

**The Future Direction of Business Education in Hong Kong  
Secondary Schools: Issues and Concerns**

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by

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## **Abstract**

This study analyses the development of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools. The analysis focuses on its past development, and issues and concerns in its future direction. Three questions were asked: Why has business education emerged as part of the curriculum in secondary schools in Hong Kong? How do principals, teachers and students perceive business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong? What are the issues involved in the future development of business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong? These questions provide the framework of this study, and documentary analysis, questionnaire, and interviews were used to collect data.

For documentary analysis, official documents, circulars, minutes of the subject committee, annual report of business subjects examined, advisory reports from various committees, and White Paper were employed.

In the questionnaire survey, teachers of secondary business education, students taking secondary business education and principals were surveyed to find out their views on various issues related to secondary business education in Hong Kong.

The third element of data collection is interview. Teachers of secondary business education, students taking secondary business education, principals, curriculum developers and government officials were interviewed to share their views on various issues related to secondary business education in Hong Kong.

This study concludes that secondary business education finds its roots in vocational education, preparing students with lower academic ability to perform clerical and supportive work. Because of the contemporary changes in Hong Kong society and economy, secondary business education has to be revised. The result from this study calls for a revision of the aims and curriculum of secondary business education with various recommendations. Furthermore, the provision of teacher training for business teachers and the involvement of business/industry should also be the focus of the future development of secondary business education.

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To God be the glory.

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## List of abbreviations

ACTEQ	Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualification
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
APEID	Asian Programme of Educational Innovation for Development
AEB	Associated Examining Board
BOE	Board of Education

C BSP	Cambridge Business Studies Project
CERI	Centre for Educational Research and Innovation
CACA	Chartered Association of Certified Accountants
CIMA	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
CDC	Curriculum Development Committee
CDI	Curriculum Development Institute
DFE	Department for Education
DES	Department of Education and Science
EBEA	Economics and Business Education Association
EC	Education Commission

ECR	Education Commission Report
EG	Education Convergence
ED	Education Department
ERIC	Education Research Information Centre
EXCO	Executive Council
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualifications
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HMI	Her Majesty Inspectorate

HKALE	Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKEA	Hong Kong Examinations Authority
HKHLE	Hong Kong High Level Examination
HSSC	Hang Seng School of Commerce
ICAC	Independent Commission Against Corruption
IT	Information Technology
ITAC	Industrial Training Advisory Committee
INSET	Inservice Education and Training
KTS	Kowloon Technical School

NBTE	National Board for Technical Education
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
POA	Principles of Accounts
PTU	Professional Teachers' Union
S.5	Secondary 5
SMI	School Management Initiative
SSPA	Secondary School Places Allocation
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

UK

United Kingdom

US

United State

UGC

Universities Grants Committee

VTC

Vocational Training Council

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Professor Rosie Young, the ex-chairperson of the Education Commission once made the following statement (1993):

The world is changing, the society around us is changing and Hong Kong is changing even faster. These are exciting times. The twenty-first century is likely to see greater advances in science and technology and increasing affluence. I dare say materialism will become more prominent especially in developed societies and those undergoing rapid economic growth in the Pacific Rim including China and Hong Kong. These factors together with the approach of 1997, the return of sovereignty to China and the implementation of the one country two systems concept will pose enormous challenges to all of us but especially to those who have the responsibility to plan for a better education system for Hong Kong in the twenty-first century (p.11).

Society shapes education and education reflects society. Thus now is a time when the rate of change in science, technology, economics and society is rapid. Therefore the education system itself must be in a constant state of review and change so as to adapt to the changing situation locally as well as in other parts of the world.

The situation in Hong Kong illustrates this because the industrial base is changing, with over 70% of jobs in the service sector, in finance, retailing, social services, and in what may be called the information industry based on technology (Hong Kong Annual

Report, 1997). These changes have implications for the workforce requirements in terms of skills and qualities of workers.

Thus the time has come for a major educational review. In his first speech as Chief Executive, Mr. C. H. Tung indicated his desire to improve the education in Hong Kong. Tung, a former businessman, is especially concerned about the future competitiveness of Hong Kong as a competent workforce is a prerequisite for economic development. The economic survival of Hong Kong significantly depends on the ability of its businesses to compete effectively in the world economy.

In order to better serve the future needs of society, Julian Leung, the Head of the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI), comments that students should be encouraged to learn knowledge and skills related to business (*Wen Wui Po*, 11.6.97). Since business has gradually become an important aspect of our lives, the role of business education is vitally important to prepare students for future work in the business world. Lewis (1991) states that 'all pupils will, upon leaving school, become producers, consumers, and citizens, and thus their studies in business must prepare them for their involvement and responsibilities in those roles' (p.14).

The writer has a professional interest in issues regarding business education. Graduating with a bachelor's degree in commerce, he began his career as a secondary teacher. When competition for a place in university in the Business faculty was keen, the writer wanted to know the reasons why business education in secondary schools bore a low status. The writer then worked in his present position as a teacher trainer. He has also been involved in the development of business subjects in secondary

curriculum through participation in various subject committees and working groups. Throughout the years, he has become convinced that secondary business education has a significant role to the future development of society of Hong Kong. In recognizing the importance of business education, the writer proposes that it is time to conduct a thorough evaluation of the past development of business education in secondary schools, its present issues and concerns, and the future business curriculum. The knowledge of the past is important as it gives us the reasons for the development of business education in secondary schools. Understanding the present condition of the issues and concerns in secondary business education will enable us to plan for the future. Finally, taking into account what is known about the past and the present, some future directions for secondary business education seem logical. As there is a paradigm shift in Hong Kong, it is necessary to see how the change in secondary business education can more usefully serve this community.

### **1.1 The research questions**

The concern of this study is to discuss the future direction of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools. In doing so, the writer has to describe and analyse how business education has developed in Hong Kong secondary schools and the issues and concerns in this process of development. The following questions will provide a focus.

- 1 Why has business education emerged as part of the curriculum in secondary schools in Hong Kong?

2. How do principals, teachers and students perceive business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong?
3. What are the issues involved in the future development of business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong?

## 1.2 Delimitations

Due to the nature of the research questions and the restriction of time and human resources, the present research study has been completed within the following limits:

- The findings presented in this study cover the period till June 1998. As the educational scene is constantly changing, especially in the case of Hong Kong after the change of sovereignty in 1997, many issues have been raised with implications towards the future of secondary business education. The obvious ones were the discussion of information technology and the implementation of ideas suggested by the report *Review of Prevocational and Secondary Technical Education* in 1997. The writer has tried to update the discussion as much as possible, but June 1998 is the deadline for information to be included in this study.
- In exploring the development of secondary business education, the writer has relied on documentary analysis and interviews. However, problems arise because many of the documents are not available. Furthermore, it is more than thirty years since secondary business education first started in Hong Kong and the personnel involved in the development of secondary business education have either died,

retired, or are nowhere to be traced. Despite all these difficulties, the writer has been able to identify two of the founding staff for interview.

### **1.3 The significance of this study**

This research is believed to be significant for the following two major reasons:

1. When business education was first developed world-wide, it was considered as part of vocational education. While research on vocational education has been full and significant, few studies relating to the development of secondary business education elsewhere have been carried out. In Hong Kong, the situation is more or less the same and there has been little research on any issues related to business education in Hong Kong. This research is the first in-depth study of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools. It provides primary data, which contribute to the understanding of how and why business education was developed in Hong Kong.
2. With time, the nature of secondary business education has changed. Hong Kong has now become an international city where business activities are prominent. Its continuous growth will rely heavily on the education levels in Hong Kong. Secondary business education is important, as it will equip future generations with the skills and knowledge essential for the economic affluence of Hong Kong. This research will look at where business education in secondary schools should be heading in the future to ensure the success of the future economy of Hong

#### 1.4 Definitions

There are few definitions of business education. The earliest definition can be found from Nichols (1933), where he defined it in his book *Commercial Education in the High School*, as:

A type of training which, while playing its part in the achievement of the general aims of education on any given level, has for its primary objective the preparation of people to enter upon a business career, or having entered upon such a career, to render more efficient service therein and to advance from their present levels of employment to higher levels (p.51).

“Business education” has been used traditionally to describe the school curriculum occupied by a diverse range of subjects such as book-keeping, commerce, typewriting, and shorthand, which provide training in vocational skills in the commercial sector. Today, the term “business education”, as defined by Lewis (1991), has become more common as the ‘narrowly vocational skills are more typically subsumed within a more integrated and cohesive framework which has an objective to provide a general understanding of business as an aspect of life’ (p.12). In the U.K., business education is broadly defined by Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI, 1992) as comprising:

... a wide range of learning activities, both subject-based and cross-curricular, aimed at developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of key ideas, enhancing personal skills, and developing informed attitudes, in matters relating to the economy, the world of work, and to business enterprise (p.5).

In Hong Kong the definition of Commercial Subjects was described in the third meeting of the Commercial Subjects Committee in 1973 as follows:

“Commercial Subjects” is a comprehensive term generally understood to include all the subjects of value to a commercial career ranging from typing, shorthand, general commercial knowledge, office practice, and business management to all the stages of accountancy and others.

When business subjects were first offered in Hong Kong, they were frequently referred to as “commercial subjects”. In Britain, the term “commercial education” has been changed to “business education”. The term “business education” has been used in the United States for many years. In this study, the terms “business education” and “commercial education” will be used interchangeably. Both include elements of Commerce, Principles of Accounts, Office Practice, Typewriting, and Business Studies.

## **1.5 Structure of the thesis**

The dissertation consists of nine chapters. Chapter one is the introduction. Chapter two includes background information about Hong Kong and goes on to describe

education in Hong Kong. In chapter three, the development of business education in Hong Kong is considered. The development of technical and prevocational schools in Hong Kong is also discussed, as business education was first initiated in these schools. The development of secondary business education in other countries is described and a comparison is made to see if there are any differences common issues with regard to the development of secondary business education. Chapter four is a literature review on the issues and concerns of business education in secondary schools within an international context. Chapter five deals with the methodology. Chapter six is an analysis of data from a questionnaire survey. Chapter seven is an analysis of responses from interviews. Chapter eight is a discussion of the findings. Chapter nine is the conclusion and recommendations.

## **Chapter 2 : The Background**

This chapter provides background information about Hong Kong. It starts with some general information about Hong Kong and moves on to describe secondary education and curriculum development in Hong Kong.

### **2.1. Location**

Hong Kong is situated on the southeast coast of China, about 95 km south east of Canton. There are three main parts of Hong Kong: Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories. Together, the territory covers an area of 1066 square kilometers.

### **2.2 Population**

The total population of Hong Kong was 6.5 million at the end of 1997. The age distribution is as follows:

Table 1: The age distribution of people in Hong Kong as at 1997 (Source: Hong Kong 1997)

Age	% of population
Aged under 15	18.1
Aged 15-34	32.0
Aged 35-64	33.6
Aged 65 or over	15.4

It can be observed that Hong Kong has a young population where more than a half of them are under 34 years old. Around 14 per cent of the population lies between the ages of 15 - 24, roughly the age from junior secondary to university graduates.

About 98 per cent of the population are ethnic Chinese. Westerners comprised only 1 per cent and other non-Chinese Asians 0.5 per cent. Over 59 per cent of the population were born in Hong Kong.

Cantonese is the mother tongue of over 80 per cent of the urban population. English is also widely used, especially in business. People are also learning Putonghua, the official language of China, to prepare for the future.

