

# Philosophical Foundation of Hong Kong Tertiary Civic Education Policy: Formation of Trans-Cultural Political Vision

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## Abstract

*This paper explores the philosophy of tertiary civic education in Hong Kong. It does not only investigate the role of tertiary education that can play in civic education, but also explores the way to achieve the aim of integrating liberal democratic citizenship and collective national identity in the context of persistent conflicts between two different identity politics in Hong Kong: politics of assimilation and politics of difference. As Hong Kong is part of China and is inevitably getting closer cooperation with the Mainland in the future, this paper argues that Hong Kong citizenship should affirm its own distinctiveness while also identifying with Chinese nationality. Thus, tertiary civic education should foster a trans-cultural political vision so that the two different horizons can be synthesized, and the political framework and identity can be transformed in order to reduce conflicts between the two peoples.*

*Keywords: tertiary civic education, Hong Kong, trans-cultural political vision*

## Introduction

With the development of Hong Kong political reform and the increasing interaction between Hong Kong people and Mainlanders, the Hong Kong-Mainland conflicts have intensified in recent years, such as the occurrence of Occupy Movement, the anti-parallel trading movement, and the controversies of moral, civic, and national education in Hong Kong. For Zhang Dejiang, the National People's Congress Chairman, these conflicts highlight the urgency of reinforcement of national education. However, Chan Kin-man, Occupy Movement co-founder, criticizes Zhang for imposing national education on people in a top-down manner while neglecting dissatisfactions and real appeals of Hong Kong youths (Apple Daily, 2015). So, in the face of continuing conflicts between Hong Kong and the Mainland, what kind of civic education do Hong Kong youths need? While a few empirical studies have been made on Hong Kong civic education (Fairbrother, 2003; Lai & Byram, 2012), the philosophical exploration of Hong Kong civic education, in particular in tertiary education, has been largely neglected. Probably, as some scholars have argued, the government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) often lacks visions in policy-making. Even if there is such a vision, it is usually bureaucratic driven which is short of philosophical reflection.

This paper attempts to study the philosophy of tertiary civic education in the context of cultural political conflicts between pan-democratic and pro-Beijing camp. In this paper, I will first briefly discuss about the development of Hong Kong civic education which was driven by tension between democratization and nationalization. I argue that underlying these tensions, no matter in social political or in civic education, there is a deeper clash between two different identity politics. On the one hand, Hong Kong is driven by politics of assimilation, to achieve a better integration with Mainland China. On the other hand, many Hong Kong people strongly identify with local distinctive value and social political administration. They recognize themselves as Hong Kongers prior to Chinese, and resist to be assimilated by Mainland China. Indeed, because of their particular historical background, Hong Kong people should uphold its distinctiveness on the one hand, and seek to identify themselves with Chinese national identity, on the other. With this dilemma, it is argued that, Hong Kong tertiary civic education should aim at cultivating a trans-cultural political vision so that Hong Kong students can formulate their own identities based on Hong Kong's particular historical condition while maintaining hermeneutical dialogue with Mainland China. With the hermeneutical theory by Gadamer, such dialogue and inter-cultural exchange can challenge students' existing framework, broaden their horizons, and hopefully lead to framework transformation which can integrate two conflicting cultures.

### **The Development of Civic Education in Hong Kong**

Civic education is an important component of education. It fosters citizens to use their rights and to assume their obligations to participate the public life in democracy with necessary knowledge and skill. Maintenance of a democratic society must rely on the quality of its citizens. However, the development of civic education in Hong Kong is still at the preliminary stage. Before the reunification in 1997, civic education was deliberately de-emphasized. Because of the ideological struggle against the revolutionary nature of political education in Mainland China, the Hong Kong British Government tended to depoliticize Hong Kong's educational curriculum in order to maintain a stable social environment and economic growth, and in reaction to the young people's potentially destabilizing patriotic sentiments (Fairbrother, 2003, pp. 6-12). However, in the 1980s, as the negotiation between Britain and China about Hong Kong's handover started and 1989 Tiananmen Square protests occurred, the demand for democratization and political rights intensified in Hong Kong. The requests of civic education to strengthen the sense of political participation and human right education were raised by pressure groups. On the other hand, there were also requests from pro-Beijing camp advocating more national education. Approaching the period of handover, students' civic knowledge was found to be barely satisfactory, in particular their knowledge about and attitude towards China. Thus, there was strong government tendency to revise civic education curriculum contents, to enhance the understanding of China and to strengthen national identity. And the promotion of national education and patriotism became an important element in curriculum development after handover.<sup>1</sup> However, there are still two deficiencies in the current curriculum of civic education.

