. I don't want just to give them facts, but allow them to see relationship between different pieces of fact. These are what I hope to achieve.

I (7): Okay. Do you think patriotism, or love of one's own country, should be one of the aims in the teaching of GPA?

S (7): Do you mean a different thing to nationalism when you use the term patriotism?

I (8): Now, it's your view that is important.

S (8): I think if you are talking about affection to the country and the land, it's still

acceptable. That's normal. I also show such emotional bond with my country when I talked about June 4<sup>th</sup> and so. But, if you refer to the slogan used in the transition period like "we should have love the country education", I will not accept that and in fact I am very resentful to it.

I (9): So, you think the affection to your country and the land is patriotism while the formal "love your country" sort of calling and the drilling therein, are nationalism.

S (9): Whether we should use nationalism depends on its definition. I guess nationalism should have its own implication. I don't like the formal call of "love the country", say made by the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (actually a leftist party in Hong Kong) because these people fuse the love of the country and love of the party (Communist Party of China) into one regardless of what the government and party has done. If the government has suppressed the people and freedom, what is the point of loving it? If it is a matter of implied obligation, I cannot approve of it. I am very resentful to it and I would even lose the temper upon reading it.

I (10): So, the delineation of nationalism and patriotism can be vague. But, you agree to affection to one's country and land and reject any formal call for loving the country if it includes the love of the government and the party.

S (10): Exactly, and definitely. Do remember when you say you love the land, the government may be doing something to harm the land and the people. How can you love (the government) then? But, I understand that these people, when they say love the country, they mean it's after the handover and you should know what to do (love the land and the government as one piece). To these, I cannot render any support. Isn't it?

I (11): Yes. Okay. Is GPA nearer to being an academic subject or to being a form preparation for political participation?

S (11): Personally, I see it more from the academic point of view. But, it is hard to draw a hard and fast line. If say the students know more, they may concern more with their surrounding and then perhaps they shall resort to acting out. Political participation and participation then may be a continuum. But, as for me, I want to first give students some understanding and that will be academic in nature.

I (12): Dou you think you are helping the students to build up a sense of national identity in the course of teaching this subject?



S (12): I think so. I think so. It may not related to the subject matter. It does not cover that much of China indeed as China is only one of the parts. But, out of my contact with the students, I understand that some of them have become more concerned about China and the questions she encounters. To concern, of course, may not be equivalent to rendering love to the country. But, I guess such increased concern can reflect the affection bond with and hence implied responsibility to the country. This is not a direct result of the coverage of the subject. This depends on the teacher and how he interprets the issues and the feeling they get as a result. I believe it is more about this. How I interpret the party and the state and my personal manifestation (actually the Subject uses the Chinese proverb “teach by acting out”) will be important in affecting the student’s concern for the nation. This is my personal feeling and some students also told me so.

I (13): Actually this should be the question I asked right from the beginning. I forgot to do so and so I have to ask you now. Is it true that you taught both Certificate and A Level before? Now you should be just doing A Level.

S (13): Yes, this is the last year the school teaches the subject.

I (14): So, the Certificate Level was gone for sometime?

S (14): Yes.

I (15): Okay. I shall be asking my questions in general. If you believe different answers are needed for different Levels, please just specify.

S (15): Fine.

I (16): It will also be fine if you want to talk of something else other than the questions I ask.

S (16): Okay.

I (17): Do you find the aims and objectives in the official Syllabuses to be helpful in guiding your GPA teaching? Do you read them?

S (17): Frankly speaking, I have read them before. I can tell roughly what they talk

about. But, I don't think they are of great help. I find what they talk about are very general, for example the understanding of concepts and the development of the sense of civic responsibilities etc. These, I believe, are very official stuff. But, you can't say they are wrong either. So, I have read them. But, sorry they are not that helpful.

I (18): So, they are not too helpful because they are too generic?

S (18): What is meant by generic?

I (19): They are very general.

S (19): Yes. The Syllabus must be written in this way. They include everything, such as skills etc., isn't it? I will not consider them particularly.

I (20): So, you won't first read them before teaching a particular topic and see what aims are to be achieved etc.

S (20): No, certainly not. Off the track perhaps. I will do it in the teaching of Liberal Studies. The subject is so broad that I have to read the Syllabus or else I don't know what it wants. The subject is related to skills etc.

I (21): We also have the Teaching Guidelines.

S (21): You mean the red one?

I (22): Yes. The one issued by the CDI (Curriculum Development Institute). It tells what activities are to be arranged and so.

S (22): That's junk.

I (23): Did you read it before.

S (23): Yes, I did. I did. I read it before when I was writing something and would like to see the suggested activities there. But, I find the activities suggested in the Guidelines, like using the boards (for display) and drawing of flow charts etc., useless. I either find them too simplistic or that the activities suggested cannot serve the objectives I have in mind. Take asking the students to draw a flow chart as example. What is the purpose of it? This will not enlighten the students with regard to helping them to refine the way

they see things.

I (24): Are such activities able to be implemented?

S (24): Yes, in fact it will be very simple to finish too. Say, I can ask the students to cut some newspaper articles to put up on board in the wake of June 4<sup>th</sup>. I can also ask them to gather some information and comment. I have been doing this. I don't need the Guidelines to tell me.

I (25): So, the activities are feasible but not meaningful and you won't follow them in your teaching.

S (25): Yes. Besides the time allocation, like spending so many lessons on this topic and so many on this and that, as to me, is totally unrealistic.

I (26): Why?

S (26): There are topics I want to elaborate more. You can't say there are so many periods, say 7 periods, to be spent on this topic and that's it. There may be many things I want to talk about instead. It's too rigid. It may be that they are simply recommendations. But, I won't follow them. It is not too helpful.

I (27): Can I know roughly how you will normally teach a GPA lesson.

S (27): I think research is not important in the GPA class. It is rather a one-way business. I will first introduce the factual background. Then I will present my view and explanations of such facts. Discussions are rare.

I (28): It's mainly lectures.

S (28): Yes. They are mainly lectures.

I (29): Why are discussions rare?

S (29): Time is not enough. Besides, it may be due to language. I tried before. But, it hardly worked. (Actually the subject uses the Chinese proverb "it's like pulling the cow up to the tree".)

I (30): What do you mean by language issue here? Do you mean their English is not good? (The school in concern is an English-medium school.)

S (30): Yes. I think that's a waste of time (given that the students are not up to the standard in English and they have to converse in English in discussion). I gave them time to talk about issues. Then they mumbled for a long time and didn't really come up with anything. So I think I should do it for them.

I (31): So, their linguistic abilities are low and cannot afford them to do the discussion.

S (31): Yes.

I (32): XXX is a girl school. Do you find that girls' sensitivity to current news is...

S (32): Lower?

I (33): So you said it. Do you think so?

S (33): There are students who are more active in this sense and there are students who don't really know what is going on despite your teaching them for a long time. There are students who begin to become more concerned with the study of GPA. Some can grow in their understanding.

I (34): So, you think it's a matter of individual difference mainly?

S (34): Yes. I don't know the case with boys, as I never taught in a boy's school before. Some of my students may be like a mess. They won't read more things when they go home on top of notes and things you assign.

I (35): But, do they like to discuss?

S (35): It differs across the years. This year, our final year of having the subject, they are even more passive. I resort even more to lecturing. Maybe it is known that we are coming to a close. It's a sunset business. I get very frustrated too. This year is rather exceptional in fact.

I (36): How about the classes in the past few years?

S (36): You want to know whether they like discussion?

I (37): Yes.

S (37): I think they like to listen to me more. I thought they would discuss when I asked them to. But, I seldom gave them such chance.

I (38): Do you think that the students are passive because of their gender. Say, due to the fact that in Hong Kong, girls are less outspoken and so?

S (38): I don't really think so. I never taught boys before. But I think there is no real correlation with gender. I guess they simply follow me. If you gave me boys to teach, I believe the boys could become that lazy and passive too. I think this is the case with all our kids. I think if you gave me boys. I could at least achieve as much as I achieve with girls, say in promoting their concern of the society and so.

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I (39): What are the reasons that you resort mainly to lecturing?

S (39): The first reason, as I said before, is time. Second, I also say we should go beyond the outward appearance of facts.

I (40): Go beyond the outward appearance?

S (40): Yes, there can be story behind such facts and I want the students to see it and judge and evaluate etc. If you give it to the students, it will waste a lot of my time. They may not be able to do it too. But, if I can do it for them, let's say when I talk about the Communist Party of China and the problem of transfer of political power. This is not covered in the textbook that deals mainly with the institutions. I shall bring out this based on my own understanding nonetheless. You can say I am doing inculcation or indoctrination. I think I can do this in a better way through lectures. If I give them discussion, they will talk and talk and at the end can give me back only a factual account. This falls short of what I ask for, say seeing what is there behind the facts. If this is the case, I better let myself do the talking work. I feel this way. I think I can go more in depth this way.

I (41): You mean in the direction of critical thinking and judgement?

S (41): Yes. I think so

I (42): So. In reality, you are using the lecturing method. Is this also the ideal method you have in mind?

S (42): Yes. This is also the ideal method.

I (43): Would you encourage your students to take part in political participation. Take an example, when the issue of legalization of soccer gambling was in the air, I guess a schoolteacher did bring his students to lobby the Chief Executive against the notion. Would you organize such activities for your students?

S (43): (The subject laughs.) I never tried this before. The best I tried before was to bring them to see the Legislative Council meeting, together with you. (I was then the GPA panel chair in the school, working together with the Subject in teaching the subject. That should be more than ten years ago.) But, I know the students I teach, I mean some of them, may take up such participation by themselves as they become more concerned and feel having the responsibilities after studying GPA. Say two years ago, a couple of my students wrote to the Civic Right Party to volunteer for help.

I (44): You mean the party that is run by Ms Loh.

S (44): Yes. When I went to the June 4<sup>th</sup> rally, I met my students. It happened many times. I didn't lead them to join the rally.

I (45): How about if you suddenly told the principal that you would lead them to the parade?

S (45): (The subject laughs) Wow, then it would then be a real big trouble.

I (46): I mean what would you expect then if you say you are to bring students to political participation? You just said it would be a big trouble. Can you say more about it?

S (46): It depends on who is in the office (of leadership). I remember when XXX (the last principal) was still in office, the students approached me in the wake of June 4<sup>th</sup> and told me that they would like to put up posters in the memory of the event. I then approached XXX and she said, "Good, go ahead and put them up". Now, ... ! I didn't try.

But, out of what I can feel...

I (47): Big trouble?

S (47): I don't think she (the new principal) would fire me for this. But, out of what I can see as I didn't ask before, I guess she would say, "Better don't do this sort of thing". The best thing (the new principal deems) will be to hoist the national flag. The best thing is to hoist the national flag! (The Subject says this two times.) Yes, she said this to me many times. She asked me to attend seminars that explained the national flag. She spoke to me face-to-face about how we can organize the raising of the flag (in school) and salute etc. Now she is thinking in this way. Put to this the termination of GPA and other things, you can take that she is an important character in the depoliticization concept. So if I asked her for permission to bring students to the June 4<sup>th</sup> rally, I believe she would say no. Whether this could be due to political reason or administrative consideration to avoid responsibility would be hard to say. We better forget this person! (This statement of the Subject reminds me of a colleague who once invited me to write on the depoliticization of post-colonial Hong Kong's education, especially from the perspective of civic education. The researcher thus decides to interview the personality who has been working with civic education in Hong Kong for a long time.)

I (48): So, the headship's impact is enormous.

S (48): Yes, in fact the impact is huge, especially with regard to the ethos (of the school).

I (49): This would affect the way you do your work and the range of things you can do.

S (49): Sure. So, the sheer fact of support or no support means a world of difference. When you see the subject has been that phased out, it frustrates you.

I (50): Off the track a little bit perhaps. But, as we worked together in the panel before, and now, put it point blank, the shop is closing.

S (50): Yes, the shop is closing.

I (51): Tell me, in your opinion, what are the main reasons for the termination of the subject.

S (51): I have just said my initial conclusion is that of political reasons. It is due to the political understanding and consideration of the headship. You know she is a very bureaucratic person. It is due to her own view of politics and her idea about how sympathetic we should be toward political participation. But, now, I am thinking this hidden political agenda is not the only explanation. In my subsequent conversation with her, I gather that she is trying to follow very closely the central policy line. She believes that curriculum integration is the core development and then she confirms this with her wide contact network, with principal association and so, and then she believes that some individual subjects with little use (in her eyes) should be closed. I tell you with certainty that this person is surely politically conservative. But, I find that she is trying to follow closely the central direction.

I (52): So, the two reasons are firstly that she is politically conservative and secondly that this subject is sensitive.

S (52): In her mind, she has subjectively deemed so. In fact the subject is not that ...

I (53): The second reason is that she tries to follow closely the official line. This is a matter of political compliance.

S (53): Ah...

I (54): Policy compliance?

S (54): That's more appropriate. She is the sort of person well stuck to this. She will do anything the government requests. She has little brain too. She will pick up from what neighboring schools are doing. She gathers this from her wide network. She has no direction, say in planning the school's curriculum.

I (55): So, can I say that you feel that the government is not favoring subjects like GPA?

S (55): Put it this way, at face value, they won't say it and they still say they value civic education and political education etc. But, my feeling is actually they are trying to play down these.

I (56): So, even civic education is to be scaled down?

S (56): It depends on which sort of civic education you talk about. Civic education is



only a brand name.

I (57): So, the political elements in civic education are to be minimized.

S (57): They still allow you to put GPA to the examinations. But, in brief, I feel they try to depoliticize.

I (58): So, if civic education is not related to being politically critical and evaluative and instead is tied to being a good citizen and to "love thy country", it will be promoted.

S (58): Yes, exactly.

I (59): And as GPA, as you say, can go to such level as being politically critical and evaluative, it is no more the loved baby?

S (59): Yes, this is my feeling. I think this is getting more obvious. (There is such a decision) and the flatterers down the line know what to do.

I (60): This goes down to the school level and as a result closes our shop?

S (60): Exactly.

I (61): That's sad to see the shop close.

S (61): Yes. Actually, when you rang me up for doing this interview. I tried to find for you the letter from the Council that explained its decision to close the subject.

I (62): You talked to them?

S (62): Yes. If you looked at the letter, you will find those absurd reasons very funny.

I (63): That's deplorable.

S (63): Yes. There has been so much change since 1997. The change of the people and so....

I (64): This subject was turned out before 1997, say in mid 1980s. Hong Kong was then under British rule. Now, we are no more a colony. How do you think? The pre- or

post-1997 period provides us with a more favorable condition to teach this subject?

S (64): Of course, it was the period before the hand-over that gave a better ground to teach this subject. During the period of the British rule, though there might be political agenda for the colonial government, the political and administrative reforms then, gave us a much better context to do the subject. The space was there. Besides, there was a much stronger voice for the political organizations. Though the elected places came out slowly, the ethos was so much different.

I (65): So, there was then a much more lenient atmosphere?

S (65): Yes. So, though some people scolded Chris Patten, I believed he worked to our good. How he acted himself out was another thing. He contributed a lot to the political culture of Hong Kong. Now, it has been withdrawn totally.

I (66): So, now it is getting tight?

S (66): You feel it. We are going back in our way. Don't you?

I (67): Can't answer you as interviewer (should remain neutral). But, if you ask me on a personal basis, I tell you I agree with you.

S (67): Look at the Legislative Council. It has been paralyzed.

I (68): Guess now they count votes by sectors.

S (68): Yes.

I (69): There seems to be no more room for private bills, as private bills cannot touch upon government policies and involve public funds.

S (69): Yes. So, they can only deal with the most trivial. (The subject laughed.) There can only be bills to regulate corporate bodies and say allowing or disallowing the monopolist power companies to raise charges. These are trivial and there are not much of them anyway. Flatters are more plentiful these days. The so-called loyalists who tie themselves to supporting the authorities are even more plentiful than in the colonial days. I am getting a bit angry talking these.

I (70): In teaching political issues, do you think it a good sign to have divergent views among your students?

S (70): Definitely good. The students I like most are those who can rebut me and challenge me. That's true. I accept this. Though I may be angry then, I would admire them.

I (71): How about during examination?

S (71): Marks?

I (72): Yes.

S (72): It's the same (as they can get high marks). Administratively, this may be burdensome. But, all these years I have liked these students most. I guess our students have been good in taking care of the marks they should get.

I (73): Comparing our students to students in other schools, in terms of personality, what do you think are their differences? Though I have my view as I taught here before, I want to know your view now that you are the interviewee.

S (73): Personality? They may be a bit proud. Formerly, they could afford it. Now it is more based on ignorance as they think they are still very outstanding. When I first came the students were very proud but they were brilliant. Now, they are still proud, but they are simply under the wrong belief that they are like the graduates from the school 20-30 years ago.

I (74): Are they proactive and active in learning?

S (74): In terms of these, they are very weak. But, to qualify my comment, I have to say they still study (the book). I just find them stick with what I give them things to do. But, they study, say by rote, to get over the examinations.

I (75): Are they outspoken?

S (75): Used to be so many years back. But, that's not the case no more. They used to be proud but outspoken and sharp (in comment). Not so any more. I have seldom got any more challenging voices I told you a moment ago. It may be that they get afraid easily.

I (76): Why has this change come about?

S (76): Formerly, they were brighter and they would think, "Why did you not allow me to answer this (their own) way." They would fight to get the marks that they thought they were owed. Now, the students won't even stand out to fight for their own.

I (77): Has the culture of the school changed?

S (77): Sure. It has changed. It has changed and become less friendly. Some students in the sixth form came to me a few years back and told me this. I shared their view. They said when they were in lower forms, say when they joined the school in form two or so, any time they could find their teachers ready for chats on whatever topics, say the philosophy of life and so. They said: " Now, we will run away from the teachers. We find the teachers wearing a tight face and look very tired. There is no point talking anymore"

I (78): So, what has brought about this change? Is it the teachers or the school head?

S (78): It is the new head. She insists that we do up to 100 percents when the Education Department only requests ten. This works us to death. We are very frustrated. Though we have been very professional and effective in our work, we still get her scolds. She has never been appreciative. So, what is the point of doing the job so well? Where comes the energy for chatting and dealing with the students? The culture has so completely changed. I am very disappointed. I don't actually want to talk (in school) now. A colleague came up to me today and asked me whether I would like to be nominated for the chairmanship of the General Staff Assembly. I declined outright as I had lost my interest altogether. Why should I make myself so tired after all?

I (79): So, the new head has caused the staff to change?

S (79): Before, I never thought there could be so great and complete a change with the change of leadership! It's only now that I can understand what the books I read before about people dying of sorrow and rage could well be true stories.

I (80): Is there any need to avoid anything when, in the course of teaching China and Hong Kong, we come across politics and issues that are not in line with democracy?

S (80): The policy?

I (81): Yes.

S (81): We should not. What is wrong is wrong. I have condemned things done by the Hong Kong Government. It is through these we teach our students to be critical and to shoulder responsibilities. If you teach them abstract, empty stuff and avoid sensitive things, what is the point of studying this subject? You also feel bad about the private bill and group voting changes, don't you?

I (82): Yes.

S (82): I won't avoid anything. I just go to these issues with students.

I (83): What sort of national identity do you think our students should have?

S (83): Should?

I (84): Yes.

S (84): It must be a kind of critical national identity. As a member of the nation, they should be able to see their nation critically and don't just follow what the central authorities say they should believe. And be it whether it is the Government of China or the Government of Hong Kong.

I (85): This subject is also much related to the concern of indoctrination. What is indoctrination in your point of view?

S (85): To accept uncritically the present system and the policies and beliefs pursued by those in power. I think this is not good. We have a duty to let the people know not all policies and political figures are worthy of admiration and trust.

I (86): How would you guard against indoctrination when you teach GPA?

S (86): That's a good question. As I said earlier, I may be inculcating my students. I may show and teach my personal view to them in the course of criticizing and judging policies. I cannot avoid this. I also think this should not be condemned.

I (87): Do you mean what you teach are more radical, critical and so?

S (87): I don't know how you find it. I have been scolding Tung in my lessons. In a sense there is a stance. But, I will tell my students that it is my personal view and (request them) don't just trust it or I may have harmed them. This is an additional remark. I have to say I am inculcating them. But, I cannot avoid this. I cannot avoid this whatever I teach. I cannot just take out a chart and tell how many members are there in each body and the way they are chosen. Even so, I shall comment on the way of choosing such members. Even so, in electoral aspect, you are already leading the students to think of the problem related to election. I remember going to a seminar in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, I differed from some teachers who said that I should not give political point of view and stances. They believed we should only show charts and so and said the structural / descriptive things. I think I am smarter in this sense. What is the point of teaching if we confine ourselves this way?

I (88): If they are only structural and descriptive in nature, they will be very simple and students may not be able to deal with the A Level examination too.

S (88): Yes, even if this is from a utilitarian point of view. I may be affecting the students. But, I think this is needed. I never scold the Communist Party for being the Communist Party. I criticize it for the process and policies I can see. For this, I think I should enlighten the students.

I (89): And you respect their own view?

S (89): Absolutely and I like them argue with me too.

I (90): Is public examination a help or a hindrance to the teaching of GPA?

S (90): Both and not so much either way.

I (91): Why?

S (91): There is a little pressure and focus and this help. Too, the A Level questions are open-ended and this facilitates argument. On the bad side, the content can be excessive and we rush and can't go to depth and this hinders. Look at the coverage, there are real too much to cover in two years.

I (92): I have found the questions asked in public examination being repetitive or being similar over a number of years.

S (92): Exactly and I guess more so over the years.

I (93): Would this affect the way you teach?

S (93): No. There are students who complain that I don't help with the tipping off.

I (94): They want you to tip on the questions?

S (94): Yes. But, I don't. I tell them that I know what are the key things to cover and the requirements of this subject. If they trust me these key things will help them get over the examination. I won't tip on the questions directly.

I (95): Do you think that GPA gets the space to survive in Hong Kong?

S (95): The space is very limited indeed. First, as I said earlier the curriculum change is in the direction of integration. Social science subjects will be incorporated and that actually means they will be reduced in size. Besides, it is social consciousness. Look at the education reform now underway. I think the education reform is based on the rationale that there is globalization and competition between regions. Hence Hong Kong has to improve its competitiveness. This affects the reform and the curriculum restructuring. The so-called knowledge based society is actually unrelated to the disinterested knowledge, like what Socrates and Plato talked about as the knowledge of form and nature etc. The interest now talked about is knowledge related to competition and money making. Social science and humanities will be little relevant in this interpretation. On the other hand, I think that administration has been replacing education. Now there is nothing but the stress on administration and accountability and the filling of forms. In this light, I don't think politics has a significant role to play as it emphasizes aims and direction. Besides, there is no time to spare on humanities, as it only wants to get the things done. This is true of the whole society. Besides, in a more practical sense, now it is emphasized that we have good relationship with China. The government thus will set the restraints. Though China will not exercise the control directly. Those people will know how to shine the shoes though the government will not say that we give up GPA and so. But, I do think that the change in the society, including the institution and attitude, does not favor it.

I (96): Can I say that Hong Kong is now a self-restraining society as many people will set the restraints here in order to please China? Or so they believe they can? As a result, the room (for free political discussion) is narrowed down.

S (96): Agree though we need evidence. But, bar this, I agree. I just want to add one more point about what I just said about the so-called knowledge based society. Together, it is a lost society.

I (97): You mean it is also very utilitarian and biased toward what they deem practicalities?

S (97): Yes, that's it. So, they say, "Don't talk so much". They thus don't treasure humanities and science even though they are good. I don't like their "learning how to learn" slogan as it is nothing new.

I (98): I guess Confucius said it.

S (98): Yes, and it was in the tradition of Western philosophy. There was the calling of "know thyself" etc. Why is it so drummed up nowadays? It is because they now attach a price to knowledge. What price? That's market price, my friend. How can I learn? What is there to learn anyway? I can't even afford the time to read a book I like and attend a course. The knowledge they sell is only the compartmentalized knowledge. I can only study things related to the subject I teach and attend the so-called workshops and seminars etc, say related with critical thinking. Many of them are junks. Okay, the purpose of attendance is simply to allow them to assess you in relation to whether you are fit for promotion. What is learning to learn as a result? When we talk about knowledge before, we treasure it as being disinterested and broad. There is no such thing and knowledge ceases to be broad any more.

I (99): So, knowledge is now pursued not for its own sake and is pursued simply for other things.

S (99): We go the wrong way. Hong Kong is going the wrong way. What is there to learn? I think it is the policy of Education Department and the narrow compartmentalized knowledge to operate the subject. I don't think there is learning. Instead, it is control and manipulation. This is reflected in the school level. In the staff meeting, there is dead silence as teachers keep their mouths shut.



I (100): It was not so before. There were many voices when I was there in the school. You remember I was sitting at the back. But, I was not pleased with the decision and had to air my opposition aloud though I was at the back.

S (100): These are gone. In comparison, though I do not find XXX (the last principal) very brilliant, she is highly respectable. She is much better than these arrogant but ignorant ones.

I (101): So, you see the change in ethos.

S (101): Yes, this is true not just to our school. It is applicable to Hong Kong as a whole. The sense of insecurity, the need to sustain a living and lastly the administration are together suffocating the people. I am very frustrated with so many things. I cannot air such disappointment as I cannot locate its hub and I am too tired. I spend the days filling out forms and go upstairs and down for these. I waste the time. It is the absorption of politics by administration. The people (in power) are changing their faces and know how to team up (with authorities).

I (102): So, the habitat in the school is totally different from what it used to be when I left?

S (102): Yes, it is silence now. Look at the staff meeting and you can tell. I think it is also the reflection of Hong Kong as a whole.

I (103): And what are you going to do?

S (103): Try not to talk and conserve energy. (This is a Chinese proverb that means frustration out of inability to change unhealthy things).

The taping is terminated, as the Subject wanted to talk of something more personal. The interview lasts for an hour.

**Side Note:**

The interview is held in the coffee shop of a hotel, as the researcher believes that the interviewee will be very critical to the school in this matter

The Subject adds, after the taping is finished, that there is actually no point for dropping the subject, for it achieves both good results and student enrollment

The Subject carries on the conversation with the researcher and expresses deep concern about Hong Kong's well being as the direction of the new regime seems largely mistaken, especially in the matter of nepotism and the lack of transparency.

## Transcript Seven

A brief sketch of the school

- A prestigious granted school with long history
- A protestant school with foreign missionary background
- An English school
- A boy's school
- A school which may go private in two years' time
- The relationship between the teachers and the principal has been strained by the dispute over school privatization

Date of interview: 11/6/2002 (d/m/y)

Subject interviewed: S9

Class: GPA teacher, Syllabus planner and public examination setter

Background of subject:

- Male, in mid 30s
- AS Level GPA teacher
- A Level curriculum planner, helping with both Syllabus and Teaching Guidelines
- History major, with some study of Political Science in the university
- 10 years experience in teaching GPA
- A former student of the interviewer in the University when the Subject took his Cert. Ed. program

Venue of meeting: a café in Hong Kong Island

Length of interview: 1 hour

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

#### Content of interview

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): This interview is related to my doctorate study in the University of Durham. I am writing a thesis and the interview is part of the thesis work. The consent form you see here specifies the protection to you, mainly in the area of anonymity. Both your name as well as your school's name will not be disclosed. I shall also send you a copy of the transcription worked out by me once it is finished. You can ask for amendments. This is to ensure that I do not misunderstand you in any way. Actually, this consent form is part of the requirement of my University. Please sign if you have read and agreed to it.

S (1): I have finished reading it. Am I called Subject? (The Subject points at the text of the consent form and is interested in the way he is addressed.)

I (2): Yes, it stands for the interviewee.

S (2): It seems like something without life.

I (3): Perhaps, it also means putting you in the first place. I can't tell either. But, it is so

in many research literatures. (The Subject signs the consent form and the interview begins.) Okay. First may I have some background information from you ? I understand that you are teaching GPA this year. You are doing the subject at A Level. But, this is the last year your school is offering the subject.

S (3): Yes.

I (4): Are you involved in the subject's committee work?

S (4): Yes.

I (5): Guess it is with A Level's Syllabus.

S (5): Yes.

I (6): I understand that you are also involved in the subject's public examination setting work.

S (6): Yes. But, the setting work is with Certificate Level.

I (7): My interview is to comprise two parts. The first one involves you as a teacher. The second part is related to your role as a curriculum planner, looking after the subject's Syllabus and so. I would specify it when I start to deal with those questions. This is an informal interview. You may stop me and turn to things you want to talk about though I have a list of questions with me here.

S (7): So, I shall answer your questions?

I (8): Yes. But, you may stop me anytime you want to talk on any points you consider fit.

S (8): Okay. But, I won't. I think I shall like to answer your questions.

I (9): Fine. (It's up to you)

What are your aims in teaching GPA to your students? What do you want them to achieve?

S (9): To understand the society and politics comes first. But it is most important that they can develop values I deem right e.g. values related to democracy and freedom and the rule of law etc. These are most essential.

I (10): So, in the process (of teaching), you will also explain to them that these (values) are worth pursuing?

S (10): Sure.

I (11): How about examination results? Are students' examination results important to you?

S (11): Achieving good examination results is important to me. But, there has not been much pressure from the school so far. The pressure comes from me and the students. (The Subject repeats the point.) The school actually doesn't pay much concern to this subject. Maybe, it is due to the fact that the subject is an AS Level subject.

I (12): Mainly due to the fact it is an AS Level subject?

S (12): It thus has little impact on students' chance of entering the university.

I (13): Did your school ever start the subject at Certificate Level and full A Level?

S (13): No, never. It has always been AS Level.

I (14): Why?

S (14): It started 10 years ago in the school's attempt to broaden students' horizon. As a corollary, a number of AS Level subjects were started. GPA was one of them.

I (15): Can I say that this subject has always been marginal in your school and has never attained the mainstream status as Chinese, English and Mathematics?

S (15): Yes. But, it has been studied by quite a number of students. Examination results have been unsatisfactory, resulting in falling enrollment.