### **2.3 The economy**

Hong Kong does not have many natural resources so it has to depend on imports for food and other consumer goods, raw materials, capital goods, fuel and even water.

Because Hong Kong has to import so much, it needs to export a lot so as to earn enough to pay for the imports. Hong Kong is a famous financial centre with the following advantages. Its magnificent harbour together with its position on one of the world's busiest shipping lanes attract many ships and containers, and Hong Kong has one of the biggest containerization business in the world. Moreover, its link with China together with China's open door policy in recent years means more business in Hong Kong or through Hong Kong to China. Its excellent communication facilities and infrastructure allow people to make contacts easily. Furthermore, the government in Hong Kong is relatively stable; the laissez-faire policy encourages the inflow and outflow of money and the low tax rate attracts many foreign companies to start their business here.

In the past forty years, the structure of the Hong Kong economy has changed markedly. Hong Kong has moved from a manufactory-based society in the fifties to the world's eighth largest trading economy in 1996. Within a period of rapid social and economic change, it is obvious that the industrial base is changing, with consequent implications for workforce requirements in terms of skills and qualities of workers. Over 70% of jobs in Hong Kong are now in the tertiary sector (Table 2).

Table 2: The distribution of the workforce by economic sector in the past three decades.

Year	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1971	4.3%	53.6%	42.1%
1981	2.0%	49.8%	48.2%
1991	0.8%	36.7%	62.5%
1995	0.6%	27.1%	72.3%

Source: Hong Kong Annual Report (1971, 1981, 1991, 1997)

## 2.4 The political background

Hong Kong became a British colony in 1843 under the Treaty of Nanking. On December 19, 1984, the Prime ministers of the UK and China signed the Sino-British Declaration, which is an international agreement registered with the United Nations. In the Joint Declaration it was provided, among other things, that:

- On July 1, 1997 Hong Kong would become a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China with a high degree of autonomy;
- the current social and economic systems in Hong Kong would remain unchanged for 50 years;
- the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region would be vested with executive, legislative and independent judicial power;
- rights and freedoms, including those of the person, of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of travel, of movement, of correspondence, of strike, of choice of occupation, of academic research and of religious belief, would be ensured by law;
- the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region would retain the status of a free port and a separate customs territory;
- the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region would retain the status of an international financial centre, and its markets for foreign exchange, gold, securities and futures would continue; there would be free flow of capital and the Hong Kong dollar would continue to circulate and remain freely convertible;

- the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region might establish mutually beneficial economic relations with the United Kingdom and other countries, whose economic interests in Hong Kong would be given due regard.

The above points are significant, as they affect the confidence of the local businessmen as well as that of the foreign investors.

## **2.5 The history of education in Hong Kong**

Traditional Chinese education is literary and mathematical in content, didactic in method and dominated by examinations. Its teaching is secular, its scope largely confined to the classroom, its curriculum emphasizing the theoretical rather than the practical, and learning by heart rather than the application of learning (Fisher, 1951).

“Everything is secondary to education”, so the ancient Chinese proverb says. The Chinese regards education as very important. In traditional China, the education system was seen as a step for people to join the government as bureaucrats. The Civil Service Examination was first established in the Sung Dynasty (581 AD). In the minds of the Chinese, education is a means to climb up the social ladder. The Chinese are diligent by nature and place a high value upon education.

Hong Kong became a British colony in 1841. It was a fishing village then, and only a few Chinese village schools and temple schools existed. In 1866, the government established the first Central School. This was a government Anglo-Chinese school that gave upper primary and secondary education to boys admitted through a compulsory entrance examination.

The government took few initiatives in education in the past, lacked long-term educational goals and was little involved in providing education. However others were encouraged to do it voluntarily. The missionaries established most schools. The majority of the population in Hong Kong then had no desire to stay in Hong Kong for long; most of them aimed to return to China after a few years. Even those who had families in Hong Kong preferred to send their children back to China for education. Education was not regarded as the responsibility of the government.

After the Second World War in 1945, education, like everything else in Hong Kong, had been quite thoroughly destroyed. School buildings were in ruins. When the society of Hong Kong was waiting for reconstruction after the war, education was not on the priority list and the government's involvement in education remained small. In 1945, for example, education was allocated just below 4 per cent of the total government budget (Hong Kong 1946).

Then in the late fifties and early sixties when a large number of immigrants arrived from China in tens of thousands, and people in Hong Kong started to treat this society as their home, the matter of education started to receive more attention. In 1965, the White Paper Education Policy announced the reorganisation of the structure of

primary and secondary education and set universal primary education as the immediate aim. It was stated that 'the final aim of any educational policy must be to provide every child with the best education which he or she is capable of absorbing, at a cost which the parents and the community can afford' (p.8). Still, the government's involvement in education was minimal, with much of the burden of education being undertaken by private schools.

After the riots in 1967, things started to change. People in Hong Kong recognized that Hong Kong was their home. The government then paid more attention to educational matters. In 1970, it was decided that a further major expansion of secondary education was necessary, and steps were taken to increase the provision of subsidised secondary education to a total of 50 per cent of the Forms I - III age group (Hong Kong 1971). By 1971, free primary education was available to all. Students not allocated places in government or aided schools under the Central Allocation Scheme were sent to private schools for three years of junior secondary education and their school fees were paid by the government.

In 1974, three years after the introduction of universal primary education, the White Paper, *Secondary Education in Hong Kong over the Next Decade*, announced the government's intention to extend the provision of universal education from six to nine years by 1979 (Hong Kong 1974).

In 1977 the Governor announced that Hong Kong would begin in the following year, one year earlier than originally planned, to provide a further three years of free and compulsory universal education up to the age of 15 in 1978. In 1978, the White Paper,

*The Development of Senior Secondary and Tertiary Education* was published. It set the target of providing more school places in senior forms. Furthermore, the Hong Kong government also emphasised the balanced development of general, practical and cultural subjects in the school curriculum. Prevocational schools were developed with the aim of strengthening and developing practical and technical education. Technical institutes, technical colleges and the Hong Kong Polytechnic were built to ensure the link between vocational and technical education throughout the secondary system, leading to a technological outlet in tertiary education.

The 1990s are a period of expansion for tertiary education in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong government decided to double by 1994-95 the number of first-year first-degree places in Hong Kong's seven tertiary institutions to 15,000, which accounts for more than 18 per cent of the relevant age group.

The seven tertiary institutions comprise the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, City University of Hong Kong, Baptist University, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and Lingnan College.

The attention the government gives to education can be reflected by the amount of its expenditure on education (Table 3). In recent years the increase has been significant, with the allocation reaching 18 per cent of the GDP in 1996 (Hong Kong 1997). Still, compared with other countries, this is not enough. Kurian (1991) ranked Hong Kong as 143rd (from the highest) among the world's 172 countries on public expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP.

Table 3: The percentage of government expenditure on education

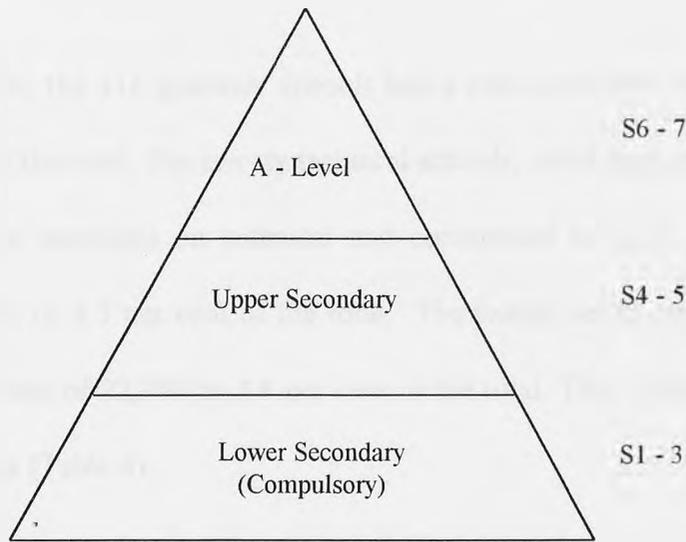
Year	82-83	85-86	88-89	91-92	94-95	96-97
%	13.0	18.6	17.6	17.1	17.1	18.0

Source: Hong Kong Annual Report (1983, 1986, 1989, 1992, 1995, 1997)

### 2.5.1 Secondary education in Hong Kong

At the end of primary school, the students are allocated Form one places in junior secondary schools. Five “bands” in the order of merit are formed based on the scaled internal assessment of students in the same school net. The top twenty per cent of students in the same school area go to the first band in the school area, the next into the second band, and so on. The main part of secondary education lasts for five years. It is made up of a junior cycle of three years, which are compulsory, and a senior cycle of two years, which is not compulsory but nearly universal. Students have to take an examination in Secondary five (S.5) and those who get the marks can continue their studies in S.6, preparing them for university entrance examination (Fig.2.1).

Fig.2.1 Secondary school structure in Hong Kong



There are five types of secondary school in Hong Kong; namely grammar, technical, prevocational, practical and skills opportunity schools. Most students attend the first three types of schools, and in 1996, there were only two practical and three skills opportunity schools. The schools provide different subjects catering for the needs and abilities of different students. Grammar schools offer a five-year course in a range of academic, cultural and practical subjects leading to the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). Those who meet the minimum requirements can proceed to a two-year sixth form course leading to the Advanced Level Examination (HKALE). The technical schools prepare students for the HKCEE with an emphasis on technical and business subjects. The prevocational schools offer an alternative form of secondary education for students with an aptitude for practical and technical subjects. Students completing secondary three in a prevocational school may enter approved apprenticeship schemes or continue their studies to secondary five, and those qualified can study secondary six at polytechnics or technical institutes. Prevocational

and technical schools consisting of students mainly from the lower bands teach the most business subjects. Even in grammar schools, business subjects are likely to be studied by students of lesser abilities.

In 1996, the 418 grammar schools had a total enrolment of 456,700, that is 88.4 per cent of the total. The twenty technical schools, which prepare students for the HKCEE with an emphasis on technical and commercial subjects, had a total enrolment of 20,515, or 4.3 per cent of the total. The twenty-seven prevocational schools had an enrolment of 22,758 or 4.8 per cent of the total. Thus, most students attend grammar schools (Table 4).

Table 4: Figures showing percentage of students in different kinds of schools

Year	Grammar	Technical	Prevocational
1965	185,271 (94.77%)	6,853 (3.5%)	781 (0.4%)
1970	218,246 (94.53%)	7,097 (3.1%)	2,320 (1%)
1975	331,189 (89.84%)	11,323 (3.1%)	4,771 (7%)
1980	434,636 (93.55%)	20,231 (4.35%)	9,720 (2.09%)
1990	391,567 (90.77%)	21,581 (5%)	18,233 (4.23%)
1996	456,700 (88.4%)	20,515 (4.3%)	22,758 (4.8%)

In the development of the junior secondary curriculum, one milestone was the introduction of the concept of a common-core curriculum. In 1975, the Education Department produced *A Preliminary Guide to the Curriculum for Junior Secondary*

*Forms* to assist schools in implementing the common-core curriculum at junior secondary level.

Most secondary schools in the junior sections follow a core curriculum that comprises the basic subjects of Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science, some subjects within the social science realm and a few practical subjects. Prevocational schools offer a curriculum with half of the time devoted to vocational training.

In recent years, the distinction between grammar and technical schools has been blurred because they both share the common goal of preparing their students for further academic studies (Cheng 1991:287). Starting from 1992, prevocational schools have offered places in Secondary six to prepare students for further studies in tertiary institutions.

