

**Curriculum Reform of Secondary Technical and Prevocational
Education in Hong Kong 1997–2004**

By

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, technical education has taken an important role in helping the development of light manufacturing industries in Hong Kong. The increasing concern about the development of technical education was attributable to the recent restructuring of the manufacturing sector which moved northwards into the mainland China.

In March 1997, the Education Department of Hong Kong released a report on the 'Review of Prevocational and Secondary Technical Education' to collect views on the future development of 'Prevocational Schools' and 'Secondary Technical Schools'. This led to the initiation of the 'New Technical Curriculum' (NTC) to cope with the future needs of students studying in these two types of schools. The NTC covers five new subjects including 'Design & Technology (Alternative Syllabus)', 'Graphical Communication', 'Information Technology', 'Technological Studies' and 'Word Processing & Business Communication (English)'.

The main aims of this research were to study the implementation and impact of the reforms looking specifically at how existing teachers were able to cope with these changes. In addition, this research tried to evaluate the implementation of the NTC reform and to identify ways to solve the problems encountered resulting from the NTC reform. Lastly, this research also intended to make suggestions on the implementation of future curriculum innovations in Hong Kong.

For this research, the development of the new subject 'Graphical Communication' at the Certificate of Education level was used as an example to illustrate the processes of the curriculum reform related to implementing 'NTC'. A qualitative methodology was employed, the main research methods using data collection by interviews, questionnaires and focus group interviews. Interviews were used at the start of the NTC reform to collect views on the immediate impacts and changes from various sectors of educators and teachers. Data were collected at nine separate stages as the NTC reforms were being implemented. Lastly, the focus group interview was used to conclude the findings of this research.

From the data collected, it was found that the NTC reform led to problems on teachers not capable of teaching the new NTC subjects. Consequently, some schools stopped offering technical subjects and switched to offer subject like 'Information Technology' for financial, organisational reasons, or that these subjects proved to be more popular with students. Suggestions were made for future curriculum reform such as methods to improve the retraining of teachers and production of teaching resources. Finally, the findings indicated that the use of pilot schools as a means of testing the impact of curriculum reform could lead to a smoother implementation in the future education reforms.

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