First, throughout these years, the curriculum of civic education mainly focused on primary and secondary education (Education Bureau, 2008), while the role of tertiary education in civic education has been neglected. We should never underestimate the significance of civic education at the primary and secondary level. However, if civic education is an important way to foster quality of citizens, tertiary education, as part of the education process, unavoidably bears the responsibility to cultivate citizens with reason and spirit to lead (Branson, 1998). As the goal of civic education is to foster the moral political engagement, it should cultivate the commitment of democratic ideals, such as respect for persons, rational engagement and procedural fairness; it should also foster the development of moral reasoning and the adoption of others' viewpoints emerged from reasoned consideration. Also contained is a comprehension of globalization, the diversity of Hong Kong society, the Hong Kong political institutions and its relation with the Mainland. Finally, substantive knowledge of certain controversial issues, no matter in Hong Kong, in the Mainland or in the global world, is also crucial. Students should be able to examine complicated situations in which different values are often in conflict, to employ both substantive knowledge and moral reasoning to evaluate problems and relevant values, to make independent judgments on relevant issues, and to act on their judgments. Obviously, tertiary education provides an important environment for students to acquire relevant knowledge and to cultivate these capacities. Thus, it is necessary to reflect on the role of tertiary civic education in Hong Kong.

Second, civic education in post-colonial times is basically a kind of territorialized education, which is characterized by a "One Country, Two Systems" notion of citizenship. This involves both local citizenship and national citizenship that are structured by very different political beliefs and values (Lai & Byram, 2012, p. 2-3). The basic reason is that Hong Kong is not a nation-state. It used to be a British colony; it has a particular historical context which is very different from other cities in the Mainland; and it is experiencing re-integration with sovereign China after the political handover. Thus, the national identity of Hong Kong is very different from that advocated in Mainland China. Due to democratization, re-nationalization and globalization after the handover, civic education in Hong Kong is very different from the national education in the Mainland. Basically, there are two aims for the civic education after reunification. They are to develop democratic citizenship, that is, to foster competent members of political democracy, on the one hand, and to enhance the sense of national identity. However, these two aims are in tension, in particular in the context of recent increasing conflicts between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Hong Kong's colonial history makes Hong Kong people's identity more liberal, individualistic and democracy-laden, which is very different from the national identity advocated in the Mainland that stresses homogeneity, collectivism and socialist-laden. This can be seen as the conflict between democratization and nationalization of civic education. This conflict is indeed parallel to the conflicts of two identity politics in Hong Kong after handover, as shown in the following discussion. The convergence of these two very different identities after the reunification seems to be particularly difficult, if not

impossible. Therefore, further reflection on Hong Kong civic education is essential.

### Conflicts of Two Identity Politics

In 2011, the Education Bureau of Hong Kong has proposed the curriculum of moral and national education, which has replaced the existing moral and civic education in order to enhance national identity. However, the proposal has sparked great controversies and protests in the city. In particular, the "China Model National Conditions Teaching Manual", published by the National Education Services Centre under government funding was criticized as biased and brain-washing. The manual which describes the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as an "advanced, selfless and united ruling group", whereas criticizing the Republican and Democratic Parties of the United States as a "fierce inter-party rivalry [that] makes the people suffer", has caused repugnance to many Hong Kong people and a series of protests by different pressure groups (Wong, 2012). The curriculum is criticized as "brainwashing", indoctrinating the youth into unquestioning support of China's Communist Party. Even though the Secretary for Education, Eddie Ng has publicly criticized the manual as biased, it still cannot allay worries and suspicion of the public. Finally, the government has to delay the commencement of the subject by introducing a three-year trial period.

Apart from the curriculum of moral and national education, there also exist lots of different social cultural conflicts in Hong Kong. For instance, the controversies of political reform and the Occupy Central movement have deeply divided Hong Kong society. The consensus between pro-establishment and pan-democratic camps seems to be hardly achievable. The cultural clash between Hong Kong people and Mainlanders due to the Individual Visit Scheme launched in 2003 has also induced a radical anti-Mainland movement, and describing the Mainlanders derogatorily as "locusts" which destroy every green thing wherever passes through. This has also caused the rise of the idea of indigenism which aims at "safeguarding rule of law, freedoms, fair competition and other core values that took Hong Kong over a hundred of years to build, as well as Hong Kong's culture and traditions", as Lee Yee, the commentator states (Lee, 2013).