## **2.6 Curriculum development in Hong Kong**

When one thinks of Hong Kong, one will mostly likely associate it with the British influence. Morris (1992a) states that the curriculum in Hong Kong is an imitation of what is happening around the world, especially in the U.K. This is easy to understand, for Hong Kong, as a colony of the U.K., has been under the British influence in many aspects, education included.

The British influence is observed when Hoffman (1970) noted that the educational system in Hong Kong followed a British structure, and Sweeting (1995) stated that many schools in Hong Kong were missionary schools of the English and European pattern. Furthermore, many involved in the development of the curriculum, such as the officials from the government and academics in the universities, have affiliations with the U.K. one way or another. For example, the University of Hong Kong (established in 1911) follows the British pattern, and many of its teaching staff are from the U.K. Some have trained or studied in the U.K. while others may directly come from the U.K. It is thus very natural for them to use the U.K. as reference. Moreover, reports on the education in Hong Kong, like the *Fisher Report* (1951), the *Burney Report* (1935) and the *Llewelyn Report* (1982), are led by academics from the U.K. McClelland (1991) noted that curriculum development in Hong Kong has followed a typical British territory line. To a very large extent the output of the Curriculum Development Committee (CDC) has been derived very directly and visibly from U.K. models. It is not until recent years when local issues have become more significant that more local academics have been involved in the development of the curriculum in Hong Kong.

### **2.6.1 Curriculum decision making at the governmental level**

In theory, the Governor of Hong Kong (the Chief Executive after 1997) is the highest decision-maker on all educational matters. The Executive Council (Exco), a decision-making body with every member appointed by the Governor and whose meetings are

confidential advise him. Usually, before a certain policy is implemented, the government can form an ad hoc committee to discuss that particular issue and the public are invited to submit their views. The policy can be carried out in three channels, by issuing a green paper, by inviting submissions from recognized organizations, or by discussions in regular or special consultative meetings. Besides consulting Exco when making important policies, the Governor can also seek advice from the following committees.

#### 1. The Education Commission (EC)

The Education Commission was set up in 1984 with the following terms of reference:

- to define overall educational objectives, formulate education policy and recommend priorities for implementation having regard to the resources available;
- to co-ordinate and monitor the planning and development of education at all levels; and
- to initiate educational research.

The Education Commission is appointed by the Governor to advise on the development of the education system in the light of community needs. It has twenty-one members, of whom fifteen are appointed from outside the Government and six are ex-officio members. The ex-officio members are: Secretary for Education and Manpower; Director of Education; and Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on

Teacher Education and Qualifications, representatives from the Board of Education, the University Grants Committee and the Vocational Training Council. Other members are appointed on an ad personam basis to give their personal advice on educational matters. They include educators/administrators from the pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors, and Legislative Council members as well as representatives from the business sector.

The Commission exerts its influence through the submission of its reports to the governor and the Exco for examination and approval (Table 5). It is seen to be the highest level for educational consultation concerning curriculum matters at a relatively macro level.

Table 5: List of reports by the Education Commission:

Name of the publication	Date of Publication
Education Commission Report No.1 (ECR1)	October 1984
Education Commission Report No.2 (ECR2)	August 1986
Education Commission Report No.3 (ECR3)	June 1988
Education Commission Report No.4 (ECR4)	November 1990
Education Commission Report No.5 (ECR5)	June 1992
Education Commission Report No.6 (ECR6)	March 1996
Education Commission Report No.7 (ECR7)	October 1997

## 2. The Board of Education

The Board of Education (BoE), established in 1920, plays a key role both in the formulation of policy and in educational planning. It is a statutory advisory body appointed by the Governor. It is concerned with education from kindergarten to the sixth form. The chair has been occupied by unofficials since 1973. The majority of the members on the BoE were lay members reflecting the following interests:

- tertiary institutions,
- schools,
- major sponsoring bodies,
- the Hong Kong Training Council, and
- commerce, industry, the professions and community service.

## 3. The Universities Grants Committee

The Universities Grants Committee (UGC), established in 1965, is appointed by the Governor to advise on the development and funding of higher education, and administer public grants to eight publicly funded tertiary institutions. The UGC is independent of the government and tertiary institutions and has a membership of local professional and business people.

#### 4. The Vocational Training Council

The Vocational Training Council (VTC), established in 1982, is Hong Kong's principal organization responsible for vocational education and training with the following functions:

- to advise the Governor of Hong Kong on the measures required to ensure a comprehensive system of technical education and industrial training suited to the development needs of Hong Kong;
- to institute, develop and operate schemes for training operatives, craftsmen, technicians and technologists needed to sustain and improve industry;
- to promote and regulate the training of apprentices;
- to provide and co-ordinate the provision of skills training to disabled persons aged fifteen and over for the purpose of improving their employment prospects and preparing them for open employment; and
- to establish, operate and maintain technical colleges, technical institutes, industrial training centres and skills centres.

The VTC has a membership of four government officials and eighteen non-government members who are leading figures in industry, commerce and the service sector, educationists and representatives of workers. It has now operates two technical colleges, seven technical institutes, twenty-four training centres, and three skills centres for disabled persons.



## 5. Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualification

In 1993, the government established an Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualification (ACTEQ) to oversee policies related to teachers' preparation and professional development. It comprises representatives from the major teacher education institutions, government departments and institutions relevant to teacher education, together with a few teachers and principals.

Besides seeking advice from the Advisory Committees, the government sometimes resorts to third parties for consultation. These include overseas experts with international reputation and prominent figures in the local community. For example, three experts, one local and two foreign, were invited in 1997 to submit a report concerning the reorganization of the Education Department.

While the above-mentioned bodies take initiatives to advise the government on educational matters, the following mainly execute what has been laid out:

### 1. Education Department (ED)

The Director of Education, who is appointed by the Governor heads the ED. S/he is advised by the BoE in the formulation of policy and in educational planning and is directly responsible for the administration of primary and secondary education. The role of the Director is described as follows (ED, 1981:3.9):

The Director's role, with the help of various advisory bodies, is to superintend the educational needs of the community and to determine how these needs can best be served. He is also responsible for maintaining discipline and order in the control of educational activities, deriving his authority and powers mainly from the Education Ordinance, which includes detailed provision for the registration and management of schools, the registration of teachers, rights of appeal, the Director's power to order attendance and the inspection of schools. The Education Regulations are concerned in the main with school premises and structural requirements, fire precautions, health and sanitation, discipline, fees and collections, educational requirements for teachers, students' associations, school management committees and supervisors, and other general matters.

The power of the director can also be observed through the following two regulations:

Any school except in accordance with a syllabus approved by the Director may give no instruction (Education Regulations, 1971, S92(1)).

No person shall use any document for instruction in a class in any school unless particulars of the title, author and publisher of the document and such other particular of the document as the Director may require have been furnished to the Director not less than 14 days previously (Education Regulations, 1971, S92(6)).

The above regulations were revised in 1990, and schools now do not need to report the subjects provided and textbooks used to the director for approval. Still the director

has the power to require any school to submit particulars of textbooks and any other documents for examination, and to forbid adoption of any textbooks or documents if they are thought to be inappropriate.

## 2. Curriculum Development Council (CDC) & Hong Kong Examinations Authority (HKEA)

The curriculum of Hong Kong schools is controlled by two central organizations. The CDC is responsible for designing curricula and for approving school textbooks. The HKEA administers all of Hong Kong's public examinations and produces the syllabuses for all subjects that are publicly examined.

### a. Curriculum Development Council

The Curriculum Development Council (CDC) was established in 1970 to replace the old Syllabuses and Textbooks Committee. It is a non-statutory advisory committee appointed to advise the Director on school curriculum and closely related matters. The membership of the CDC consisted of representatives from pre-school to higher education, people from bodies like the HKEA (1977 onwards) and the teachers' union. The CDC is responsible for producing a "syllabus" for each subject.

## b. Hong Kong Examination Authority

The Hong Kong Examination Authority (HKEA) is a statutory and self-financing body established under the Hong Kong Examinations Authority Ordinance that was enacted on 5 May 1977 under the leadership of Exco. It produces the syllabuses for all subjects that are publicly examined from Secondary 4 to 7 (S.4-S.7) and is responsible for the conducting of the HKCEE and the HKALE. Apart from the ex-officio members, the Governor appoints all members.

Subject committees consist of teachers from secondary schools and tertiary institutions and staff of the ED. They advise the Board and the Authority on the examination of their subjects. They propose new syllabuses and syllabus changes and annually review the examination of their subjects, reporting to the Board on all aspects of the examination. They nominate setters, moderators and examiners for appointment by the School Examinations Executive Committee.

In developing a curriculum, the CDC, sometimes with the collaboration of the HKEA, will identify and promote new or revised educational programmes. The final product is usually the production of CDC and HKEA syllabuses.

## c. Curriculum Development Institute

The Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) was established in 1992 as a result of a recommendation in Education Commission Report No.4 (ECR4). It has a non-official

Chairman and its members include educators as well as employers and parents who aim to advise the government through the ED on all matters related to curriculum development in local schools from kindergarten to the sixth form. The main functions of the CDI include:

- curriculum planning, including research, experimentation, innovation and evaluation;
- providing and updating curriculum guides and subject syllabuses;
- developing and managing resource materials;
- liaising with the HKEA, the Advisory Inspectorate of the ED, and teacher training institutions on the development and evaluation of the curriculum;
- reviewing textbooks and providing resource library services; and
- serving as secretariat to the CDC.

### **2.6.2 Curriculum decision making at the bottom level**

It has been a tradition that the development of the curriculum is usually in a top-down approach where decisions are made by “experts” or those who are powerful and influential. However, there are others who may have a direct or indirect relationship with the curriculum and their involvement in the process of developing the curriculum is important.

## 1. Teachers

It is essential that teachers, as the executors and users of the curriculum, are involved in the process of decision-making in the curriculum. Proponents who have argued for increased involvement of teachers in the process of curriculum development, so as to produce more realistic and relevant curriculum projects, include Fullan & Promfret (1977), Herriott & Gross (1979) in North America; Stenhouse (1975), McDonald & Walker (1976) in the U.K.; Walton & Morgan (1978), and Skilbeck (1975) in Australia. The involvement of the teachers is precious, as Carson and Friesen (1978) note:

It is generally felt that since teachers possess professional knowledge they should be involved to a considerable extent in educational decision-making in order to practice their expertise as well as to protect their professional interests (p.2).

However important it could be, studies have shown that the involvement of teachers in curriculum planning is minimal. Research done by Cohen & Harrison (1982) implied that teachers saw themselves as having little influence on school-level curriculum decision-making. A similar situation is found in Hong Kong where the development of the school-based curriculum is a failure (Lo, 1995).

a. Teachers as developers

Because of their understanding of the school and students, teachers can act as “curriculum-developers” in designing and developing a curriculum to meet the needs of their students. This can be done through developing a school-based curriculum specifically to suit the needs of the teacher’s own school, or by joining the CDC’s subject committee through invitation. Though teachers may be enthusiastic enough to act as curriculum developers, it is quite difficult for them to fulfill this role satisfactorily because being burdened by the heavy workload; teachers are often too busy to find time. Moreover, there are too few supporting resources, and there are not many openings for teachers to join the official curriculum development committees. Even if they do join, their involvement and influence can be very limited as meetings are few and discussion is usually dominated by government officials.

b. Teachers as implementers

This is the role in curriculum development that most teachers adopt. As users of the curriculum, teachers will follow it closely, especially in subjects with public examinations. The problem with following the curriculum so strictly is that teachers may not mention anything worthwhile which is not required in the syllabus as it would be regarded as irrelevant, thus discouraging the chance of any successful curriculum innovation to take place. An example is the development of civic education, which is regarded by many teachers as important to secondary students, but since this is not a

subject that leads to a public examination, its development has encountered many difficulties (Cheung & Leung, 1998).

c. Teachers as adapters

Sometimes teachers may find that the implementation of a certain curriculum may not serve the best interests of their students. There are also cases where the available materials like teaching kits or textbooks are not good enough. When the above happens, instead of fully implementing or rejecting the developed curriculum, teachers serve as adapters, tailoring and modifying the curriculum to suit the needs of their students. This usually takes place where the examination pressure is not great. The problem with this is that it is very time-consuming, and teachers may not have enough time to do so much.

d. Teachers as researchers

Theoretically, teachers can act as “curriculum researchers”. Teachers can do action research by trying out different sets of curriculum materials in their class and do the necessary evaluation. In practice not many teachers can fulfill this role for reasons ranging from their busy schedules to their lack of knowledge and skills to conduct research.