I (16): So, unsatisfactory results reduce enrollment and hamper the subject's importance?

S (16): Yes.

I (17): So, in your own theory, why students of your school are poor in results?

S (17): (The Subject hesitates for a while). The main reason is that it is not a major subject. It has little impact on chance of entering the university. More importantly, it also has something to do with the marking of papers. We think there is bias in marking. We talked to the Examination Authority many times. The results are problematic, as to us, particularly because they have little, if not negative correlation, with students' overall performance in the A Level examination and with the same students' performance in the same subject in the university. Give you some examples. They may have all credits in the A Level and get U (undefined, i.e. lowest grade) in GPA. The student may get a U in GPA and may make the first of class in this subject in the university. It is hard to explain why they are so poor in results all these years.

I (18): So, what is your guess?

S (18): Maybe the markers' criteria are too high and my students cannot meet them.

I (19): Okay. Do you think they (the markers) have some standard answers?

S (19): I don't think there can be much standard answers as this subject is very much related to current affairs. The chance is not high.

I (20): Is it possible that they (the markers) require certain stance that needs to be taken?

S (20): I can't tell, as I have not been involved in the marking work. But, I think the students will not be too radical and will tend to be neutral.

I (21): Okay. Should GPA promote patriotism as one of its aims?

S (21): In my view, it's not possible as China is very much a negative example. We certainly won't tell the students not to love the country. I will still try to differentiate with them the country, the government and the party. But, they shall still mix them together. The resentment to the authorities often reduces the love to the country.

I (22): Okay. Thus as to you, what is patriotism?

S (22): I think it refers to the love of one's own country's history and culture and support to its unity and sovereignty. But, it is not safeguarding the interest of individual leaders or a political party. They should be separated.

I (23): Is GPA more an academic subject or a preparation for political participation?

S (23): I don't think it is up to the level of being preparation for participation. But, at the same time, often it is not as academic either. It is unique in itself as it covers a lot of current issues and hence is atypical of academic subjects. In the AS Level, for example, it takes almost one half of the marks, as far as HK is in concern.

I (24): Can GPA enhance the sense of national identity among the students?

S (24): No, it can be even negative in the sense that the students can end up criticizing the nation more than before as they know more about the bad things. They may even become more critical to their country. This may be more than identifying with the country.

I (25): The Hong Kong Examination Authority (HKEA) has issued GPA Syllabuses. Are the aims in the Syllabus important to you in your teaching?

S (25): Basically, they are not important.

I (26): Why not?

S (26): Back to the basic, you need to see what sorts of questions are asked in public examinations and where the focus is. Those aim and objectives basically are not linked directly to the questions asked (in the public examination). So, I won't pay much attention to them.

I (27): Okay. There is also a set of Teaching Guidelines issued by the Curriculum Development Institute that tells us how to use time etc.

S (27): Yes.

I (28): Then, are the Teaching Guidelines important to your teaching?



S (28): They are of referencing value. The time to be devoted to a certain topic etc. is not important. However, the Guidelines (for teaching) are more specific than those in the HKEA's Syllabus and thus can be more useful as reference.

I (29): Will you read them?

S (29): Yes, I will.

I (30): In general, how do you teach the subject in class?

S (30): I spend relatively little time on theories, as they are more abstract. Instead, I spend much time on concrete examples and issues to bring out these theories. The issues come from China, the international scene and Hong Kong. They are mainly current issues. But, they may be historical incidents too. I do it this way as this subject emphasizes proofing with examples.

I (31): By the way, what did you study in university?

S (31): I graduated as a History major and Political Science minor.

I (32): In the University of Hong Kong?

S (32): Yes.

I (33): In terms of methods like lecturing, discussion and so, what do you think you are more inclined to use in teaching your GPA class?

S (33): I use lecturing methods mainly because students are not up to the level to do group discussion and learn through such discussion.

I (34): Is it language or knowledge?

S (34): It is their academic knowledge and their understanding of issues which becomes the problem here. They are not up to that standard.

I (35): I understand they have no GPA study in the Certificate Level. They only do it in AS Level. Will this cause difficulty?

S (35): Yes. This causes difficulty. (The Subject says it two times). They study with difficulty, (as they have no prior knowledge) and this can be the reason for poor results.

I (36): Bar these constraints, what, in your mind, is the best method of teaching GPA? Of course, you can say lecturing again.

S (36): Of course it is discussion-based learning, as there is no absolute truth in the related issues. Exchange of ideas based on own stance is better.

I (37): So, in your point of view, is it healthy that, in the course of learning, the students express different stances and divergent views? The views, remember, are even different from yours.

S (37): I guess it all depends on the argument behind. If the argument is sound, it should even be encouraged (not just tolerated).

I (38): Will you avoid talking anything when, in the course of teaching Hong Kong and China, you come across something that may be sensitive, say practices that may not be in line with democracy and so?

S (38): I will not need to dodge anything and I shall talk about them when needed.

I (39): This may be a hypothetical question as your school is doing just the AS Level. But, if your school took the subject at it's A Level, would you consider taking the Project Assessment Scheme (PAS)?

S (39): I would not join the Project Assessment Scheme even if allowed. It is because from hearsay, I gather that the scheme doesn't bring good results.

I (40): So, results are after all the most basic consideration?

S (40): Yes, it often is the factor in the consideration.

I (41): We talked about national identity a few moments ago. Returning to this question, what sort of national identity do you think our students should have?

S (41): I believe that national identity should be accepting one's own country and government as legitimate but remains critical to them. That is to say, students should not take the authorities as illegitimate because it is dictatorial. They should instead take

the political authorities as reality but remains critical in their attitude.

I (42): So to be critical here is to improve the country by promoting a healthier ethos or policies?

S (42): I don't think Hong Kong can have much impact on the development in the mainland in this sense. All that I can think of is the building of the ethos within Hong Kong.

I (43): In teaching politics, we often come to a term, known as indoctrination. In your view, what is indoctrination?

S (43): It refers to controlling thoughts. It is simple.

I (44): Is it positive or negative in your understanding?

S (44): In most of the time, it is negative. Part of the political culture and particular political values, such as freedom and democracy and the rule of law etc, you can say it is indoctrination (i.e. can be passed on through indoctrination).

I (45): So, you mean some value can be...

S (45): You can say I will impose these on them in a forceful way.

I (46): Yes.

S (46): This is to ensure that they will accept.

I (47): So, what on top of these should be negative?

S (47): Yes, I understand it this way.

I (48): Will you take measures to guard against indoctrination (on top of the essential values)

S (48): Usually I will indoctrinate the value of democracy but not the version of democracy. For example, you can mention to them different versions of democracy in practice and let them reflect upon the best form of democracy, say whether presidential

form or parliamentary form of democracy is better. I shall not go to the very minute level. It doesn't go to the specific concepts. The students have to accept certain principles of living. But, different versions of implementing should be left to themselves. Of course dictatorial forms are not included in this consideration. This should be ruled out.

I (49): So you will insist on the principles of democracy and freedom. But, you won't insist on specific policies.

S (49): Yes. Yes. Democratic system can be realized in different ways.

I (50): Okay. In correcting students' papers, what is, in your view, a good answer in GPA?

S (50): This is to be close to the demand of HKEA. They should show independent thinking, critical mind and analysis. Same mind to teachers is not important. Only if their ideas and arguments are kink, shall I then deduct marks from them.

I (51): What is meant by a good GPA students in your understanding?

S (51): I guess they should write well and, in the course of writing their essays, they can be analytical and critical minded; and can use a lot of evidence to advance their argument. I stress this last point as I feel that to give ideas without being able to give evidence is a failure in itself. They should be able to quote from a wide spectrum.

I (52): Do you think the Government is emphasizing and actively promoting the subject?

S (52): I think the Government basically doesn't care about this subject. The Government doesn't interfere with these academic subjects.

I (53): Reinforcement?

S (53): You can say so, as there is a small sum of money to help buying of some books...

I (54): Does your school favor the subject?

S (54): I think it is somewhat neutral and apathetic. It doesn't care.

I (55): The subject will close down next year. Can you share (your views and feeling) on this?

S (55): I guess the main reason is poor results in the examination. If the result is good it may change to A Level. Our school is trying to do away with AS Level after all. GPA cannot turn A Level because of its poor result. I have no confidence to make such a proposition. I can't guarantee its examination results anyway.

I (56): But, I gather from what you just said that the case might be your school has come to a dead end. You do not have Certificate Level and this renders it difficult for students who do it at AS Level. Then poor results at AS Level forbid the subject to move up to A Level. The failure to move up to A Level in return disallows the subject to gain importance.

S (56): Yes. Basically, this is the case. Actually there is no room to start this subject at Certificate Level.

I (57): Why?

S (57): Because we have already got a lot of subjects at Certificate Level. There are already many split classes. Students may split into two or even three classes (to take their electives). The students already have got so many choices. It becomes practically impossible to assign periods to accommodate this subject. There is no way out.

I (58): Then what do you think is the reason why this subject cannot compete successfully with Economics and Accounting (in the Certificate Level)? By the way, you do have Accounting?

S (58): Yes we do have Accounting. These subjects have been there in the timetable for a long time. It had been there for a long time when GPA was coined. There is thus actually no question of competing for space.

I (59): There is no way to compete?

S (59): No, it is out of the question. Besides, those subjects can better arouse the interest of the students.

I (60): Why?

S (60): Because they are subjects of better practical value.

I (61): But, don't you think that this subject can also have practical value as it enhances the understanding of China and can thus be related to China trade and working in China etc?

S (61): It's not me who deem that the subject is not of practical value. It's the students who think so.

I (62): Some believe that boys will be more able to do the subject as they are more concerned with and interested in politics and current affairs. Do you think that boys are thus more suitable to do this subject as a result? Of course, I know you are just teaching boys, as your school is a boy's school.

S (62): As subjective feeling, I do think so.

I (63): You do agree to this?

S (63): Yes. In general, their concern of (current issues and politics) is higher.

I (64): Do you think the political changes related with the change of sovereignty in 1997 will affect the teaching of this subject? By changes, I include also the change in social ethos. Perhaps we can first start with the changes. Can you observe that there are changes in political and social ethos before and after 1997? (The researchers finds that the sentence may be a bit complex and thus decide to split the question into two).

S (64): You mean...

I (65): For example, the degree of openness and...

S (65): The whole society?

I (66): Yes it may include the changes in the whole society.

S (66): In terms of politics, I believe we are moving into being conservative. Perhaps not just...I think it is political apathy too. I also become more apathetic too.

I (67): Why is there such apathy when compared to the time before 1997?

S (67): There is quite enormous discontent against the regime among teachers, students and colleagues.

I (68): This is more serious after 1997?

S (68): This is after 1997. Before 1997, (the level of resentment was low), probably due to the fact that the society was more prosperous and also to the fact that expectation of people to British rule was not as high. After 1997, on the contrary, the expectation of the people rises and the economy is in a poor shape. This results in a fall in the interest in politics. People become more apathetic as a result.

I (69): Yes. But, using the Western societies as examples, political resentment usually results in a rise of political concern...

S (69): But, in the case of Hong Kong, we don't have much room for political participation. The Government is basically a close and undemocratic system. People can't remove the government and this political powerlessness has brought forth a sense of helplessness.

I (70): So, can I say that this apathy is the reflection of political helplessness?

S (70): Yes. Yes. The helplessness brings the apathy. It arises because people cannot remove and monitor their government through elections.

I (71): But, before 1997, the Governors were appointed by Britain. Now, at least Tung (the Chief Executive) is returned through a system of election.

S (71): Before 1997, the people were well fed and clad. There was thus not much dissatisfaction. Now, the economy is not good. People have a lot of grievances. Yet, they can't change the government.

I (72): So, this further dampens their interest in politics?

S (72): Yes, this is the point.

I (73): Is this subject a sensitive one, say to parents and students, as it deals with talks

about politics?

S (73): It happened before that a parent asked whether the poor performance of his son was due to the government's attempt to close the subject. The parent even hinted that he should write to the mass media. I asked him not to do it, as it would not be effective. Nothing was actually done.

I (74): Do you agree to what he said?

S (74): I don't think he had proof.

I (75): The following questions accrue to your role as a curriculum planner, say as member of the subject committee. First, do you think this subject can help the students to become effective citizens of the HKSAR?

S (75): Certainly. Students can know the government structure, governance, and political parties. Their knowledge about all political actors actually improves. They can also know the problems that arise from the political system. Their knowledge about the ruling of Hong Kong in general will improve.

I (76): It mainly enriches students in the knowledge domain?

S (76): There is certainly knowledge enhancement. On the other hand, the subject can enrich the students' critical attitude in politics. They become much stronger than average people (in being politically critical).

I (77): As curriculum planner, do you find the aims/ objectives in the Syllabus satisfactory?

S (77): I don't think it is a matter of good or bad. They are broad, abstract, generic and rather universal and positive. These can readily be accepted by most of the people.

I (78): Say you became the big boss and could change anything there, would you like to change these aims and objectives?

S (78): There is no need to change them, as they are basically correct and broadly accepted.



I (79): As planner, are you satisfied with the content of this subject?

S (79): There is not much problem there. It is quite well balanced and every part of the content being useful.

I (80): Anything you want to change, say adding or deleting or altering?

S (80): There is nothing to change in my view.

I (81): Then, how about the Teaching Guidelines issues by the CDI (Curriculum Development Institute)?

S (81): Basically, they are too idealistic. With regard to the activities, you won't have so much time to implement them, considering the tightness of the subject's schedule.

I (82): So, it is the time issue.

S (82): Yes. There is not enough time. It is simply not possible to do them.

I (83): As for assessment, the mode of the assessment is mainly paper test. Few schools do the PAS anyway. Do you agree to the assessment mode in general?

S (83): Paper test is fine. But, there are too many essay questions. I think we should develop variety, like multiple choice and data based questions. The present method is not too comprehensive.

I (84): I gather from figures about school and student enrollment that GPA is not a growing subject. On the contrary, it is declining gradually. As a planner, how will you account for the stagnant growth of the subject?

S (84): I don't really know why other schools will have such attitude? But, in my personal view, schools usually care about examination results. People can't see that this subject generates good results. Being difficult is also a problem. It includes too much current issues and has no standard textbooks to rely on. This brings pressure to students and teachers as they have to constantly read newspapers and magazines. There may be schools that do not want it because of its politically sensitive nature.

I (85): In terms of content, which part of the Syllabus do you think is best written? Which part, on the contrary, is comparatively the least satisfactory? (The Subject paused for some moments). Perhaps, we can focus on the A Level Syllabus for the time

being.

S (85): (The Subject pauses for a while.) I think the Syllabus is quite well balanced and every part being quite worthy of learning and quite useful too.

I (86): Okay, time for our meeting is near and I have finished with my questions. Do you want to add any more points and opinions?

S (86): No. (I think that's it).

I (87): Then thank you for taking this interview.

## Transcript Eight

### A brief sketch of the school

- A boy's school
- Located in Kowloon
- A Catholic school
- A Chinese medium school, taking student from the lower bands
- The supervisor is a priest. He used to live in a quarter inside the school. But, he is gone now.

Date of interview: 24/6/2002 (d/m/y)

Subject interviewed: S10

Class: GPA teacher

### Background of subject:

- GPA teacher
- Female, late 30s
- A former EPA teacher
- Took up GPA after returning from Austria about 4 years ago
- Graduated from the university as a Government and Public Administration major

Venue: The school's meeting room was used at the beginning. Noise of the construction work nearby made us move to another room in the former supervisor's quarter.

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

Length of interview: 1 hour 15 minutes

### Content:

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): The interview is related to the dissertation I am writing. The dissertation is a part

of the doctorate program I am doing in the University of Durham in the United Kingdom. The topic I have chosen is teaching politics in schools. I am using GPA as a case. As such I need to interview friends who are working with this subject. This includes those who work as teachers and curriculum planners. The University is requesting us to protect the interviewees. There are a number of provisions. (The consent form is produced.) They cover mainly anonymity, in the sense that your name, as well as the name of your school, shall not be disclosed. I shall do the transcription myself. Thus, nobody shall hear your voice and identify you. I shall also send you a draft transcript once it is ready to ensure that I have not misunderstood you in any way. If you find that I have misunderstood you, you can request amendment to the transcript. The details are in this consent form. Perhaps, you can take a look at it. If you have no questions, you need to sign it before the interview begins.

(The Subject signs the consent form. The noise from the construction work is getting worse. We move to a room in the former supervisor's quarter to continue the interview.)

I (2): First, let's get some background information straight.

S (1): Yes.

I (3): Are you involved in the committee work of GPA.

S (2): No, not in this year.

I (4): So, you are only teaching the subject this year.

S (3): It has been so in these few years.

I (5): I understand that you teach the subject at both the Certificate and A Level.

S (4): Yes.

I (6): Are you working with the PAS (Project Assessment Scheme) in A Level?

S (5): No.

I (7): Okay. I shall start now. I ask the background information (about your involvement) because I have both questions to teachers and questions to curriculum planners. As you

are not related to curriculum planning work, I shall focus on the questions related to GPA teachers only and leave those related to curriculum planners. I think when we teach the subject, there are things we want to achieve. It can be in terms of our students' achievement and improvement etc. So, what are the aims you have in teaching this subject, say in terms of expected students' achievement?

S (6): The aims are not related to students being prepared to work as politicians. This subject will not do this. It is related to the role of citizens instead. Educating students to be good at reasoning and well versed in current affairs will allow students to be good citizen in a democratic system.

I (8): Thus, it is more related to enabling our students to play their role as citizens in a better way?

S (7): Yes.

I (9): How can this subject contribute to developing good citizens?

S (8): Certificate Level gives students understanding about HK, the place they live in. If you have no understanding and are unable to analyze, you cannot tell right from wrong in the politicians' discourse. This affects your voting behavior and the way you express your opinion. Then, at higher form, say at A Level, the subject gives more understanding of China. China is closely related to Hong Kong. They also have a lot of chance to work in China (in the future). Understanding the political environment of China will be of help to them.

I (10): Can I say that this subject allows them to know the polity of Hong Kong so that they can judge and tell right from wrong in dealing with politicians while knowledge about China's politics helps them to work in China in the future?

S (9): Yes, and China has influence over Hong Kong. Besides, in A Level, they do United States too. This gives them somewhat like international perspective. This allows them to see systems very different from that of China.

I (11): Yes.

S (10): I don't know whether it is possible. But, maybe, students can give some ideas about the political development of China in the future. You see there is a chance to see other political systems at work.

I (12): Oh yes. In the Certificate Level, there is also the talk about the parliamentary system.

S (11): Yes, a touch upon.

I (13): And all these give the students an international perspective that allows them to bring new elements into their evaluation and analysis of Hong Kong and China?

S (12): Yes.

I (14): A moment ago, you mentioned about good citizens. So, what in your view are things a good citizen should do?

S (13): I think a good citizen should have knowledge of society and know what are happening. They should have both (social) concern and interest. They should also be a part of public opinion and be able to analyze and judge. This is because a successful democratic system is grounded on having citizenry who are both independent-minded and rational in thinking. So, concern and understanding are both needed. Last, of course, they shall be inclined to participate, say in voting and expressing their opinion.

I (15): Okay. In your view, is this subject more an academic subject or a form of preparation for political participation?

S (14): GPA is more an academic subject (than a form of preparation for political preparation). Students aim at getting higher grades and the subject is very examination-oriented.

I (16): Then, are getting better grades in examination important to you?

S (15): I believe this is not a problem so long if this raises students' interest. This subject is special in the sense that what happen today can be readily cited as examples. They are really related to your daily life. But, since the examination requirement is mainly on knowledge. So, I think this is more an academic subject.

I (17): Do you think patriotism should be among the aims of this subject?

S (16): It is difficult (to take patriotism as an aim of the subject). We talked about this in

the morning. The principal mentioned that the Korean football team was supported by the nationals not that because they liked football. It was more because the Koreans loved their country. On the contrary, people here only said they supported China's team. Behind your back, they actually placed their money on Brazil's team in soccer gambling. They were very realistic. They shouted with bad words at the Chinese team when it made mistake. I think it is difficult as this subject is rational in nature while national feeling is mainly a matter of affection. When students become more rational and understand more, their resentment of China may increase. This is because China may be negative in a number of areas, such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion and press etc. This may happen. But, our job is to analyze the information with them.

I (18): Can I say this subject allows the students to understand more but love of the country may diminish as a result of such understanding?

S (17): Yes.

I (19): It can be hatred too?

S (18): Yes.

I (20): But, back to your point of view, is it appropriate to make patriotism one of the aims?

S (19): It is not possible. Teachers' own affection to the motherland may be low due to a long period of colonial rule and education. We only rationally analyze different political systems and explain their strengths and weaknesses. The only positive thing we talk about China nowadays is her economy. She is really successful in this area. We depend on her nowadays. Promoting affection through this subject is not easy. On the contrary, to have the affection (to the country), you don't need to have a lot of information.

I (21): Knowing more may even be detrimental?

S (20): Yes. Singing the national song etc. can be more effective if promoting affection is the concern.

I (22): Will you agree that this subject will help students to build up a sense of national identity?

S (21): Do you mean Chinese citizenship?

I (23): Yes.

S (22): I ask this question as they (the students) often think that they are Hong Kong people. So, the self-identification you ask is about the country?

I (24): Yes. I am asking about whether the teaching of the subject will contribute to the self-identification of students as Chinese citizens. Do you think there will be such an effect (when GPA is taught in school)?

S (23): No. Not much as I can see.

I (25): Why?

S (24): Even up to Certificate Level, you are only teaching China's political system to the people. On the other hand, the self-identification as China's citizen depends on a lot of things such as identification with the Chinese culture and other factors. Besides, they (the students) have always identified themselves with Hong Kong, instead of seeing themselves as Chinese.

I (26): This is very hard to change?

S (25): Yes. Yes.

I (27): So, they will know something like the National People's Congress (China's legislature) and the State Council (China's cabinet) and still do not have any identification with them (the state)?

S (26): Yes. Yes. This will not lead to identification.

I (28): So, knowing and identification are basically two different things?

S (27): Yes. Yes.

I (29): So, they can know all these (Chinese political system) and still think they are Hong Kong people (instead of Chinese citizens).

S (28): Yes.



I (30): Okay. Are the official aims/ objectives in the Hong Kong Examination Authority's Syllabus important to your teaching? Will you read such aims and objectives and follow them in the course of teaching?

S (29): Do you mean the general statements at the beginning?

I (31): And those you find in each section (in the explanatory notes).

S (30): Such as analysis and participation etc...

I (32): Yes.

S (31): They are very generic in fact. I do read them but only to get a brief sketch. The emphasis on analysis is good and can be done. The same is true of multiple perspectives in understanding. I shall not read them before every topic. Instead I read them every year.

I (33): On the whole, do you find them reasonable?

S (32): The call for students to analyze and think rationally can be achieved. But, those related to action and participations may be too idealistic.

I (34): Apart from the Syllabuses issued by the Hong Kong Examination Authority, there is also a set of Teaching Guidelines issued by the Curriculum Development Institute. At first there was only one for Certificate Level. Later, in 1996, another one for A Level was released. They deal with the sorts of activities to be implemented and the time allocation etc.

S (33): Yes.

I (35): Will you regularly consult the Teaching Guidelines and follow the recommendations there?

S (34): I do read them as reference to make the year plan and before teaching a topic. It is only to make sure I miss nothing in teaching. But, I will not necessarily follow the methods in teaching.

I (36): Yes. How do you normally teach the subject in class?

S (35): Do you mean A Level or do you mean Certificate Level?

I (37): Yes, if you think they are different, please specify the level.

S (36): Actually, I am mainly rather examination-oriented. For Certificate Level, the answers expected are shorter. Say, it may be three marks for each point. The stress is how to grasp a number of points rather than to develop on the points. You need to give them a number of points and perhaps bring them out to do some visits. As for A Level, the question is short but the answer is long. The skill is mainly how to understand. There is a need to understand different perspectives because of the need to answer longer questions. Generally, I mainly use "question and answer" techniques.

I (38): This is the actual method you use. How about the ideal method you have in mind?

S (37): Now, OHP are being used. Later, I will like to use IT, for example accessing the Internet to get information. Now, the Government is putting a lot of information in the web page. I shall try to use the computer more though this year I still worry about not being able to get the machine work. Anyway, it is important to encourage students to speak out.

I (39): But, if they are working with the computer, they won't (be interacting).

S (38): I can project the information on screen.

I (40): Okay.

S (39): In Certificate Level this year, I require the students to do a project in summer. You know (in Certificate Level), the students need to study one policy area. Before I find the information for them. Now, it is actually very easy to do it by going to the Internet or by reading the newspapers. I now require them to collect some information themselves. This year it is about education. This can be achieved by their doing the project.

I (41): So, the project is part of your request on them.

S (40): Yes.

I (42): How many students do you have?

S (41): Forty.

I (43): Then, you have to look after about forty projects?

S (42): No. I shall group the forty students, into groups of four.

I (44): So, there shall be around ten projects.

S (43): Yes.

I (45): The ten group projects here are not to be submitted to the HKEA. They are yours.

S (44): Yes.

I (46): Suppose you have the same amount of individual projects...

S (45): Such as in the A Level (PAS)?

I (47): Yes, which are to be handed in to the HKEA (as part of the assessment). Do you think you can handle the job?

S (46): It's not just the problem of marking their work. Now, the project work going on in my school is actually not that satisfactory. There are projects in junior forms, i.e. form one to three. The teachers cannot that follow the work of the students. The idea of doing it across the subjects may be a good idea. There are not as many projects as a result. There won't be so many projects, say for Geography, History and EPA etc.

I (48): This will trim down the number of projects required?

S (47): Yes. There can be better care of the projects as a result because teachers can have the time in a lower ratio (teacher-to-projects). As far as I can see, the projects at the junior forms are poorly done. I don't teach them. But, I have read the projects. They are all plain factual information, without any analysis and thinking.

I (49): Can I say that the number of students, or more specifically, the number of

projects, is crucial as it affects the quality of the projects.

S (48): Yes. Apart from introduction and outlining the methods of carrying out the study, actually the teachers will be heavily engaged in the process, say in answering students' questions. Without these (intense teacher support), all result will only be a heap of information. There will not be much thinking and analysis. As such, there is nothing to gain after the projects have been finished.

I (50): With regard to methods, let me ask a related question. If project work becomes a part of GPA study and the number of projects has been reduced to a manageable level, say about ten due to smaller class or extra hands, do you think this will be good?

S (49): Yes. Actually this is also true of visits. I need to take eighty students out.

I (51): Eighty?

S (50): Yes, as we have two classes. I don't find it easy to invite other teachers to help too. You simply can't lead too many students to visit a place, say a law court. It must be one (teacher) to twenty (students) as this is the most the court can take. This is also true of projects. The students may need to come to you regularly, showing things they have written etc. You will have to comment and point out mistakes they make in the text and in their thinking.

I (52): Do you think projects can help the students in enhancing their thinking, say analysis and collection of information etc:

S (51): I have not got in touch with it yet as I am not doing the junior form (projects). But, out of what I see, they are only factual stuff, without much analysis and thinking. This year we did participate into a project competition, I helped to lead a few projects. But, they didn't go well. When the old boys came back, I told them that it was not looking good at all. It could be that the seventh forms had no experience in doing projects before. I could not pass any of their written work. They didn't work hard on the projects either. Then I called in the old boys to help. They are now studying their post-secondary education and they know the way of doing projects much better, say in information gathering and presentation etc. Thus (you can say), I have not yet got the positive effects of projects from the present students.

I (53): But, are you positive with projects, say once the students have the habits of

working on projects and the size of class is no more a problem?

S (52): Yes. I think it can be useful.

I (54): In what sense?

S (53): It is a way for you to search for answer out of a question you find interesting. This will not confine you to a particular area. You will get something from the process of collecting information and analyzing the information. You will not be confined to the Syllabus. You will be happy because you find things you are interested and get the answer at the end.

I (55): Okay. Let's continue with teaching method. But, if you want to talk about something else, please do.

S (54): As for teaching method, I need to talk quite a lot, as the children (students) are weak in current news. There are so many they have not even heard of. It is hard to start a discussion. They don't even know there is such news. (The Subject laughs).

I (56): You mentioned that examination was important a few moments ago. Can I ask you whether language is important in this subject? Or, in particular, is language ability important in affecting the examination result?

S (55): Yes. Language is particularly important in A Level, as students need to write a lot in their essays. In Certificate Level, you may know the skill and get the points (to get through the examination). Then, each point requires you only to write a few sentences. But, in A Level, language is very important, as you need to write essays. The linguistic skills are very important. For some students, you won't understand anything though they write out the essay to you.

I (57): It's because there is a need to read a lot and write a lot.

S (56): On top of that, it is the logic (of writing); say how this sentence is related to the next one etc.

I (58): And students cannot get through if they are a bit weak in language?

S (57): Yes. It's is not a matter of writing beautifully. It is matter of being able to express own views. The impact of language is there. This is true even if there will be a data base

part to be added to the Syllabus in the future. You need to write on those data given anyway.

I (59): Okay. Let's stop for a while. (A janitor staff tries to enter the room and the interview is interrupted for a few moments). In teaching about Hong Kong and China etc, you may encounter many controversial questions. Sometime, it may be pointed out that things are not handled in line with democratic principle. In dealing with these sensitive issues, do you feel any pressure?

S (58): I don't really feel the pressure. However (ironically), students will tell me not to talk of them, as they are sensitive. (The Subject laughs). This happened when I criticized China. This also happened when I talked about the Taiwan's independence issue as people related with China had criticized that we (Hong Kong people and press) should not promote and talk about these. It's very interesting as it was them (the students) who asked me not to talk about it. (The subject laughs when she speaks). Then I have to explain to them that I just speak out these opinions. So long if you can find reasons to support your views, it should be fine. Till now, I don't feel the pressure. But, the children (the students)...

I (60): They feel it?

S (59): Yes. So, they (the students) said, "Be careful with your words and with your criticisms." (The Subject laughs during speaking).