On the surface, the conflict is due to the political administrative and economic mishandlings by the HKSAR government. However, the underlying cause of the conflict is actually the clash of two different identity politics. Indeed, in the face of increasing multiculturalism, western countries have also investigated about identity politics and multicultural education. However, the identity politics in Hong Kong are different from the western controversy about multiculturalism. In the western debates, liberal democracy is the mainstream political ideology, while certain marginalized cultural groups seek for equal recognition and positive accommodation of cultural differences from the society. Rather, in Hong Kong's debates, socialist Marxism with Chinese characteristics is the dominant ideology, whereas the liberal democratic ideal in Hong Kong is marginalized. Therefore, it is argued that, instead of the model of western conflict between politics of liberalism and politics of multiculturalism, the clash in

Hong Kong is indeed between "politics of assimilation" and "politics of difference".

The politics of assimilation was driven by economic and political factors. Economically, the Hong Kong SAR government and many businessmen find that the close economic integration with Mainland China is important for sustaining Hong Kong economic development. Indeed, in the first few years of the post-1997 era, the Hong Kong SAR government did not accord high priority to economic co-operation with the Mainland. It simply attempted to maintain Hong Kong's role as an international finance, trade and services centre. However, as the crisis engendered by the Asian Financial Crisis, and the China's entry into the WTO, the SAR government started to be aware of the significance of co-operation with the Mainland. Therefore, the SAR government has become much more active in its economic co-operation with Mainland China since 2001 (Cheung, 2012, p. 200); and we can see, there follows the idea of regional co-operation of Pearl River Delta, the signing of the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) and the Individual Visit Scheme. As the economic development of China has become vigorous, it also offers "a unique opportunity for Hong Kong to transform itself into a leading financial centre for China" (Cheung, 2012, p. 202). In 2008, the global financial crisis has led to recession for many western countries; and it has added a significant downside risk to the Hong Kong economy. As China's economy maintained a high GDP growth and did not have a recession, many western countries, as well as Hong Kong, are aware of the importance of closer co-operation with the Mainland; and Hong Kong's economy is under the threat of being marginalized in the face of the Mainland's rapid development (Cheung, 2012, p. 205). Hong Kong's former central banker Joseph Yam Chi-kwong also warned that the political conflicts can hamper Hong Kong's integration with Mainland China and its economic development (South China Morning Post, 2014).

Politically, the aspiration of assimilation is driven by a republican vision which emphasizes the idea of collective self-government. Apart from freedom and equality of respect, the republican vision also involves realization of two values: the emancipation of individuals and civic integration (Maclure and Taylor, 2011, p. 29). Pro-Beijing camps are indeed highly dissatisfied with the existing resistance of many Hong Kong youths and their negative attitude towards the nation. Many officials of CCP conceived of Hong Kong as the lost son being colonized by the British power (Jiang, 2014a). They have been indoctrinated a series of western ideology, that is liberal democracy which stresses human rights, values of individual liberty and equality, that are alienated from the Mainland. The conflicts between Hong Kong and the Mainland after the reunification, such as the rejection to enact a security law based on Article 23 of the Basic Law, the resistance of national education curriculum, the recent movements of exclusion of the Mainland Chinese and the proposal of civil nomination and self-determination, are perceived by Beijing as threats to the sovereignty of the country over Hong Kong. This shows that many Hong Kong people are still controlled by the western ideology. Thus, they cannot fully identify with China and accept the fact of returning to the motherland. It is contrary to the idea of patriotism in the Mainland

which stresses the significance of the nation as a whole. It damages the relation between Hong Kong and the other provinces, and weakens the solidarity and the sense of belonging among Chinese.

On the other hand, the politics of difference in Hong Kong seeks the recognition of its own unique identity. For many Hong Kong people, they seek the recognition of Hong Kong as a "distinct society" and make this recognition as the basis of its cultural, legal and political administrative development.

As Hong Kong has been administrated as a separate British colony for 150 years, the fusion of traditional Chinese culture and western culture has constituted a unique local identity of "Hong Kong Chinese" distinguished from the Chinese in the Mainland. Generally, many Hong Kong people are very proud of their cultural and political development, that is different from Mainland China. They had enjoyed freedom of speech, market economy and an effective government administration in Hong Kong. That is why they resist the patriotic education held in Mainland China which attempts to unite the entire population and justify the party's legitimacy to rule by equating the nation with the party-state. They are also worried to be assimilated in Hong Kong's cooperative development with the Mainland, and finally losing its autonomy in its future planning. In particular, some may conceive that the culture of stressing cooperation and harmony in the Mainland would force people to be "muted", and "river-crabbed" ("river crab", Chinese 「河蟹」, pinyin: *héxiè*, a homonym for "harmony," which is a euphemism for internet censorship).

