



Argument in the Citizenship Education Policy Process in Hong Kong

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[Broader Research Project]

- Citizenship Education Policy
 - Citizenship education on the policy agenda, 1973-2003
 - Social problems and citizenship education
 - Aims and objectives of citizenship education policy and curriculum
 - Argument in the citizenship education policy process

[Broader Research Project]

- Social Constructionist Perspective
 - “Truth” is defined subjectively
 - Social issues can be defined in terms of numerous discourses
 - Understanding of the world is built through discussion, negotiation, conflict, consensus, and persuasion

[Today's Question]

- In key cases of citizenship education policymaking, in what ways have policymakers argued, persuaded, and used evidence and rhetorical tools to promote their ideas about how citizenship education should be shaped?

[Outline of the Paper]

- Models of policymaking
- Policy agenda setting and issue definition
- The subjectivity of policy issues
- The politics of policy formulation
- Constraints on the policy process
 - Legitimate ideas and language

[Outline of the Paper]

- Social Construction
- Discourse
- The relation of people to discourse
- The relation of discourse to power
- Power
 - Disciplinary Institutions

[Two Cases]

- Education (Amendment) Bill 1990
 1. Sought to repeal prohibition on political education in schools
 2. Ended up retaining government control over information and opinions of a “clearly biased political nature” in schools
- Education (Amendment) Bill 1996
 - Sought to remove #2

[Policymaking is political]

■ It is characterized by

- Ambiguity
- Competition
- Compromise
- Dogma
- Interests
- Influence
- Interpretation
- Legitimacy
- Power
- Pressure
- Resistance
- Rhetoric
- Strategy
- Struggle

Policymakers are trying to achieve goals

- Construct the problem
- Push for their definition of the problem
- Convince others of the validity of their view
- Suppress alternative definitions
- Persuade others to accept their construction of the problem and solution

[In argumentation, policymakers]

- rely on “objective” information
- appeal to values
- use evidence
- use emotion and drama
- use statistics and symbols

[Education Regulations, 1971]

- 98(1)
 - No instruction, education ... 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 ... shall be permitted upon any school premises ...

Education Regulations, 1990

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[Education Regulations, 1990]

- 98(2)
 - The Director may give directions in writing or other guidance to the supervisor of any school as to the dissemination of information or expression of opinion of a political nature in that school, so as to ensure that the information or opinion is unbiased.

[Education (Amendment) Bill 1996]

- Private Members' Bill by Christine Loh
- Sought to repeal 98(2) and related section in Education Ordinance
- Pro: Cheung Man-Kwong, Anthony Cheung Bing-Ling, Leung Yiu-Chung, Lee Cheuk-Yan
- Con: Ip Kwok-Him, Mok Ying-Fan, Henry Tang Ying-Yen, Secretary Joseph Wong Wing-Ping

[The notion of “bias”]

- Too ambiguous, vague
- All political discourse entails bias
- The interpretation of bias would be up to a biased government

[The notion of “bias”]

- Control over bias does not amount to control over education
- Students should be protected from bias so they can learn to think independently

[Censorship]

- Regulation is an open invitation to government censorship
- Schools would exercise self-censorship
- Teachers might inadvertently violate the Regulation

[Censorship]

- Fears of censorship are groundless
- Loh has no confidence in civil service
- The Regulations are only to ensure that schools adopt balanced and objective views when discussing politics

[Necessity]

- Regulation 98(2) is not necessary
 - The notion of protecting students' "welfare" incorporates the idea of being free from political indoctrination
 - Textbooks already subject to monitoring
 - Principals have disciplinary power on basis of professional misconduct
 - Relevant power has never been invoked

[Necessity]

- If it's never been invoked, why bother repealing it?
- Regulation is necessary to promote awareness and school self-discipline
- Schools are satisfied with the status quo
- No requests from public to repeal
- The issue has been debated and decided 6 years ago

[Evidence from Schools]

- Complaint of censorship in a school
- Feedback from schools that they are satisfied
 - Counter: government did not consult
- Submissions from educational organizations in opposition
 - Counter: these are wrong, misguided

[Fear]

- of future HKSAR government
- that human rights would be infringed
- that schools would take a rigid and cautious teaching approach
- that schools would be at the mercy of the government's interpretation of bias
- that schools would be an open arena of politics among different parties

[Appeal to Teachers' Professionalism]

- “As a teacher of civic education, I believe that ...”
- Interpretation of bias in education should be a matter of teachers' professional judgment or that of an organization of teaching professionals
 - Not the government
 - Like Law Society and Medical Board

[Appeal to the Law]

- “According to legal advice, it is not sufficiently clear ...”
- “The legal advice available to us does not go with Miss Loh’s opinion.”

[Emotive and Dramatic Language]

- Teachers are trapped in a “mine zone”
- “We must safeguard our students against the poison of biased opinions.”
- “Political censorship never speaks with its own voice. It always hides behind other, more agreeable purposes.”

[Emotive and Dramatic Language]

- “These two provisions – leftovers of colonial rule which are intended to suppress political education ...”
- “...if his speech were put back to 1966 or 1967, people would look upon him as flattering the colonial government.”
- “I ask you to support the amendment Bill and join hands in discarding the stinking leftover of the colony.”

[The Result?]

- Loh's bill was "negatived," 27 to 23

[Persuasion is Power in Action]

- Legislators are
 - defining “truth”
 - arguing for their definition of “truth”
 - persuading others to accept their definition of “truth”
 - exercising power
 - vis-à-vis each other
 - vis-à-vis future citizens