I (61): In teaching this subject, often there is the concern about indoctrination. So, what is meant by indoctrination as to you?

S (60): Indoctrination is forcing one's belief through and imposing it on others, without relying on reasoning. It is the promoting of a thing (belief) by emphasizing its merits, without good reasons behind.

I (62): Will you take it as positive, negative or neutral in nature?

S (61): (The Subject hesitates for a while). Put it this way, I don't find it desirable, considering from the perspective of (developing) a reasoning mind. But, I don't know. My own understanding is that our education is more in favor of the Western notion of democracy. It is more inclined to take it as more satisfactory. I may be speaking more information on this side (Western democracy). This may affect the students though I

resort to reasons. I may explain more on this side (Western democracy). Is this ... (indoctrination)? I know democracy of the West better. As for that of China, though we know it structurally, there are in fact many things inside we don't know clearly. Is this indoctrination? The students listen to this side (Western democracy) more. This may affect the students as they may think the Western version, or the United States' version, may be better.

I (63): So, you can see this potential influence?

S (62): Yes.

I (64): In the course of teaching, the students' view may dovetail with ours. Or else, it may differ from ours. If they express a divergent view, how will you feel? Will you accept such divergent views?

S (63): I approve of such divergent views. We only examine reasoning behind in marking students' papers. Yet, students complain that they are in a weaker hand when arguing with me (because of their knowledge deficiency). They said, "We won't be able to win by debating with you". I think we can have different views and talk about our reasons behind. But, they believed that they could not win the upper hand, as they didn't have enough information. (The Subject laughs when she spoke).

I (65): You said that you would accept their view, though it may be different from yours. But, will their divergent view have an influence on the mark they get?

S (64): I don't think this (influence) exists. So long if they talk with reasons, I shall accept (the answer).

I (66): So, it all depends on the reasons behind the answer?

S (65): Yes.

I (67): We talked about national identity a few moments ago. What do you think our students' sense of national identity should be like?

S (66): In fact, it should be belonging to a state. There is advantage of such belonging, as it comprises protection. Especially when the country in concern is strong, the group can derive advantage (from belonging to it). This can be based on practical

consideration. As to the students in Hong Kong, it may be better to appeal to them with the practical advantage of this belonging.

I (68): Is there any attitude etc. related with this belonging.

S (67): It is only the matter of rights and duties. You want to obtain the advantages from the organization... (and need to pay a price for it).

I (69): So, you take the price and there are responsibilities, such as...?

S (68): Yes. ... (The Subject hesitates for a moment.)

I (70): By the way, I think you have been talking about China's citizenship.

S (69): Yes. This comes with birth. You can't choose anyway. Born to this particular state, I think you also hope it can go well as you will get better when the country gets better. (The Subject laughs when talking about this.) I think there can be identification with this.

I (71): So, apart from the rights we have just said, what do you think are the responsibilities to the state?

S (70): So, don't work to the destruction of the country and the organization. If they can do this, it will be fine. Or you can say we keep our position well. Obey the law (for example). We need not join the army. But, there is now the controversy, like you have to support the unity of the country. This, like the Taiwan issue... (The Subject pauses for a moment.)

I (72): There can be different conceptions of state unity?

S (71): Yes, (one way of seeing it is) without Taiwan, we can still be a country.

I (73): But, what you have just said may not be in line with what China is thinking now. (You just said) talking about it may not be appropriate.

S (72): It's not exactly like this as there can be many different ways of unity. Confederate system is also a model. Even the students do think that due to history, Taiwan should be a part of China (The Subject said Hong Kong by mistake.) The



question is how to make Taiwan come back willingly.

I (74): So, can I say that as citizen, we also have the responsibility to bring out our opinion though it may not be...

S (73): Yes, though they may not be in support of the government.

I (75): So, not necessarily in support of and dovetailing with the government's version?

S (74): Yes. Yes. The aim is that the country can have improvement.

I (76): We have seen that public examination is very important to the subject. You mentioned that the students cared a lot with the results. So, in your view, is public examination in general a help or a hindrance to this subject?

S (75): I think examination is good in the sense that without it students won't study. Now, it's very difficult to go by interest. Even if they show interest, it is (examination) results they are after. If there is no pressure of examination, the students will not that study. This is the good side of examination.

I (77): Is there any bad side?

S (76): It is bad in the sense that it is confining in terms of content. We have to stay within the Syllabus. Besides, we are quite rushing with a tight schedule and there can be little time for discussion on controversial matters. Sometime, they like to raise questions. However, once it is not within the Syllabus, you dare not to talk too much.

I (78): How will you define successful students of this subject? I mean students who have made progress in (learning) this subject.

S (77): (The Subject pauses for a while.) I think successful GPA students should be socially aware and understand current affairs. They should listen in class. You know they can not know everything by just reading the textbook. And, they can manage the skills in answering questions. Then, with these, I believe they are making progress.

I (79): What are the factors that will influence you in making your choice when you set questions for your students, say in test, examination and especially the mock examinations?

S (78): In setting questions for students to do in internal test and examination, I will catch the major current issues of the year.

I (80): Why?

S (79): It has always been like this. There must be a question on the most important issue of the year, say American presidential election and the choosing of the Chief Executive in the 2001 and 2002.

I (81): You mean there will be such questions in the public examination?

S (80): Yes.

I (82): So, public examinations should reflect these current issues and you follow them?

S (81): Yes. So I say the question must be wrapped up in current issues. As for Certificate Level, the questions have been asking more or less the same things within the Syllabus.

I (83): I have studied the past questions in a longitudinal way. I have found that the questions do repeat themselves. Sometimes questions that are almost the same turn up again. Sometime, part of the question re-appears, perhaps with some word changes. Do you find this too?

S (82): Yes.

I (84): Will this affect your teaching, as you say, examination is very important?

S (83): You mean focus?

I (85): Yes.

S (84): I teach all topics though student demands that I tip on the questions (and teach only those which may turn out). However, the questions asked in the mock examination (the last internal examination students take before going to the public examination) represent my guess of what will turn out. But, as for teaching, I will not stress a particular part though they often come to me and ask me which parts can be skipped.

I (86): You teach both boys and girls. I presume this school is co-educational.

S (85): No, this is a boy's school. But, I taught in a girl school before. I was an EPA teacher then.

I (87): Okay, then there can still be comparison. Some pointed out that girls were less socially alert and were less interested in politics, do you feel the same way.

S (86): Yes. Boys have more questions to ask and more to say while girls are more passive and obedient. They just listen and take all you give them. But, these girls may be more successful with examinations as they are stronger with language. But, boys' reactions are faster. They also have more questions.

I (88): And, the boys' social alertness is also stronger?

S (87): Yes.

I (89): Why?

S (88): It may not be just gender. Individual difference also exists. There are also boys who are not interested with politics. I think this is in line with how girls study in school at large. They usually stay quiet; listen to all you say and take notes. Reaction is thus not satisfactory.

I (90): This subject has its own uniqueness. Will it be that as girls bring their learning habit to this subject, they will be...?

S (89): Disadvantaged in learning this subject? Yes. In fact, we have some naughty boys who don't study hard. But, because they ask a lot and read the newspaper, they may also get good results.

I (91): Especially in Certificate Level?

S (90): Yes, if they have already thought the matters through (due to social alertness and concern about politics), they don't actually have to study too much. Particularly if they are to answer in Chinese, they can express themselves in writing.

I (92): Do you think school ethos exerts a positive or a negative impact on the implementation of teaching of the subject in this school?

S (91): As for school ethos, in fact the principal of the school is rather... Actually, our school is a bit special. The students asked, "Why don't we start Economics and have GPA instead?" I don't know much about the history. But, I know that the teacher who used to teach here had taken part in writing up the Syllabus. Thus, this subject had an early start here in this school. But, there are lots of things the school is doing that are in tandem with the subject. For example, we have news sharing. Everyday, we are putting up news. We are using the funding for civic education. Everyday, before school commences, two or three students will come back and cut out the more important news and put them up on two display boards. These will be put up before other students come back. The students usually will have a look at the display boards before they have their lessons. This is a (supportive atmosphere).

I (93): So, you have a group of students to do it for bulletin board display.

S (92): Yes, and the students will read them before school begins and also in recess time. The students will read them as a matter of habit. Now, the school is trying to let them watch the TV news in the classroom. This can be done in the morning before school begins and also at lunchtime. Besides, the school has very much supported the visits though they may take up class time. The school generally will grant its permission.

I (94): So, can I say that the school is encouraging the students to have social awareness?

S (93): Yes. The principal is very happy that our students can have opinion of their own over current issues. (The Subject laughs when telling this). He said, "Even teachers may not have so deeply thought of those things, I think the opinions are very reasonable too."

I (95): So, the principal encourages them to have their views on social issues, politics and policies too?

S (94): Yes. Yes.

I (96): Do you think this help the subject?

S (95): Yes, in creating the atmosphere. The students can get in touch with more newspapers and current news. These will definitely help the subject.

I (97): You joined this school in 1997?

S (96): About that?

I (98): And, before that you taught in XXX.

S (97): Yes.

I (99): Do you think the government is actively supporting GPA?

S (98): I don't think so. I think we are fighting alone in teaching this subject. There are few teachers teaching the subject. Besides, there are not many opportunities... Say, in English, there can be a lot of seminars. As different from other subjects, there are no seminars for GPA teaching. There are some courses on civic education.

I (100): They are for civic education only?

S (99): Yes. Though sometime they may touch upon Hong Kong's and China's politics, they are very generic indeed. They are not up to the level, say that requested by (GPA) A Level. You have to find your own way. This subject is special in the sense that you cannot depend solely on the textbook.

I (101): I guess there are almost no textbooks.

S (100): Taking the subject in Chinese, we are lucky that there is still one at Certificate Level.

I (102): You mean the one by XXX?

S (101): Yes. Others, including the only one in A Level, have all gone. There is no updating and replacement. We may seek a little help from junior form textbooks. Those textbook can make money and the publisher is updating them continuously.

I (103): So fighting alone refers to little logistic support, e.g. staff training? Other subjects like Chinese, English and Mathematics all get them.

S (102): Yes. This is also true for IT (information technology) support too. This includes what other subjects are doing, say computerizing the teaching etc. Every subject seems to get it, except GPA. (The Subject laughs). There are too few people in Hong Kong taking the subject. I think the government has already given up looking after it.

I (104): Have you thought of why the government is not promoting this subject?

S (103): Is it political? The lack of support may be due to Tung's negative view to politics.

I (105): I guess he told others that he disliked politics.

S (104): Yes. He dislikes party politics and believes that parties pollute H.K. He thinks that will turn H.K. into chaos. The view of the leader is quite negative to politics indeed.

I (106): And so...

S (105): Yes. Besides, the social ethos is important. People here want to take Economics and make more money. They think Economics helps making money. In schools both subjects are offered, GPA is only the mistress (A Chinese proverb, meaning playing second fiddle only or as a weaker partner). Only weaker students take it...

I (107): Do you see any change in the room for this subject before and after 1997?

S (106): The content of teaching has changed. The emphasis now is teaching the Basic law to students. As for its room for survival... (The Subject pauses for quite a few moments.) I don't think there is much change. But, it seems that the government is now playing more emphasis on civic education, in money terms I mean. We are now actually only using the civic education funds to promote our subject, say in the news bulletin and visits. Actually, civic education is a very comprehensive thing. It so happens that I am responsible for it. I thus use the money on my own subject (GPA).

I (108): In fact, I have asked an expert on civic education in Hong Kong. His belief is that the government actually is depoliticizing civic education nowadays. Thus civic education becomes...

S (107): Singing the national songs and doing these superficial things...

I (109): Yes (that's what he tried to say). It becomes a matter simply of affection and not the critical judgment, telling right from wrong sort of political learning.

S (108): Yes, on formalities...

I (110): So, he believes this is the direction of the government. His point is that it is fine for raising the national flag and talking about how to be a good citizen and how to take care of environment etc. But, critical political attitude is not promoted. Do you have the same feeling depoliticization as being a part of the government's inclination in the course of implementing civic education?

S (109): (So, civic education is) promoting formality and obedient citizens. I am not that an expert on civic education. But, this subject emphasizes a lot on rational analysis. Thus, I am not that strongly after (the "affection and good citizen" line). But, the political ethos is becoming that there can only be one voice and what Mr Tung says is right and what has been decided ... (The Subject laughs). So, the atmosphere is not that we can have discussion and we take what turn out to be the best in the discussion.

I (111): So, in this atmosphere, this subject....?

S (110): It will somewhat be disadvantaged.

I (112): Okay, it's an hour (actually a bit more than). Thanks.

Side note: After the tape is turned off, the Subject expresses her concern about those students who take GPA in the Certificate Level, but fail to come back for their sixth form. Due to the small number of schools offering this subject, it may happen that these students will not be able to continue their study of GPA in the schools that admit them.

## **Transcript Nine**

Date of interview: 19/6/2002 (d/m/y)

Subject interviewed: S11

Class: theoretical sampling-related interview (concept: de-politicization)

Background of subject:

- One of the writers of the 1996 Civic Education Guidelines
- Male, in late 40s
- Teaching civic education in teacher training programs in one of HK's tertiary institutes
- Well experienced in civic education matters, with wide contact with schools, NGOs (non-government organizations)
- Have publications on civic education in HK

Venue of meeting: the Subject's Office

Length of interview: 35minutes

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

Reason for choosing the Subject for interview:

The term "depoliticization" was raised repeatedly by different informants in the preceding interviews with GPA teachers. Coincidentally, a few months ago, the Subject tried inviting me to co-write an article about "Re-depoliticization in HK's education after 1997". The invitation was politely declined, as I was busy with my own work and study. I come to the belief that I can make use of the insight of the Subject, to help verify and explore further into the concept of depoliticization.

The Subject was very friendly and willing to share his perspectives about Hong Kong's depoliticization, from both social and civic education perspectives.



## Content of interview

I (1): The interview is related to my study of the doctorate degree in the University of Durham.

S (1): Yes, I guess it should be such things.

I (2): Yes. I need to write a thesis and I need to do interview work as part of the dissertation. The topic of my study is teaching politics as a subject in schools. I use GPA as the case as it is the only subject that is completely devoted to politics. In the course of my interviews, the notion that Hong Kong, with regard to both political and social ethos, is moving toward depoliticization has been mentioned. Politics, as pointed out in the course of interviews, refers particularly to political evaluation and judgment, and pointing out what is right from what are wrong. The belief put forth is that the government is not encouraging this in the course of education and in the course of shaping the social ethos. I think of you because you are very experienced in civic education. Besides, you are also very interested in depoliticization. You mentioned this to me about the idea of co-writing an article. It didn't work out. But, this brings me back to you. My University requires me to protect my Subjects, mainly with respect to confidentiality. It mainly comprises anonymity, both of you and of the organization you work for. Even if I mention your name in the course of interview, it will be deleted in the transcription. I shall do the transcription myself. No one thus will hear your voice. The content will be used as part of the dissertation. Perhaps it will be good for you to read this (consent form) first. If you have no problem, you need to fill out this consent form before we start with the interview.

S (2): Fine. (The Subject signs the consent form).

I (3): I don't really bring a list of (formal) questions with me. You know this interview is more a snowball. The interview is actually meant to be a chat. Certainly, we shall keep the theme (i.e. depoliticization). Okay. Do you really feel that Hong Kong is moving in the direction of depoliticization in terms of its education and social ethos? The emphasis is for the period after 1997 though, of course, you may talk about the pre-1997 period as well.

S (3): I think I shall start with civic education. I am not that an expert in other subjects. I shall later talk of the social ethos. My assumption is that civic education, and particularly political education etc, is indicator of the political status quo. The care

about democracy and freedom etc. will be reflected in the civic education of the society.

I (4): Yes.

S (4): The fact is that Hong Kong's civic education is moving back to square one through "re-depoliticization". This is my perception of the development after 1997, especially in these few years. I am writing an article *Moving back to square one*. I believe we are making a U-turn through re-depoliticization to become once again what we were many years back.

I (50): Yes.

S (5): We need to talk about some history. I still stick to civic education. In the 1960s we had Civics. I studied it too. Civics was replaced by EPA (Economic and Public Affairs) in schools (in the 1970s). Some scholars said this was the first round of massive depoliticization. EPA actually dodged anything controversial and only tackled current issues and the assembly (the law-making body, i.e. politics) in the factual manner. Only civic education of a highly depoliticized nature was allowed, say knowing how many members there was in the Legislative Council etc.

I (6): How to be a good citizen etc?

S (6): Yes. Hong Kong was then a depoliticized place, without many elections and so. It was a borrowed place on borrowed time. Then, in 1980s, during and after the signing of the Sino-British Agreement (for the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997), the scenario began to change. The society began to pick up politics. Many people hoped that there could be more elections. Some believed it paved the way for (self-rule) after 1997, as this was mentioned in the Joint Declaration. Political parties and organizations were born etc. The White Paper issued in 1984 on representative government reforms clearly spelt out that Hong Kong should prepare for changes in politics and constitution. This was a clear signal of changes, say in participation and power redistribution. There were political reforms to bring forth the devolution of powers. The election of the District Boards and the talk to implement direct election (in the Legislative Council) in the 1990s etc. were moves in this direction. This had an impact on education. The Civic Education Guidelines were released in 1985.

I (7): It was also in this period that GPA was established.

S (7): Yes. GPA was turned out then. History also started to cover more current issues of a political nature. However, the 1985 Civic education Guidelines was criticized seriously. It didn't have an identity of its own by taking on many other things, such as moral education and sex education. There was still an attempt to dodge controversies. Right from the beginning, it stated that the aim of civic education was to promote social stability. There was an attempt to persuade the people to accept the existing status quo. Political elements were deliberately diluted. So, you can say that in this period, the Civic Education Guidelines, perhaps plus that of GPA, only represents the beginning of the trend of politicization. (The interview is interrupted as the janitor staff comes in to collect the dustbin)

S (8): This already was an improvement when compared to the period before the Joint Declaration. At least you see the start of the politicization process. Then the development of the society went on and many things happened, such as the June Fourth Incident (in 1989), the passing of the Bill of Rights, the birth of political parties, the passing of the Basic Law, introduction of direct elections, and the lowering of the voting age etc. The Civic Education Guidelines released in 1996 represented an effort to give civic education a more definite shape, with focus on democracy, rights, citizenship and global education. Sex education and environment education were set aside to ensure civic education has an identity of its own. As to me the themes of the new Guidelines comprise democracy education, human rights education, rule of law education, national education and global education.

I (8): Can I say that 1980s represents a start off, marked by changes of the political system and representative reforms? These created then an opportunity (of change). Civic education and political education then got the chance to grow, though it was just the beginning.

S (9): Yes, you can say so.

I (9): Though it was not fast, comprehensive and satisfactory?

S (10): No.

I (10): Thus you feel that up to 1996, the progress was still there as there continued to be acceptance and respect (to civic education and political education)?

S (11): Yes.

I (11): Do you mean particularly in 1996, the mixing together of political elements and non-political elements in the civic education, say in adding to moral and sex education to that of political education, was reversed.

S (12): Yes. This was much debated in the first meeting. Then it was decided that they (moral and sex education) should go to their own respective places. Sex education was deemed important. But, it had to be dealt with in its own guidelines. That's why we got a sex education guidelines published in 1997. Besides, the 1996 Civic Education Guidelines takes in controversial and political issues.

I (12): Okay.

S (13): Thus you see (in this period) the civic education became politicized gradually as a result of changes in the society. The civic education guidelines reflected such a change. Of course, implementation was a different story. What I said above dealt mainly with the change towards politicization in the document level. After 1997, however, there is another obvious phase of re-depoliticization. In the documents released, this is particularly clear. In the "Learning to learn 2001", civic education is mentioned repeatedly, but only in terms of moral/civic education and that means the independent identity of civic education is gone.

I (13): Thus the shelf filled with political merchandise was put together with another shelf selling non-political items?

S (14): Yes.

I (14): At the same time the importance of political education is diluted?

S (15): Yes. This is one thing. Even the name has changed to a new one as you can see. Civic education is linked to family/ value/ sex education in terms of aims and content. Values mentioned are generic and personal. They include: respect, courage, perseverance, as against the more political concepts such as human rights and justice etc, dealt with in the 1996 Guidelines. These are less dealt with here. This is the second thing you should note. Thirdly, though as mentioned in the appendix of the document, life events are drawn in to teach such education. A list of categories of life events are specified, each with a number of themes. However, only 1 out of 6 categories there are on relations to society and can be political in nature. The other only deal with the

individual level and person-to person sort of things.

I (15): This is all about the 2001 document "Learning how to learn".

S (16): Yes. In fact, I have done some calculation too. I can send you my article if you need.

I (16): That's good. (The article has become one of the references for this thesis.)

S (17): In terms of the life events, out of the eighty something themes, only 5 or 6 are political. These deal with things, like voting etc.

I (17): Can I say that now, in this Chap Sui (a Chinese dish, which stands for a medley of different food), civic education (with political elements) becomes just a tiny bit in the whole thing.

S (18): Yes.

I (18): Okay, this is the document. I also understand that you are in contact with the teaching of civic education in schools as you are teaching the teachers civic education or are helping in other ways. Do you also sense that the ethos is also changing in the school level?

S (19): I think I want to add another point relating to the policy document before I pick up practices in schools.

I (19): Sure.

S (20): In both the 2001 document and the speech given by Tung Chi Hwa (the Chief Executive), there is a strong emphasis on national education. There is a very heavy dose of national education in the 2001 document...National education can be very political. But, now such national education is only built on culture and not politics. It is a depoliticized notion. China is a cultural concept in the 2001 document and is not a substantive political theme. Maybe it is another story in the GPA subject. This is in tandem with Mr Tung's speech that emphasizes China's culture and value. He dodges China as a political concept. Political education now seems to be attempts to avoid political controversies and judgment

I (20): Can I say that national education as a cultural entity emphasizes the affective

side, i.e. the sense of belonging to the land and the common blood etc. This thus allows the avoiding of political judgment and evaluation.

S (21): I agree to what you say. Once you touch upon the political domain, many controversies will surface. If you go by culture, you go with history. This, together with a touch of affection, you move toward affection education. This thus becomes love and belonging to the land and the common blood, the sense of root. This is affection only.

I (21): And not related to rational thinking....

S (22): No, it is not related to this rational critical judgment. Thus the background is clear. It is simple. This turning back (depoliticization) reflects the social ethos and the leaders' reservation on right and democracy. Mr. Tung does not want the thing to go too fast. Whether he tries to turn the clock back is, of course, debatable. My personal view is that at least he does not encourage a relatively fast pace toward democratization. You can get this by looking at the passing of the public order ordinance etc. This contradicts the long-term objective of universal election (of the Chief Executive etc) as stipulated in the Basic Law. If we believe this (universal election to turn out the government) to be our long-term objective, we are not working in education to prepare for this future. Just looking at the policy document worries me. As for schools, my feeling is simple. My opinion is that schools have never really got started, with the exception of a very tiny fraction of them. I helped the Education Department to carry out a research some years back. The report was not published. It was found that schools remained highly apolitical all through the years. If there was any politics, the most they would talk was about the concept of election. They would avoid controversial issues. Individual schools might be different. Thus, I don't think schools have ever made much change. This is true with civic education. It may be different with GPA. One change I can see with the help of the research is that that national education is taking on a cultural direction. The farthest schools are willing to go may be the election of student unions.

I (22): Do you think the situation will change in the near future, say in the course of 5 years?

S (23): No, not at all. Look at how primary schools use the QE (Quality Education) Fund in their civic education application. They (the projects) are all about moral education, and perhaps also how to protect the environment etc. The most they will do is topic like, "how to be a good citizen?" etc. That's is to be obedient and not to make troubles etc.

I (23): This covers primary schools.

S (24): Yes. My knowledge about secondary schools comes from the teachers I teach. It also suggests that they won't talk any more than the concept of elections in civic education. (They never go into areas that involve political judgment.)

I (24): (I follow from what you say.) What do you think makes Hong Kong so different that as if it can stay in the stone age and the students are required to stay off from knowing politics?

S (25): There is a major contradiction here. The people are not that depoliticized. The people take more to the street to articulate their demands. This (informal channel of political participation) becomes more acceptable than before. The people resort more to struggle than before. The wish to get democracy is still there. This is indicated in some opinion survey. But, the government is dampening it with all means and doing it with great force to stop it.

I (25): Can I say it is a form of absorbing politics with administration.

S (26): It is not just absorbing politics into administration. Absorbing politics into administration implies absorbing the dissident elites. What's here now is suppressing and marginalizing those dissident voices, especially those arising from the grass root. There is enormous political energy in the society. It is alarming that the government is also closing and narrowing the channels of political participation. There is always an alternative to peaceful reconciliation of conflicts!

I (26): That's mob politics?

S (27): Yes. If you want people to reach their political goal rationally, education, especially civic education is important. Now it can be very dangerous. The belief may be that schools can be turned apolitical so that those who take to the street may have no one to succeed them. Thus, teachers become depoliticized... But, as for me, I think teachers have never been truly politicized.

I (27): Okay, that's all I want to ask. Is there anything you want to add?

S (28): Yes, how will teacher education be managed?

I (28): I shall turn off the tape to continue the chat with you.

## Transcript Ten

Date of interview: 25/7/2002 (d/m/y)

Subject interviewed: S12

Class: former GPA teacher / public examination setter

Background of subject:

- Male, early 40s
- Former GPA teacher
- Worked in the tertiary institute as a civic education planner after leaving school
- Former public examination question setter of GPA, with experience of marking projects (PAS)
- Now, working for education of gifted children

Time used: 1 hour 15 minutes

Venue: A meeting room in the organization the Subject works for

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

### Content of interview

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): So, my old friend, this is an interview related to my doctoral study. My University requests that a consent form be filled out before the starting of the interview. You may know this better than me (as the Subject is also doing a doctoral program).

S (1): Yes.

I (2): So, there will be anonymity. Your name will not be disclosed. Nobody else shall hear your voice, as I shall be doing the transcription. The tapes will be destroyed in the long run. This, together with the fact that your name will not appear in the text, will ensure that your identity will not be revealed. Even if I address you by name in the conversation, it shall be deleted. After I have finished the transcription, I shall send a



copy to you for your reading. This is to ensure that I shall make no mistake, say by misunderstanding you in whatever way. You can request amendment if you deem necessary.

S (2): Yes.

I (3): Should you have no problem, please sign the form.

S (3): This one.

I (4): Yes.

S (4): Dear...?

I (5): I shall put your name here later. (The Subject points at the blank space in the consent form).

(The Subject signs the consent form).

I (6): Thanks.

S (5): Wish you every success.

I (7): Thanks. Let me first introduce the background to you. I am writing on the topic "Teaching politics in schools". I am using GPA as a case. I want to interview you not just because you are familiar, but also because you taught GPA before and you also worked for the Civic Education Center of XXX. Besides, you also had experience of GPA question setting. Thus, you will have a lot of experience to share with me. This will allow me to develop my insight.

S (6): Yes.

I (8): Actually, my interviews have been implemented for some time. I have already seen some teachers and curriculum planners etc. They are basically the same group of people. What I want to do now is to bring up the views of these people and ask you, as

a person of experience, to comment on them and supplement by adding your opinions. So, the mode may be, "So these are their points of view, how will you see them?" Please also give your opinions in the course. This is supposed to be an informal talk between friends.

S (7): Is the tape running now? (The Subject laughs while talking. We check the recorder together.)

I (9): Yes, it is. If you don't want to talk about what I bring up, please stop me and talk about other things and insights you may have in mind.

(The researcher then double-checks the background information with the Subject. The Subject points out that he also worked as the coordinator of civic education in the school he used to teach.)

I (10): Okay, I shall then focus on these experiences of yours. I shall first start with questions related to teacher of the subject. There are a number of points the GPA teachers make clear to me in the interviews. They are rather interesting and worth exploring too.

S (8): Yes.

I (11): Many teachers believe that GPA is more an academic subject than a form of preparation for political participations, though some feel that with GPA study, students can more conveniently participate into politics in the future. The majority feels studying GPA is more like studying a subject in school. This is the reality. So, as an ex-teacher, how do you think about this?

S (9): It is both in fact. As a subject, especially a subject set up in the senior forms, it is certain that the aim is the examination. Thus, to aim at knowledge primarily is not a problem. We (the teachers) all have the aim in mind. This is fundamentally based on the need to face a public examination. On the other hand, no matter whether the teacher has got formal teacher training or not, he should know that teaching is not just for the subject's knowledge. You will be teaching a lot of values to the students. Say in my case, I studied politics before. My sense of mission is not confined to earning a salary.

I (12): Yes.

S (10): I might have values to teach in the subject. In the course of teaching, I might be teaching not just knowledge, but also some values and attitudes. My thinking is not that I (the teacher) shall preach my beliefs to them and ask them just to adopt the beliefs. My aim is to stimulate them to have more thinking, just the way we are talking about the so-called generic skills nowadays. They are to think about and decide on their own actions. I shall try to train them on critical thinking through my classroom teaching. As a result, I feel that there should be effect on both sides.

I (13): You just said there were values you wanted to pass to them though you did not enforce these values to them. You aimed at stimulating their thoughts and they made the final choice.

S (11): Yes.

I (14): Can you list a number of the values you think we can or should bring to the students through the teaching of GPA?

S (12): In teaching this subject, at both Certificate and A Level, you will encounter a lot of theoretical things. At that stage, you may not be able to understand. So, it is better to learn through the study of real cases. You may go into the cases related to the topics and pick up the most heated points for discussion. I shall tell them my view of the issue. But, I will make known to them that they do not need to follow my point of view. In the discussion about election, the actual events of election are more attractive to the children than the pure theories of election. For example, in the (recent) election of the District Boards, the Government explained that it would be more democratic to have a number of appointed members than having all members elected. Is this true? So, here in interpreting this issue, I shall express my opinion. Besides, I shall give the chance to the students to think of the issue themselves. Things like this, and other matters related to democratic values, will be available substance for them to think about. In the very day of sovereignty transfer (1<sup>st</sup> July, 1997), there was demonstration when the ceremony was going on. You (the police) played the music (Beethoven's symphony) through the loud speakers to cover the voice of the demonstrators. The police claimed that this was a move to calm down the tense climate. The demonstrators believed that it was their right to have their voice heard. This also represented a value conflict for students to think about. Intentionally or not, I shall share with them my view while they can also have the room to reflect on the process related with these issues.