The rise of indigenous awareness and local consciousness also reinforces the rejection of being assimilated. The sense of indigenesness has been raised with the uprising of the Hong Kong economy and the distinctive Cantonese popular culture since the 1970s. Hong Kong Cantonese TV programs, movies and pop songs in these decades are very popular not only in Hong Kong and the Mainland China, but also in overseas Chinese communities. Therefore, many Hong Kong people are strongly identified with the local culture and perceive the closer integration as initiating cultural invasion from the Mainland.

On the other hand, a series of government mal-administrations in the Mainland, such as the land reform movement, the movements against the "three evils" and the "five evils", the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and the religious persecution by the Communist Party over the past 60 years have also frustrated Hong Kong people's recognition of Mainland China. The event of Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 has further strengthened the fear of the Communist Party, the affirmation of Hong Kong unique political administrative system and the aspiration of democracy. Indeed, political citizenship in Hong Kong was basically repressed under British rule in the colonial days. However, the preparation of decolonization process in 1980s and 1990s has given an opportunity for the development of democracy in Hong Kong. It induces the aspiration of universal suffrage and the rejection of authoritarian government (Ku, 2012, p. 129).

In the early days of the reunification, many Hong Kong people were confident in the principle of "One Country, Two Systems," and believing that Hong Kong would enjoy a high degree of autonomy, as laid down in The Joint Declaration. However, many Hong Kong people have experienced the regression of freedom of speech, the increasing self-censorship of mass media, the growing inequality between rich and poor and the increasing intervention from Beijing after the reunification. People start worrying about the loss of a high degree of autonomy in Hong Kong.

Indeed, the recent rise of indigenous awareness is also shown in surveys on Hong Kong people's ethnic identity conducted by both Hong Kong University (HKU) and Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Generally speaking, around half of Hong Kong people would identify themselves as both "Chinese" and "Hongkongers." However, the recent CUHK survey shows that the portion of people who identified themselves as merely Chinese drops from 32.1% in 1997 to 8.8% at 2014. The portion of those choosing merely "Hongkongers" rises from the lowest 16.7% at 2008 to 26.4% in 2014 (CUHK CCPOS, 2014). The recent survey conducted by HKU also shows that the strongest index of identity feeling of Hong Kong people is as "Hongkongers", at 79.5 marks, while that of "Chinese" and "citizens of the PRC" are the lowest, at 62 and 54.4 marks respectively; they are also at their lowest since the compilation of these indices in 2008 (HKU POP, 2014). The rise of indigenous awareness and decline of the sense of Chinese identity are contrary to the China's economic development in recent years, thus they should be due to factors other than economic development.

Nevertheless, in the eyes of pro-Beijing scholars, Hong Kong's resistance against the national education and Mainland China is due to the brainwashing by the British government in the colonial day and the intervention from the "outside forces", such as western governments, human rights activists, democracy backers, Chinese dissidents, that aspire to use Hong Kong to thwart China's one-party Communist system. For instance, Jiang Shigong, deputy director of Peking University's Centre for Hong Kong and Macau Studies, asserts that the British Hong Kong government's promotion of democracy before reunification was not genuinely for the sake of Hong Kong people. Rather, it was just a strategy to enhance British bargaining power with China in the future. Unlike the Roman Empire, British imperialism was not an attempt to establish a great civilization through integrating different cultures. British colonization of Hong Kong was simply driven by England's utilitarian concern (Jiang, 2008, p. 59), and therefore it was opposed by Hong Kong leftists and the anti-imperialism movement. Nevertheless, Hong Kong 1967 Leftist riots had given an opportunity for the British Hong Kong government to oppress the Hong Kong leftists; and to launch their project of "winning the hearts and minds"<sup>2</sup> by demonizing communism through mass media in the colony (Jiang, 2008, p. 31). Furthermore, by introducing housing, education and other social welfare, the British Hong Kong government portrayed itself as a benevolent ruler. In the earlier colonial day, the British government repressed democracy development in Hong Kong because they had to prevent the infiltration of pro-communist leftists into the government. However, in the 1980s, in the face of the fact of

the future handover of Hong Kong to the Mainland, the British Hong Kong government started to promote democracy and to strengthen the sense of political citizenship in Hong Kong; and thus it induced Hong Kong local consciousness and distinctive identity, which was alienated from the Chinese identity in the Mainland. This caused trouble to the handover of sovereignty and effectively repressed the rise of Mainland China (Jiang, 2008, p. 72).