## 2. Textbook publishers

In the process of curriculum development, a syllabus determining the coverage of contents will be produced, and textbooks, will be written. The development of certain subjects may be hampered if there are not enough textbooks in that subject available. Teachers may be afraid that if schools decide to offer this subject, they will have to expend much effort in developing their own teaching materials for this subject. Thus many are reluctant to suggest that their schools offer this subject no matter how useful and important it could be. In the meantime, publishers are not willing to produce textbooks for a subject if the market is small. A-Level Business Studies is one example. It was not until in 1996 that the first A-Level Business Studies textbook written for local students was produced. Thus it can be said that the textbook publishers have a certain degree, no matter how limited it is, of influence on the development of business education in Hong Kong. Moreover, many of the textbook writers are either experts in the subject area in tertiary institutions or experienced teachers who have backgrounds as subject committee members and/or markers of public examinations. Their views on the subject may be expressed during their writing of the textbook. Hence textbook publishers have an indirect influence on the curriculum.

## 3. Parents

The direct influence of parents on curriculum matters in Hong Kong has not been significant. Unlike some parents in the West who are more involved in schools, parental involvement in school matters has not been common in Hong Kong. However,

this phenomenon has started to change. Parents are now more educated than before and they see the importance of their involvement in schools. Terms like accountability have started to be used by parents. Moreover, parents now have fewer children so they can spare the time to be involved in school matters (Sze & Ho, 1998). Following the recommendations of ECR4, many schools have started to form “Parent-Teacher Associations”. The introduction of the School Management Initiative (SMI) with one of its goals being the involvement of more parents in school management committees has also encouraged the parental involvement in school. This has started to have an effect on curriculum decisions.

A recent example to illustrate the influence of parents on one aspect of the curriculum is the school policy on the language of instruction. Many parents think that the use of English as a medium of instruction is more prestigious as they perceive the future economic returns of studying in English are higher than those of studying in Chinese. Though in reality many schools claim to use English as a medium of instruction, they in fact only use English textbooks but use Cantonese to deliver lessons. However, parents still think this is preferable. Schools may feel that it is better for students to learn in their mother tongue but they dare not make any change for it will spur a stormy reaction from parents. In return schools would fail to attract the more able students. This actually happened to one prestigious school. When the medium of instruction was switched from English to Chinese a few years ago, the banding of the student intake in S.1 dropped. Parents do not wish to send their children to schools that are perceived as being inferior by using Chinese as a medium of instruction. After a few years, the principal of this school resigned and the school switched back to English as the medium of instruction.

#### 4. Pressure groups

The importance of pressure groups in influencing the curriculum has been identified by Print, (1993) as follows:

Pressure groups exist to protect the interests of their members by influencing the making of policies, by putting their objections to the government, by making public campaigns which may take the form of letters to the newspapers, public speeches and posters; or by getting press coverage by holding news conferences and providing reporters with press release, and collecting signatures for a petition to the Governor and so on.

In most cases, the government listens to what the pressure groups have to say in order to sort out the various options available and decide on the best policy. Furthermore, the government needs co-operation in administration. Careful dealing with pressure groups can facilitate execution of policies.

There are quite a number of education-related pressure groups in Hong Kong. The Education Convergence (EG) and Professional Teachers' Union (PTU) are two examples. They have quite frequently express their opinions on various educational matters and their members are now appointed as members of various committees that have a direct influence on the curriculum.

## 2. Religious organizations

It can be observed that many schools in Hong Kong have religious affiliations. This is not difficult to understand as missionaries have had a vital role to play in the establishment of schools in the history of education in Hong Kong. They have influence on curriculum development through different channels. First many of their graduates have become influential figures in society. Some are wealthy enough to donate money to establish new schools. Moreover, some graduates have become government officials and others have become committee members in various groups concerned with education. Then, many principals of these schools are involved in various important groups that have a direct influence on curriculum decisions. For example, the ex-chairman of the Board of Education is the principal of an Anglican school, and many members of the Education Commission are from various schools with religious background, just to name a few.

Finally, the religious influence on curriculum can be observed in the development of religious education. Many schools with religious background produce their own teaching materials for the subject of Religious Studies. Many adopt some of the materials into the teaching of civic education and moral education. Hence, the influence of religious groups on curriculum in Hong Kong cannot be overlooked.

Having discussed the general background in Hong Kong, with particular emphasis on the development of secondary education together with the process of curriculum development in Hong Kong, the next chapter will focus on the development of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools.

## **Chapter 3: An Overview of the Development of Business Education in Hong Kong Secondary Schools within an International Context**

The previous chapter gave a brief description of the background of Hong Kong with particular emphasis on secondary education in Hong Kong. This chapter deals with the development of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools. In tracing its development, it is essential to look at the development of vocational and technical education first, which are said to be where business education finds its roots. Then the writer will provide a brief sketch of the rationale for the introduction of, and nature of, business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong. When this is done, the first part of this dissertation, which is the past history of the development of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools, will be completed. This chapter will conclude by a study of the development of business education in a few selected countries in both the East and the West, comparing it with that of Hong Kong, to see if there are any differences and/or similarities.

### **3.1 Vocational education: where business education begins**

Youth policy has always been an issue and governments have tried hard to make sure students go to school to avoid their making trouble on the streets. The problem is that

not every student suits the present academic educational system and dropouts need some way out. Thus vocational education comes in the picture as it can keep students in school and provide them with opportunities to learn some skills so as to prepare them for future jobs (Blackmore, 1990; Jonathan, 1990). Furthermore, when education is often used as a tool to serve the economic needs of the nation, vocational education is employed as a response to the economic and employment needs of a country (Carr, 1990).

Vocational education in Hong Kong can generally be categorised into two main streams: the non-school stream and the school stream. The former covers job-related courses at various levels provided through the Vocational Training Council and administered by the Technical Education and Industrial Training Department whereas prevocational schools provide the latter.

### **3.1.1 The development of technical education**

Technical education forms an essential component of Hong Kong's education system. It exists in a number of ways: as prevocational education at secondary level, as craft training at post-compulsory level, as technician training at post-secondary level, and as the training of engineers and technologists in universities and polytechnics.

Secondary technical education in Hong Kong started before prevocational education with the founding of the Junior Technical School in 1932 (it became the Victoria

Technical School in 1957) offering a three-year course. According to Waters (1979b), 'This was the first Government institution to provide full-time technical education' (p.16).

The *Burney Report* in 1935 pointed out the necessity to plan for technical education in Hong Kong (Burney, 1935). In 1937, the Trade School was established and in 1947 it was renamed as the Technical College, a government-funded institution providing vocational training.

In 1953, the Ho Tung Technical School was opened to provide a secondary technical education for girls. In 1954, the Governor appointed a standing committee on technical education and vocational training with the following terms of reference:

- To keep under constant review the current facilities for, and the varying requirements of, technical education and vocational training with particular reference to the needs of commerce and industry;
- To advise the government on the steps that should be taken to meet these requirements and on all other general matters relating to technical education and vocational training.

In the same year, the *Report on Technical Education and Vocational Training in Hong Kong* (1953) was published. The following paragraphs from the report are quoted in this study to identify the importance of business education, and its relationship with technical education:

In a Colony such as Hong Kong where trading is the principal activity and where such a large proportion of the population is engaged in commercial pursuits - from the large business houses to the smallest import-export firms - it is surprising that more attention has not been paid in the past to vocational education and vocational training for commerce. Commercial enterprises bring in their train such ancillary services as banking, insurance, finance, accountancy, shipping, stock exchange and government departments. All of these are staffed by men and women whose work is based on knowledge of some branch of commerce, whether it has been gained before or during employment. The growth of the textile industry and the increased importance of other local manufacturers increase the need for persons trained in commerce. Buying and selling form part of every manufacturer's business, i.e., he engages in the commercial side of industry. He is as much concerned with commerce as is the trader who may never own or see the goods with which he does business (paragraph 287).

It is our opinion that considerable importance should be attached to making special provision in the Colony for vocational education and vocational training in commercial subjects. We consider that courses in commerce should be instituted with attention paid to the special needs of the Colony's commerce. Our viewpoint has already been put forward in our Interim Recommendation in which we urged the building of extensions to the Technical College in order to accommodate, inter alia, a new course in commercial subjects (paragraph 289).

Under the systems now obtaining in Hong Kong too many young men and women enter commerce with little knowledge of the work they will encounter. It follows that the necessary procedures and techniques have to be learnt after entry into employment. Furthermore, studies undertaken after entry into employment are frequently only single subject courses and as a result the young man or woman lacks the general education in commercial subjects which would give a background to his or her work (paragraph 290).

Commerce covers a wider field than buying and selling and education for commerce must therefore embrace educational facilities for those preparing for or engaged in business occupations of every kind, professional and otherwise, from office routine, such as typewriting and shorthand, to the positions of greatest responsibility (paragraph 291).

It is noted from paragraph 291 that the function of business education was not only for the training of clerks and secretaries, but for others who might have an interest in business, like accountants and persons in positions of managerial responsibility.

Starting from 1957, secondary technical schools offered a five-year course leading to the HKCEE, with students taking technical subjects in addition to the usual academic subjects. In 1960, secondary modern schools were established to cater for students who could not get a place in government or aided secondary grammar schools. The curriculum for secondary modern schools was very practical so students could be employed upon graduation. However, it was noted that students, after completing Secondary 3, aspired to continue their studies in Secondary 4 rather than enter

technical schools. As a result, the government secondary modern schools were converted into secondary technical schools providing five years of general education.

The *Marsh-Sampson Report* in 1963 stated that one of the main aims of education in Hong Kong was to meet the demands of an industrial economy in the technical field for technologists, technicians and craftsmen. It proposed that secondary grammar schools should provide a broader curriculum to include technical subjects. In response to this, the government set up the Industrial Training Advisory Committee. The Morrison Technical Institute was established in 1969 to take over and further develop courses previously run by Hong Kong Technical College at craft and technician levels.

The seventies saw a progressive development in technical education. The following shows the government's intention of supporting the further development of technical and vocational education in Hong Kong:

Government announced its intention of expanding higher technical and vocational education in Hong Kong by setting up a polytechnic, with the existing Technical College as one of its constituent colleges (Education Department Annual Report, 1970).

In the seventies, Hong Kong depended largely, both economically and socially, on its manufacturing industry. In recognition of the importance of the provision of properly trained and adaptable manpower to enable Hong Kong to compete for world markets, the significance of technical and vocational education was noted. In 1974, a White

Paper, *Secondary Education in Hong Kong over the Next Decade*, was published and included the following statement (1974, p.5-6):

The increasingly sophisticated industrial requirements of the next decade will best be met by providing workers with a basic minimum nine year course of general education but with a practical and technical content of 25-30%. This will provide the foundation on which further industrial training can be given.