I (15): So, you work through these real issues and provide room for students to think by

themselves?

S (13): Yes. I can take away their room of thinking (and deciding). But, I will like to give them such room. If you believe democracy is good, you should not just say, "It is good." and (think that) this works out (to convince them). If there is anything wrong with it, we shall put in into discussion.

I (16): I have talked with the teachers about whether it is possible to enhance the sense of national identity through teaching the subject. By national identity, I refer to that of Chinese citizenship. There is a division of views here. Some think we can do it as teaching GPA means teaching more knowledge about China to the students. On the other hand, some, quite a lot I mean, believe the contrary. They believe that by teaching more about China to the students, the students will even have more resentment against the country. This is because some practices in China may not dovetail with international or Western values. What is your view here?

S (14): I think the question about national identity is a heated topic for reflection that arises after the transfer of sovereignty.

I (17): Yes.

S (15): To say in this way, I have been away from the front-line (teaching) for two or three years. If you asked me whether the teaching of GPA would enhance self-identity in the early years, I would say yes. But, the identity in concern would be a Hong Kong identity only. This was not bad. But, the content of the subject changed and the direction might change too as a result of the political transfer. When I left in around 1999, I could not that tell with certainty that national identity building would be affected by this subject or a reshaping of civic education. I could not see the subject have an impact in building up a sense of belonging to China as a whole.

I (18): Yes.

S (16): For the two years after 1997, say till 1999, when I was still teaching in school, I did try to find my way in relation to this (national identity issue). I tried to find my way both with reference to civic education and the teaching of GPA. But, in relation to GPA teaching, some colleagues reminded me that in the course of teaching, we would be likely to be using a more critical model and this might have (negative) impact on the students' national identity building. Put it another way, if we as teachers didn't believe

(that) ourselves, how can we nurture the belief among the students? On the other hand, there was the civic education program. You had to do it. You needed to teach them how to sing the national song and understand the national emblem and national flag etc.

These were the ongoing activities. I thought these were relatively simple jobs that could be done outside the formal curriculum. You know things like teaching the national song, the meaning of the five-star national flag etc. With hindsight, the job was easy because there was not much room for my personal interpretation. To do such things as teaching the national song and emblem, I just followed the teaching materials and played the tape as prescribed by the CDI (Curriculum Development Institute) and the Education Department. So, singing the national song etc would arouse their (sentiment) and this might have an (positive) impact on their sense of national identity. However, I didn't stay long enough to see the long- term impact.

I (19): Can I say that as GPA concerns more about rational thinking and judgment, it may not have the positive effect on promoting national identity as singing the national song and understanding the national flag sort of work? The latter focus mainly just on affection and understanding only.

S (17): Yes.

I (20): It (GPA) may have even negative impact (on national identity building) as rational judgment may point to the other (negative) side.

S (18): Yes. Even if rational judgment may not be that important in the Certificate Level, it will be inevitable in the A Level. The questions would make it necessary.

I (21): Okay. Teachers I interviewed believe that if patriotism is involved in the subject, it ought to be one with critical thinking as a part. To love your own country should also comprise the element of critical attitude. So, if the country makes a mistake, one should have the courage to point it out for criticism. How do you feel about this view?

S (19): As personal view, I think this is good. In the course of teaching this subject, we shall encounter a lot of things involving critical judgment. We shall also mention in class to the students that loving the country doesn't mean loving the political party. But, the fact is that I feel the influence of what we say may not be as great as the effect as what the people are doing outside our classroom. If there are voices in the society that emphasize that to love the country is equal to loving its party, I think there is not much meaning for us to say our version a hundred or a thousand times in the classroom. This

is to say that the value orientation of the society is not clear. I definitely will try my best in class. But, I may not be able to achieve what I have intended.

I (22): There are some teachers who believe that after reunification, the social ethos is tilted toward loyalty and pledging of support to the regime though freedom of speech still exists. Their belief is this tendency is strong and GPA, that emphasizes a lot on political judgment of rights and wrongs, and critical thinking etc, is losing its ground of growth. What do you think about this? Do you have any comments?

S (20): (The Subject pauses for a few moments). If you compare the present time to the mid-1980s, there is a big change in political climate. At that time, as the Hong Kong British Government said, there was a need to urge the people to speak up and to have critical attitude and discussion. We are not going to infer the very reasons behind this. At that time, if you do GPA in schools, it will be a move in line with the macroclimate. But, now if you are doing the discussion and the conclusion you arrive is not in line with the overall direction, then... What should I say? May be it is deemed that you are the so-called "Oppose China and bring chaos to Hong Kong" elements. Basically it is like this. You can say what we front-line workers strenuously built up since the 1980's has already been knocked out in one blow. We worked so hard to build up a new generation who would be brave enough to come up and criticize, not negatively, but constructively. But now there seems to be a 180-degree change in the sense that it is deemed that those who criticize are uncooperative and harmful to the society. This sort of mainstream social ethos makes teachers, like me, who want to teach GPA not just as a subject, but also as a way of understanding living and preparing for political participation very difficult.

I (23): A question that you may need to go back to memory, as you has been away from the teaching post for two to ...

S (21): Three years.

I (24): Okay, two to three years. Did you teach in a co-educational school?

S (22): It was a boy's school.

I (25): What were the methods you use in teaching your classes?

S (23): It depended on the forms you are talking about. I had taught all the forms, i.e.

four to seven. When I did form four and seven in one year, my partner would do five and six. Then in the following year, we alternated (as the class got promoted). In the first semester of form four, basically you didn't that teach. You couldn't. You know they were the leftovers that couldn't join the science stream. (In Hong Kong, students are streamed after they have finished form three. Boys generally are more fond of joining the science stream, as it is taken as more prestigious and promising).

I (26): Yes. It was a boy's school.

S (24): Yes. You need to take care of the class management etc. It was better if you were their class teacher. All you could do was only very technical things, like ensuring they did hand in their homework and were prepared for examination etc. Then, in form five, it became better. First some were streamed out. (It might be that some students dropped the subject, as it was an elective subject.) There might be some repeaters who might bring the class' learning mood up. Besides, they could count the time left and knew that examination was close. Teaching became smoother and I would do something more. For example, I would show them the past paper and told them to think about it. There was more room then. Form six and seven students were different. They were all settled with their electives. I would focus on things they should know and the (way to handle) the open nature of the questions. I would work on their academic knowledge, answering techniques, as well as thinking skills.

I (27): Many teachers mentioned to me that they would like to have more discussion and projects in their GPA class. But, in reality, they had to go by the class teaching style, say at most by Q&A (question and answer). In fact, most of the time, they would have to lecture. Now that you had been talking about the way you used to teach, how do you think of these teachers' description about the way they teach?

S (25): It's is no surprise. I did it myself. In the front-line you need to be flexible. In form four and five, you don't need to do well-planned and well-designed discussion. It is better with form six and seven, as the number of students are smaller. They had also done their Certificate Level. The foundation is better. It is easier to do (the discussion). But, the number of such discussion should also be kept down. It happened that I had planned (the use of discussion to) one topic, say housing, very well in advance. I got their co-operation in working it out. Then, if you introduced (discussion into) another one, say education, in a short period, they were not happy as they thought you wasted their time. They would tell you that.

I (28): What does that mean?

S (26): That is to say that the students can accept a variety of methods. But, the general direction is that we may not take a grossly different approach. Besides, it is very hard if you want to. Take my previous school as an example; we took in those with only eight or nine points (lowest being seven) for matriculation class. They didn't have much confidence. They wanted you to help and drill them to get through the examination. They didn't want you to spend time on other things. Even to see a tape for thirty minutes would be a waste of time to them. On the other hand, they were older and they would be brave enough to challenge (the teacher's) authority.

I (29): So, can I conclude by saying that you are trying to say that as for discussion and projects, a number of factors are important, including number of students, their degree of maturity and standard.

S (27): Yes, sure.

I (30): Okay.

S (28): In the Certificate Level, it is a pity that you need to spend a lot of time on teaching them the skills (of understanding questions and answering questions). So, unless you are brave enough as to ignore a number of areas you deem unlikely to come out in the examination and focus on the others, (you may not have time to have much time to do discussion and projects with them).

I (31): That's tipping the questions.

S (29): Yes, those that will be usually asked will then be taught more.

I (32): Okay. So do you think in general teachers should do like this?

S (30): What do you mean by this?

I (33): I mean that they should teach with focus. If a question was asked last year and is not likely to turn out this year, they should teach less of it.

S (31): (The Subject hesitates a little). I actually tried to say that they should try to save that time and spend it on other work. But, I believe most teachers will use less time on



topics that are asked less in public examination. They may skip them altogether. They will use more time on topics that are more frequently asked. This is not to have idle time, but simply a matter of time allocation.

I (34): Many teachers told me that they would encourage their students to think differently and to give different views though the teacher would also express their views in class. They also said that in marking the examination papers, they would not consider what conclusions the students took. The students would have room to draw their own conclusion as a result. As a former front-line teacher, do you think it is easy for a teacher to treat only arguments but not the conclusions of the students (in the marking of papers)? Or, will students really feel they have such room?

S (32): I shall answer your second question first. Take A Level teaching as an example, in the course of the teaching, the students always had such room. But, owing to their standard, they might not be able to use such room they were allowed. It was difficult for them just to remember all the things. They also needed to elaborate and express and write. Worse still, they needed to answer four questions in the course of three hours. In my A Level class for example, they were usually large due to school's politics. I might have thirty or twenty something. Out of their internal examination papers, only two were better (in the sense of having own views articulated). All the rest just duplicated what I told them in class. They wouldn't give up a single word and put them all down in the script. As for my marking, in theory I would not care about the conclusion. Instead, I would just care about the argument. But, in reality, I did mind. I would find the work very hard. It was because of number of students. If there were thirty students in A or AS Level, I would have up to twenty-eight. It would be very difficult job to me, as I needed to mark each student on two papers, each of four questions. This would be a difficult job for me in marking (if I took different conclusions). The number made it a difficult job. I was also angry with the number of students I got. There were History, Chinese History and Geography etc. I got so many students because the students were kicked out from other subjects to join me.

I (35): So, they (other teachers) deliberately squeezed the size of their classes?

S (33): Yes, and they were the vice principal and the experienced... The History teacher would say to the class "History is not for you to study. Go!"

I (36): He said it to the students.

S (34): Yes. It was easy. There was a grace period for changing subject. All you needed to do would be to give tests right at the beginning. If I had done the same thing, what could my students take? Besides, I was not as experienced as the other teachers. So, History and Chinese History kicked out students to join my subject. Geography could not take the students at least in the AS Level, as there was no AS Geography. It then became a difficult job (when marking came). Besides, a school like mine didn't actually request much on quality. It was on quantity only, say amount of homework. This was a matter of decree from above. So, that was the frustration. In examination time, I knew it was not too good as it was not the same thing as I did in class. But, you really wanted them to answer something you had taught in class. If they turned out something very good which I didn't teach in class, I would appreciate very much. But, this was the attitude I had. I did regret it.

I (37): Many teachers told me that the school leadership's attitude was very important to this subject. This was especially so if there was support in the sense that the stress was put on civic education, students having alertness to current issues and own judgment etc. This will make the subject develop smoothly.

S (35): Like a fish get into water (a Chinese proverb).

I (38): Do you agree to it?

S (36): Agree. But, to my regret, this was not found in my school at the time I taught the subject there.

I (39): So, in your case, people squeezed students into your class.

S (37): This was part of the story. Besides, as for the school as a whole, it was struggling for survival. It was getting worse in terms of banding. It was then down to band four (the second lowest band). Now, I guess in the new system, it is band three (the lowest band). The need to survive was there. At the day GPA was first introduced in the school, the teacher concerned was (renowned in this field). He made a principal later in another school. As I was teaching there, there was always the consideration whether the subject should be closed and Economics be started with. The principal even sent the vice principal to me and told me "You should go to study some Economics and teach Economics". So, you can tell what it would be to develop the subject when the environment was like this. Besides, it was a reality that many GPA schools were taking a U-turn (dropping the subject). My school also thought of it. But, there would be other

questions once the subject was closed. For example, would the arts class be able to do Economics?

I (40): So, it was worried that the arts students couldn't make it?

S (38): Yes. I think the science students could do it better. (But, GPA was for arts students mainly). Besides, there was another subject, even more of a sunset nature, and that was History. I met my former colleagues a couple weeks ago and it was said that the school was still contemplating about which subject was to be closed.

I (41): So, either GPA or History is to face the firing squad. (I said in with a satiric laughter).

S (39): Yes, either one.

I (42): So, both GPA and History are sunset businesses.

S (40): Actually, History is more likely (to be axed). You know the former History (panel) teacher has already been promoted to become the vice-principal. The SGM (Senior Graduate Master, i.e. a senior teaching rank) has been taken up (by someone else). But, he/she has already got the promotion. It is always possible to find another place for him/her. But, here the issue outstanding comes up. You know History has been kicking students out (to GPA) and thus its passing rate is high due to the sorting. This higher passing rate in return gives people a better impression. Then the principal can explain to others that it is better in passing rate and ask, "Why should I close it?" Thus you see these people are not running education. They are simply working politics and playing a game.

I (43): You mean GPA has been enmeshed in a bureaucratic web, in which practical interest counts more than other considerations.

S (41): Yes, it is practical interest and it's very pragmatic.

I (44): GPA's survival is affected by these?

S (42): Yes.

I (45): Teachers were generally able to give me definition of what indoctrination is.

Very standard answers were given. You graduated as a GPA major. This sort of stuff should be familiar to you. So, these include, "You are forcing the students to accept a thought and no room is provided and..."

S (43): "No thinking allowed..."

I (46): Yes. But, when I asked them whether indoctrination is good or bad, the answers I got were interesting. Some thought this was not the problem of teachers. They said if there was a worry, it should be a worry related to the government, about her using the subject to pass the beliefs she favored to the people. Then the teachers thought that they had already avoided indoctrination, say by giving the students freedom of drawing conclusions etc.

S (44): Yes.

I (47): However, some of them believe that they would give to students fundamental concepts like democracy, by indoctrination if needed. So how do you think about this?

S (45): In reality, if you teach the lower forms, say form four, and you just teach the knowledge in the book without adding elaboration and your things (interpretation etc) and the students just do it as knowledge, it is also a form of indoctrination. It is the same. The students only take what the facts are without much questioning and understanding. This will also be internalized to become part of their future value and affect their behaviors in return.

I (48): So, excluding values is a form of value in itself. It is to understand without judgment.

S (46): It is hard to say. Values can also arise from the inside. The knowledge they take in may also affect their own value. It depends on how you do it. To just teach them the concepts of democracy may be a form of indoctrination. But, if in the course of teaching them, I draw more things to discussion and explorations, you may say I am not indoctrinating them. This may actually involve the question of teaching methods. How to teach is the crux now. It depends on whether the teacher knows how to teach when he has the textbook in hand. If you don't know how to teach, many things can turn out to be indoctrination. For example, if you teach China's polity, say the functions of different bodies and people, it can also be indoctrination, if they (the students) don't even think why the President of China should have such powers and reflect upon the

checks etc. You can call it indoctrination too.

I (49): So, you are saying that to teach only facts without critical judgment can also be indoctrination as students think this is what things should inevitably be. These are fine.

S (47): Yes. You can say so.

I (50): Then, if you talk with them, you may or may not be indoctrinating, depending on whether space is allowed?

S (48): Yes. So, as civic education workers, we hate the term indoctrination as we have given it a very rigid definition. It refers to teaching some values and insisting that they must be right. That's why we hate the term indoctrination.

I (51): Yes, okay. As you worked both as a GPA teacher and subsequently as a civic education planner, I want to seek your view about the relationship between GPA and civic education. This is the main course for today perhaps.

S (49): First you should define the aims of civic education. It must include allowing them (the students) to have the knowledge required of a citizen. Then it comes to the citizen's attitudes. Finally, it should be the action dimension that arises as a consequence of such knowledge and attitude. Then, this becomes complete and most ideal. In educational terms, it is the teaching of thought that lead to actions, including abstaining from actions. Remember choosing not to act is also an action in itself. GPA can contribute a lot in the knowledge dimension. This, hand in hand with the interpretation of the teachers in class, can have an impact on the students' temperament. This in return shapes their attitude. This can be a form of help in development. The problem is that this academic subject does not really call for a lot of actions. But, the subject is good in the sense that it can lay the foundations. As for civic education, in fact the most important thing is that of actions. For example, in some schools, you can see their civic education program actually stresses the action dimension, without talking about what are (the concepts) behind. There may be just the call for service etc. In this sense, combining GPA and civic education may be quite satisfactory.

I (52): So, can I say GPA provides reinforcement to civic education in terms of knowledge enrichment and, if the teachers teach appropriately, there can also be a nurturing of temperament.

S (50): Yes.

I (53): But, you don't think GPA can provide political participation to students and hence you see its contribution in the front end, i.e. the providing of knowledge.

S (51): Only if they take A Level's project (Project Assessment Scheme), shall it be better. In PAS, they may have some actions to work out.

I (54): Research?

S (52): Yes. They will get in touch with more people to understand in a better way. This is one of the dimensions of participation. This is to understand a problem better by going to the field.

I (55): Almost all GPA teachers I interviewed are also the key persons in civic education of their schools. When I taught GPA in school, the principal also made me the coordinator. It came almost automatically. Do you think such arrangements are appropriate?

S (53): It depends on the civic education orientation of the school in concern. In the school I taught before, they had already got a Religious and Social Training Program, which it thought would be okay. The Civic Education Coordinator post was only the result of Education Department's request. Whoever took the post was not important. It would be better if someone (already promoted) occupied this promotional post. In my school, the former Civic Education Coordinator was the panel chair of Chinese History. But, after a lot of effort, he managed to have the job squeezed to me.

I (56): Why was it good to have someone already promoted to take this post?

S (54): He would then fill a post in which promotion was possible.

I (57): So, the principal needed not explain to a green horn why, despite doing this promotional post, he is not promoted.

S (55): Yes. You know there are not enough senior places. It's virtually very difficult to get a senior place if you work as a Civic Education Coordinator (though in principle, the post makes its incumbent eligible to promotion). It depends on the direction (the school wants to take). Giving it to a GPA teacher, more or less civic education will be geared towards politics. Civic education comprises more than just this. Besides, if you

want to talk about the tradition and history of the nation, I (GPA teacher) may not know such things well. Then if civic education entails environmental protection, it may be better to have a Biology or Chemistry teacher as I (GPA teacher) may not be that competent with this. This is more so if we go to sex education. I think it would be better if the task of civic education can be taken by a number of teachers.

I (58): So, can I say that as for the political part of civic education, the GPA teacher should take charge because there are actually no other teachers who can know these matters well?

S (56): Yes, I am sure it will be good that way. I have seen schools that do not have GPA. In those schools, often the EPA teachers will be assigned the civic education work. In those cases, the grasp on political changes is usually weaker. They can be mistaken too. It is funny. When I worked for the XXX (a teacher education institute), I had to visit schools to see how the civic education teaching kits should be prepared.

I (59): Do you mean secondary or primary schools?

S (57): Primary schools. I had to review all the things that might be related to politics. One of the schools put forward a theme of the school's General Studies, known as "election". I had to see it as you know the theme was 'election'. I followed up to see how elections are taught in General Studies. But, the teacher... I am not looking down to him/her because he/she is a primary teacher. But, it is either due to (the lack of) training or the teacher's own ignorance of politics, (the teaching is wide of the mark). The teacher taught proportional representation. It comprised lecturing, lot of blackboard writings and even doing worksheet. Then the teacher said, "Now, you know what proportional representation is, we shall do a simulated election in class". However, the teacher only managed to organize a simulated election on "simple majority, first past the post" method. There is a deficiency in terms of knowledge. It seemed that the teacher dared not organize an election based on proportional representation.

I (60): Can I put it in a simple way that the teacher just doesn't know it?

S (58): It can be. But, you see there is no point to talk of one thing (proportional representation) and illustrate another (simple majority method). The students can't learn. They get even confused. The teacher could compare the two methods. But, I couldn't see this happen in class.

I (61): There was no matching between words and deeds.

S (59): The teacher could explain to the students why the method changed. But, I couldn't see it either. I left a comment to them that it was flawed. But, after that I left the job. I know my successor did not follow this up. The kit was turned out unchanged. (The Subject laughs).

I (62): Okay.

S (60): One more example to you. In the so-called "simulated election", three model students came up to cast their vote. Then the teacher said that one of them could not do it because he/ she was a candidate in the election. I scratched my head. (A Chinese proverb, meaning totally puzzled). What made the teacher believe he/ she could disallow the student candidate to vote? (The Subject later explained the context of the mock election when he examined the draft transcript sent to him. According to his deliberation, the students in each class were to turn out a class representative to stand for election of the form model student. Three candidates were nominated. The candidates would carry out their election campaign in order to win in election to be the class representative. The problem was that the three candidates were barred from casting of votes, in stark contrast to what real elections should be.)

I (63): In the real Presidential elections or so, the serving President usually is the first to cast his vote.

S (61): Yes! You know the teacher simply didn't know the deeds and the work related to politics. If this political aspect is handled by a GPA teacher, it can be done more appropriately.

I (64): This is the last part of the interview. I know you helped setting public examination papers before. I shall not go to details. Instead, I am interested in knowing the core values of the setters involved. What do you think are the conditions that need to be met if questions are to go through the setting process to be adopted for use in examinations?

S (62): Do you mean public or internal examination?

I (65): I mean public examination.

S (63): Public examination.



I (66): Perhaps, I shall do it the same way we did with it a few moments ago. I shall give you the opinions I collected from those with setting experience for your comments. There is a belief that since this is the case of public examination, one important factor is accountability. To be able to answer to the public, the results of the examination must give rise to a good shape, with two tails, and with the majority of the students in the middle.

S (64): Bell-shaped.

I (67): Yes. This is very important. Besides, the answers to the questions should be will supported by documentary proofs. Do you think this is a very important consideration in the setting of public examination questions?

S (65): (The Subject pauses for a moment).

I (68): I mean, "Is this true in reality?" I am not talking about ideal. (The Subject still pauses for a moment). I mean a defensible paper...

S (66): It is a matter of collective effort to work out a normal distribution. Colleague in the Hong Kong Examination Authority will work assiduously for it. My feeling arises from working in the setting task a number of times. This may or may not be true. But, I had this feeling too when I was teaching the subject in my school years back. First, the examination paper must be able to meet the requirement of an assessment tool, say validity and so. Second, it also reflects what we want the subject to become. If as in the case of GPA, that is facing a hard time, there should not be anything that makes existing schools even more inclined to get rid of it. This is the reality. If this beautiful subject is nailed, we cannot even do the meaningful thing we want. This is doing bad thing with good intention. I can make the papers very demanding, say all requesting critical thinking and so. If your judgment shows no critical thinking, you get only ten out of twenty five etc. This thus becomes a good academic question. But, if this was the case and the effect (on results) was bad, schools would abandon you, just like History entering its sunset era.

I (69): Yes. History is even more in the sunset stage than us (GPA).

S (67): Yes. (The Subject laughs). Would it then be even a bigger hamper to the ideal of those who like the subject?

I (70): So, existence is the necessary condition to development.

S (68): Yes. My experience before shows that in such moderation committees, not necessarily only true for GPA, if setters bring forth questions that are very difficult, the ideas will be banded. There is no other way. The question can be very well set, say developing sequentially on a theme and will lead to a lot of thinking and critical judgment. When I saw such questions, my thought was, "If my students can't make it and so too are many students in Hong Kong, it's out of the question".

I (71): Yes. Is it that there is a need to satisfy the market?

S (69): It is not just to keep the rice bowl by satisfying the market. If the subject survives, we can still do something with it. This is the part of the mentality underlying the setting of questions.

I (72): Okay. There is also a saying from setters that to follow the current issues closely is also important. Catching up with current issues is also important in setting questions. Do you share this opinion?

S (70): Yes. But, there is another problem here. Sometimes, the students will be messy in doing current issues, and will not be able to use the basic concepts in the questions. This is due to the fact that teachers did not do it in class before and the students don't know how to see current issues from concepts they learn. But, the problem is also that in the most heated issues, the students may reproduce the comments from the press and take them as their own in the papers. You know the mass media will not deliberately link the current issue with the concepts you learn in GPA. This may not be satisfactory. But, back to the basic, the students' concern about current issues is a good thing. But, the more worrying fact is that there is a time frame for question setting (in the sense that the questions shall be ready many months before the date of examination). The students will not be able to remember what happened at the end of last years and so. They may remember what happened in March (shortly before the examination). But, what happen in March surely will not be asked.

I (73): The last question. Some pointed out that it could be good if there could be a variety of assessments, say having data-based questions and projects. Do you agree to such saying?

S (71): Agree from the bottom of the heart. I think there will be change in this direction in the future A Level. The Syllabus will not be changed. I recalled when I was attending

the committee meeting, I found it very hard to sell the idea of changing the “two papers, eight essay questions” to the university lecturers. I don’t mean you of course. I believe they were very firm on keeping the essay questions. True such questions can test ability of comprehension, organization, thinking and expression but...

I (74): So, that was the subject committee meeting (of the HKEA)?

S (72): Yes, and a working group was set up to discuss the change.

I (75): And, the university academics are not in favor of a change in form?

S (73): No they didn’t. At the end only a minor change of adding a little data based question was decided. But, that’s real little. Besides, there can be some short questions in the future too. This is already a good development as the past Syllabuses included much more as countries like USSR etc were all included. You will die studying all of them. Variety is good. But, I think we also need to know who the users are. If it is the subject academics in the university, they will have a strong influence. We study education and may know the assessment tools. But, this may not be applicable to the academics of the discipline. Besides, if there are changes in the assessment tool, we also need to know the impact on the teachers in the front-line. If it just asks them to do more, it may not be that fair to them.

I (76): Some teachers feel that they are using the non-PAS mode because the number of students is large and the standard of students is low.

S (74): Me too (when I taught GPA before).

I (77): Their belief however is that GPA is good. As a former setter, do you agree to that?

S (75): Yes, PAS is good. You want GPA to contribute to civic education, apart from serving as an academic subject. The PAS allows the students to do something hands-on. Bar the quality issue, this is a more interesting way and this will reduce the stake of the public examination.

I (78): Okay, that’s all of the questions. Anything you want to supplement?

S (76): No. You can ask me more anyway.

I (79): Okay then I ask you this. You taught in a boy's school. But, you may have some ideas here, say from your experience as a student or from the course of encounter you have due to your role as an educationist. In fact some teachers expressed that boys, as they were more active and willing to give response and being more alert to issues etc, were more advantaged in doing GPA. How do you feel about this? Is this belief valid?

S (77): I think it is a matter of gender characteristics. Boys are more active, fond of speaking and don't like reciting. This subject doesn't that stress reciting as it involves a lot of current issues. They may think that if they are more alert to current issues and are able to write them out, results can't be bad anyway. In comparison, I don't know for sure as I never taught girls before. If girls are quieter and less fond of thinking, this subject may not be as suitable. But, if they can really recite well, there should not be too big a problem. Look at XXX (a girl's school). They are also doing GPA. I also had the experience of marking PAS. I also marked the PAS work of XXX. They were not bad. Probably due to the teacher's influence, they took issues. I mean policy issues. That brought them mainly to document study and web search, plus perhaps a little interview. I found them able to handle this.

I (80): So, can I say that your point is that boys, as they are more active and alert socially, are better fitted to the subject, as a result of gender attributes. But, a good teacher can, with due efforts in teaching and orientation, help girls to do the job just as well, especially if the girls are strong in the cultural background etc.

S (78): Yes, we believe in the way teacher can exert such influence, in GPA as well as other subjects.

(The interview ends and the tape is turned off. The researcher continues the chat with the Subject).

Side Note: In a subsequent e-mail, the subject supplements (in Chinese) the following:

- Certificate Level GPA is too tied to local context to be able to help the students to see with international perspectives.
- A Level fares better because it has theories and politics of USA. University lecturers also see international perspectives as important.
- International perspectives should be important in civic education as Hong Kong is a cosmopolitan city. Whether it will become critical depends on the teachers.

## Transcript Eleven

Date of interview: 26/8/2002 (d/m/y)

Subject interviewed: S13

Class: theoretical sampling-related interview (concept: gender and political education)

Background of subject:

- Male, early 40s
- An experienced teacher educator
- With study in both gender issue and political socialization
- With research background on education and gender issues of Hong Kong

Venue of meeting: My office

Length of interview: 40minutes

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

Reason for choosing the Subject for interview:

Though my dissertation is about teaching GPA as a political subject in school and no reference to gender was ever intended in the design stage. In the subsequent interviews with teachers, it was repeatedly pointed out that gender was a factor concerned. Some pointed out that girls were rather passive and quiet in their class learning. Besides, they lacked interest in current issues and politics. As this may have a negative impact on girls taking GPA or undertaking other forms of political learning in school, the researcher, following the spirit of discovery through theoretical sampling, has decided to interview the present Subject. It is hoped that the Subject's study and understanding of gender influence on education and schooling can cast more light to this issue. Besides, the Subject's insight about political socialization is also sought.

**Content:**

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): Thanks for taking this interview. This is an academic interview. I am studying my doctorate program in the University of Durham. I am writing the dissertation. I need to

gather data. This interview is part of the data gathering process. The University requests that the interviewees be protected, mainly in the area of anonymity. The consent form you have in hand specifies the protection. So, your name will not be disclosed. I shall do the transcription myself so that no one will hear your voice. The tape will be destroyed after the dissertation has got through. I am sure you know all these. I shall send a copy of my draft transcription to you and you may recommend amendments. This is to ensure that I shall not misunderstand you in any way. Please sign the consent form if you have no problem with it. We can only start after you have signed the consent form.