From these two different perspectives of Hong Kong, it seems that there is really a huge gap between pro-democratic and pro-Beijing camp, and between Hong Kong and the Mainland. Obviously, the causes of conflicts are not only different political visions, but also the lack of mutual trust and fear. Such conflicts seem to be hardly resolved in the short term. However, in the long term, the way to reduce the gap can only be achieved by enhancing mutual understanding. Thus, the reflection of civic education in Hong Kong has a practical urgency.

Basically, the author is very sympathetic with the aspiration of Hong Kong to be a distinct city with a distinctive Hong Kong identity. On the whole, Hong Kong differs from other Chinese societies in many ways: its freedom of speech and assembly, the stresses of human rights and the rule of law, its democratic politics and the efficient administrative system, the high degree of modernization and urbanization, the high standard of living, the majority with English proficiency and its exposure to foreign influence, the fluidity of society, the dominance of an economic and management elite, and its high international rankings in its economic freedom, financial and economic competitiveness. All these political values, institutions and culture are constitutive to the current success of Hong Kong development and its role as one of the world's greatest cities.

However, proponents of assimilation politics may argue that politics of difference will deteriorate the integrative function of citizenship. Too much emphasis of local distinctive citizenship means that Hong Kong people would lose their sense of collective belonging with the Mainlanders. It further diminishes their willingness to identify with China, making them difficult to cooperate and to compromise with the Mainlanders. Hong Kong people may then develop a purely instrumental attitude towards Mainland China. From this aspect, the danger of differentiated citizenship is that its emphasis of "the recognition and institutionalization of difference could undermine the conditions that make a sense of common identification and thus mutuality possible" (Carens, 2000, p. 193). Therefore, while stressing the distinctiveness of a Hong Kong identity, we can never neglect the relation between Hong Kong and Mainland China in the formation of citizenship.

Indeed, the search of recognition of a unique identity is not equivalent to rejection of Chinese identity. In reality, Hong Kong is a part of China. Hong Kong can never be an independent country. From the perspective of economic development and people's livelihood, many Hong Kong people also think that the closer integration between Hong Kong and the Mainland China is inevitable and would be beneficial to Hong Kong.

Indeed, most Hong Kong people, including pan-democrats, are patriots (Jiang, 2014b), although some claim that what they love is China as motherland rather than China as led by the Communist Party, whereas others claim that we cannot take out a ruling party while talking about love for their country. No matter how we understand patriotism, the fact is that Hong Kong people cannot understand themselves without relating themselves with current Mainland China; Hong Kong people are surely Chinese citizens. On the other hand, Hong Kong is a place of the fusion between Chinese and the western cultures; it can advance some kind of crossing between China and the international world. It can also function as an indication of the possible democracy in the future political development of China. Thus, the distinctiveness of Hong Kong and its particular relation to China can contribute to the development of China and its relation with the global world. Indeed, the principle of "One Country, Two Systems" dooms the notion of citizenship in Hong Kong to be a new kind of citizenship different from the socialist collectivist kind in the Mainland while keeping the Chinese nationality.

### **Tertiary Civic Education: Formation of Trans-Cultural Vision**

#### **The Significance of Tertiary Civic Education**

If the main thrust of democracy is collective self-rule, civic education is then education in collective self-governing. This means that citizens are actively involved in their own governance rather than passively following dictums from others. Thus, citizenships imply political participation. However, it is not simply participation for its own sake. Citizens' political participation must be based on informed knowledge and critical evaluation; otherwise, democracy can lead to the tyranny of the majority. Therefore, many contemporary political theorists, such as Jürgen Habermas, John Rawls and Iris Marion Young, etc., propose the idea of deliberative democracy. The basic idea of deliberative democracy is that legitimate political decisions have to be based on sufficient discussions and debates among citizens under a reasonably promising environment. It implies various efforts to enhance the amount, quality and influence of public discussion.

The implication of deliberative democracy to civic education is that students need to learn to participate in public discussion, which could be face-to-face or mediated by social media. Students must learn to exercise critical deliberation among moral values and political ideas, to exercise personal or self-reflective choice. Thus, students need to establish the capacity for evaluating competing conceptions of moral values and political ideas. Society must avoid the inculcation in students of the "uncritical acceptance of any particular way or ways of life" (Gutmann, 1987, p. 44). They need to provide moral justification for their own views and actions, giving reason to justify them that would be accepted by others. In short, they should develop the abilities, knowledge and skills that lead them to understand current events and to discuss with others and influence decision making by government with the views they have developed and refined after deliberation. Practices of these discussions and debates

about current events seem to be especially promising in tertiary education.