The Apprenticeship Ordinance in 1976 ensured that all workers between 14 and 18 years of age receive appropriate technical education in the technical institutes (Hong Kong Annual Report, 1987, p.113). The 1978 White Paper, *The Development of Senior and Tertiary Education*, recommended that the curriculum of senior secondary forms should be broadened, with greater emphasis on practical and technical subjects.

In the 1970s and 1980s, more technical institutes and vocational training centres were established under the administration of the ED. The VTC, a statutory body with a role to advise the Governor on policies for developing a comprehensive system of technical education and industrial training suited to the developing needs of Hong Kong, took over much of the responsibility from the ED in 1982. In 1982, a panel of experts was invited to Hong Kong to conduct a review of education in Hong Kong, and the *Llewellyn Report* (1982) was written, with the following words on technical education in Hong Kong:

From the point of view of manpower alone, expansion of the technical institutes and sweeping improvements in teacher education would seem to us to be clear

priorities.... Most likely, the plans to expand the universities and Polytechnic could be easily justified also from plausible labour need calculations...If one looks at Hong Kong society today - its energy, its competitiveness, the value it puts upon education, the degree of social mobility apparently related to education, its age structure, and its comfortable exchequer - then the social pressure for further expansion is understandable, legitimate, and has to be met in some way....(There) is an overwhelming case for the expansion of opportunity for study at the degree level, with particular emphasis on degrees in technological subjects, and in courses for higher technicians....These considerations satisfy us that a considerable and rapid expansion of degree level and higher technician education is both necessary and desirable (Llewellyn, 1982, pp.63-6).

Technical education continued to be perceived as important by the government in the eighties. The following taken from the annual report is a neat summary (Hong Kong Annual Report, 1984, p.5):

...the development of Hong Kong's economy in the 1980s should not be inhibited by a shortage of high-level technological manpower; there was a need to increase the annual growth rate of the universities; training facilities must be expanded for our existing workforce to upgrade their technical skills; increasing the output of manpower at the professional and graduate level, more attention should be paid to the need for a solid infrastructure of skilled support at the technician and craftsman level.

Though the Hong Kong government took many initiatives to promote technical

education, the difficulties were many (Hong Kong, 1981):

It has only been in the last decade or so that the general public has begun to understand the purposes of technical education in schools and consequently there has been a marked reluctance to accept it as a viable and equal alternative to the “academic” education on which the public places such value.... The development of technical education in Hong Kong is still so closely associated in the public mind with the extent to which general education is provided, and is regarded by many as a mere consolation prize--except perhaps when it can be seen to offer students as good a chance as any other type of education of progressing to senior secondary and sixth form education (p.24).

The difficulties were recognized, but the perceptions of the public could not be changed so easily. The government wanted to further improve the quality of technical education and change its image. In their mission addresses, at the *Vocational & Technical Education for 2000 Conference* held in the Chinese University in 1995 and at the *Science and Technology Education Conference 96* held in the University of Hong Kong in June, the officials of the ED and the representatives of the Prevocational School Educational Workers' Association had stressed the needs and the importance of transferable skills like communication, numeracy, IT, problem solving, and teamwork, suggesting that changes in the prevocational and technical education were inevitable due to the pronounced trend shift in the workforce in Hong Kong. In 1997 a major review on technical education was carried out and the report, *Review of Prevocational and Secondary Technical Education*, was published with the following recommendations regarding the role of secondary technical schools:

We note that most secondary technical schools currently offer a curriculum very close to that offered by secondary grammar schools. Individual secondary technical schools in favour of removing the technical reference from their names should apply to ED to revise their registered name. But given the world trend for increasing emphasis on technology and that more resources for the delivery of technical education are available to secondary technical schools than to secondary grammar schools, secondary technical schools should continue to provide technical education.

We recommend that the present proportion of practical/technical content attached to the secondary technical school curriculum should be retained. We also recommend that apart from continuing to offer suitably updated practical/technical subjects, the existing technical schools should implement new business and technological subjects(s) (p.12).

The recommendation called for the implementation of new business subjects. This will have an effect on the future development of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools. Working groups have been set up to look at different initiatives. There are now twenty technical schools with a total enrolment of 20,515 students in Hong Kong (Hong Kong, 1997). Graduates of technical institutes can now further their studies at tertiary institutes. The Hong Kong Polytechnic and the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong, established in 1972 and 1984 respectively, were upgraded to universities in 1995. The University of Science and Technology, established in 1991, aims to lead the way in the areas of science and technology vital to the region's economic future.

### 3.1.2 The development of prevocational education

Before the development of prevocational education, the Hong Kong government established some modern schools to provide a similar kind of education to cater for those primary school leavers who were unable to enrol in secondary schools. However, this kind of education was not well received by the public. In 1963, almost 94 per cent of a total of 131,000 students were attending the general/grammar school type. The enrolment in technical, vocational and secondary modern schools amounted to little more than 6 per cent.

The secondary modern schools were then converted to technical schools in 1964. In the late sixties, the government decided to develop prevocational education and with the aim that this would ultimately be one of the major streams of secondary education for the around one third of primary school leavers who do not continue their studies in secondary schools.

The Working Party on Pre-Vocational education was constituted on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 1969 on the instruction of the Committee on Vocational Training with the following terms of reference:

- To study generally all aspects of pre-vocational education and training.
- To determine the role of pre-vocational education in Hong Kong for the next 10-20 years and its place in the general educational pattern as well as its relationship

with primary and secondary (both grammar and technical) schools, and other forms of vocational training and technical education.

- To make recommendations on the establishment, operation, supervision of and curricula (viz. balance and depth of academic, vocational and social subjects) for pre-vocational schools.

Its report, *The Report of the Working Party on Prevocational Education* (ITAC, 1970), considered as the most detailed official document on prevocational education in Hong Kong, stated the following to justify the existence of prevocational education:

Prevocational education should be considered as a system of education aiming at developing in all young people an understanding of the economic, social and technical elements of progress, of meaning of work discipline, co-operation and team-work, and of the value to society of the work of all its members. Prevocational education should also make it easier for young people to choose among the many different possibilities of employment open to them, but it should not aim at providing the complete skills and knowledge of a specific trade or occupation (p.2).

The working party made use of these aims to establish the curricula of the prevocational schools. A three-year post primary pre-vocational education was proposed for the following reasons:

- that over the next 10-15 years, Hong Kong would be able to provide universal education for three years beyond primary,

- that this group of young people can become a vital sector of Hong Kong's manpower if given the right education and training, and
- that the advancing technology of Hong Kong's industry demands a more sophisticated and adaptable labour force (ITAC, 1970).

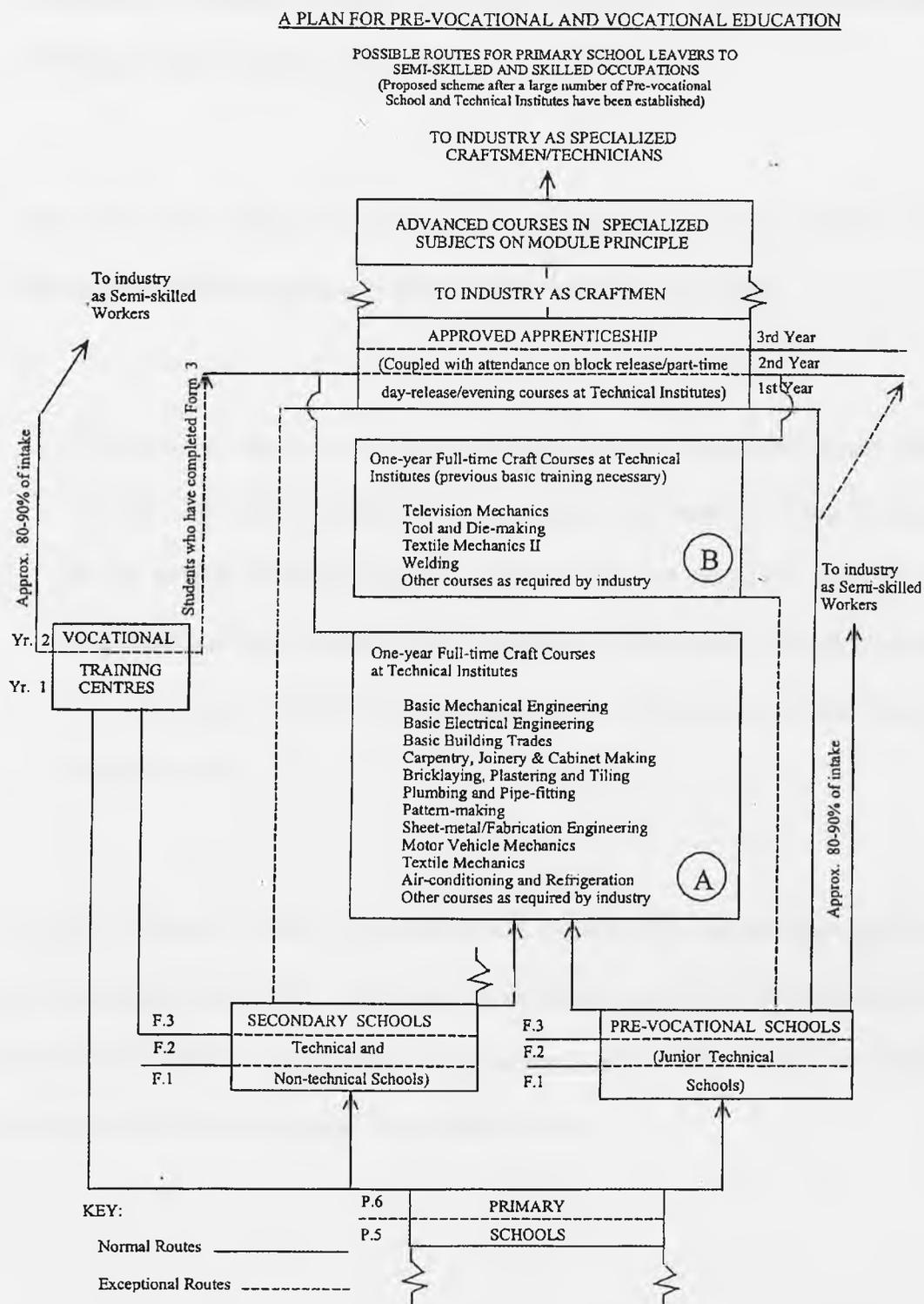
The plan was that every student would, over a period of three years, receive about 50 per cent general education and 50 per cent basic practical training. After attending prevocational school for three years, students at the age of around 16 would enter industry as semi-skilled workers. It should be noted that these same principles would apply to commercial training.

As a result of the ITAC Report, prevocational education commenced in 1970. After a pilot project from 1969 to 1973, a three-year prevocational course was adopted in the junior secondary curriculum in 1973, with half of its curriculum devoted to vocationally related subjects. The Holy Carpenter Practical Training Centre in Hung Hom, which was established in 1965, and the Saint Godfrey Vocational Training Section in the Caritas Community Centre in Aberdeen, which had been in operation since 1967, were later converted to prevocational schools. In 1969, the Caritas St. Francis Prevocational School was established in the Caritas Community Centre and the Caritas St. Joseph's Prevocational School was established in 1970. In addition, a number of new prevocational schools were built. In 1973, K.G. Lavender, the Principal of Wandsworth Technical College in Britain, visited Hong Kong to give advice on prevocational education and on secondary technical schools. From 1977, prevocational schools were administered by the Schools Division in the ED, instead of, as in the past, by the Technical Education Division.