(The Subject signs the consent form).

I (2): The name of my dissertation is "Teaching politics in schools: A study of GPA in Hong Kong". I mentioned this to you before. You are not a GPA teacher or a curriculum planner of the subject. I invite you to interview because the GPA teachers I interviewed mentioned about the effect of gender on the matters related with the teaching of GPA. I understand that you have a lot of insights on gender and education, especially in the Hong Kong context. So, I seek your advice on this (gender) matter. I have been addressing you by your name. The name will be deleted in the transcript to ensure anonymity. So, what I want to do is to present to you what the GPA teachers said and seek your comment, judging from the point of view of gender and education.

S (1): Fine

I (3): "Girls are relatively passive, quiet and lacking concern on current issues", some teachers pointed out. Do you get the same impression from your study and understanding of gender issue in Hong Kong?

S (2): Different levels of schooling are involved in this issue. It covers education at both tertiary and secondary level. I have been away from secondary school for quite a long time, say almost ten years. But, out of my research and observation, the phenomenon does exist. In teacher colleges or colleges of education, male students are more active in giving responses. Certainly, there are individual differences. In my observation...

I (4): You can also refer to your observation about primary and secondary teachers if you like.

S (3): In my observation, this may also be true for both teachers and students. Women teachers also have this inclination (of being uninterested in current issues etc). This

may be due to what happened before. When they were students, they might also lack the interest on current issues and politics. Of course, as I have said, individual differences do exist. I guess what (the GPA teachers) said should be true.

I (5): So, teachers and teachers-to-be show this inclination. True, you have been away from school as a teacher for almost ten years. But, can you share more with me about what you find about girls in primary and secondary schools in your research conducted in mid 1990s.

S (4): I may not have enough figures to talk about this. My (qualitative) research in this area covers primary school students. It does not cover politics. But, you can say I can see the same phenomenon though I may not have a lot of numerical proof to back the claim.

I (6): So you say you can see it, but numerical proofs may not be plentiful. I understand the research you did was a (qualitative) case study of an ethnography type. (The Subject immersed in a school for a prolonged period; participated into and observed the interactions in and after class and talked to different parties throughout.) So, you find girls in school do tend to ...

S (5): To be more passive. Besides, the teachers' concern falls relatively more on the boys. This also leads to girls being relatively more passive.

I (7): Yes.

S (6): Girls also play a lesser role in lessons. But, primary students will not have much chance to touch upon politics.

I (8): And you cannot see much there that concern about current issues?

(The Subject nods).

I (9): But, how about the case of teachers?

S (7): Teachers are relatively more plentiful in my social circle. I find this true with teachers. Women teachers concern more about non-political matters, say hobbies and entertainment etc. Men teachers are relatively more interested in current affairs and politics.

I (10): Yes. You find that female students are more passive and quiet and women teachers tend to lack alertness to current issues and politics.

S (8): Yes.

I (11): Do you think that this is the result of nature or nurture?

S (9): As a sociologist, I believe in the importance of development through nurture. I don't see much about inborn nature towards political alertness.

I (12): So, inborn attribute should be ruled out.

S (10): Yes, it is a matter of development. The socialization process that account for male's interest (in current affairs and politics) is complicated. The same is true for the case of men's interest in football. They are of course two different things. But, in a sense, the two are similar in the sense that peer influence is strong. The peers (of men) like to talk about current affairs and politics and hence there is the force, not related to any inborn attributes, that drives men to concern about them.

I (13): I shall follow up this one and ask you to say something more about the non-inborn factors that account for the gender differences.

S (11): Peer influence is one as I have just said. So when boys and male teachers get together with their peers, it is more natural that they talk more about current issues and politics. In the same token, female students and women teachers will talk more on shopping, entertainment and making up etc. Of course, some say that it is also ascribed. Girls, as alleged, are more concerned with their look and thus they are more concerned with shopping and making up. But, I think it has more to do with the topic of the (peer) group. Men teachers and male students deal more with topics about current issues and even economics in their daily conversation. Girls talk more about entertainment and (movie) stars. The group influence is more important.

I (14): Can you say more about why female students tend to be quiet and passive in class?

S (12): I think I need to correct myself on one point. Now, even girls are not necessarily very quiet and passive. It is only a matter of comparison (between genders).



I (15): So, girls are less quiet and passive when compared to before.

S (13): Yes. You can say so. The reasons for this... (The Subject thinks for a few moments.) I can't be that sure. But, it can be that there is male domination.

I (16): You mean in the classroom, there is male domination?

S (14): Yes. This may be the continuation of this problem. I can't tell with a high level of certainty as I have been away from secondary teaching for some time.

I (17): In primary school...

S (15): In primary schools, women teachers are more inclined to invite boys to answer questions in class. They also attend more to the needs of boys. They have relatively ignored the girls.

I (18): What account for women teachers' preference for boys in answering questions?

S (16): This is related to better response given by boys. Boys are more eager to answer questions, whether they know the right answer or not. If teachers want more interaction in class, they find it easier to work with boys.

I (19): Thus, it becomes a matter of "chicken and egg" (a Chinese proverb, meaning a circular flow of cause and effect). Boys like to answer questions more than girls and teachers thus invite them more. Thus, boys dominate the classroom. This is what you can observe.

S (17): Yes.

I (20): In primary school, the difference I found was substantial. In secondary school, it may be less so. In primary schools, women teachers are much greater in number (than men teachers). In secondary schools, men and women teachers are more or less the same in number. Male domination of the classroom may be less obvious as a result. So, you believe women teachers' preference of boys is stronger than men teachers'.

S (18): In my observation, men teachers are more equal in treating of boys and girls. Of course, this is only about my research. It may not be able to be generalized.

I (21): Are you saying that in terms of equality of concern, women teachers are more biased (in favor of boys)?

S (19): I shall say they tend to ignore girls. This may be better in secondary schools based on this theory as there are more men teachers. But, as teachers, we tend to invite students who are willing to answer more than those who are not. This is particularly so when we want the class to be more lively. Of course there are exceptions when we address questions to those who are particularly quiet in class. In primary schools at least, boys are more willing to show their performance.

(The researcher briefly summarizes the points above. The Subject nods to signal approval).

I (22): Is it reasonable for me to suggest the following? Girls are mainly taught by women in primary schools. The women teachers are more inclined to invite boys to answer, talk and participate into activities. Female students develop a quiet and passive personality in this male-dominated environment. They bring these traits to the secondary school, as personality development is a continuous process. Thus, girls are inclined to be quiet and passive in their secondary school learning too.

S (20): Yes. But, I have to emphasize that there is individual differences. Besides, it should be noted that girls are catching up and are strong in many areas. Boys may be weak in many areas.

I (23): Such as...

S (21): In results, for example... If we look at secondary school allocation, we see that girls are at the upper hand. Of course results may not mean other things.

I (24): Why are girls able to fare better in (this) examination results?

S (22): My impression is that though boys dominate the class by being more active and have more airtime etc., but back to examination results, it depends on what you write (in the examination papers). This does not take into account how active you are in class. Thus, you can see girls fare better in results all the way up in the schooling process. This is interesting.

I (25): You mean girls do better because they are better with language and writing.

S (23): Absolutely. Boys are better with calculation. But, most examinations are based on writing. The situation is changing. Female students outnumber male students in the university. They do just as well in first honor. This may be true worldwide. But, this doesn't change the fact that boys may still dominate the class. In the issue of GPA, boys may be more interested too as they are more interested in current issues and politics. I can also see that in the peer groups of men, there are more time spent on current issues and politics. Females really are not interested in these things. They are more interested in making up and shopping.

I (26): Can this be related to role learning in the sense that girls pick up these (lacking interest in current issues and politics etc.) from their women teachers.

S (24): Not just from their women teachers, it can be the social ethos at large. I also study politics. In the case of Hong Kong, it is correct to say that the political concern in general is low. But out of those who are active talking and commenting on politics, men are the majority. Hong Kong is not a highly political place. With the downturn in economy, people concern more with economics. But, there are still quite a number of people who comment on politics. Out of them, there are more men than women.

I (27): So, this is social ethos. The women teachers are only affected by this ethos.

S (25): Yes, I think so.

I (28): I understand you didn't teach GPA before. But, taking this subject to be current issue- and politics-based, will girls be disadvantaged in doing this subject?

S (26): As a matter of inference, I think so. Interest is basically the drive for learning.

I (29): This applies to result in terms of learning?

S (27): Yes.

I (30): In terms of results... I think I have to explain to you that GPA's public examinations are also based primarily on paper test. Will girls make up by their better language abilities?

S (28): Not necessarily making even. I think the former factor, i.e. that of interest and inclination counts more. The boys' political concern is after all more important. Of course, there are individual differences. I think that boys' current issue and political concern will give them an edge.

I (31): Okay. I also understand that in your doctoral study, you are doing political socialization and civic education in Hong Kong. (I shall like to talk about this.) Please stop me and switch to other topics in case you do not want to answer my following questions. This is just meant to be an informal conversation. (I say this because I have finished looking into the gender perspective and will like to branch into the Subject's conceptions about civic education etc. This is a bit more than what I said about the purpose of the interview. As such, the Subject should have the right to decline any sharing) What do you think are the outstanding deficiencies in Hong Kong's civic education?

S (29): In fact there are many parts in civic education. It is a controversial term in itself. When we talk about citizenship education, we may talk about sex education and environmental education etc. In a narrower sense, citizenship education should be on the political education side. Isn't it? The deficiency is substantial.

I (32): Like...?

S (30): Before 1997 particularly, it was political apathy and the lacking of a sense of nation. After 1997, we do not see the government to have done a lot in this area, particularly on fostering a sense of nation and the related identity. Besides, the students have not got enough critical thinking to analyze politics. I don't think we have done much in (preparing) democratic participation either. We may even question whether our students have the international perspectives. There is still much to be done if Hong Kong is to be an international city. We are talking about Hong Kong is to be another London and New York in Asia. If this is to be true, there is much to do against the backdrop of globalization.

I (33): Let me briefly explain what GPA is about. It talks about the politics of Britain, the United States, Hong Kong and China. It covers some political concepts too. As such, do you think GPA can help remedy some of the shortcomings of civic education in Hong Kong, particularly in the area of fostering international perspectives and

understanding our own nation etc?

S (31): Yes. I think so. I think political socialization is a very broad concept. There must be political education element in it... It comprises both processes inside and outside the classroom. It is a totality in itself. In lower form we depend on EPA. In senior form, we have GPA as a subject. I think it is both helpful and important. I may not know its division of labor with Liberal Study.

I (34): In the case of Liberal Study, only a small part of the subject is about politics. There are many other areas included. GPA, on the other hand, is all about politics and government. The school I used to work for calls this subject Political Science. In my interviews with GPA teachers, some pointed out that there were changes in the politics and social ethos of Hong Kong after 1997. You mentioned about political evaluation (judgement) a few moments ago. The belief of the teachers seems to be that as the pace of democratization is now being slowed down, there is also a narrowing of the room for such critical political judgment. They even believe that the room for GPA is dwindling, as GPA does not dovetail with this (tightened) social climate. They deem that the social climate is not moving in the direction of openness. Do you share the same impression in the course of your study and research?

S (32): I think democratization can take different directions. Some who are more in the frontline believe that we should move forward towards democracy at a faster pace. There are some who have reservation. We call them "pro-China elements", let's say. Their points of view are different. I agree that in many areas we may not be that democratic. For example, we cannot elect out Chief Executive. On the other hand, the Taiwanese are able to turn out their president. But, I also agree to the saying that after 1997, Hong Kong people actually have a lot of freedom in criticizing the government. Some people even say that before 1997, you might not dare to criticize the British Government or the British Hong Kong Government the same way you are doing now. Now, the Chief Executive and the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region do allow the people to criticize them rather severely. In this sense I don't think politics of Hong Kong has been that tightened up. True, the democrats (broadly construed) are asking more than what the current state of affairs is allowing. But, I shall not agree to the saying of the GPA teachers that the political ethos is being tightened and GPA's room (of survival) is vanishing. True, we cannot do a lot of things, like choosing the Chief Executive through general election. China's official also mentioned that we might not have this for many years. A lot of things are of course arousing criticism, like the use of the 800-strong Election Committee to choose

Legislative Councilors suddenly were entitled to choose the Chief Executive (in the second term).

I (35): So, can I say that what you point out is that the political development in the sense of democratization has slowed down, but the freedom of speech is still there?

S (33): Yes.

## Transcript Twelve

### A brief sketch of the school

- An old school with a long history
- A renowned granted school
- A Catholic girl's school
- An English medium school
- The school is located in Hong Kong Island
- Recruiting students mainly from the upper bands, and with better socio-economic status

Date of interview: 6/8/2002 (d/m/y)

Subject interviewed: Subject 14

Class: GPA teacher / Chair of the A Level subject committee (HKEA)

Background of subject:

- Female, late 40s
- GPA teacher, well experienced in teaching GPA at both Certificate Level and A Level
- Worked with PAS before
- Chair of the HKEA's GPA A Level Subject Committee; long service with the CDC's committee that looks after the Teaching Guidelines
- One of the drafters of the Syllabus when the subject was first turned out

Time used: 2 hours

Venue: a Chinese restaurant near where the Subject lives

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

## Content of interview

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): Thanks for accepting my invitation for interview. This interview is for academic purpose only. I am doing my doctorate in the University of Durham in the United Kingdom. I am now writing my thesis. I have chosen to write on the topic, " Teaching Politics in Schools". I am using GPA as a case. My University requests that we should protect our interviewees or subjects. This is also a part of the process. I think you must be familiar with all these. They are mainly related to anonymity and confidentiality etc. I shall not disclose your name, as well as the name of your school. As we are friends, I may have called you by name in the interview. This will be deleted in the transcript. To ensure that no one will identify you by voice, I shall do all the transcription myself. The tapes will be destroyed after the processes related with the dissertation are finished. I shall send you a copy of the draft transcript after I have finished. You may correct any point in case I have misunderstood you. Perhaps you can have a look at this. (The consent form is produced to the Subject). Please sign it if you have no problem and we can only start after your signing the form.

(The Subject signs the consent form.)

I (2): This is a Chinese restaurant. It is good in the sense that this interview is in a less formal setting. We can simply talk as friends do. To begin with, I shall first get some of your background information straight. I know that. But, this is just to make sure that there are no mistakes. So... You are teaching GPA now. You are the only GPA teacher in the school. You teach the subject, at both Certificate and A Level. Your school takes the PAS.

S (1): No, not in this year. We did PAS once.

I (3): Okay. You are helping with the curriculum (planning) work. I understand that you have been working for the committees of the Examination Authority for a long period of time. Now, you are the chair of the A Level Subject Committee. I remember I did work together with you before. Besides, you also had the experience of helping in the committees of the Curriculum Development Council, looking after the Teaching Guidelines that tells what activities are to be implemented and the time allocation etc. Are you still helping with the Teaching Guidelines work?



S (2): No. In fact I don't think that committee is active in amending the Teaching Guidelines anymore. I think the person responsible for the subject in the Education Department is really very busy with other tasks now. Besides, the number of students taking this subject is so small. I don't think this subject is their priority anymore.

I (4): But you have got experience working with the Teaching Guidelines. I remember that right back to the 1980's, I started working on this with you. Thus, you have on and off been helping them and now you are not doing it this year

S (3): Yes. But, if they need me, I shall be very willing to give my advice.

I (5): As you have got such rich experience, I shall be asking my questions in two parts. First, I shall focus my questions on you as a teacher of GPA. After that I shall shift my focus to your role as a curriculum planner of the subject. I simply seek your opinion. Though I have a list of questions with me, you can stop me whenever you think you want to talk about something else. This is after all an informal talk between friends.

(The Subject nods).

I (6): These are some questions related to the teaching of GPA. Okay. In teaching a subject, we want students to achieve something. What do you most want your students to achieve in studying this subject?

S (4): I think I most want the students to know the surrounding and the rule of the game behind the social structure.

I (7): Yes.

S (5): They thus will be able to know their behavior in their daily life. They may also understand their own inclinations. They cannot avoid understanding their own society and its policies, as these are all so relevant to them. These will exert a great deal of influence on them. Understanding the rule of the game (of the society) will allow them to handle their own affairs more competently. This will bring a sense of direction to their living. I think this orientation is very important to the youth.

I (8): Should patriotism, or the love of one's own nation, be an aim in the teaching of GPA?

S (6): I have not thought of this in the conscious mind. But, since the development, especially political development of modern China is a part of the A Level Syllabus, the students will know more about China with reference to her political, diplomatic, economic, and military policies. The young people may think that, due to the slackening economy of Hong Kong, their development maybe in China, if they are to avoid the problem of youth unemployment here. I believe they will naturally concern more about the affairs of the country. But, I don't think the sentiment of loving the country necessarily results from this.

I (9): Actually, I have already interviewed a number of teachers. I do like to ask for your comments on some of the points the teachers said. Some teachers expressed that teaching more about China might not necessarily increase the students' love of China. On the contrary, this could work the other way round as students could resent against China more, especially when China might not be acting that in line with standard of the West, say in the area of democracy etc. The impact can be negative. What is your opinion?

S (7): I think what the subject says depends on how the teacher in concern understands and interprets the things. Besides being affected by the mass media, the students' understanding of China is shaped a lot by their GPA teacher, who gives them a lot of views. The teachers' own understanding will affect the students' understanding. Thus, I myself will choose to take an objective and open attitude to express the development of China (to the students). Of course, China has a lot of problems in her systems. Some say that there is corruption and there is rule of persons (as against the rule of law) etc. There are also a lot of problems related with the state enterprises. But, all in all, China is opening herself to the world. For example, China is joining the World Trade Organization. There can actually be a lot of different views. Even in the leadership of China, there can be support and opposition (to this change). Stepping into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I hope the students can be more open and will be able to accept different perspectives. This will allow them to make their own judgment about China in the future, when they get more experience and information. This is my direction.

I (10): Do you think GPA is more an academic subject or a form of preparation for political participation?

S (8): I think it is more in the side of being an academic subject. To me, being academic is gathering some facts. Then, based on such facts, you start your analysis and critique. You have to see whether you have evidence to prove your own view. This is more based on a truth-finding and exploration spirit. It is understanding the truth. In this perspective,

I don't think it is necessarily preparing the students to participate into politics. Some students may not approve of the way the politicians act themselves out. This is because politicians usually have their own political platform. I don't think GPA is aimed at preparing the students for political participation. But, it may be a related product. Students may have the inclination (of political participation) when their political knowledge increases. After learning about politics, they may want to exert their influence through political participation. But, this is not an aim of the subject itself.

I (11): So, this is more an academic subject.

S (9): Yes.

I (12): Do you think studying this subject can enhance the sense of national identity. By national identity, I think now it should be Chinese citizenship we shall be talking about.

S (10): I think there is not much effect there.

I (13): Why not?

S (11): I think the young people of Hong Kong are trying to find their own personal identity. National identity is quite far off. They are lacking direction. They are at a total loss in terms of their social role. I don't think they can (develop a sense of national identity) through studying GPA. This is especially so when people have not much social identification and direction. The performance of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has also disappointed a lot of people. I think it is very hard for them to locate themselves and find for themselves a sense of identity. For example, we have been talking recently about youngsters who lose both opportunities of study and work. They also feel the uncertainty, say of work, after finishing study. The majority of young people I know of have not got a sense of personal identity.

I (14): So, can I say it this way? The best way to enhance national identity among the people is that the HKSAR Government, as a part of China's Government, to perform better. People then will see the pride of being Chinese citizens. They will then see the advantage of being Chinese citizens. Without this, no matter how much about China we teach, it will not be of much use.

S (12): Yes. I can observe that many schools are organizing visits to China, to both rich

cities and poor countryside. This will give a true encounter of China to the students. They can see the changes China is facing. I think these real trips and encounters can be more useful and practical than teaching GPA in class.

I (15): Okay. There is a Subject Syllabus worked out by the Hong Kong Examination Authority. Will you first look at those aims and objectives in the Syllabus before teaching your classes?

S (13): I won't do it deliberately. I shall read it and "copy and paste" from it in doing my annual report to the school. I shall then be quoting the aims from the Syllabus. In the process, I do not read it intentionally. But, as I am engaged in the planning of the Syllabus, the aims of the subject are already in my sub-conscious mind. I know what the subject is for.

I (16): Do you agree to such aims in the Syllabus? Do you think they should be amended in any way?

S (14): I think, judging from the rational level, the aims of the Syllabus have no problems. But, as for the behavior level, whether they (the students) will develop their values and act out accordingly is another question. They may stand more on the side of the poor, after they learn about polarization. But, they may stand firm on the side of market rule just as well. I think it may not work out in a straightforward way.

I (17): So, they are satisfactory with reference to knowledge. But, it is doubtful whether such knowledge will be translated into actions.

S (15): Yes.

I (18): Apart from the Subject Syllabus, there are also the Teaching Guidelines. The Curriculum Development Institute that is under the Curriculum Development Council turned out the Teaching Guidelines. The Teaching Guidelines describe how time is to be spent on different activities etc. First there were guidelines for the Certificate Level. Later, in 1996, the A Level Guidelines were published. I remember doing these, together with you, some years ago. Okay, back to the role of teacher, will you take out the relevant Guidelines and study them before you teach your classes?

S (16): I think I will not. I think the Teaching Guidelines are simply hopes that in the process, the most basic content can be covered. But, in reality the teachers have to face a lot of administrative work. There is also a lot of non-teaching work that keeps him

engaged. My belief is that the teacher has to come up with his own priority with reference to the reality that arises. Of course, the teacher's interest and his effort in gathering information will inevitably affect his way of interpreting the content of the Syllabus. My inclination is to follow the general trend of social concern in setting the agenda in the lesson.

I (19): So, these considerations will be more important than the Teaching Guidelines in determining the way the subject is taught.

S (17): Yes.

I (20): So, in general, how will you teach this subject (in class)?

(As the surrounding is getting quite noisy, we turn off the tape and get to another table. The recording stops for a while).

I (21): I asked just a few moments ago about how you teach this subject. Certainly, the method(s) can be different between lessons. But, can you tell me how you will teach this subject to your students in general? I mean the method(s) you will use, like lecturing, discussion, and project

S (18): The fact is I am having smaller class now. I get eleven students in my (A Level) class. This enables me to change my mode of teaching. Instead of lecturing to them, I try to be student-oriented. I will use a number of different methods. For example, sometime, I will ask them to do role-play. For example, they are put into groups of three. Then one will be the presenter, the other two are respectively the observer and the critic. I ask them to play their roles. I work just as a recorder, like a secretary. I will type their conversation out and the day after I ask them to compare the different viewpoints. I will then analyze and put together their views and share mine with them too. The students like it too.

I (22): You mean you will do it in A Level?

S (19): It's difficult to do it in Certificate Level as it is a big class of more than thirty people. I will use the method of questioning. (I ask the questions and) students who are interested answer my questions. But, of course, this is confined to a few students who are interested in this subject and are eager to air their opinions.

I (23): Yes.

S (20): Their opinions will then become like the mainstream (in class). But, I do take the views of my students as important.

I (24): Thus, the number of students seems to be very important in determining the method(s) used in class.

S (21): Yes (The Subject nods.)

I (25): I understand that your school took the PAS before. Some teachers I interviewed expressed that it would be a good idea to take the PAS so long if the class size was small and the teacher could cater for the number of projects. How will you comment on this opinion, with your experience of working with the PAS?

S (22): I think it is good. It is because students can choose their own topics and collect information related to the topic. They will collect information (from documents) or go out for interviews. They carry out data analysis. If they are interested in these research efforts, it will be very helpful to them. They will gain much first-hand knowledge by such research efforts, like interviewing politicians and Legislative Councilors. They will hear these personalities describe their perceptions and points of views. These are very valuable opportunities for the students. This will be more advantageous to them if they have the heart and time to do such work. But, the problem is that the burden on the teachers is also very substantive. You have to discuss with the students whether the topic of the research will be lopsided. Then, you have to (help them) think of the way to carry out the project. Every topic is unique (and requires different treatment). The teacher will have to pay a lot more efforts (than in the non-PAS case).

I (26): As a teacher with experience in working with the PAS, how many projects do you think a teacher can lead?

S (23): I took eight then. But, I felt it very hard already. It could be that I was quite serious with the job. Every morning then, I would go back to school early. I would talk with the students from 7:30am to 8:00 am. Every time I would see one or two of them. We talked.

I (27): Why don't you opt for PAS now?

S (24): The students do not want the PAS that much. Some students are doing English Literature at the same time. English Literature requires the students to take some project work. It is not a matter of choice. It will be too burdensome if students are to work on two projects. Then after conferring with the students, it was found that those students taking English Literature would not like to do the PAS. I talked to HKEA (to see whether it would be possible to have part of the students to take the PAS). But, the reply was that the school as a unit should be uniform, either in taking PAS or not. It could not be that some students took the PAS while some would not. So, under such objective constraints, I had to give way.

I (28): Will you provide opportunities for your students to act out in politics, as they have learnt the knowledge in class? I refer to a sort of political participation.

S (25): (The Subject pauses for a while). I didn't do it directly. But, some students will help individual elected representatives in the election campaign. They did it out of their own interest. I would inform my students about political seminars held in the tertiary institutions. If I have the time, I will go there with them. Sometime I will invite them to go there themselves. They can understand the leadership' stance and the way it is expressed etc. They can observe these things more directly. We will encourage them to make use of such opportunities. But, it will be difficult for students to participate into politics, as they are already busy with their study. There is a lot of homework too.

I (29): This question is hypothetical. If the students are very active in helping the elected members in their campaign, say in winning votes during election. How do you think the school leadership will feel about it?

S (26): I think that there is a directive issued to school about organizing students in election campaigns. I will not deliberately tell the principal that the students do take part in such activities (out of their own initiative). I shall not initiate such activities.

I (30): Will the leadership be alarmed if it sees that a lot of the students are doing it?

S (27): I think it will. I think it will. Some years back, the Association of Youth did organize activities during election time. It was something like enabling students to understand stances of politicians from different parties. Students could contact politicians of different parties. It would not be a problem if it was confined to being a disinterested study. But, the school would not find this agreeable if it was promoting a stance to the students.

I (31): Will you try to encourage your students to see politics from different perspectives in the course of teaching GPA to your class?

S (28): Yes, I will.

I (32): How will you facilitate this?

S (29): I do it through enabling them to see different stances of different people in the understanding of the same issue. For instance, you can choose the incident that the HKSAR Government invited the National People's Congress to interpret the Basic Law. This was related to the right of abode issue. I would then introduce to them different opinions, from those who supported it to those who didn't. The various discourses would be introduced to the students. Of, course, I would find the more typical and representative versions for them so that they could do their own analysis.

I (33): So, you will bring to them the whole spectrum of opinions, ranging from the leftist to the middle and the rightist ones. Thus, they will develop the inclination of seeing things from different perspectives.

S (30): Yes.

I (34): In the course of teaching GPA, we may get involved in issues, that are very controversial, particularly so if they concern our government or leaders.

S (31): Yes.

I (35): When you touch upon these issues in your discourse, will you feel any pressure?

S (32): I do not feel any pressure.

I (36): Is it necessary to dodge some (sensitive points) in the discourse?

S (33): My stance is that I shall remain objective and open. I will not be particularly supporting a particular standpoint. I will bring to the students different perspectives, included in the mainstream. I shall also explain to the students how the roles of people will inevitably affect the views they have. The point of view may not be truly personal. I shall let my students understand that our behavior and thinking are affected and confined by many different factors. It is not a matter of black and white. (The Subject



laughs when she says this). I like to see that my students have this so-called systematic thinking. As such they will be more objective and practical when they try to understand the reality. They shall not take an excessively simple way to perceive this world.

I (37): Okay. I understand your point. The teachers I interviewed once mentioned that China's officials had mentioned that we should not talk about Taiwan's independence issue. Will you, say in the course of replying your students' questions or in dealing with the concept of sovereignty or so, need to avoid going into such topics?

S (34): I will not dodge this. But, I will also tell the students that Chinese Government has a particular point of view on this matter. The people in Taiwan may have a different point of view. If you are talking about the concept of sovereignty, actually this is a concept under dispute in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Whether sovereignty can be really independent and autonomous is really a question. Actually policies pursued are limited by a lot of considerations related to the environment. Economic consideration, for example, has led to a lot of compromises. As a result, I try to share with my students (on such concepts) in a more practical way. Even in Taiwan, there are also different factions. Anyway, as in Hong Kong, up to now, we are still relatively more open, as there are less restrictions on freedom of speech, the mass media and Internet etc., we may get hold of different views relatively easily. My attitude is to allow them to see different stances, within the given time frame.

I (38): (You will try to) enable them to have an all-round exposure.

S (35): All-round exposure as far as my knowledge can afford. I have to admit that I have to face a lot of constraints myself. There are many things which I do not have an answer. I deem it very important to have friends. I think it is very important to find time to talk with them and understand their views. I will not just depend on written materials. Instead I will very actively find out other perspectives through listening to the mass media and contacting my friends. My belief is that what is right and what is wrong may be hidden and then the more you know, the more your view can be different. I tell my students what I know is limited.

I (39): Teaching this subject may easily bring up the term "indoctrination" as a matter of association. Can you tell me what the term "indoctrination" means to you? Besides, is it a positive thing or negative thing in your understanding?

S (36): I think indoctrination must be a negative thing. To indoctrinate means you

compel your students to take up your point of view in a wholesale manner. You aim at ensuring wholesale acceptance without resistance or divergence. Taken this way, I deem it problematic even if you think what you believe is very true. You must allow room for people to think and make their own choice rationally. It will be much better that way.

I (40): Do you take up any method to avoid possibly indoctrinating your students when you teach GPA to them?