Generally speaking, tertiary education emphasizes independent thinking and analytical skills instead of the capability to memorize. It encourages interaction and discussion and provides a more liberal environment for study. Most Hong Kong tertiary institutes demand that students study the subject of critical thinking, as well as some moral subjects, so that students learn how to form arguments critically, and deliberate over social issues. Indeed, study by Gregory P. Fairbrother (2003, pp. 107-134) also shows that the experience of tertiary education has significant influence on shaping students' citizenship and their national attitudes. By examining researches over three decades, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) also argue that tertiary education has a substantial impact on knowledge and cognitive development, as well as on political beliefs, values and personal attitudes. College students usually become confident, autonomous and open-minded; they also become interested in cultural activities and become capable of thinking more abstractly and reflectively. As Anne Colby and Thomas Ehrlich assert, intellectual academic pursuit and civic development are mutually enhancing. As civic and political developments involve "the achievement of a more sophisticated and conceptually advanced understanding of complex social and ethical ideas", they are inevitably integral to intellectual growth (Colby and Ehrlich, 2000, p. xxv). Thus, tertiary education can play an essential role in the cultivation of citizenship.

However, in critical thinking, arguments require shared premises, which are not always present in conflicts between Hong Kong and the Mainland because of the very different worldviews and background understandings. Very often, these conflicts are hardly resolved because participants are lacking "sufficiently shared understandings to fashion a set of arguments with shared premises, or appeals to shared experiences and values" (Young, 2000, pp. 71-2). Therefore, with the increasing conflicts between the identity politics of locality and nationality, simply stressing the training in critical thinking is not enough. Tertiary civic education should also facilitate students with the trans-cultural political vision in which different horizons can be merged and a new vision can be created by comparing and articulating these contrasts.

### **Dialogical Hermeneutic Approach**

Indeed, our current subject of critical thinking and analytic philosophy are very much determined by the Cartesian epistemology, which stresses the primacy of method and assumes the subject as the disengaged self. However, such epistemology is harshly criticized by phenomenologists, such as Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Charles Taylor and Hans Georg Gadamer. They argued that instead of being disengaged subject, our existence is primarily and foremostly "being-in-the-world." Prior to our detached stance towards the object, we are already involved and engaged in the world that we can never be fully disengaged. Such notion of an engaged self has provided the theoretical foundation for the philosophical hermeneutics and the necessity of dialogue and conversation with others in our self-understanding.

As we are always situated in the world, our understanding and moral judgment inevitably involve framework, or "horizon of significance" (Taylor, 1992, p. 38) or in Gadamer's term "prejudice" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 272), which is constituted by history and tradition in our community. For Gadamer, prejudice is not a negative notion; rather it is the necessary condition of our understanding and provides background for our judgment; it is prejudice that opens up to what is to be understood and evaluated. Furthermore, our moral values and judgment are shaping our self-understanding, because to understand who I am is to ask what is of crucial importance to us (Taylor, 1989, p. 30). Thus, our identities are largely constituted by the condition and history of our community. The hermeneutical theory can partly explain that the cause of current conflicts among Hong Kongers and the Mainlanders is due to different moral political frameworks. As the relation between Hong Kong and the Mainland is getting closer, our identity is bound to transcend local context and to acquire a cross-cultural significance (Dallmayr, 2009, p. 31).

In order to maintain the particular identity of Hong Kong people while reducing conflicts and to achieve greater consensus with Mainland China, Hong Kong tertiary civic education has to include two streams. First, apart from the grasp of history, culture and values integral to contemporary Hong Kong society, students must be able to have philosophical reflection on this culture and values. Students must identify the existence of debates and dilemma about these values and political concepts in the current moral political circle, and to deliberate the significance, the relevance and the integration of these values in Hong Kong. Second, apart from substantive understanding about the contemporary China, including its history, culture and ideology, students must also try to establish a trans-cultural vision, to surpass local vision and to acquire a new cross-cultural framework. By such trans-cultural vision, it is expected to achieve what Gadamer calls, "a fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 305) in which a new political vision can be evolved that can integrate two different frameworks from Hong Kong and the Mainland. So apart from critical thinking, students should also study subjects about moral political philosophy and understanding contemporary China. Regarding to China and Hong Kong related subjects, students should be exposed to writings of scholars from Mainland China, as well as Hong Kong and western countries, to ensure that they can perceive and consider the situation from different perspectives. In contrast to the protest in the social movement, face-to-face dialogue with scholars and students from Mainland China through exchange programmes and study tours are particular favourable conditions to establish such trans-cultural vision. A genuine dialogue demands participants to be attentive to each other, to be modest and non-aggressive, willing to listen and refuse to overpower the others (Dallmayr, 2009, p. 27).