The following diagram (Figure 3.1) shows the proposed position of prevocational education in the general educational pattern and its relationship with schools, primary and secondary (both grammar and technical), vocational training centres, technical institutes and apprenticeship training. It can be seen that three possible routes are open to graduates of the prevocational schools:

- to join industry as semi-skilled workers after a short spell of on-the-job training;
- to join an approved apprenticeship scheme coupled with part-time day-release courses; and
- to further their technical education in a one-year full-time course at a technical institute, after which they should be eligible to join the second year of an approved apprenticeship.

Figure 3.1: The proposed position of prevocational education in the general educational pattern and its relationship with schools (adopted from *The Development of Technical Education in Hong Kong and Opportunities for Prevocational School Leavers*, p.10)



The development of prevocational education was favourably received at an early stage and Scholz, the supervisor of the Caritas St. Francis Prevocational School (1972), contributed to the aims of prevocational education by offering students 'general education plus an introduction into a variety of practical subjects in a 3-year full-time course, thus preparing them for entry into the world of work, to orientate them prior to specialized vocational training and to provide them with a broad basis of knowledge of training in an occupation' (p.2).

Later, at the Joint Speech day of Caritas Prevocational Schools on 30 July 1977, Scholtz asserted the uniqueness of prevocational education by stating:

'Prevocational education is, to my knowledge, the only educational stream which was fully and totally developed in Hong Kong by the people of Hong Kong and for the people of Hong Kong. It is in the form as we know it today, the intellectual and developmental work of people of Hong Kong. It is not borrowed from elsewhere. I humbly like to suggest that it can serve as a model also for other countries'.

As noted by Waters (1979a), the purposes and objectives of prevocational education were redefined in early 1977. These were confirmed by the Director of Education, the Honourable Kenneth Topley, when he spoke on 9 July 1977, at the Prize-Giving Ceremony of the Holy Carpenter Prevocational School:

'It was considered that the main aim of prevocational schools was to prepare young people to face the demands and responsibilities, as good citizens, and to live satisfying and rewarding personal and family lives. In short to prepare young people for life - prevocational education is seen as a form of education which will play a big part in the development of the character and encourage positive attitudes towards life in both work and leisure. It is conceived as a form of education adapted to modern times and to the new pattern of social and industrial life' (p.22).

The restructuring was noted in the *White Paper on the Development of Senior Secondary and Tertiary Education* (1978) where the ED started to change the class structure of prevocational schools so as to expand up to S.5 level in 1979. It also suggested that schools should offer a wide range of subjects to reflect the various ranges of abilities among senior students. The aim was to allow some students an opportunity to follow a course that would make them more prepared for the world.

Then in September 1981, the prevocational schools began to offer senior secondary classes and assumed a dual role. For junior secondary education lasting three years, these schools prepare students for apprenticeship schemes. For the two years of senior secondary education, these schools prepare students for technician programmes in technical institutes.

In 1984, the Education Commission Report No.1 (ECR1, 1984) recommended reorganizing the class structure of the prevocational schools to be like that of a newly established grammar school. ECR2 (1986) further recommended that the sixth form

courses should be extended to all prevocational schools. The message was heard and in 1989, the Government expanded the provision of senior secondary classes in prevocational schools. In 1992, following the recommendation of ECR2, a few prevocational schools started to provide sixth form classes.

Prevocational schools were providing more and more academic subjects, but the ECR4 in 1990 wanted to maintain the balance between the academic and non-academic subjects in prevocational schools:

We note that some prevocational schools have begun to place more emphasis on academic subjects possibly in response to parental pressure. We would not wish to see prevocational schools moving away from their practical curriculum since we believe that their role of providing an alternative curriculum for students is important and should therefore be preserved. We recommend that ED monitor the situation closely to ensure that the balance between academic and non-academic subjects in prevocational schools, as prescribed by ED, is maintained (p.58).

In order to encourage S.2 and S.3 students to transfer from grammar schools to prevocational schools, ECR4 proposed a bridging course to be arranged by the prevocational schools for S.2 and S.3 student from grammar schools. The circular states that:

The Education Commission in its Report Number 4 looked at the needs of those students, who having been allocated places in grammar schools, find themselves after the first year or so losing interest in the more academic approach and wishing to learn more practical subjects. The Commission took the view that these students would be better off if they could further their studies in a prevocational school and recommend that a bridging course which would include workshop training, be arranged to help these students adjust to the more practical content of the curricular in prevocational schools and gain the minimum level of practical proficiency required for their classes (ED, 1992 Circular no. 40).

The bridging course was available for free in the summer holidays and one class of forty students each was set up on Hong Kong Island, in Kowloon and in the New Territories. The course lasted for six weeks and students had to spend seven hours a day from Monday to Friday there. It was not a success, lasting for only a few years until the summer of 1996, because the course did not attract many students.

Despite its unpopularity among students, prevocational education is still regarded as important by the government and the BoE issued the following statement after its 167<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 17 May 1993:

The Board of Education reaffirms the value and importance of prevocational education in Hong Kong, especially as it offers a useful choice of schools and curriculum for some students. The development of prevocational schools is in line

with the government's established policy to provide a diversity of schools for children with different needs.

The Board further notes that the demand for places in prevocational schools remains high, and hopes that the tertiary institutions and training institutes in Hong Kong will offer wide opportunities to prevocational school leavers for further studies or training.

Despite the government's efforts in bringing prevocational schools on a par with grammar schools in terms of class structure and course duration, the following table clearly indicates the increasing unpopularity of prevocational schools by the decrease in the number of applications put forward by primary six students.

Table 6: Applications submitted for Secondary 1 places in prevocational schools

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Total number of places available	4739	4710	4938	4886	4925
Total number of applications	9093	8071	7793	6538	5862

Source: Secondary School Places Allocation Unit, Education Department.

To further help the admission of students into prevocational schools, the traditional practice of admitting students into secondary 1 of prevocational schools through a process of selection interviews aiming at assessing the applicants' suitability to prevocational education conducted by individual prevocational schools was replaced by allowing prevocational schools to join other schools in the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) central allocation. This started in 1994, and the result was good. For the 1994-96 SSPA, the average fill-up rate through central allocation was 93.6 per cent.

A major review on prevocational and technical education took place in 1997, and a report, *Review of Prevocational and Secondary Technical Education* was published with the following recommendations regarding the role of prevocational education:

We therefore recommend that prevocational schools should continue to offer primarily a technical curriculum. They should offer an alternative form of secondary education to that offered by grammar schools by providing a different curriculum for students with aptitudes or inclinations for practical/technical subjects. However, the existing prevocational school curriculum should be revised in the light of the changing community needs. The new prevocational school curriculum should not be pre-vocational in nature; instead, it should be a broad and balanced one with emphasis on business and technological subjects. It should target at students of all abilities, helping them to progress as appropriate into higher education, vocational training, or employment according to their abilities, aptitudes, interests and aspirations. In recognition that rapid changes in economy and technology will soon render specific skills obsolete, the new

prevocational school curriculum should encompass skills which are generic but fundamental and transferable so that students are equipped with the know-how on how to learn and how to adapt to the changing demands of society (p.16).

The Report thus recommended a number of changes to the present curriculum including:

- stronger emphasis on business and technological subjects, aimed at imparting to students generic but fundamental and transferable skills;
- stronger emphasis on languages;
- a wider application of modern technologies;
- addition of new business and technological subjects;
- the subject of “Business Fundamentals” should be introduced in the junior forms to replace the present “Commercial Studies”;
- in junior forms, the business/technological content should be reduced to 30±4% as against the present practical/technical content of 40±2%;
- in the senior secondary curriculum, the business/technological content should be set at 30-35% as against the present practical/technical content of 30%;
- attachment courses in the institutes under the Vocational Training Council should be arranged for junior-form students; and
- one computer laboratory should be provided to every prevocational school to accommodate the needs of all the new business and technological subjects.

The above recommendations seem to respond to the demands of the local community. Such demands reflect changes of society in recent years. The report noted the structural changes in the Hong Kong economy in recent decades that have led to major changes in

our workforce requirements. In order for industries to become more high-tech and more up-market, they now demand better skilled workers. The global trend of vocational education is a combination of general and vocational education. Acquisition of generic vocational competencies is desirable and beneficial in preparing students for the modern world.

Another change is the change of name. Starting from September 1997, prevocational schools and technical schools had the option to remove the prevocational or technical reference from their names. This is done, hopefully, to improve the image and status of the schools and attract more students, for “prevocational” and “technical” are associated with second rate.

At present, there are 27 prevocational schools in Hong Kong with an enrolment of 22,158 in 1996. These schools offer an alternative form of secondary education suited to students with an aptitude for practical and technical subjects. They provide a solid foundation of general knowledge and a broad introduction to technical and practical education upon which future vocational training may be based. The curriculum in S.1 to S.3 is made up of about 40 per cent technical and practical subjects and 60 per cent general subjects. The technical and practical content is reduced to about 30 per cent in S.4 and S.5. Students completing S.3 in a prevocational school may enter approved apprenticeship schemes or continue their studies to S.5 and take the HKCEE. Qualified candidates can continue their studies in polytechnics or technical institutes. Now 23 out of the 27 prevocational schools provide sixth form classes, recruiting students from prevocational, technical, as well as from grammar schools.

The introduction of technical and business subjects in prevocational schools is designed to meet the needs of students with different inclinations. As compared with the vocational education and training offered by the vocational training institutes under the VTC, prevocational schools in Hong Kong do not aim at providing complete skills and knowledge of a particular trade or occupation.

### **3.2 Problems of vocational education and the implications for secondary business education**

As it has been identified earlier in this chapter that the development of secondary business education in Hong Kong finds its roots in vocational education, so the problems of vocational education will have implications for business education. The following areas are identified as problems of vocational education.

#### **1. Curriculum**

As described in the Report (ITAC, 1970), vocational education was first initiated to provide job training for the under achievers:

Pre-vocational training schemes require being “tailor-made” so as to make the greatest possible impact on the society in which they are introduced and to give the greatest possible help to young persons in finding employment (p.7).

What was “tailor-made” then has become outdated now. Over the years changes have taken place very rapidly but the curricula of technical and prevocational education has remained more or less the same. In addition, shifts in the economy in Hong Kong have resulted in industries moving from Hong Kong. The intention to equip students with the skills to be semi-skilled workers might have worked in the seventies, but now that the economy of Hong Kong has become more prosperous, tertiary production dominates, resulting in a loss of semi-skilled jobs. Moreover, when compulsory nine-year education was achieved in 1979, primary school-leavers no longer found it difficult to get a place in secondary schools, and the majority of students can go beyond Form Three levels. The report went on to say:

Before working out any details of the school programmes we must be clear in our minds what the graduates are likely to do after leaving the schools at the age of 15 or 16. In fact this must depend on the structure of our economy rather than what we might wish them to do. In the major industries such as textiles, garments, plastics and electronics more than 80 per cent of the employees are either unskilled or semi-skilled operatives. It is therefore clear that most of the pre-vocational school-leavers must go into this type of job although the better ones would be well prepared to enter apprenticeship or some other form of training for skilled work.