S (37): I will do self-reflection repeatedly. This reflection covers both the matter of human nature and the limitation I face in understanding the world. This is a continuous process. It is important because if you set aside your subjective judgment and stance, your room (of understanding) will be enlarged substantially. Besides, I really think that no system of beliefs is completely correct and is worthy of compelling the students to believe. I emphasize that students should have the chance to explore and find the beliefs he thinks are most suitable to themselves, in both daily living and the making of choices. They will then live their life without regret. This is important.

I (41): There was a teacher who mentioned to me that he would allow the students room (to make own conclusions). But, in the matter of the most basic values, like democracy, human rights and the rule of law, he would compel the students to believing. How do you think about this? Do you think this is common among teachers?

S (38): I think receiving education in Hong Kong will make one inclined (positively) to matters related to democracy in the Western sense. This is especially true for us who grew up in the colonial era. But, we must know that both Western democracy and socialist democracy are having their respective limitations. From my personal point of view, of course, I hope to see it (the system) will be more people-centered and we can have rights as a matter of nature. This is also my belief and inclination. But, I will also tell my students that Western democracy also has its limitations in its assumptions and expression. I may take it as a matter of drawbacks of human nature that thwart an otherwise very satisfactory system. I may refer to the recent bank deceptions in the USA and help stimulate them to reflect why this can happen, despite the fact that check and balance etc. are at work. They will then have a chance to know the reality and know that any beliefs and ideologies will need to face the litmus test of reality to be able to claim its certainty (of merit).

I (42): Perhaps we should eat something first. (We are having lunch in fact.) What you

have just said is in fact very relevant to my study. (We stop for a while and enjoy the dim sum we have ordered.)

We talked about national identity. I asked whether this subject could help students develop a sense of national identity? I did not explore into the meaning of national identity then. I want to pick up the issue now. What do you think should characterize the national identity our new generation needs to develop?

S (39): I think globalization is more and more real in this new era. National identity is simply a matter of blood and skin color as these are things we cannot change. On top of that, the thinking and mentality should be dynamic and changing. It should not be that we think China must always be good and superior in relation to other countries. It is only that we appreciate our common root, i.e. the common origin of our cultures and values. But, in the course of their development, we have to know they are affected by and do merge with other cultures. Thus, I think this national identity should be a progressive and not a static entity. I mean not static, in terms of time and space. Perhaps I can put it this way. We are now talking about the concept of global citizenship or being a citizen in the global village.

I (43): Yes.

S (40): Thus, one can think of being a member of the Chinese state. But, this can include many things too. Recently I paid a visit to Lai Guang (in the mainland), where the minority races live. There are many different types of cultures there. Even in China, there are five different main races, including the Han (the biggest one). Thus there are lots of things to study. Is national in this sense confined to Han, the mainstream? This is where we can have a lot to explore. We may know more about our characteristics. We may not be subject to assimilation that easily. But, in many occasions, we can enrich our own culture and values by absorbing different perspectives.

I (44): So, can I say that national identity should be construed in a more open manner and it should allow us to absorb values which are new and good? It should not confine us and bar us from taking new inclination and even moral standard. It will then be very much different from the past, like "We Chinese are like this." or "We British are like that." etc. We thus are trying not to be rigid.

S (41): Yes.

I (45): After all these conceptual stuff, let's talk about something more related to reality. Is public examination important to this subject, as far as your school is in concern?

S (42): It must be important. (The Subject laughs when she answers). Any principal will be very concerned with the results in the public examinations. This applies to every subject, and not just to GPA. The school principal will not be willing to see the reputation of the school being tarnished by a subject, whose results are falling. Certainly, a more open and receptive principal will look into the difficulties the subject faces. The principal shall then be more able to tolerate and accept the teacher in concern. It depends a lot on the principal's style and beliefs. On the contrary, if the teacher fails to get the understanding of the principal, I think the teacher will have to face tremendous pressure. As for GPA, the result is more uncertain. The content of the examination is very current and there are no standard answers. It is very difficult and the teachers have to chase the Syllabus. It is a very hard work. Besides, as teens, the students will not find it easy to handle the topics in the Syllabus. On top of this, our students sit for the English papers. Actually, almost 70% of the students (in Hong Kong) do the A Level examination in Chinese. We become the minority. The difficulty we encounter actually increases. It is more and more difficult to ensure there can be good results in the public examination.

I (46): Yes. I also understand there is no textbook now. Will this add inconvenience and difficulty to your work in the course of teaching? I understand many other subjects are based on textbooks.

S (43): Yes. Exactly. The principal should understand the teacher in concern has to pay a lot of time to the teaching of this subject. Besides, if we agree to the call of the educational reform that what students learn must be related to their daily living and must be interesting, this subject can be of great value too. We in fact are following very closely the spirit of the education reform. We stress a lot on independent thinking. But, I guess, once we are in public examination, the principal will resort to using another standard. It is not then to determine the importance of this subject in terms of its meaningfulness.

I (47): It becomes seeing the importance of the subject in terms of marks.

S (44): Yes, in terms of marks. It becomes that of passing rate and credits etc.

I (48): But, it is hard to ascertain these in this subject, as it is more current and so.

S (45): It is hard to guarantee but (so far) it is also not bad when compared to other

subjects. Perhaps it may be due to the quality of the candidates in concern. But the pressure is there. If the students can be stimulated to have their own views etc, I guess to get good results will not be difficult. But, the students have to adapt to a new learning method and attitude and a special way of gathering information. These are atypical when compared to studying other subjects. They have to be able to manage this new mode of learning.

I (49): You just mentioned about good results. I understand that you are teaching in a girl's school. Actually many teachers I interviewed told me that girls were more quiet and passive in class and were less concerned about current issues and politics. As an educationist, how do you feel about this?

S (46): I have always been teaching in a girl's school and I don't really know the situation in the co-educational schools. As a modern woman myself, I don't think the gender stereotyping should be that important. I myself am quite different from what you have just said. I am very interested in my surrounding, including that of politics. I am not the type who is passive and will recite and believe whatever you say. Perhaps, my character is more like that of a man. I think as for a person in this new age, to be able to know the current trend is a basic requirement of life. You will lose your direction if you are alienated from the trends of development and the ideologies of the society. I don't think the gender stereotyping should be that important. Instead, I should be thinking of using different methods to stimulate the students to think about the social issues.

I (50): There were teachers who told me about the political changes in Hong Kong after reunification. The belief is that in terms of democratization, Hong Kong has made a U-turn after 1997. Even in terms of discourse, it seems that we are being dominated by one voice. The thinking is that GPA will be affected as a result. The room for GPA will be narrowed down. As you have just said, GPA is based on rational analysis or judgment based on rational thinking etc, this subject is thus not in line with the macroclimate, that stresses the love of the country and slowing down of the pace of democratization. This may mean GPA does not move in tandem with the changes and ethos of the new era. Do you share this feeling? Or, do you want to comment on this?

S (47): I do not understand it this way. I think that this subject is primarily related to expressing our views on the current state of the society. What you just mentioned is also a way to of understanding. Moving backward in terms of democracy may not have a direct impact on this subject. This subject can tell this reality (to the students). Of course how you see democracy is a matter of your own perspective. You may think the

current state of affairs is a decline in terms of democracy. But, from the perspectives of China's leaders, it may be that Hong Kong has now got democracy for the first time. In the past, the governors were appointed by Britain while we now at least have the electoral committee. It depends on your perspective to say that there is a U-turn in democracy. This subject can expound this and various views on the issue. The students can thus learn the different opinions. As such, I don't think this subject's room has been narrowed down. I think this subject is primarily aimed at exposing the students to different perspectives and views and as such, I don't think there is any narrowing down of its room.

I (51): There can even be more topics for discussion.

S (48): Yes. There can be more topics to discuss. I also do not agree to the saying that there is now less freedom of speech. I think Hong Kong is still a very free place in terms of airing of opinions. For example, Mr. Tung is being criticized everyday. In fact, we believe the mass media is abusing freedom of speech nowadays. So, in the absence of the professional ethics and code, we may even need to tell the students that freedom of speech should be paralleled by that of social responsibilities.

I (52): There is also a thought among some of the teachers that the impact of the political ethos is on the school leadership. The school leadership may be alert to the contradiction that GPA emphasizes that students will judge politically while the macroclimate emphasizes love of the country and giving of support to the regime. Okay, teachers, as you have just said, can get more topics for discussion. But, the school heads may find this sensitive and not in line with the official requirements.

S (49): I don't know how to say about the subject's sensitiveness. I really don't know whether GPA can transform students who are otherwise very passive into very critical personalities. (The tape runs to its end. A little time passes and the recording continues). I think it depends a lot on the relationship between the principal and the teacher. I have never got a real censorship from my school head in the sense that she will consider what I say in class. If the teacher in concern is confident and is holding tight his belief, I don't think there is a tendency of self-censorship. If you say that the macroclimate is that of compromising to and supporting those in power, I call this a form of "shoe-shining culture". I think a lot of people will agree to that, especially considering that we are now facing the hardship of economic restructuring. There can be compromise very easily. But, as a result of this, we can have more self-reflection, especially whether we can hold firm to our stance if the result can be deprivation of our well being. Where should

we posit ourselves and how we should deal with the requirement of the leadership etc. is what our young people need to face. They may need to work with such complicated considerations, making choices in their daily living. To face this more complicated setting, a value orientation will be more needed.

I (53): So, you don't feel the political pressure yourself. But, you won't be surprised if you find other teachers of this subject can sense that potential pressure.

S (50): I think this subject is different from other subjects in the sense it is not dealing with history. Instead, it is dealing with current issues. Even if you are dealing with history, you can still feel the pressure if you are working on issues related to value orientations. For example, in the case of the Opium War, there can be different stories, depending on whether you take the Chinese or British perspective. So, should the History teacher take up China's perspective in viewing the issue after 1997 because the war is a big shame to the country? Or, should the teacher take up the view that as a result of colonization, Hong Kong gets her asset and advantage? This also involves a contradiction. I guess this applies to every subject where value orientation is involved. But, this subject is special in the sense it talks about the current things. I think as for teachers, we are more conservative and we only talk about the reality. If there is pressure as such, we have to face the reality of schools. I think what's more important is how we equip our students to face all these pressures. But, I would like to remind that schools are usually ruled in a dictatorial manner. This is especially so in this "employer society". In such context, whatever the principal says, the teachers will normally need to pay heed. This may not even be related to whether this subject's bringing the pressure to teachers.

I (54): This may be part of the post-modernist society's features. I think I have finished with all I want to ask about GPA teacher. Do you want to add any comments?

S (51): I think it is very important that GPA teachers can have professional growth and development and have self-reflection on the contradictions and thoughts society is now presenting us. This is why I like GPA, despite that it makes me difficult, say in preparation and so. It is the contrast of thinking with the students that makes it challenging. The difference in the way of expression between the generations is to me a good way to learn too. I am very confident in this subject's contribution. Many students who did this subject came back and told me that I provided them with a framework of thinking. There is a unique space of thinking that is not given by other subjects. This framework and the critical mind equip them well for the jobs they do and this reflects the value of this subject.

I (55): Do you think the government has worked hard to promote this subject?

S (52): Of course not. The education system of Hong Kong is very market-oriented. There is a very heavy emphasis on economic consideration. This subject talks about politics to which the people are apathetic. This may be changing, as people are more concerned with the society. But, to most, it still is very difficult and abstract. A lot of people will find this boring and not being able to help in earning money. This turns the students back. Besides, since the examination is so difficult, they will choose something they are more confident.

I (56): You mentioned to me before the interview started that the principal made clear to you that she would close the subject if the result was not good. Do you mean that the consideration is being pragmatic?

S (53): It is a very realistic consideration. Even the education reform is very much based on practical advantage. It is based on the consideration to make Hong Kong able to compete economically. The emphasis is to enable the students to have generic skills. These are skilled-based. These are not related to value orientation, thinking and critical judgment. These are idealistic educational aims. I don't think the education context in Hong Kong is emphasizing these.

I (57): Now, I have some questions to ask in relation to your role as a curriculum planner.

(The Subject looks tired. I think it is time that we rest for a while.)

I (58): You are very tired. Perhaps we better take a break.

S (54): I am fine.

(The interview resumes after a short break).

I (59): If you don't mind, I shall like to ask another question about teacher before proceeding to the curriculum planner's part. If one is to do well in the subject, is language important?

S (55): That's important at least in the sense that students can express their view. Besides, this subject stresses a lot in writing essays. For example, within forty five



minutes you have to write an essay of more than five hundred words and that includes everything a normal essay should comprise, say introduction, development, and personal viewpoints etc... That's a big demand made on the students.

I (60): You mean Certificate Level?

S (56): A Level. Certificate Level does not really require essays as it requires mainly points. These are the feedback from my students. Even in English composition, they get one hour and fifteen minutes to write an essay of about five hundred words. But GPA asks for a comprehensive essay in forty-five minutes. To them, this is a big challenge.

I (61): Examination is important and some teachers expressed to me that students did ask them to tip the questions. Did your students make such request too?

S (57): They didn't ask me directly. But I think they had confidence on me, as I am a teacher who cares about modern development.

I (62): So, do you try to catch the trend of questions?

S (58): I follow mainly the heated topics. Many students told me that the questions in the mock examination were similar to the questions they had to answer in the real public examination.

I (63): So, you believe the heated topics cannot be far from the questions set in the public examination.

S (59): I think this subject asks about current issues. So, my focus will be on the most heated topics. But, the problem is that there are many current issues. But, you need to teach the students to be able to deal with different ways the questions can be asked. This ability to deal with uncertainty is difficult to teach indeed. This effective communication skills requires the students to have a thinking mind. Many students said to me that the reaction on the spot was very important indeed.

I (64): Now, I come to the questions related to the curriculum planning part. As you are serving as the subject's A Level Committee Chair, and had been working on the Teaching Guidelines for sometime, I shall ask my questions on the curriculum in a wholesome way. This saves time, as I know you are very tired. Do you think this subject can help the training up of effective citizens for Hong Kong? Let's say this

refers to citizens who can fulfill the rights and responsibilities effectively.

S (60): I said before that the advantage of students doing this subject would be the acquiring of a unique framework and method of thinking. This also means that they can see their own unique perspective and view. This I think will be very useful. I am quite certain of it. So, effective skills and value orientation together will allow them the best chance to meet with the demand of an effective citizen. I think they have to be responsible for their own decisions and behaviors no matter what positions they take up. These must be acceptable in the sense that they must be based on thoughts, good reasons and moral judgment. I think if everyone does his role well, the quality of the society will improve over time.

I (65): As for the aims of the Syllabus, I mean those we find in the HKEA Syllabus. You said a moment ago that they were fine. As a chair and a member of the committee, what do you think are characteristics of aims the committee will approve to be included in the Syllabus.

S (61): I think they must make people feel the Syllabus will have room to develop. These aims must then be open and reflect the reality. Besides, there can be room for more development. If you look at the Syllabus and immediately find it is very old-fashioned and is not dealing with contemporary issues, I deem this hardly acceptable. Of course there is the conventional belief that a Syllabus must comprise knowledge, skills, attitude and values. But I think values and attitudes may not be sufficiently dealt with in the formal curriculum. It depends on the overall culture and ethos. This depends on how the various parties in school actually interact with others. The values as manifested (by teachers) and the way of interacting with students count. I think GPA is only one amongst the subjects.

I (66): So, what is written down (as aims) must be comprehensive. But, in their realization, we know the reality is GPA is all but a subject.

S (62): (The Subject nods). This is also what I believe about an effective teacher. The teacher must be able to manage his professional judgment and must have faith on the subject he teaches. He should be able to make promises, and manifest, instead of just profess. If the teacher talks about freedom and democracy but act in a dictatorial manner, it won't be convincing anyway. This reflects very much the personal style and character of the teacher in concern.

I (67): Do you find the subject content satisfactory?

S (63): I think the content is only a generic statement of coverage, I believe the real content of examination is more important to the teachers. As the students actually need to sit the public examination, many teachers only consult the questions asked in the examinations.

I (68): This is exactly what I want to say. The point conveyed to me by some teachers is that they tend to see the past papers (to prepare the students). This is a strategic positioning. But, bar this, as planner, do you see the content needs to be added or deleted or changed in anyway?

S (64): I think we need to examine in details the choice made by the candidates in examination. Say, in the case of China, students usually only choose two questions, which are about China as a party state and how socialism in China is construed and expressed differently in different time. Other topics, like that of the People's Republic of China and the military modernization etc., will be answered by no one if they turn out. Others like the people's line etc are also not popular and will not be chosen. So questions about China tend to be about direction, principle and are more comprehensive in nature. This will allow the students to express and answer well. More specialized questions are not chosen anyway. Based on this observation, I think the teacher will know how to focus.

I (69): So, areas question can be asked (will then be the focus).

S (65): Areas that yield questions that can be answered. So, say if we do ask the peaceful reunification of Taiwan, the students become scarred because the case with Taiwan is different from Hong Kong.

I (70): I see.

S (66): So you have to understand that the students are only teens and they are not that mature. What they can accept are simply questions about broad direction. If you go to the very real and substantive level, I think they find it hard to understand. For example, if you talk about the people's line, the students are not really in that time and context. What they can manage will be the public relation and policy promotion strategy etc, and not necessarily the people's line in the eyes of Mao Tze-tung. If it becomes so abstract to them, they cannot really write up an essay.

I (71): So, is it true that as curriculum planner, one of your aim is to ensure that there are areas in the content that questions can be set and that these questions can be taught by teachers and tackled by the students in examination?

S (67): Yes. Yes. This is the case. Of course I am also familiar with the lecturers in the university who are working in the question setting task and I can grasp their concern and specialty. This is of very great help to me in managing the Syllabus.

I (72): I see. As for the pedagogy, we refer to the Teaching Guidelines. You are not helping this year. But, you have got the experience. I also helped with the task before. I actually worked with you before. But, I shall give no opinion now because of my role. The Teaching Guidelines are very rich with different sorts of activities specified. Can you tell me what were your consideration when you decided which activities were to be put in and how much time they would be given?

S (68): I think it is the interest of the students that counts, especially the part where students will likely to have reactions. When we wrote those things up, this was the thought in my mind. I would see it from the eyes of the students. So, in the course of dealing with the concept of constitution, we invited the students to have a look at the constitution of the school, its content and the process it was passed and the role of the principal in the process etc. This will help enable the students to see the concept from the basis of understanding what are around them. I think this can be of great help to the students when they are to understand the abstract constitutions of different countries. As a planner of the Guidelines, I would like to see the interest of the students being followed and their active thinking can be adhered to. We tried to work out the best.

I (73): Every subject has its assessment. This subject is primarily based on paper test. It was so in the Certificate Level. In A Level, though there is PAS, few schools take it. Some teachers believe that if the subject is assessed through project work, it will be much better. Do you agree to this?

S (69): I do not necessarily agree to this. There is a lot of emphasis on projects recently. There will be enormous work on both teachers and students if projects are done seriously. In reality, candidates sit for many examinations and GPA is only one of the many. Are they willing and can they really put the time on this project? If project is simply copying by means of downloading different things from the Internet, I don't think it is good either. Thus, I may not totally agree to this point. Besides there is the question of fairness involved in the mechanism. You know the marks of the students in

their projects are linked to their paper test scores.

I (74): You mean the external marker.

S (70): In GPA (PAS), there are both internal and external markers. The two marks from the two markers are averaged. But, internal marker usually will not give a very low mark. Out of twenty-five, seventeen or eighteen marks will usually be given. This is in fact needed because too low a score will drive the schools away from taking this subject. Thus back to the basic, education may not be that quantifiable. Even if the students fail, it does not mean that they do not learn a lot.

I (75): So, projects can be good only if the problem related with the mechanism can be solved and there are not too many students and there are not many subjects requesting a project.

S (71): Yes.

I (76): Actually, I have done a little longitudinal study and have found that questions tend to repeat themselves over a number of years. I guess other subjects may be more or less the same. It may not be verbatim repetition and can be repetition with some changes in wording. It might be about the Governor's legislative powers in the past and now it may be about the Chief Executive's legislative powers etc. Will this lead to tipping of questions or teachers' preparing model answers to students?

S (72): I have never worked out a model answer for the students. I may be lazy. I also think that there can not be model answers. I also help with marking of papers. GPA involves a very wide domain. It is difficult to work out one answer as different answers can arise as a result to different ways of thinking and organizing. Different views and expressions make it very difficult. I thus have never thought of providing model answers to students. Take the example about Governor's and Chief Executive's legislative powers you just mentioned, though they are the same conceptually, the contextual factors and expression can be different. Thus I think reciting model answers is not sufficient to get good result in this subject. It calls for "real ability" to have good marks. The way the question is asked can involve different elements and calls for different responses.

I (77): So different time period brings in different elements.

S (73): Yes. 1980's of course will be much different from 2000. So, I train my students to respond on the spot (to questions they encounter).

I (78): So, there cannot be one model answer to be used across different years.

S (74): So, the subject is very difficult.

I (79): So, though teachers may focus on areas that are likely to turn out, they cannot really give students a model answer to recite and get high marks.

S (75): No, they can't get high marks just by reciting. Take the recent ministerial responsibility reform as an example, so much has changed within the short period between the time it was proposed and the time it was turned out. So, the students actually need to be contingent and cope with changes on the spot. Many of my former students are now working with other jobs such as financial analysis and planning. They told me that the training here is of value to them now that they have to be contingent to their work. This once again makes me confident of this subject's contribution.

I (80): I have finished with this interview. Thanks for your help.

Side Notes:

After the tape has been turned off, the Subject says to me that the school has always been in favor of English Literature, as it is a symbol of granted school status. She also worries about the future of the subject in the school as it can easily be closed if its good results are gone. It brings a lot of pressure to her. This year, she prays, hoping the results can be good. Closing the subject may mean a transfer to the teaching of other subjects, say English and this can be complicated.

The Subject repeats the following two concerns:

- The subject has no textbook and this brings extra burdens to both teachers and students.
- The students have to be able to get the right message of the question setter as to what is asked before they can answer well and get good results. Studying the right topics alone does not guarantee a high score. This brings extra insecurity.

In a follow-up e-mail, the Subject explains further on the issue of international perspectives by saying:

*“GPA can allow the students to understand political institutions, ideologies and process in a comparative sense, by drawing reference across China, Hong Kong and United States in particular. However, the subject will not be able to allow the students to gain a worldwide view or knowledge of trends of political and diplomatic development and, say understand how President Bush strategically posits USA toward Middle East and Iraq.”*

## Transcript Thirteen

Date of interview: 13/8/2002 (d/m/y)

Subject interviewed: Subject15

Class: Former GPA teacher / Serving GPA subject officer at the Hong Kong Examination Authority (HKEA)

Background of subject:

- Male
- At mid 30s
- Studied politics in the university and with research experience
- Former GPA teacher (at both Certificate and A Level)
- Serving GPA Subject Officer at Hong Kong Examination Authority

Time used: 1 hour

Venue: The Subject's office

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

### Content of interview

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): Before we start, I have to ask you to read this consent form. The University (I am doing my doctorate study) requests that we protect our interviewees or subjects. You need to sign this consent form before we proceed to the interview. Actually in this consent form, we list the protections, which are mainly related to confidentiality. (The consent form is produced to the Subject.) I need to change it a little bit. As you are no more working for a school, school name in the first clause is therefore irrelevant. I will do the transcription myself and so no one will ever hear your voice and identify you. The tapes will be destroyed after the dissertation stage has been finished.



S (1): That's good. Okay, there is no problem.

(The Subject laughs and signs the consent form).

I (2): First let me have some background information straight.

S (2): Okay.

I (3): I understand that you taught GPA in school before. After that you worked in the Hong Kong Examination Authority, with responsibility of looking after GPA and other subjects.

S (3): Right.

I (4): Actually I have already interviewed a series of persons. Some are GPA teachers. Some are curriculum planners, say working for the HKEA's GPA subject committees. Some have been working on paper setting etc. I hope I work out something of help to us both in the following interflow. Besides seeking your views, I shall also convey to you the points I gathered and seek your comments. Hopefully, the results can be of help to the development of the subject.

S (4): Fine.

I (5): I shall skip the part for teachers and focus on the questions about the curriculum because of your administrative experience. I shall first ask questions about curriculum planning and then proceed to the public examination issues.

S (5): Yes.

I (6): I shall not differentiate my questions between A Level and Certificate Level. But, if you want to pinpoint at one particular level in your answer, please do.

S (6): So, your dissertation does not aim at one level of study.

I (7): That's a good question. My topic is "Teaching politics in schools: a study of GPA in Hong Kong". Hong Kong is very special in the sense that there is a secondary school subject which is all about politics and which has a public examination of its own. I take the subject GPA as a case and I am not aiming at a particular level. I take the subject as

a whole.

S (7): Yes, I see.

I (8): Do you think this subject can contribute to the development of effective citizens of Hong Kong. If affirmative, what are the subject's contributions?

S (8): As a matter of contribution, I think this subject's aims and nature are really very good. Theoretically, it can contribute a lot (to the development of effective citizens). But, you have to first look at the popularity of the subject among the schools in Hong Kong. No matter how good the subject is, if the candidature is only about a thousand, its lack of popularity is all too obvious. But, on the other hand, the subject in itself is very useful in allowing the young people to have understanding of Hong Kong's political structure, the running of the government and the government's relationship with the people and the issues of rights and duties. The subject can let the students know the political culture related to these and understand the citizen's political relationship to the society. This is helpful.

I (9): There are recent research findings that tell that the young people of Hong Kong are lacking a sense of national identity. By citizenship, now it should be clearer as Hong Kong has been returned to China. This citizenship is actually citizenship related to the People's Republic of China. These researches say that our young people do not have a high level of identification with the role of being China's citizen.

S (9): Yes.

I (10): Often, they take themselves only as Hong Kong people. They also insist on this. This subject covers China, the politics of China.

S (10): Yes.

I (11): Will this subject have an impact or help on enhancing the students' sense of national identity?

S (11): I will see it this way. What I see reflect my own value orientation only. This subject will provide a form of hardware or infrastructure on the relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland. I mean knowledge about the structure of the relationship. The understanding of the students will become stronger as a result of studying this subject. But it is another question whether they accept and identify themselves with

this (relationship). But, this subject is a channel for them to understand. They have a better chance to understand. If they understand and accept the relationship, that's better. But, if they don't accept, it is their own value orientation. But, obviously, this subject provides an objective channel for them to understand. Whether this helps (national identity building), I don't know. On the contrary, in my experience of teaching GPA, the students, after understanding more, ...might get even more alienated

I (12): There were teachers who also said this.

S (12): Yes, it can be like this. Not knowing it may make you have less feeling on the issue. But, studying it may magnify your feeling.

I (13): A close question. Patriotism, or the love of one's own country, is a heated topic now. Will studying this subject have an effect or help on enhancing patriotism?

S (13): I think the subject and its aims are not on this. It is not aiming at promoting their sentiment of loving the country or supporting one side or one ideology. Absolutely not.

I (14): So, this is only a platform of knowledge. What else the students decide after obtaining the knowledge is a matter of their own personal judgment.

S (14): Yes, and the subject trains the students the skills of critique and analysis. These are the focus and it is not things like patriotism you pointed out.

I (15): So, the stress is on rational things, like critique and analysis, and not on affections and sentiments.

S (15): Right. I think dating back to the days of colonial rule; the government did not put efforts in this direction. This subject should be construed as one aiming at promoting understanding. It is not aiming at promoting support of whatever things.

I (16): Yes, I see. Now, let's look at it from the point of view of international perspectives. Mr. Tung's saying is that Hong Kong is to be another London or New York in Asia and as such international perspectives will be very important for our students. This subject covers the USA, say at it's A Level. Besides, in dealing with the concept of democracy, students may also study the United Kingdom and other democratic systems.

S (16): Yes, that's right.

I (17): I guess Certificate Level may be a similar story though its scope may be narrower. So, do you think this may give our students a little international perspectives in the political sense?

S (17): I think that's positive. It has this impact. It is certain too. In the A Level, they will know more about the way United States' Government operates. More or less, this will be related to the way human rights are perceived. We also have the section on comparison between United States' and China's government. This year will be the last year we ask this in the examination. For instance, in the case of relationship between government and the people, the two countries can be different. This also applies to the relationship between the legislature and the government etc. The students will then understand the differences. We shall not study the diplomatic issues and the role of United States in the international arena. But, knowing the government structure and values of the United States will be helpful to the developing of international perspectives.

I (18): So, is it true that whether there is a paper specifically on comparison, the students can still learn more about different polities?

S (18): Yes, they will.

I (19): Then, as a result of this, the students can build up this "compare and contrast" in their cognitive mind no matter whether they need to do a question on it or not.

S (19): Yes. For instance, in the understanding of the United States' international role and policy, we should understand these are related to the way the American believe about human rights and democracy. Certainly, practical advantages also count when USA makes her international policies. The children (students) can make such association themselves.

I (20): This year will be the last year we have comparison and contrast questions.

S (20): Yes. The examination is now over. It is finished by now.

I (21): So, next year different countries will be taught in its own sake.

S (21): Yes.

I (22): So, can I assume that even if they need not answer a question on comparison, the students will also do it in their own thinking and analysis, as they have learnt China, Hong Kong, United States and so?

S (22): Yes. Yes, that's right. Actually in dealing with the political concepts of the papers, they will also need to draw examples as references and the comparison (between different polities) will come out naturally.

I (23): Do you find the aims of the GPA Syllabus satisfactory?

S (23): That's okay. I don't think there is any problem. There is no problem there.

I (24): Put it another way, what sort of aims do you think can be accepted by the committee as aims of the subject? What are the conditions deemed important?

S (24): The conditions for...?

I (25): So that the aims can be accepted to be put into the Syllabus and be published.

S (25): Do you mean what are the conditions for such aims to be actualized? Or, do you mean what are the conditions the aims must meet to be adopted?

I (26): I am more on the technical level. I mean when you accept some statements as aims of the subject, what criteria do you have in mind that help you decide the statements should be written into the Syllabus and go public? An example I can cite here is that one committee member pointed out that the aims had to be generic, comprehensive, positive and generally acceptable to the public.