Participations in social movements are also important learning conditions of civic education. They provide students opportunities to reflect, to organize and to deliberate their ideas regarding certain issues. However, nowadays, many social movements in Hong Kong are driven by anger and hatred. It has engendered deep mutual mistrust and the sense of hostility towards each other; and thus obstructing genuine dialogue. A

condition of face-to-face dialogue with others without any existing political agenda could be complementary to civic education. It is also promising for students to open themselves and to try to understand others sympathetically without attempting to win others. In such dialogue, their original frameworks are challenged and they learn to listen to something foreign to them. Such a process of dialogue is different from a debate; its consequence is not the triumph of one stand over another. Rather, it is a mutual learning process with a frame of question and answer in which each acquires a better understanding of both others and themselves (Gadamer, 2004, p. 367-70).

To develop such a trans-cultural vision means that students are called not only to understand their own culture and tradition, but also to engage the complicated aspects of unfamiliar life-forms. Such understanding is tensional, because, for Gadamer, hermeneutical dialogue is always "based on a polarity between familiarity and strangeness" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 295). In the process of fusion of horizons, individuals are forced to engage the challenges of their unquestioned assumptions, and then to reflect and to revise their own frameworks in the process of communication. This tension also renders interpretation a circular characteristic which is called the "hermeneutical circle" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 293). It is an open circle developing a learning process and transformation of framework. In dialogue, the participants project their original understanding of the world that, nevertheless, gets crushed because others refused to be assimilated. Thus, a new comprehensive framework is needed which triggers a continuous modification of one's understanding of others and the world.

With respect to conflicts between people in Hong Kong and Mainland China, most of them are Chinese with similar traditions, and they may even have some close relatives living in both places. They are actually the same kind of Chinese a few decades ago. Indeed, most of Hong Kong people are migrated from the Mainland in 1950s and 60s because of civil war in China. In particular after the People's Republic of China was proclaimed in 1949, many people and corporations migrated to Hong Kong because of the bad living condition and the fear of persecution by the Communist Party. While Hong Kong had experienced a relatively stable social and economic development under the British colonization, China had gone through a period of turbulence caused by a series of political movements. For instance, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution launched by Mao have caused the death of several ten millions of people because of starvation and persecution. These movements have caused great social political instability, decline in economy and capacity of government to deliver goods and services, a generation of young adults are denied education, the growth of corruptions and political struggles in the government, and finally moral cultural regression of the whole country. The sequences of events left billions of Chinese struggling to survive in turbulence for over decades. This very different historical background over last few decades not only explains why the values and conducts are so different between Hong Kong people and the Mainlanders, but also reminds Hong Kong people that the distinctive cultural and moral identities they have fostered are partly out of luck. With such background knowledge, I expect, while affirming their

own values and conducts, Hong Kong people should broaden their horizons in understanding China, no longer showing contempt towards the Mainlanders; rather they should find how to communicate effectively and sympathetically with the Mainlanders.

Regarding to the politics, the resistance of democratic political reform by Beijing is due to their reflection of collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, shortly after Tiananmen Square protests at the same year. From a series of eight videos titled "Thinking of danger while living in safety: the lessons from the collapse of the Soviet Union Communist Party," which is required to be watched by all party members, it is known that from the perspective of CCP, the collapse of the Soviet Union is due to its rejection of communism and Marxism by their former political leaders. In particular, Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, advocated for democratization and openness of the Soviet Union which had finally led to the harsh public denouncement towards the communist party by the opposition factions. The videos blame Gorbachev for the end of the communist party which leads to the collapse of the country; and the principle may also be applied to China: the end of the party's rule would lead to the collapse and fragmentation of China (Callick, 2014, p. 60-62).

CCP's blaming for the political leaders as the factor of the collapse of the Soviet Union may not be right. For many westerners, the collapse of the Soviet Union is due to the problem of communism itself. CCP's prediction of the end of party's rule leading to the fragmentation of China is also controversial. We can see the democratic transition in Taiwan did not cause the disaster and destruction of the Taiwan society. No matter which is right, it is argued that the debate about political reform in Hong Kong cannot proceed without such background understanding of CCP. The negotiation with CCP cannot work without addressing its worries and concerns, even though it remains open to be discussed about how to respond to CCP's worries of political reform.