It can be observed from the curricula of technical schools and prevocational schools as well as the possible routes for the graduates of these schools that the government's intention in establishing vocational education is to provide sufficient manpower for the lowest sectors of the labour market. In the seventies, Hong Kong was undergoing the

process of industrialization, and economic growth largely depended on an adequate supply of labour. In the ED's Annual Summary 1971-72 (p.5), it was noted that the aim of prevocational schools is not to complete skills and knowledge of a particular trade or occupation, but to prepare young people to enter a suitable field of employment, preferably as apprentices in industry.

What is the significance of this? It is felt that since business subjects were initially designed and included in the curricula for technical and prevocational schools, the depth and width of their content is questionable. Since business subjects were not designed for those who wanted to acquire deep knowledge and understanding of the discipline, they were full of facts. This was in order to cater for the less able students in the technical and prevocational schools. This explains why the pass rate of most business subjects was so low in HKCEE as students taking this subject are of lower abilities. Furthermore, the business subjects that the students of prevocational schools study were regarded as being at a low level, and they are acquired at the expense of the more general mathematics, science, and other skills that employers may treasure.

## 2. Perceptions from the general public

Subjects in the curriculum can be divided into high-status and low-status (Goodson, 1987). High-status knowledge, like the arts and the pure sciences, has dominated the school curriculum. Knowledge acquired from these subjects may not be immediately useful, but will become professionally vocational at a later stage.

Vocational education has always had a relatively low status, as the “practical” and the “vocational” have seldom given access to university or to prestigious and professional jobs. It is seen by many employers as a way of screening potential employees for relatively low-skilled jobs (Lloyd, 1994). It is also perceived as an educational programme for dropouts or at least for those who are not academically able to study in an academic programme. In the U.S., vocational education is labelled as a second-class educational alternative. Wenrich and Wenrich (1974) state that:

Many youths have come to see vocational and technical education as second-rate, to be undertaken only after failure in a college preparatory or college transfer program (p.279).

The National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education (1984) in its report, *The Unfinished Agenda*, describes the image of vocational education:

Vocational educators have resigned themselves in some instances to the second-class status that is generally accorded their programs. Whether vocational education programs are viewed as preparation for blue-collar occupations or as dumping grounds for low-ability or disruptive students, they are seldom perceived as prestigious (p.4).

Bottoms (1989) also commented on the low status of vocational education:

Course content is also a reflection of expectations for students. In vocational students' academic courses, expectations are typically low, the instructional climate is unenthusiastic, and the instructional process requires students to be passive learners (p.3).

Feinberg & Horowitz (1990) even stated that vocational education was the consolation prize that went to those not singled out in the nationwide talent contest. This was echoed by Oakes et al. (1992) who stated that low-income students and the disadvantaged minority took more vocational courses.

In the writer's view, the concept of "vocational education" is more like that of "advanced placement" as it functions to identify a certain type of student and to stamp the student with a certain status and identity. It communicates a certain status and projects a certain future, not only to the school authorities and to future employers, but also to the students themselves. A similar sentiment could be shared in Hong Kong where the Government noted:

There is a marked reluctance from the general public to accept technical education as a viable and equal alternative to the "academic" education and it is difficult to convince parents that not all children are suitable for senior secondary education (Hong Kong Government, 1981, 24).

Lee (1991) analysed the aims of prevocational education in Hong Kong and stated that the aims were very narrowly conceived to cater more for social and economic needs than for the educational development of students. He saw it as 'a kind of semi-skilled labour training and dead-ended schooling' (p.145). The recent report, *Review of Prevocational and Secondary Technical Education*, also laments the low image of vocational education in Hong Kong (1997):

Despite emphasis put on practical/technical subjects in the 1970s so as to achieve a balanced development of general, practical/technical and cultural subjects in the school curriculum, we find that parents continue to show reluctance to accept prevocational schools as viable and equal alternatives to secondary grammar schools. Also, many of the practical/technical subjects offered by prevocational schools are criticised to be out-dated (p.14).

The poor image of vocational education has had an impact on the development of secondary business education. When it is associated with the provision of practical subjects for vocational education, business education in secondary schools is also perceived by the public as something inferior.

### 3. Economic growth

Vocational education is offered with the aim of training adequate labour for the development of the economy and it is believed that these graduates will, in turn, receive handsome earnings. However, whether graduates from vocational/technical

education will receive higher earnings is still debatable. While there are studies indicating positive relationships between earnings advantages and vocational/technical education (Tannen, 1983; Fredland & Little, 1980) there are other findings showing no definite positive relationship between the two (Taussing, 1968; Grasso & Shea, 1979).

In Hong Kong, Chung's study (1986) on the contribution of vocational and technical education to the economic growth in Hong Kong has observed the following:

- not all workers who go through a specific technical education found employment in the field corresponding to their original training,
- most workers in each of the three major manufacturing industries (mechanical, electrical and electronic, and textile and garment) had general education rather than vocational/technical education,
- a number of workers who are placed in the category of general education have completed junior or senior secondary general education, have got a job in the industry, and have then gone on to part-time-in-service training in technical institutes.

Based on the above observations, Chung concludes that technical education at the secondary-school level has not played an important part in the advancement of economic growth in Hong Kong (p.36).

Furthermore, the structural changes in Hong Kong's economy require fewer graduates of vocational education. Manufacturing was Hong Kong's largest employer and the

most important economic sector from the 1950s to 1980. More recently, the service sector employment has grown tremendously in Hong Kong, from 54 per cent of Hong Kong's work force in 1985 to 72 per cent in 1995 (Hong Kong Annual Report, 1997). Moreover, many merchants made use of China's open door policy to shift labour-intensive, low value-added and low-skilled operations into China. These changes resulted in a change in our workforce requirements. Industries now demand workers with better skills, like language proficiency, critical thinking and computer literacy, things that can be associated with the studying of academic, not vocational, subjects.

As business education is treated as a part of vocational, not academic, subjects, its development has met many hindrances. If it continues to serve as a consolation prize for secondary students who do not have the results to go for further studies, then its growth will be limited. This can be changed, for now the change in the economy in Hong Kong can be favourable to the development of business education in secondary schools. However, much effort has to be made to upgrade the curriculum of secondary business education, making it a competitive choice for students who are interested in pursuing a career in business.

#### 4. The importance of being qualified

In Hong Kong, "qualifications" mean a ladder to wealth. This is reflected by some old Chinese sayings like, 'Everything is inferior to studying' and 'There is an elegant mansion and a beautiful wife in books'. Being qualified is an important path to success

is a belief firmly rooted in the minds of the Chinese. Once qualified, their social status as well as financial condition will improve, for their qualification can guarantee them well-paid jobs. Qualifications have always been required for the professions. As society advances, there is a rapid rise in the number of jobs that cannot be performed without certain knowledge or qualifications. The time when experience carried enough weight even without proper qualifications is gone; today you need certain qualifications to meet job entry requirements.

This is why parents fight for places for their children in kindergartens for it is the path to success. Children from a prestigious kindergarten can move up to a good primary school, a secondary school, and university, then a well-paid job. Cheung (1993) noted that academic results are a prime factor in measuring the good reputation of a school. That is the problem of vocational education as schools providing it will be regarded as low status, and graduates of these schools are not "qualified" to further their studies or find decent jobs with high salaries.

### **3.3 The development of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools**

The further we look back, the further it is possible to see forward. (Winston Churchill)

Literature on the development of business education has been sparse (Williams & Yeomans, 1994). The situation is the same here in Hong Kong. This section provides a brief sketch of the rationale for the introduction of, and nature of, business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong. To understand why and how business education came into being, the researcher employs two approaches.

First, the researcher interviewed the persons involved. They were policy makers in the development of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools in the seventies. The second source of data is various documents discussing the possibility of the implementation of business education in secondary schools.

#### 1. Societal background

It is an undeniable fact that society and culture greatly influence the formation of the curriculum. No matter how perfect the curriculum could be, when it is written after deep and careful consideration and has a strong philosophical background, it still needs to be in context. A curriculum without the context of society is no curriculum at all. The contents of the curriculum have to reflect the needs of society. Before it can lead society to change, the curriculum has to first fit into society.

The Chinese tradition does not put much emphasis on business education. There are four types of people in different professions, as the old Chinese saying goes: scholars, farmers, industrialists, and finally, businessmen. The Chinese culture is very much influenced by Confucianism which emphasises the study of knowledge, and that is why scholars are the most prestigious and respected among different types of professions whereas businessmen

will be associated with words like cunning, greedy, and unethical. Moreover, the society in Hong Kong in the past was dominated by industrialists, and the provision of unskilled labour to satisfy the manufacturing sector was enough to keep the economy running. People fought for survival; getting rich was beyond their imagination. The time was not ripe for business education.

Then in the early sixties, business activities in Hong Kong started to boom and the stock market in the seventies attracted people's interest towards business activities. Furthermore, the rapid economic development in Hong Kong meant that an increasing variety of workers was needed. People began to pay attention to business education.

In fact, many business subjects have existed in the secondary school curriculum since 1953 when the Ho Tung Technical Schools for Girls was established to offer business education for girls. It was a tradition at that time for boys to do metal work and girls to study typewriting and shorthand.

## 2. Initiation

The possibility of offering proper business subjects in the secondary curriculum was deliberated in the early seventies. At the third meeting of the Commercial Subjects Subject Committee (Secondary) in 1973, it was stated that there could be a wide range of business subjects offered but that not all would be studied by students in secondary school. Those subjects taught in secondary schools preparing for the HKCEE were Principles of Accounts, Typewriting and Shorthand. As these subjects required good standards in English, the suggested syllabuses were primarily prepared for S.3 and

upwards; therefore, they were not suitable for the lower forms of S.1 and S.2. (Shorthand is not even taught in S.3.) However, for those students who may terminate their studies at the end of the third year, some elementary aspects of business subjects might also be taught in S.2 and S.3 as in secondary modern schools and prevocational schools.

The objectives of studying commercial subjects, as expressed by the subject committee, were to provide students with:

- some basic knowledge of the importance of earning and living in our world of today;
- an understanding of the elementary knowledge of commerce;
- training to be office assistants or business machine operators;
- a basis for further studies;
- some understanding of international affairs in relation to finance; and
- the ability to employ commercial skill beneficial to the student's community, his work and his home, thus increasing his social usefulness (Subject Committee, 1973).

Though the objectives of secondary business education were described in a manner covering many aspects suitable to students of different levels, it was regarded by the general public as a means to provide knowledge and skills for students who in the future will be engaged in low-level jobs such as office assistants and business machine operators.

Then as business began to take on more importance in the economy of Hong Kong in the seventies, educators and curriculum developers started to explore the possibilities of changing the secondary curriculum, and the inclusion of business education into the general curriculum was looked into. First, a technical inspectorate post was set up in 1974 to oversee matters dealing with technical education, including business education. Furthermore, the Deputy Director in Technical Education from 1973-1978, Andrew Kingwell, was keen on promoting business education, and officials in the ED explored different means to upgrade business education in Hong Kong secondary schools.

In 1974, Mr Halliwell wrote to the ED expressing his views on secondary business education in Hong Kong. He was the principal of King's College, a very prestigious government school in Hong Kong, and was later transferred by the government to Kowloon Technical School (KTS). During his stay at KTS, his concern was to raise the school to the same level as King's College, and it was obvious that the first priority was the introduction of academic subjects into the school curriculum. To this end he introduced biology and built the necessary laboratories. Later he turned his attention to the Technical Subjects and was largely instrumental in the updating of and giving academic contents to the existing subjects. It was only towards the end of his stay as principal of KTS that he tried to focus on improving the quality and image of the business subjects offered. These had originally been introduced, back in the days of the secondary modern experiment for girls, as an alternative to boys doing metalwork and woodwork. Then typewriting and bookkeeping were carried over when the Secondary Modern schools became Technical Schools. Halliwell thought that the existing syllabuses of business subjects for secondary schools were based on low-level jobs, such as typewriting and bookkeeping. He was convinced that the only solution to the problem of business subjects being of low status and unpopular among parents and students was to drop typewriting at

an early stage and to concentrate on proper business subjects which have some job potential and could form the base for higher stage education.