S (26): I agree to this interviewee's saying. Actually I want to say this. (The Subject shows the aims of the Syllabus to me). I think you are referring to this.

I (27): Yes.

S (27): In fact, as for social subjects, these things are rather generic. These include understanding of different things and skills etc. As for the criteria for such aims to be considered fit and good, I think more or less, the consideration is whether they target well towards the recipients. I mean the students. One special feature of the students here is that they don't understand much about current issues, government behaviors and responsibilities of the citizens. They don't have much contact with these either. This is

my personal point of view.

I (28): Yes, we are only talking about personal views.

S (28): I don't think they are doing well here. This Syllabus needs to face this deficiency. It must work to reinforce the students in this way. For example, we will stress on talking about the responsibilities of the citizens. We emphasize that the government is a service provider to us. We take this perspective. If we aim this way, the curriculum must move in tandem. We have to consider the reality and only so can the aims be effective.

I (29): Okay. So, judging this way, you find the present aims and objectives satisfactory.

S (29): Yes, I do. We do put down phrases like being a responsible person. But, of course, its realization depends on the course of teaching.

I (30): As for content, which is a necessary part of the Syllabus, do you find the existing ones satisfactory?

S (30): (The Subject takes a little pause). It is a relatively contradictory thing. I find that the existing Syllabus has relatively too many things. "Too many" is in relation to the learning time. They have just one year something for each level of study.

I (31): I see.

S (31): That is tight. But, the dilemma is that politics must be related to different things. There are a large number of political actors. There are say, the government, the people, the political parties, the mass media etc. We cannot see one thing independently. Besides, behaviors of the actors are related to political concepts.

I (32): Thus, it becomes very comprehensive.

S (32): That's very comprehensive and everything is very closely related. The problem is more serious with A Level. A Level study concerns not just structural things, but also a lot of conceptual things. I think the curriculum is very rich in nature. There is enough to teach if you are thinking about teaching politics. Of course within the content, we will not teach some of the concepts that can only be taught in great depth. For example, liberty and justice may be too difficult and cannot be taught in the course of secondary education.

I (33): And they are very philosophical too.

S (33): Yes. They are very philosophical. Thus, we have to be selective. On the whole, I think it is enough.

I (34): Okay. The Syllabus may cover too many things.

S (34): It is the problem with (not enough time). Beside, they may not be able to absorb the things. For example, they find it very difficult to deal with Marxism. I mean it is relatively (more difficult).

I (35): If it is a matter of change, what changes will you most like to effect? Take away a part of the content?

S (35): In fact when I first took up the job a number of years ago, we carried out a review. We took away some difficult concepts, like social contract theories. It is important. But, we cut it because of time (constraint).

I (36): You mean Jean Jacque Rousseau and the like.

S (36): Yes, Rousseau and John Locke etc are gone. It's because they are very philosophical. Besides, the teachers may not have enough time to teach all. On the other hand, we are going to cut the part of comparison as I have just said. It is believed that students can do it even if they need not do it in examination. We are doing this (trimming). Yes, there is no other way.

I (37): Now, I want to talk about the mode of assessment. I am referring to the public examinations.

S (37): Yes.

I (38): On the whole, do you find the mode of assessment satisfactory, particularly in relation to the aims of the subject?

S (38): (The Subject pauses for a moment). I think if we consider it in the context of Hong Kong's education system and its related learning environment, I think the requirement (of the subject's examination) is okay. But, not all students can meet with the requirement. This may mean the assessment is somewhat wasted.

I (39): What are the areas the students are most unable to meet with the requirement?

S (39): They do worst with analysis, in Certificate Level and particularly in A Level. They are very bad in critical thinking. Of course, individual students may be good. But, on the whole, it is disappointing. Actually the assessment will change in 2003. So, you can say that we are lowering the standard to suit the students' ability. But, sure you can also say that we are changing the assessment to test different skills. We may test some basic skills. That's why we are going to have some short questions.

I (40): You mean in A Level?

S (40): Yes. That will be more factual by comparison.

I (41): Then, the comparison section will be cancelled.

S (41): Yes. Besides, we are going to have some data based questions.

I (42): In A Level?

S (42): Yes, it is with A Level. In Certificate Level, we are trying to incorporate it into the existing mode. There will not be a question called data based questions. But, some questions may have this element.

I (43): So, you try to stimulate them to do some more analysis.

S (43): Yes. This is to help them use different methods. They are to grasp some basic concepts. Then they are to use such basic knowledge to do some analysis. We are actually trying to break up what we did in one go before. In the past, we just gave them one thing (question) and they had to do everything by themselves (without this step-by-step guidance etc). They could not do it effectively. So, now we give them the steps.

I (44): This then is facilitating them to do the analysis.

S (44): Yes. (The Subject laughs). Hopefully we can work it out.

I (45): I talked with some GPA teachers. You know I also taught it before. We



understand the students have to write out a lot of things (a long essay) in response to a short question.

S (45): Yes they need to write a few pages.

I (46): The standard of the students is a falling one, in both language and other aspects. Thus, the GPA teachers I talked to feel that it is difficult to meet the requirement. I think the point (change) you just mentioned is a response to the problem.

S (46): Yes.

I (47): When we talk about assessment, I want to discuss with you the issue concerning with the Project Assessment Scheme (PAS) too.

S (47): Okay.

I (48): The PAS is not taken by a lot of schools.

S (48): Few schools are doing it. Only four schools are doing it.

I (49): But out of the GPA teachers I visited, the feeling is that though they are not doing PAS now, the scheme is worthy of pursuing.

S (49): Yes, it is worth doing.

I (50): They mentioned about the scheme is allowing the students to learn with interest and self-direction and breaks the confines of the Syllabus. The students can also do more data collection work too. But many teachers are not doing it because of objective factors (constraints). Two factors to them are outstanding. First, the number of students is a problem.

S (50): Yes.

I (51): One teacher XXX mentioned to me that number (of students) is crucial. Other teachers shared this. She said a few students would be the right figure.

S (51): Yes, in A Level.

I (52): Yes. How do you think about this?

S (52): Absolutely agree. I recall my experience as a GPA teacher in XXX. We took the PAS too as a matter of tradition. I agreed very much to the mode of PAS. That's good and the students could learn a lot. This also prepared them for university study, in both the skills and methods of dissertation writing. They could manage these things. But, the quality issue was important. Each of them would need to do a short dissertation paper. It was not possible for the teacher to assign enough time to look after each of them. though the ideas behind the scheme was very good.

I (53): Yes.

S (53): But, in these few years, I found from the projects handed in to me that the students concerned might not have spent much efforts in the projects. This might owe to the fact that they had to cater for other examinations and also to the fact that the marks accounted for by the PAS was not too substantial. Fifteen percentages of the total marks was returned by the project work.

I (54): That's not much.

S (54): We are increasing it to 22.5% if I am not mistaken.

I (55): But, that's only a quarter of the total marks.

S (55): Yes that's only about one fourth. But, they have to start in form six and carry on till form seven. The teacher will have a lot of work while the teacher need to put in a lot of efforts. (It is difficult as) the students have no prior experience of writing research papers, assuming that they do not do it in other subjects. They have no ideas about many things needed, like how to make hypothesis; how to build up arguments and write footnotes etc. They don't know all these. They don't know how to do interviews and write the questionnaires etc. The teachers need to spend a lot of time on training them up and correcting them. All these add up to account for the unsatisfactory outcome (in terms of take-up rate).

I (56): You have been expressing very well. Though I seem to have a list of ready questions here. But, please understand that this is an unstructured interview and just talk whatever you want to. You may even stop my flow and go back to whatever you want to say, like your teaching days and other questions you deem fit. This is simply an informal conversation between friends. (There is a little pause and I therefore resume

asking questions). Not many schools are taking the subject. This subject is not a growing subject and the number of schools taking it is actually falling.

S (56): Yes. Every year there may be one or two schools dropping it.

I (57): So, what do you think is the major obstacle of this subject in its implementation at schools, so that it fails to grow, get stagnant and even decline (in terms of number)?

S (57): It is falling as you said. There are a number of possible reasons. But, I think the most important reason is that (the Subject said aloud) our education authorities does not see the good point of this subject.

(There is a pause).

I (58): Can you say a little more about this?

S (58): It does not see the good point of having this subject and has not done anything to reinforce this subject. In short, I think the government doesn't know how to invest. It has always been saying that it wants to nurture the sense of nation and sense of citizenship among the people. A lot of informal curricula have been worked out. Things like ... (There is a little pause).

I (59): Civic education?

S (59): Yes, and moral education. That's working through different channels. On the contrary, this subject is a formal curriculum that can face the aforesaid dimensions. There is already a rather complete and established curriculum here that has been taught for more than ten years. The government, I believe, does not know how to invest its resources and where to focus in terms of resource allocation. This is the main reason. This will also make schools and students unable to be brave enough to accept this subject. Without the encouragement and resources of the government, this is not possible.

I (60): Yes, this is also one point the teachers brought out. The government has not been actively encouraging the subject. For example, there is no active promotion.

S (60): But, (on the contrary) the government wants to do something in this area. But, it doesn't know how to use this tool. I think it is a bit foolish.

I (61): The teachers said to me that “Why GPA does not have seminars on its teaching while such seminars are plentiful with other subjects, like English? Besides, there is also no promotion.”.

S (61): Exactly. That’s it true exactly.

I (62): So, do you agree to it that these are signs of lack of encouragement?

S (62): Yes.

I (63): Some teachers said to me that it seemed that the government had forgotten this subject.

S (63): I guess so.

(We laugh).

I (64): But, lets go back a little bit. When the government works on civic education, it often is related to the love of the nation and a sense of citizenship identity etc. This subject can give a reasonable knowledge platform. But, as we have just said, the judgment of the students can be either positive, or neutral...

S (64): Of course they are free.

I (65): Or, it can be even negative.

S (65): Sure.

I (66): Can it be that this subject is not a core subject because of this?

S (66): (The Subject hesitates a little). I can’t oppose your saying. But, I don’t think the government is so smart to think of this. (We laugh). I don’t think that it is smart enough to know of this subject, understand its effect and resort to the using of other non-formal curriculum to do the work. I think it isn’t like this. In fact it is practically meaningless if we keep talk about citizenship identity while in fact we have no ideas of the government and the state structure and even some recent development of the country, say after 1949 (the year China turned communist).

I (67): So, is this the same as putting up a building without first doing the groundwork?

S (67): Yes. No matter how you talk of these (national identity, patriotism etc) to the students, it will not be effective at all. How can you say you love the country or support the government when in fact you don't even know what it is doing? You don't know how things come about. How can you support anything? There will be no impact if you keep on doing things which are only superficial.

I (68): I have a little thought in my mind. This was also mentioned by some of my interviewees. GPA was launched in the midst of 1980's.

S (68): 1985?

I (69): The drafting work began in 1984 if I am not mistaken. At that time the British administration in Hong Kong was working with development of representative government. On the other hand, the return of Hong Kong to China was being planned. Then, the Sino-British Joint Declaration (on the return of Hong Kong) and the Basic law etc were turned out. The teachers said this was an opportunity allowed by the then circumstances (to develop the subject).

S (69): Agree.

I (70): Politics then became more open and the society became more politicized etc. Based on these, the subject had the chance to be born (and grow). But, things have been reversed. Some interviewees pointed out that after reunification, there was the tendency of redepoliticization. It seems that now it is not the wish to see people talk that much about politics any more. Thus, the belief is that, as a corollary, the space for survival and growth of this subject is reduced. Do you agree to this view?

S (70): I agree to this view.

I (71): Can this be related to your earlier point? There must be a need before the government will put efforts in developing this subject. But, in the present context, the need is no more felt to exist.

S (71): I agree to your point. But, I also think that the government is not able to know the effect teaching this subject will bring. They don't know and they don't care about it.

In our meeting, the complaints of the teachers seem to be about having no textbooks and no seminars, as you have just said. There are no such things as the resources have gone elsewhere. They go to other subjects. Besides, as there are so few students taking it, as shown by the candidature, it is not worth putting resources into it. But (the Subject speaks with a little pause) the main reason is that there is no promotion by the government. There is a lack of promotion because there is a lack of recognition.

I (72): Because they don't see the need.

S (72): Yes. So, I agree with your view. But, before the return of sovereignty, say in 1984 and 1985 etc, when the representative reform was underway, I think the government then was taking the lead. The government worked with education to lead the development. As a result, some subjects, like that of GPA, were turned out. Though then there was already Economic and Public Affairs (EPA), the government set up one more subject (GPA). I believe the government then played the key role of doing these things. Of course this is difficult to prove. I was also a student at that time.

I (73): I was then helping the drafting of this subject.

(We laugh).

I (74): This was the very moment I was drawn into the drafting of this subject. There were a lot of people there, such as XXX, XXX. (They were also interviewed earlier). I have finished with the questions about the curriculum. Do you want to add anything before we talk about the examination?

S (73): No, I think that's it.

I (75): Now, the questions focus upon the public examination.

S (74): Yes.

I (76): A moment ago you commented on the present mode of assessment and you said you found it satisfactory generally.

S (75): Yes.

I (77): I would like to discuss about the question setting process. We shall not go into details and touch upon the questions as I know they are confidential.

S (76): Yes.

I (78): In the process of moderating, the moderators work as a team to turn out the questions. What factors do you think the moderators will consider in working with their questions, say which questions are to be selected and which are not. Or, what level of depth and how the questions are to be expressed and written etc?

S (77): Do you mean A Level or do you mean Certificate Level?

I (79): I mean in general. Of course you can differentiate between the two if you deem necessary.

S (78): I will answer you in generic terms. First we need to see whether it meets with the requirements of the Syllabus, especially the aims and objectives etc. We have to stick to them. We cannot go outside what the Syllabus includes. The second thing we stress is that it must be related to current issues. It must be updated. This is obvious. For example, when the issue of the responsibility of the civil servants is in the air, we are inclined to ask about it. We shall not go back to things that happened four or five years ago. It can be things that first came up four or five years ago. We just do not emphasize history. Third, we will look at the standard of the students. We will anticipate how far their abilities can carry. This is very important. Certainly this is anticipation only. There are topics we consider too difficult to them and then we will avoid them. Or, at least, (even if we ask them), we will not go into it deeply. The fourth factor is related to the interest and academic standard of the individual setters. This is a reality. If say he or she knows more about public administration, the focus may be more on civil servants and so. There will be an impact. Of course there is group interaction as in the meeting the moderators talk it among themselves. Finally, it will be the pattern of questions already asked. If the question was already asked last year, we will not like to ask it again this year though it may still be a heated topic.

I (80): You just said about pattern. Actually before coming, I have done a little longitudinal study about the questions asked between 1996 to 2001. It appears that similar questions will turn up in a few years. Similarity here may not mean that exactly the same questions with the same wording will re-appear. It can be that the questions in concern actually are asking the same thing or cover the same areas.

S (79): Yes, you are right.

I (81): Of course, as you said, same questions will not appear in two consecutive years.

S (80): Right. Right.

I (82): Some questions are similar and some are almost the same. Outsiders call it “cooking the same dish again” (A Cantonese proverb, meaning repeating something.) I don’t think this is peculiar to this subject. It actually happens in many subjects. Will this have an impact on directing the teachers’ teaching. I understand you also taught this subject before.

S (81): I think the way the questions are set and the content of the questions will definitely have an impact on teaching. It is impossible not to have this wash back effect. There are two ways to see this “repeating”. First it may come accidentally. It comes out as people forget. It is like we finally realize that the question asked this year was asked two years ago etc. This is not strange. We do not have a regulation that forbids asking questions already asked before. The second reason may be that the students did not do it well before. It could be due to the students or the teacher’s teaching. We will then like to ask that again in another way in another year.

I (83): That means you are in some sense directing the teachers.

S (82): We draw their attention to some topics. This may not be the only reason. But, this is one of the possible reasons.

I (84): So, you have talked about the “wash back” effect. We both taught GPA before. When you know that sort of questions will...

S (83): Reappear or have a greater chance of being asked again. (The Subject says it before I can finish the sentence).

I (85): Say, they come up once every two or three years.

S (84): Yes.

I (86): The teachers are likely to give more time and efforts there.

S (85): That’s the right way. I would if I were teaching the subject.

I (87): Okay. One teacher complained to me that the public examination results of his



students were...

S (86): Unsatisfactory. (The Subject says that before me probably due to that he knows the teacher and the case well).

I (88): He also felt that the correlation between GPA's score and scores of other subject was low. Say, students got good grades with other subjects but poor grade in GPA. Besides, same student with poor GPA grade could get good result in doing this subject in the university.

S (87): So, the question is why the A Level's grade can be that low?

I (89): Yes. The concern was with the low association. Is that common?

S (88): (The Subject thinks for a while). Actually every year there will be some cases like this. Some teachers will make inquiries to us. But, our standard of marking is uniform and there is full anonymity of students in the course of marking. The papers are mixed in a way that (even the marker will not know the identity of the candidates). It is actually impossible for anyone to deliberately increase or decrease the marks of certain candidates because we don't know who they are. All the rules we have point toward equal treatment of candidates. So, if we talk about the reason behind. The analysis points only to that they didn't do as well when compared to other subjects. I mean in comparison to other students. We did not give fewer grade A and B when compared to other subjects. We gave out A and B according to performance.

I (90): So, the reality was that for the school in concern the students' performance was lower in GPA, than in other subjects. In this particular case, the school's GPA score bear a low correlation with other subjects. So, this is only an individual case.

S (89): We actually have an ability indicator. The general picture is that if you do well with GPA, you won't be very bad in other subjects. Our subjects are relatively comparable (in terms of results). It won't be that GPA is particularly difficult and Geography is particularly simple as they are in the same level. It is only a difference in subject nature. We do have this assumption.

I (91): In general, GPA's correlation with other subjects is ...

S (90): It's high. It's high indeed.

I (92): So, that's to say if you get A in GPA, you won't be bad in other subjects.

(We laugh).

S (91): That's our analysis only.

I (93): Two related points from teachers that I like to share with you. First, this subject is difficult to study.

S (92): Agree.

I (94): The first reason put forth is that teachers will need to prepare a lot. You know there is no book to use.

S (93): It is impossible to have one too.

I (95): If they do it in Chinese at Certificate Level, they can still partly rely on the book by Chan. Perhaps this helps a little. Besides, they have to read up a lot of current issues.

S (94): Yes. They do. I agree.

I (96): And because it stresses a lot on current issues, there is a degree of uncertainty.

S (95): Yes. I agree.

I (97): There is pressure on teachers. The worry is that they may miss out reading something.

S (96): Yes. I agree.

I (98): Some teachers also said to me that language was very important in studying GPA as one needed to read a lot.

S (97): And expression is important.

I (99): Yes you need to write a lot (to get through). You also agree that that these make the subject difficult.

S (98): Yes. Absolutely agree. In fact I encountered the same problem before (when I

taught). I then told my students, “ You may come to topics that I have never taught before.”

(We laugh).

S (99): I said to them, “Don’t come back and ask why I did not teach you in class.” You know that a teacher cannot teach all possible things, considering the complicated nature of the subject. Besides, it is related to current issues. It is actually a matter of whether the students have the habit of following them. I mean it is a matter of whether they have social concern. If they don’t they will miss a lot of issues, that are related to the concepts they acquire. If they miss these issues, they will run into troubles, as they cannot have the depth in their analysis. There are no cases to do any analysis.

(The Subject reminds that it is time to go for lunch as we have reserved a table and immediately after that there is a meeting. The tape is turned off but we carry on the chat during lunch.)

Side Note: The chat continues during the lunch we have together at a nearby hotel.

The following points are raised.

- The Subject does not believe gender will be very important in advantaging boys when they do GPA. It is pointed out that even analysis and expression in GPA will need to be expressed and girls are stronger in linguistic terms. This is particularly important in A Level.
- Besides, it is also pointed out that, candidates are weak in analysis. An example is given. When the question, “Should China adopt the Western version of democracy?” was asked, many candidates only gave answers like “No, because it is prescribed in the constitution that China is a socialist state”!

In the interview with Subject 16 (27/2/2003), it was pointed out that universities exert a strong influence on GPA and its examinations. To explore into this point, the interviewer talked to the Subject again.

In this follow-up telephone interview (17/4/2003), the Subject gave the following opinions:

“In the case of A Level, as a result of the tradition that the examination is used as university entrance examination, and also as a result of increased subject depth, the universities (especially University of Hong Kong) play a very important role in shaping the public examination setting work. For example, the Chief Examiner is usually a university lecturer. University lecturers, on the other hand, are not involved in the Certificate Level setting work. University lecturers are present in the subject committees (both Certificate and A Level).”

## Transcript Fourteen

Date of interview: 27/2/2003 (d/m/y)

Subject interviewed: S16

Class: Theoretical sampling-related interview; Concept related: sensitive nature of teaching GPA (plus other views of the informants on GPA teaching and setting work)

Background of subject:

- Dr Sonny Lo, a lecturer of Political Science in the University of Hong Kong with brief experience in GPA teaching and experience in GPA setting and PAS moderating work.
- (The subject indicated that he could be quoted. So, his name is not hidden in this transcript)
- Age: 40

Time used: 1 hour and 15 minutes

Venue: The Subject's office

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

### Content of interview

(I: interviewer; S: subject and the number in bracket refers to the number of turn of speech)

I (1): Dr Lo, thanks for accepting the interview. It actually is a form of theoretical sampling that brings me to you. In the course of my study, a number of informants mentioned about the sensitive nature of teaching GPA, a subject of politics. It reminds me of your works, about the teaching of politics in Hong Kong. Thus I called to see you. Now, as I find that you had also got such an experience in working with the subject, I think I shall also like to present to you very briefly the views I collected from teachers

and other informants in the course of my study and see whether you have comments.

S (1): Yes. Good.

I (2): However, if you will not like to comment, I shall keep going and return to the topic about sensitivity.

S (2): Good.

I (3): And as you said you were also involved in the setting work before, I shall also like to ask about...

S (3): Views?

I (4): Yes.

S (4): Good.

I (5): Can we take this as a talk between two friends? Thanks for taking me as a friend. If you don't feel like to talk about the things I bring up, please talk about those you like to. All I intend to ask can be brushed aside. Is that fine for you?

S (5): Yes.

I (6): My study as I just said is finding out from teachers how this subject should be taught and the impact it will bring. As for the impact of the subject, I have been focusing on a number of concepts. The first one is the question of national identity. Most of the teachers in fact do not think that teaching this subject will strengthen the sense of national identity of the students. Many of them are citing that this subject is using a critical approach. Thus, the students will learn about a lot of things that China may not look as good, say in the areas of human rights and democracy etc. These will not particularly enhance the national identity of the students. Of course not all think in this way. The teachers believe that this subject will bring about an increase in concern level. But, all steam will soon be lost. The students will not have a stronger national identity because of an increase in knowledge about China. How do you feel about it?

S (6): Yes. The first possible reason is that the subject is too difficult. The setters are mainly university teachers. There is the problem of mismatching. The setting work is

based on the perspective of the university. The level of secondary schools was not addressed. Besides those who set the question did not have strong Chinese national identity either. Rather, I found them to be more pro-Western. They might even have strong Hong Kong identity. Those who set the (public examination) question would of course have an impact. Besides, how the teachers in the committees viewed these questions and the national identity of these teachers represented another dimension of this matter. Besides, how teachers in the frontline receive these questions and the national identity of these teachers represent a third dimension of the matter. After all these filtering, the subject certainly cannot instill a strong sense of national identity.

I (7): Yes.

S (7): On the contrary, the effect can be chaotic. The students will find the questions difficult and there must be a way to deal with it. The search for a model answer is a way out. Secondary schools usually search for some sorts of model answers. But, social science should have no model answers. Instead, it emphasizes arguments. Despite this, in the setting process, we have to work out a model answer and turn out some sorts of "points". In this process, which involves three levels, nothing like national identity will come out.

I (8): Yes. You just mentioned that setters have pro-Western or Hong Kong identity. Is this confined to non-Chinese setters who work in the university? Or, is it related to the "university level" and has nothing to do with racial line?

S (8): It has nothing to do with the racial line. It should be noted that value and aims of the subject are not particularly clear. In the process, the university teachers are invited to take part in the setting work. Once started, there is no such idea as instilling national identity. Instead, the emphasis is on critical thinking. The point is politics can be understood in a variety of ways. I think the process of the setting work may not have informed the aims of the subject. Like me, they gave me a lot of papers to read and in fact I did not have enough time to finish. But, I was not briefed. So, I bring the mentality of the university there.

I (9): You mean that is critical thinking.

S (9): (Yes). However, it may not work if you are too academic to secondary students because they are not up to the level. The questions were set and the teachers were consulted. These teachers did work. But, they seemed more interested in seeking some

sorts of model answers. That was difficult, as social science should have no model answer. Even after the model answers were worked out, they would not be perfect and the markers would need discretion.

I (10): So, setters thought of the matter in an academic way while teachers, in the course of teaching try to work in a secure way.

S (10): Yes.

I (11): So, national identity was not a factor to consider for both parties.

S (11): It was not.

I (12): Another concept I am working with is patriotism or the love of one's country. The result is that most teachers believed that the subject would not make the students more patriotic. Some teachers emphasized the difference between the government and the party and the difference between the ruling party and the state. They pointed out that the students might not become more patriotic because in matters of politics, say in human rights and democracy, the line China toed might not be in line with world standard. The study might even cause resentment. What is your view here?

S (12): That's certain. As a matter of textbook, they use James Wang's book (on Chinese politics). The textbook describes the whole picture of China's politics to the students. The students will gain the impression that China's politics is quite chaotic. Besides, the salient picture is that the party and the government have merged with one another. From the students' point of view, they would find the party formidable while the near no-party status of Hong Kong might make the students feel that it is tidier. This may be the case. Thus there is little wonder why the subject won't make the students more patriotic. Besides, the textbooks are usually written in English and are very academic in nature. The objectives of the subject do not involve patriotism. Besides, the three parties involved, namely setters, curriculum planners and teachers are not patriotic either. (The Subject laughs). So, that is understandable.

I (13): So, setters, planners and teachers alike are not toeing this line?

S (13): They are not. It is also very difficult for them to do so.

I (14): The third impact I am trying to study is learning for democracy. I want to see



whether by studying the subject, the students will have a chance to have better understanding of democracy and develop also the skills related with democracy. As democracy involve so many things, I focus only on two points, namely that of tolerance of divergence and political participation. I am interested to find out whether teachers encourage and tolerate divergent views and whether they encourage their students to have political participation. As for tolerating divergence, contrary to belief that I would come up with standard affirmative answers, quite some teachers said that they were not accepting divergence. Some answers look special and I want to see whether you want to comment on them. One teacher said he had strong belief on democracy and so on the most basic premises like democratic political structure and the rule of law, there was no compromise and he would not accept an alternative answer. The students had to follow. On top of that, there would be choices, say like between parliamentary system and presidential system. Another teacher said that the students would not be able to understand much if you allowed them to find out by themselves, say by giving them James Wang's work or other books. They couldn't discern the authoritarianism behind (the Chinese system). The students could only see the factual account. They were not up to the level and the teacher thus needed to expound the view to them. There was also a teacher who said that though tolerance was good, it was not working in his case, as the students would only start to quarrel if he allowed them to discuss among themselves. How will you see these?

S (14): This has something to do with the personality of the teacher and his ability to absorb the concept of politics and democracy. At the highest level, i.e. question setting, I have found the questions about democracy to be too difficult. Besides, as for secondary teachers, they lack the background in politics (political study). I am sorry to say that some can't even tell what is meant by politics very clearly. Politics in the broader sense should be construed as the management of public affairs, whatever they are. Narrowly it is party politics and so. However, out of the interviews I had with the teachers, I see their understanding of politics is very narrow and politics means things very dirty. There is a tension with that of the setters who are more pro-Western and will espouse a wider understanding of politics. Out of my experience, the teachers are too narrow in their conceptions. They are too practical too. The first thing they want is to get a definition of democracy for their students. Besides, there may be internal contradiction if the teacher has to teach about democracy while, out of his or her own authoritarian personality, he wants to deal with order in the classroom in a forceful way. As in the case you just mentioned, the teacher had to teach about democracy but at the same time he had to do it in a patriarchic way. This looks like involving a split of personality and I doubt how the teacher managed to deal with it.

I (15): Can I say in this way? As for democracy, the teachers need to work for the standard of the university, which is quite pro-Western. However, the teachers themselves are quite Eastern. I don't know whether it is correct to say in this way?

S (15): Yes. I think you are right. That's very Chinese. That's emphasizing a lot on authority. As a corollary, to teach about democracy will involve tension. I go back to your point about the lack of tolerance. I think that's (a belief) emphasizing the rule of law in which whether parliamentary system is adopted is not important. This is a part of Hong Kong's value. Hong Kong's case is one in which the rule of law and liberties that do not come with the (democratic political) structure. It is not akin to the Western system. I see this as the result of the teachers' own socialization. I mean past socialization.

I (16): Should there be a split of personality in the teaching of democracy as you just said, will the students' learning of democracy, even in the level of knowledge acquiring, be affected? I mean if the teacher tries to teach democracy in an undemocratic way.

S (16): Yes, if the students see that the teacher is always very forceful and will shout at and punish them, it is hard to think of how the students will view the whole thing. If the teacher says that it is impossible to be democratic in school, it is important to point out that the school governance is actually undergoing a democratization process. If you are to teach democracy, the entire school environment must be democratic too. This includes the management, PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) and teacher participation. Here the problem may be the lack of democracy in the school's environment. The principal may be too powerful and too top-down. The environment is affecting the teacher's view.

I (17): In my interviews with teachers, I find that most are not seeing the promoting of political participation as an important aim. I was also a bit surprised when I found that some of them would hesitate in giving an answer and would need me to define the term to them. Not all teachers did study politics before. You said this in your articles. I also find in my study that many of them in fact did History or Sociology before. But, I think the term is covered in the discussion of concepts, which is a part of the subject. James Wang's book (for example) does include political participation by giving the variety of ways it is done in China. I find it special that they will not be able to tell me something about it. I come to the conclusion this has never been important to them in the teaching of GPA. How will you see this?