### **Criticisms and Response**

Nevertheless, the trans-cultural civic education may face criticisms from liberal democrats and pro-Beijing's camp. Sometimes, Gadamer's notion of the "fusion of horizons" is criticized as being a hasty consensus, a facile compromise. It has conceded a truly democratic reform and given up values of freedom and justice in Hong Kong. Gadamer's stress on the role of tradition in interpretation is also accused of being too conservative, that it is obstructing political reform.

First, it should be noted that the fusion, suggested by Gadamer, is neither simply a convergence of different viewpoints, nor does it simply achieve a uniformity of beliefs by compromising. Its emphasis of tradition shows that while the process of understanding is inevitably relating the other to the tradition from which the other speaks, the tradition involved can be foreign to the interpreter's original framework which induces tensions and challenges to the interpreter's unquestioned assumption. Therefore, such trans-cultural interpretative action is actually a mutual revolutionary learning process based on evaluation and recognition of difference. The aim of such

process is leading to a framework transformation which can overcome conflicts among existing frameworks. Although the outcome of transformation is not fully consistent with the liberal democratic ideal, trans-cultural civic education is absolutely not a conservative approach.

Pro-Beijing scholars may also criticize the recognition of the distinctive Hong Kong identities for weakening the sense of belonging with Mainland China. Without substantive sharing of common goods, the nation can hardly be united; it will leave room for cultural invasion by foreign powers. To address the nationalist concern, I would argue, we have to distinguish fundamental elements which are core to constitute Chinese identity that must be conformed from additives that are valuable to locals and can be tolerated and allowed. China itself is a multi-cultural and multi-racial country; it also has to search for a way to reach unity in diversity, that is, "unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation" (Macpherson, 2014, p. 20). Instead of uniformity by coercion or indoctrination, recognition of the particularity of Hong Kong culture and respect of difference, without conceding on core elements of Chinese identity, can actually enhance rather than diminish the national solidarity. This can be seen from the recent history of mass migration of Hong Kong.

In 1980s and 90s, because of announcement of Joint Declaration and Tiananmen Square protests, many Hong Kong people have emigrated to other western countries, because they worried that Hong Kong would lose its freedom and distinctiveness after the reunification. Nevertheless, shortly before and after 1997, there was a wave of return migration partly because many people had changed their outlook of Hong Kong. They became confident in the principle of a high degree of autonomy under the "One Country, Two Systems," while they were also dissatisfied with the living conditions in foreign countries. Recently, the political conflicts between Hong Kong and Mainland China and the announcement of a white paper have re-joined the lost confidence of "One Country, Two Systems" and the discussion about mass migration. Thus, it seems that the recognition of particular Hong Kong identities helps to unify a deeply divided nation rather than to divide an already highly cohesive one. Trans-cultural civic education indeed supports the notion of unity in diversity. In the past, some pro-Beijing's politicians attempt to attain unity by assimilation, but it has caused resistance and division rather than cooperation in Hong Kong. Trans-cultural civic education perceives that the goal of unity is achieved not by coercion or assimilation, but by dialogue and recognition of differences. It involves the reformulation of identity that demands a process and participations of Chinese both in Hong Kong and the Mainland. This newly formed identity must be able to reflect the distinctiveness of Hong Kong identity while maintaining substantive cohesion to China.

### Conclusion

While Hong Kong civic education attempts to integrate liberal democratic citizenship and socialist collective national identity, the persistent conflicts between two

identity politics seem to show that such aim is hardly achievable. In view of the particular historical background of Hong Kong, the author argues that Hong Kong people should affirm their own distinctive identities while identifying with their Chinese nationality. In the face of these two very different, conflicting cultures, Hong Kong tertiary civic education should foster a trans-cultural political vision which appreciates their own values and distinctive culture in Hong Kong while broadening their horizon in their continuous dialogue with the Mainlanders. The aim is to achieve a fusion of horizons so that students can reformulate their identity in response to challenges brought by the fast-changing relationship between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Nevertheless, this paper has only offered a preliminary exploration of the philosophical foundation for Hong Kong tertiary civic education policy. Substantial discussion and theoretical debates should be followed; and the details of curriculum and policy-making should be investigated in future study.

### Acknowledgement

This article is partially supported by a grant from the College of Professional and Continuing Education, an affiliate of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

### Notes

1. Article by Thomas K. C. Tse (2004) has an in-depth discussion about the historical development and change of Hong Kong civic education policy before and after the handover.
2. "Winning the hearts and minds" is Jiang's own translation. We have to note that the Chinese words are 「洗腦贏心」, which is actually "brainwashing and heart winning" in literal translation.

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