S (17): I see it this way. There is no good textbook for GPA. I don't think the textbook writer is doing the job well. Without a good text (for Hong Kong's use), the teachers have to extract the meaning from Western ones which are difficult to them. There is a lack of reference to the peculiarity of Hong Kong, say for voting, election and group activities etc. The students do not understand these simple things when they come to the university. This really makes me scratch my head. (This is a Chinese expression about being puzzled by something). This is a curriculum drawback in the sense that there is no appropriate textbook and this makes things confusing. There also is a need to give on-the-job training to the teachers. There is a need to give them lectures and those lectures should be made compulsory. One important point I can observe is that the teachers of this subject should get enough on-the job training. The curriculum process is not well coordinated too. Say, if you set questions in the form of short statement, then XXX (named deleted) will point out that you should give a longer question because then the mark distribution seems clearer. But, the thing in concern is not like this. This is too traditional. This may be the reason why the teachers are affected.

I (18): The whole process is a traditional one.

S (18): Yes.

I (19): I was also told by my informants that the school leadership might bring trouble to them if it was found that there was too much political participation by the students. How do you see this?

S (19): I think this is based on misunderstanding. I remembered I was invited to give talks to the teachers by the Education Department. I emphasized that schools could organize more debates, as political topics needed debates. Then one teacher raised his hand and told me that he came from a patriotic school (i.e. a leftist school) and he could not teach in this way. Such constraint may exist. But, the political participation we just mentioned should not be construed just as the teacher asking his students to go out to join demonstration or vote or so. I think it refers more to political thinking. You can participate into politics mentally. It needs not necessarily be behavioral participation. Behavioral participation refers to encouraging them to vote and not rallying and demonstration, I think. The teachers, I think, do not know their roles well. They are not certain about the normative role played by teachers in GPA.

I (20): So, you mean that once they think about participation, they think in a very traditional way and they think immediately of something radical.

S (20): Yes.

I (21): This alarms them.

S (21): Yes.

I (22): Thus this (political participation) has never been an important part in their consideration.

S (22): Yes. Their definition of politics is very Chinese. It is struggle, protest etc. But, in reality it isn't. Our definition of politics is very broad. Even when we talk, it can also be politics as well. But they (the teachers) do not see it this way. They have a very narrow perspective. That's a big problem.

I (23): Yes, I understand. Apart from this, many teachers said they would like to let their students learn in a more active way. They also found projects good. Many of them also praised the PAS (Project Assessment Scheme). But, at the end, few accepted this scheme. There were many reasons for this. The most important reason was large class size. They didn't find it possible to handle the projects. As a result, GPA lessons were heavily dependent on didactic method. Lecturing was the main activity. A little discussion could be added. The standard of the students was also mentioned as a reason for this. They believed that as the students were not strong, they had no choice but to teach in this way. How do think about this?

S (23): I helped with this PAS projects before. You know that's about the giving of comments to them. It was interesting. You know we study politics and it's natural for us to give comment. But, the fact was I just gave a few lines in the comment and the teachers would give a big reaction. They called me and asked "Mr. Lo, is the problem a big one?" I said to them the problem wasn't a big one at all and it was just simple comments. You know from our point of view that in studying politics, being critical was all but natural. But this seemed to have worried the teachers. Guess it might have something to do with structure. It might be that Education Department only allows the projects to proceed when the comments were positive. I believe the structure didn't give the teachers enough logistical support. It had to tell the teachers that the comments were meant to help improve the project and not to set an obstacle to the progression of the projects. The structure didn't tell them. It was not clear. You know I could teach only in the way I did in the university, i.e. by giving a lot of criticism. Besides, it is not

at all possible that a teacher can teach so many students. So, from time to time, university lecturers or tutors should be invited to talk to the students. The tutors, with study in politics, will be willing to accept such invitation to go to schools and talk to the students. It is a waste if the university trained up so many tutors and they can not help. This will be a better match as those tutors, who are Ph.D. or Ph.D. candidates, can go to the schools and work with the teachers and discuss how to work on the projects. So, in terms of resources, the poor teachers don't need to work alone. I think the structure can (be reformed to) help the teachers. I find the complaints of the teachers understandable. They are not to blame.

I (24): In relation to pedagogy, I also discussed about indoctrination with them. In Western literature, indoctrination is often understood in a negative way.

S (24): Yes.

I (25): I asked them about what they understood as indoctrination and how they would guard against indoctrination if it was not a good thing. The result was interesting. Most of the teachers tended to externalize the problem. They believed the risk of indoctrination rested with the government, which tried to ensure control of the people's mind so that the people accepted its policies. Indoctrination thus had nothing to do with teaching, as it was the government's business. How do you think about this?

S (25): This tells that the teachers were not clear about their roles. This is true even for university teachers. It depends on the subjects taught. Social science is not value free. It is indoctrination whichever values you are trying to bring out in teaching. It is only a matter of degree. It is only a matter about whether the substance of indoctrination is good or not and how controversial it is. By teaching this subject, they are indoctrinating something. Even if the teacher considers himself neutral, what he teaches may not be neutral after all. I think (your case tells) that teachers do not have a deep understanding of the meaning of indoctrination. They are thinking of the government. But, indoctrination is concerned with the process. It depends on the type of indoctrination. If it is about democracy is good and authoritarianism is bad, I guess some of the teachers may be doing it. But, I think indoctrination is more related to History than to GPA. This is the case when you are talking about the process of China's history. (In the case of GPA), the teachers may feel they are not indoctrinating because the textbook they use at A Level or Certificate Level are not emphasizing indoctrination and the model answers are more balanced. Though, these things are a bit pro-Western in nature.

I (26): We all have political views and judgment. In my interviews with teachers, many or even the majority of them, said that they would disclose their political views and stances to the students. They didn't think it was a problem. There was even a saying that pretending to be neutral if you were not actually was unethical.

S (26): That's to say they know their own view. There is a tension. They are trying to say that they have revealed their political view and yet they are not indoctrinating others. Thus they say only the government is indoctrinating. This may be a form of false consciousness. I am using a Marxist term here. If you are revealing your view, you are already indoctrinating.

I (27): Do you mean the power relationship with the student is having an impact?

S (27): Yes. Actually, the teacher should organize a lot of debates in the classroom setting. For example, the theme "civil servants should be politically neutral" can be a motion in debate. Turning own views into motions in debates allows the teacher to neutralize his views.

I (28): I think your article has covered this.

S (28): Yes.

I (29): So, making students sit still and listen to the teachers' discourse...

S (29): This is not going to work.

I (30): That will be serious indoctrination.

S (30): If so, that will be truly indoctrinating. Of course, the actual degree can only be found by doing research into the students' perceptions. But, it is certain that this is unilateral and we should know everyone is biased in some ways. This for example applies when we are asked what democracy should be. It's only through debates that we can work things out. The students will have different views and some of them may disagree to you.

I (31): There are other things that I have found (but due to time), I shall like to come back to your part now. There were informants who said to me that teaching this subject,

which was about politics, was both sensitive and difficult. I have read your articles that deal with similar things in the university level. I shall like to know more from you. So, do you think that to teach politics (in secondary schools) or GPA is something sensitive?

S (31): Yes. It would be most sensitive to teachers.

I (32): Why?

S (32): Because the teachers have to talk about Chinese politics and that will be most sensitive here. To talk about China's history, political development and Tiananmen incident etc. are all sensitive. Sensitivity to secondary teachers should be more serious than that to university teachers.

I (33): Why?

S (33): Because he has to get in touch with students who come from all over Hong Kong. In the university, we at least have academic freedom. We do not to that worry. We put research and academic first. They (the secondary teachers) are not protected in their role by academic freedom (as we university teachers are). Thus they have to take precaution when they teach. Thus, the issue (of teaching) becomes very sensitive to them. On top of that, the age of the teachers on the average should be in the range between forty and sixty.

I (34): I guess I interviewed many teachers of this age group in my study. Many of them are in the forties.

S (34): For this age group, the issues will become even more sensitive. They saw what happened in China in 1970's and 1980's or even the time before that. For people younger like us, we may be more open by comparison.

I (35): So, if the teaching becomes sensitive, what do you think such sensitivity will affect the teaching and learning process?

S (35): The impact will be tremendous. From their own experience and socialization, the teachers will believe politics is turbulent and perhaps dirty too. Teaching politics is both sensitive and potentially risky to these people. They will only teach in a reserved manner. This will constrain the classroom atmosphere for discussion. They may not

dare to organize debates. Even if there are such debates, the atmosphere is tight.

I (36): You mean they will not dare to go far in these debates?

S (36): Yes. You are right. It may be the way they find the topic for discussion? (The teachers may avoid the most sensitive one.) This is a big constraint. It may take a long time to change, say with new teacher with background in political study to emerge, as they are more open. Without this change the sensitivity issue will remain. I think even for secondary schools, (teaching GPA) should be more open.

I (37): Do you think that the return of Hong Kong to China (in 1997) has affected sensitivity of the subject?

S (37): It has become even more sensitive with the change of sovereignty. It may be changed to Integrated Humanities.

I (38): Yes, there is such a possibility.

S (38): Yes, the Education Department has already made guidelines. The guidelines even say there should be patriotism. I mean in the part about Chinese politics or China. In the part of Hong Kong, people are to know what participation is and what values are good for Hong Kong. It may be in line with what you have been saying.

I (39): You mean the subject will eventually be absorbed into Integrated Humanities and (the training for) critical thinking in politics will be rolled back.

S (39): Yes, it is strange that critical thinking has not been mentioned. In the part of China, there is even a direct call for patriotism. If so, it is even more problematic. It will even be more sensitive. There is a correct political line to toe in teaching. Thus you see the change in the sensitivity (related with teaching GPA). In the past, sensitivity was there but it was still flexible. The teachers could still speak whatever he wanted provided he had the gut. Of course he could choose not to. But, now there is going to be a (correct) line. If there is a (correct) line, these teachers are in trouble. They have to face a dilemma of whether their political views, their view of China and national identity will clash with the curriculum. This contradiction will become more serious over time. In the past, there was no explicit demand on promoting patriotism. This is an interesting issue. Some areas are good. For example, what participation and values are required etc., will have the effect of strengthening the teachers' identification with



Hong Kong. But, (the guidelines') effect on the teachers' identification with China is a doubt.

I (40): So, the legislation related to Article 23 of the Basic Law is going to be examined in the Legislative Council. Can we talk about this?

S (40): Yes, that's Okay.

I (41): Should the legislation get through? We can't tell what it will be precisely because there is no white bill. But, judging from the spirit of legislation as we may find in the blue bill, do you think the changes in law in the future will have an impact on this subject?

S (41): This will make the teacher to go, potentially and sub-consciously I mean, to political correctness. For example, topics about Falun Gong etc will be very sensitive. The same may apply to the churches in Hong Kong and relationship between the Central Government and Hong Kong etc. In these issues, they may toe the (official) political line. Or, they will tell exactly what the textbook is saying should you give them the textbooks. They may deviate but I doubt whether they dare to. If there are no textbooks and the materials are fragmented (like the present case), the teachers will be particularly worried. They may not tell the fear to you. This thing may only surface when they teach.

I (42): I remember my interview with a teacher. The teacher said to me that in the discussion about the concept of sovereignty, the students did talk about the Taiwan issue. The discussion then touched upon federal system, confederate system and independence. Some students might not see the matter from the perspective of unification. Do you think this poses a problem to the teacher?

S (42): Generally, yes. But, if the teacher in concern studied politics before, it may be a bit better. It is because prior learning in politics may make you more open in thought. It is not always true of course. Some may become rigid. But, if on-the-job training is not provided in these matters about how to deal with sensitive topics in class, say in whether to provide views and guidance to students etc., a number of results may arise. Some teachers may stick to political correctness and do not want to talk. Others will defy at their discretion. But, remember in exercising that discretion, some teachers may think about what will happen when their students may at the end go home and tell their parents that their teacher supports the Taiwanese self-determination cause. This may

bring about complaints and risk to the rice bowls (i.e. job). It may be better if the teachers do know how to proceed with a debate format. Of course, the topic may need to be set carefully considering in the debate, some students may support the independence cause of Taiwan, and Article 23 is there. But I think most teachers will rather try to be leftist and conservative.

I (43): So, can I say that teachers without prior study in politics and without on-the-job training are particularly prone to this (sensitivity shock)?

S (43): Yes, it may be so. But, it can be that the teachers basically toe the official line and only expose his view (contradicting the official line) from time to time. But this is difficult to measure, because upon observation, the teachers may change his tone. (The subject laughs). It may be an interesting topic.

I (44): So, the sensitivity is very heavily on the part of the teacher.

S (44): Yes, it is certainly very heavy with the teachers. It is matter of how the teachers will face this sensitivity. The first way is toeing the official line. The second is to toe the line basically but add personal view occasionally. The third is to be very open. The third is, I think, non-existent. How it spreads between the first two scenarios is not known though.

I (45): You also mentioned (at the start of the interview) that GPA public examination question setting is also problematic. Can you say something about this?

S (45): I guess that's too much really. They are simply secondary teachers and students. How can you ask them to teach and learn so much in the course of only two years? Even for the Integrated Humanities, the same problem may be found. We know that because they invite us to bid for it. So, globalization ...etc. are all included. But, how can you do them? Both the teachers and the students will not be able to cater for it? You need to trim it down. Study the more essential stuff. If there are so many things in the curriculum, there is no way to give specialized on-the-job training to the teachers. Thus, they can't excel at any of the topics. Thus, you see that they can't tell you what political participation is and you need to tell them (before they can reply you). There should first be a reduction in amount of content. Besides, the questions should not be too rigid. It should not be just setting a question and the students give answer. Besides, there should not be a quest for model answer. There is a problem. What discretion do the teachers actually have to deviate from the model answers? The process is too centralized. It

should be more decentralized. There should be devolution of power to teachers and an emphasis on on-the-job training. There should be more understanding (of the teachers' work), say checking how things are done by marking the papers. There should be more reinforcement to them. The expertise of the university can be used to help them. The university lecturers and tutors can be involved. The curriculum should be trimmed down and should be creative and interesting to the students. Now, the GPA curriculum can be negative. The students may be afraid of studying politics as there are so many things to learn.

I (46): If the curriculum is excessive in terms of content, will the subject be difficult to teach?

S (46): Yes, the teaching will also be very factual as a result. There won't be much critical discussion. I have examined the curriculum. It is to finish one topic in a week or two. That's impossible. In the university, we learn by discussing with the students. It is impossible to skip discussion in teaching. I guess discussion in secondary schools should be even more important. They (the students) are a piece of blank paper. How can you teach them in a unilateral way. This is not going to work (repeated two times). I am pessimistic here as the curriculum's content is excessive.

I (47): I have also done a little documentary study. In both Certificate and A Level, I studied the past papers. Past papers over a five-year period were analyzed to see possible repetitions. You know in secondary schools, such repetitions in questions are familiar in other subjects. You know similar questions will turn out again cyclically. I find that GPA is sharing the same pattern as other subjects.

S (47): Yes.

I (48): In some cases, the repetitions may be verbatim. In some cases, there may be a change of words in the questions. But, the same answers will be needed to get through. I brought this to the teachers and the setters in my study and asked about the likely impact. Some teachers said that they would teach in a more focused way. Other teachers mentioned that they would teach the entire syllabus. As a former setter, do you think that this cyclical repetition of questions will have an impact on teacher's work?

S (48): Sure, it will. The teachers see the continuity and the focus. They will know how to get close by getting the model answers ready. I guess there should be reform in the committees for setting work. There should be from time to time major changes in

membership. It should not be getting together and seeing what were asked in the past years, and changing some words and so ... What is needed is brain storming and forgetting what was asked before should there be a more radical change. This may be good. But, this is a major shock to secondary teachers. There is a need to have a transition. An alternative approach is requiring teachers to do the job, after a period of on-the-job training, say of two or three years (by university teachers).

I (49): You mean bringing in new blood?

S (49): Yes. University teachers then give comments. I think that's better. You know university teachers have a gap with the secondary students. You don't know their (the students') level. To start with the university perspective, what turns out may be difficult. The actual process should not be for teachers to comment on questions as it is now. On the contrary, it should be the other way round. At this stage there is not enough courage to do so. Or, there are constraints that forbid it.

I (50): So, can I recapitulate in this way. There should be more creative questions, with change of membership of the (moderation) committee. The university teachers can take up a training role...etc.

S (50): Yes.

I (51): This applies to setting of Certificate Level questions as well.

S (51): Yes.

I (52): Can I say this affects teaching? If similar questions turn up again and again, teachers can discern the pattern and they will be tempted to set a sort of model answer for students. This is safer that way.

S (52): Yes, it will happen this way. They will look at this from the examination point of view. But, the critical thinking that should come with this subject will be suffocated. But, it will be difficult to play down the importance of the examinations. The project approach will be a good one considering this. But, (this is not too feasible as) teachers will then face an excessive workload. This makes the subject traditional and examination-oriented and the subject may not help much in promoting critical thinking.

I (53): My last question as I do not want to take up too much of your time.

S (53): It's Okay.

I (54): I actually go back a bit. I didn't ask this earlier because I was afraid there was not enough time. I asked the teachers whether this subject would help the students to understand politics with international perspectives. This is akin to the saying that we need international perspectives as we are an international city. Mr. Tung before mentioned this. I guess many countries are also emphasizing international perspectives currently. The teachers were affirmative. One reason given was that students needed to study the United States and till perhaps next year, the students will answer questions on comparison (US with China). As a corollary to this, the teachers thought they would bring out international perspectives. But, examining the curriculum, I find that though Westminster model is covered in Certificate Level, it is relatively minor and teachers did say to me they did not think there would be any questions asked on it and they would not teach it in details. In A Level, it is basically United States only (on top of China and Hong Kong). So, do you think this is a substantive or a mature form of international perspectives?

S (54): The teachers may have a narrow meaning for being international. I guess the subject may help in the conceptual level, say (in understanding) the meaning of democracy, human rights etc. But, we cannot be sure how much the students can accept. There is no survey done so far. I doubt whether studying this subject will give the students international perspectives. If you just talk about international perspectives, some of the questions are really difficult to understand. This may be so on the part of the students. Even when I teach the law students of the university, I find that they do not know about the parliamentary system. It is only after I have taught them that they now are interested in finding out more about it. This reflects that the problem with education as a whole is that there is not enough on the part of internationalization and globalization. I doubt whether the study of GPA, say in two years' time, can remedy this.

I (55): You mean that the students may only be exposed to international understanding in a factual sense?

S (55): Yes.

I (56): So, to learn why politics will work out in a particular way, say how the power relationship between the Congress and the President changes and the factors behind etc.

the students will find it difficult to understand.

S (56): Yes. The degree of sophistication will not be high. It may be confined to superficial level of knowledge. It may be very restricted. Besides, it is in a narrow two-country sense. As you say, it is only US etc. This may be an excessive claim by the teachers. Even in the university, we cannot claim students have international perspective by studying this subject.

I (57): In the academic level at least, when we talk about being international we often mean that we are intercultural, in the sense that we can move between cultural line in understanding issues from different cultural perspectives. Thus it is to see from foreign perspective things you are familiar (local issues) and the other way round.

S (57): Yes.

I (58): So, do you think we can do this with GPA? Say, after doing USA's politics, I can use this perspective to view and judge politics (in another system). The same applies when we do China.

S (58): I don't think that's possible. I have examined those questions on comparison. It seems to me that in comparison, the system of the US looks much more superior. It just seems that the US system looks better with separation of powers etc. But, you need to research on the underlying values. Just reading the book won't give you the feeling. There must be research if you want international perspectives. There should be projects and in this case. They (the students) should compare by themselves. Say in comparing the United States and China, the students should go to the university where there are both exchange students from both the US and China. They should talk to them and understand from them the politics of their own countries and possibly also invite such exchange students to debate in their schools. Learn from the discourse and feel it (the underlying values). Even if you don't do research, you should interact with people from other cultures if you want to be international. The curriculum can be strengthened in that sense.

I (59): But, there is a need of space to do it.

S (59): So, if the curriculum is too crowded, it can't be done. If the students can be led to attend seminars and talks say in the university, it may be better. In other word, the bridging between the university and the secondary schools should be improved.

Students in fact graduate from the sixth form to enter the university.

I (60): I have finished all my questions. Anything you want to say.

S (60): No. I have said what I want. Does it help?

I (61): Yes, actually what you say about the examination is not in my plan...(The tape runs to an end).

## **Transcript Fifteen**

Date of interview: 7/3/2003 (d/m/y)

Subject interviewed: S17

Class: theoretical sampling-related interview; Concept related: Academic background of the GPA teachers

Background of subject:

- Secondary school teacher (female) mid 30s
- Political science background plus research experience in second degree study (done in the UK)
- GPA subject curriculum planner (A Level)
- Have taught the subject for 9 years

A brief sketch of the school the Subject works for

- A catholic school
- Founded more than 30 years ago
- An English medium school
- The school is located in an old urban district in Kowloon.

Venue: The interview is conducted through telephone when the subject is in office

Length of interview: 40minutes

Language used in interview: Chinese (Cantonese)

Reason for choosing the Subject for interview:

In the earlier interviews with teachers, it was found that many of the teachers teaching GPA actually didn't study politics before. One teacher opined that this was a hindrance to his work. In the previous interview (transcript fourteen refers), a scholar pointed out this lack of background would have enormous impact on GPA teaching. The present interview is conducted to a GPA teacher who has got a strong discipline background. It is hoped that the discourse of the informant can help us to evaluate some of the points brought out in the earlier interviews.



## Content of interview

Q: The interviewer's question

S: The informant's discourse ; number in bracket refers to the turn the informant speaks

Bullet points: abstracts of informant's discourse captured in the conversation

Just like other face-to-face interviews, the transcription is sent to the informant for comment and correction

Q1. Is teaching GPA difficult for a teacher who has no Political Science background? Let's say s/he is a History or Sociology major etc.

S(1)

- Yes, it can be difficult for some of them.
- This is particularly the case in A Level.
- Some political theories and concepts can be quite abstract.
- Besides, you need to be academic and objective in your analysis.

Q2. Which part and which level of the subject may be difficult for the teacher in concern?

S(2)

- The study at A Level is more conceptual and hence more difficult.
- Even at Certificate Level, though the syllabus looks more factual, the long questions (conventional questions) require application. Hence a high level of understanding and interpretation (of the subject matter) is need.

Q3. Is there enough support (from the school or the government) should the teacher find the subject matter of GPA difficult to manage?

S(3)

- No, definitely not.

- There is neither enough teaching aids nor comprehensive textbooks.
- Seminars are rare. I can only recall about a couple such occasions in my ten years of teaching the subject.
- Poor reinforcement may be the result of small market. Besides, the fact that GPA's subject matter is constantly changing with current development, also makes it difficult to prepare textbooks etc.

Q4. Will it help if universities offer lectures to GPA teachers as on-the-job training?

S(4)

- That's a good idea.
- In fact, the universities can also release timetables of lectures to the GPA teachers.
- If more lectures can be after office hours, teachers can simply sit in the lectures. The universities then need not offer extra lectures to GPA teachers.

Q5. If the GPA teacher has no research background, will it be difficult for her/him to lead the students to take PAS?

S(5)

- Yes. To do research well, you need to manage the skills, such as setting of hypothesis, methodology, and statistical work. This imposes a heavy demand on the teachers who lead the students to do PAS.
- Teachers who graduated in recent years might have some training in "introduction to research". But, it would be an advantage if teachers have got own experience in research study.

Q6. Will it help if university tutors go to schools to help teachers who work on PAS?

S(6)

- Yes, that's good.
- The tutors will need to really take up the actual work of supervising the students, besides just

offering advice.

- In a sense this will help to ensure the students will have better care and teacher support in their project work. Large class size is now a problem schools need to face if they are to take PAS.
- My school is not joining the PAS as the students are already doing well in their written papers and taking up PAS may mean a lot more work when I am also heavily engaged in various school duties.

Q7. Do you think teachers with Political Science background can better deal with the sensitivity related with GPA teaching?

S(7)

- Yes, as the study of Political Science is training on carrying out impersonal, disinterested analysis.
- The emphasis is the process of analysis and the building up of an analytical framework.
- Political Science is not normative.
- Some subjects, say Chinese Language teachers, may be taught in a normative way.
- In fact, there is a risk of the teacher teaching their beliefs to the students considering the power relationship in between.

Q8. Do you think the legislation (i.e. the passing of state security laws) related to Basic Laws Article 23, which is now underway, will have an impact on the teaching of the subject, say in making teachers more likely to toe the official line in teaching?

S(8)

- At this stage, the impact is not felt.
- But, as a worst case scenario, this can't be ruled out.

## **Pilot Interview One**

Brief Notes from the pilot interview with Subject One

Subject One: former GPA teacher and present setter of public examination

Date of interview: 2 Jan 2002 AM

Length of interview: 1.45 hours

### **Views about teaching GPA**

1. There are different aims of GPA teaching in different levels. In School Certificate level, the subject is more a form of systematic civic education to promote basic understanding of government and political systems. In A level, the subject should allow students to use theories to reflect over political matters.
2. But the actual standard of the students is crucial in determining whether real analysis is possible.
3. If patriotism is to be promoted, it must be a form of enlightened patriotism, which encourages critical attitude instead of simply promoting and protecting one's government and its policies.
4. Academic pursuit is different from political participation though the two can be related. It shall not be assumed that academic pursuit, like the study of GPA, shall lead to more participation.
5. The aims and objectives in the Syllabus only help in the first 1-2 months of teaching. After commencement, the textbook and past questions take over.
6. There is no intention to follow the Teaching Guidelines. Instead, the actual context of the school, including the convention of teaching the subject and the resources available, proves important in shaping the way the subject was taught.

7. To teach the factual part, the normal way is to follow the text and make use of materials already available, as it requires less time to prepare. The teacher shall only supplement with newspaper articles.
8. The desired teaching method is that of project, presentation and discussion, and it can only be possible with reduced class size.
9. GPA teaching should promote the viewing of politics from different perspectives. In this regard, there should be no attempt to avoid certain sensitive views.
10. Divergent views should be accepted in teaching and assessment of students' performance should be related to their argument, instead of their stance.
11. The subject should help students to clarify their own stance by helping them to reflect rationally.
12. Teacher should be critical to undemocratic government practices. Besides, students should be encouraged to be critical even to authoritative source and the mainstream opinion.
13. National identity should be understood against "one country, two systems". The common fault in Hong Kong is to take it as how Hong Kong should be subservient to the Mainland when in fact the theme should be to foster the sense of brotherhood toward people in the Mainland and to really accept them as equals.
14. Indoctrination can take many forms: selective disclosure, abusing authority and being hostile to one side of the argument.
15. The government is not actively promoting the subject. There is no active promotion campaign and more important, there is no significant logistic support, particularly in the area of resources and aids.
16. There is no deliberate support to the subject from school. But, the non-interference attitude of the school authority is already help.
17. Now, the emphasis at school level is on the practical values of subjects. This can be

market value and assistance for further study. In the society level, politics comes with a rather strong negative connotation. Politics is often construed as meaningless and politicians as bad people. As a result we cannot be optimistic to GPA in Hong Kong.

### **Views about GPA's public examination**

Public examination is described as a necessary evil. As a subject, it needs public examination as evaluation. But, public examination will reveal its pattern and this will lead to strategic focusing. Usually, the more structural the assessment is, the more factual it becomes.

As for the examination in the Certificate Level, it will be better if in Paper II, the questions can be combined, so that the students can write out their views in a longer answer, instead of just putting down a few words.

Continuous assessment and project work should be preferred in terms of assessment.

Good answers are those that are based on understanding and balancing of different views.

If, in the course of public examination, there emerges a model answer that prefers one side of the argument, it will become a hindrance to the subject.

## **Pilot Interview Two**

Brief Notes from the pilot interview with Subject Two

Subject Two: former setter of public examination

Date of interview: 2 Jan 2002 PM

Length of interview: 50 minutes

### **Views about GPA's Public Examination**

1. There is a division of labour between different parts of the examination. Conventional questions test analytical and presentation skills while multiple choice tests students' detailed knowledge about concepts and their relationship.
2. It is important to evaluate students' knowledge with regard to the content of the Syllabus. Other considerations are whether the issues are current or not and whether basic concepts are covered.
3. There is a need to consider likely performance of the students and to make sure that most students can get through in the assessment.
4. As an assessment tool, the students' performance should be in a continuum, instead of in a clustered distribution.
5. The questions that bear the following attributes are likely to be rejected:
  - being too difficult
  - will illicit controversies/ divergent views because the answers can not be objectively defined and hence no correct answer can be outlined.
6. The questions that bear the following attributes are likely to be accepted:

- have text support and documentary proof
  - can pitch at the majority of students
7. Desirability of questions must be understood against the backdrop of examination that must be accountable to the public. True, questions with document and text backing/proof can be formal and less academically ideal. But, they are desirable as they can yield objectively definable answers and can yield a normal distribution instead of a clustered distribution of results.
  8. On the other hand, open logical-rational debate sort of question usually yield no definite / objective answers. These flexible questions are good only for university level. In public examination, the down-to-earth approach is more appropriate.
  9. GPA is not likely to have high external consistency in the sense that better result leads to higher propensity to participate into politics. On the other hand, it is the other way round, which is true. Students must be good at language to get good result as they need to read a lot and write a lot. These students are not likely to be the same as those who will actively participate into politics. In a nutshell, to be good at GPA and to be good at participation seem to be two different things.
  10. There is a chance that questions may repeat themselves and similar questions may turn up. There is no problem as long as they are based on the Syllabus and the trend of public concern. Though cyclical repetition may generate a pattern and students may discern and recite key answers, this is not a problem as they still learn something and this will not cover all questions. Actually there is a trade-off between subject sophistication (depth/ internal consistency etc.) and public accountability.
  11. The questions asked are so far satisfactory as long as most stake holders are pleased with it.