He wrote the following to the Commercial Subjects Subject Committee in a memo hoping to push through his ideas:

The position is that unless I can guarantee to my students some “better” Commercial Examination Subjects in the future I shall be unable to form a new Commercial Class in September 1974 and as a result Commercial Studies in this school will gradually cease.

Mr Halliwell was then invited to a Commercial Subjects Subject Committee meeting on 21st July, 1975. He suggested in the meeting that some higher-level commercial subjects with recognition in higher education should be introduced. In reply, the Chairman assured him that the suggested syllabus of Commerce would be modified after receiving comments from the Principal Curriculum Planning Officer (Secondary) and thanked him for his opinions. It was further suggested that Commercial Arithmetic, Office Practice and Commercial Correspondence might be offered as individual subjects.

### 3. Implementation

In order to find out whether it was feasible to introduce the subject of Commerce, a survey was carried out by the ED, and it was found that many principals welcomed the introduction of this subject in their school because it was regarded as practical and

useful for many who may not opt for further studies. The following points are quoted from the report (ED, 1976):

- Due to the recent development of raising the school leaving age in Hong Kong, there is a need to expand secondary education to make it possible for more students to continue their education to a later and higher stage. In order to cater for this larger ability range, it is educationally sound for schools to develop a larger variety of subjects that are not traditionally run in schools.
- The establishment of some commercial subjects in their schools commensurate with the recommendation of the White Paper that some practical subjects should exist in the secondary school curriculum.
- As the population of Forms 4 & 5 students will continue to grow considerably in the years to come, a number of students will inevitably have to face the reality of disappointment for entry into Sixth Form courses. Some practical subjects, such as commercial subjects, should offer them an additional route for further studies and a foothold for employment, if found necessary.

With the support from school principals, Commerce was then offered in the HKCEE in 1978. It can be noted from the *Teaching Syllabuses of Commercial Subjects for Secondary Schools* drafted by the CDC (1976) that this subject is offered not to a particular group of students who may not have the marks to further their studies, but to all students interested in business education. As stated in the syllabus:

The field of business is so wide that it could include the work of the professional man, the administrator, the executive, the statistician, the organization and method

specialist, the clerk, the secretary, the typist, the office machine operator and many more who engage in different occupations in different industries. The one common link which runs through all business education is the training of boys and girls, who directly or indirectly, earn their living by the purchase and sales of goods and services. The basic aim of business education then was the provision of fundamental business knowledge to students who would become producers and consumers in the future.

As stated in the syllabus, there was an urgent need to raise the level of business efficiency in the industry and a demand for a higher standard of business education. The provision of business education should not be restricted to prevocational and technical schools for every school should offer students a broad knowledge from which to develop. Thus, the curriculum must be able to provide a balanced general education to students, and the introduction of business education supplements what students need to know for the future development of Hong Kong.

Later, Principles of Accounts and Commerce were introduced in the Hong Kong High Level Examination (HKHLE) and Business Studies and Principle of Accounts in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination. These decisions were based on the following observations noted in a Commercial Subjects Committee meeting on 12 December, 1979:

- Many secondary school students study Accounts in some evening private institutions. This indicates there is a definite demand for the subject. Members who are secondary school teachers expressed the view that the students are hopeful to have a continuation subject for Principles of Accounts in the Higher Level Examination. This is evidenced by a number of secondary school principals writing to the Examination

Authority requesting for the establishment of the subject in the High Level Examination.

- The two subjects in the High Level Examination will encourage students to develop aptitude in the field of Business Studies.
- Knowledge in Principles of Accounts/Commerce should serve as a good background for entry into the Business Administration Courses of all the institutions of higher learning.
- Judging from the rapid increase in the number of students taking the LCCL Accounts Examinations, members considered that it was appropriate for Hong Kong to establish its own examinations in this field in the two universities.
- One of the recommendations of the White Paper (Hong Kong Government, 1974) was to broaden the curriculum of the sixth form. The establishment of the two subjects in the Higher Level Examination should meet the requirements of the White Paper.

At the same meeting, all the members were in favour of the recommendation of a continuation subject for Commerce in the Advanced Level Examination. The following comments were made:

- "Commerce" is one of the major subjects in most commercial streams in secondary schools. The introduction of a continuation subject for Commerce in the A-Level examination should benefit students of these streams tremendously as it will provide an extra possible route leading to University courses.

- The establishment of this subject in Form 6 & 7 should serve as an ideal combination with Principles of Accounts and other humanity subjects for students aiming to enter the Faculty of Social Sciences in Hong Kong University.
- As there is a definite practical element in Commerce, the study of the subject in Forms 6 & 7 should provide a viable avenue for both higher educational colleges and employment.

#### 4. Continuation

With the implementation of business subjects in secondary schools in the late seventies, the role of business education in the secondary curriculum began to take shape and received more support from schools and curriculum developers. In a statement paper, *Commercial Subjects in Secondary Schools*, some of the views expressed by the advisory inspectorate in the Commercial Subjects Section of the ED is as follows (Education Department, 1980):

It is beyond doubt that commercial subjects are practical subjects. In view of their highly practical nature, they had often excited the criticism that they had little to contribute to general education. With the improvement in the quality of teachers and the organization of schools, there is a growing awareness that these subjects are capable of contributing to education.

Commerce has a great deal to contribute to sound general education and can be justified as a subject for everyone since it bears on the life of everyone at all times and at many points.

In a rapidly changing and progressive society of today, the curriculum of our secondary school should not be directed to one channel only - higher education colleges, of which only a small percentage of students could attain access. A well-balanced curriculum, with the right combination of practical/technical and academic contents would meet both the requirements of society and the needs of the students. The teaching of commercial subjects helps to form standards that become habitual, and therefore is capable of developing qualities that can be applied in a wider field. In these days, commercial subjects are usually taught by well qualified teachers. These subjects are now taught with an eye to their educational possibilities and teachers always ensure that each of these makes its special contribution to the development of the students' powers of thought, judgement and expression.

Business education first started as part of the vocational education to be taken by students of lower ability to prepare them for occupations with lower status. Its role has clearly changed. The Commercial Subjects Committee in 1980 stated that the development of business education is not intended solely to prepare less able students with skills for low-wage jobs. Business education exists as a complement to sound education and as an instrument to raise the level of business efficiency in the industry.

Consistent with the views earlier expressed by the Commercial Subjects Committee, Business Studies was introduced into the A-Level curriculum and was first examined in 1981. Now the popularity of business subjects in secondary schools is visible. In HKCEE, Commerce and Principle of Accounts are gaining popularity. When Commerce was first examined as a CE subject in 1978, there were only 693 candidates (Examinations Authority, 1979). The number has increased by a factor of more than twenty in less than

two decades, growing to 14,544 in 1997. Similarly, there were 2,288 candidates in 1978 taking the CE Principle of Accounts examination. The number was increased to 23,548 in 1997 (Examinations Authority, 1997). A similar situation arose at A-Level. There were 41 candidates in Business Studies when it was first examined in 1981. This number grew to 1,732 in 1997. For A-Level Principles of Accounts, the number of candidates was 506 in 1981 and 3,214 in 1997.

From the above figures, it is noted that business education has become popular in Hong Kong secondary schools.

### **3.4 The development of secondary business education in other countries**

Having described the development of secondary business education in Hong Kong; this chapter goes on to look at the development of secondary school business education in other selected countries. The development of secondary business education in both Asian and Western countries will be investigated to find out whether the situation is similar to or different from that in Hong Kong.

#### **1. Asian countries**

The objectives of business education are in general quite similar in different countries, focussing on its dual role: education for business and education about business.

Business education first started by equipping students with knowledge and skills for entry-level jobs. As time went on, business education also aimed to provide opportunities for students to further their studies at higher level courses and become business professionals. At a meeting to discuss the future development of business education in Asian countries, the objectives of business education are described as follows (APEID, 1982, p.45, 46):

- To provide essential information relating to business.
- To develop the students' ability to select goods and services wisely.
- To enable the students to understand the economic system, policies and business environment of the respective country.
- To develop the personality of students for effective human relations in society and in business.
- To develop skills for gainful employment in the business field.
- To develop introductory courses for study at higher level courses.
- To promote understanding of national hopes and aspirations, its identity and culture.

While the above represents what most Asian countries will do for the development of business education in the future, the following are brief descriptions of secondary business education in a few selected Asian countries.

a. China

The relationship between education and society is strong. In the case of China, where Marxism dominates, the major role of education is to supply a given number of individuals with sufficient training to maintain or increase production. That is, schools are there to provide the necessary mental, physical, and ideological training necessary for the maintenance of the economic status quo. Because of the ideology of Marxism, the kind of business education known to the West did not in the past exist in China, but subjects with similar contents were found in vocational education. Indeed vocational education has a long history in China; the first vocational school was built in 1866. By the early 1960s, thousands of vocational schools were set up (Jin, 1993). Vocational schools remained popular for quite a long period of time. The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee held in 1978 set the stage for the reform of the Chinese economy. It also pronounced the role of education to be that of promoting the Four Modernizations; thus vocational education was given much attention. In urban schools, the academic-oriented school curricula give students little preparation for specific working skills, with the result that they have to be retrained over several years to become qualified workers. Meanwhile, the prosperous economy requires a great number of skilled workers, and vocational education does fulfill its role of training vast numbers of workers for business organizations and factories in China (Unesco, 1990).

The education reform in 1985, outlined in the Central Committee's decision on the Reform of China's Educational Structure, identified vocational education as the

weakest link in China's education. It then called for the restructuring of secondary education with more emphasis on vocational and technical education (Reform, 1985):

In the course of such reforms, elements of vocational-technical education should gradually be incorporated into the general secondary curricula, with optional courses and certification at the end of the course.

A proportion of upper secondary schools is to be transformed into vocational upper secondary schools, agricultural secondary schools and vocational-technical schools. Others should simply offer vocational classes or agricultural classes as a part of a combination of general and vocational-technical education at the upper secondary school level.

Though the relative status of vocational education is low in China, students still flock to enrol in vocational schools for the following reasons. First, not every student aims to go on to university. Furthermore, the economic cost of attending vocational school is low, for the studying period is comparatively short but the return is high, for a job is more or less guaranteed upon graduation.

China has set a goal that by the year 2000, there will be as many vocational schools as ordinary schools, enrolling half of the student population. Though the support from the government has been strong, vocational education does have its problems in China. First, vocational schools were the last hope for students pursuing senior secondary schooling. They were considered to offer a "second-class" education for the least

qualified students. Furthermore, the drop out rate was high. Adding to the problem is the lack of qualified teachers. Many teachers have received just three to six months' training before they go to teach vocational courses. Some courses that are badly needed in the local areas cannot be offered because there are no qualified teachers. As stated in Henze (1993):

According to figures officially released in 1985, about 87.1% of full-time teaching staff at lower secondary level vocational schools had an educational level of secondary specialized school graduates or below. For those teaching at upper secondary level schools the rate was 40.8%. Similar signs of underqualification are well known for all types of vocational schools... As a result, the majority of teachers in vocational specialized schools will be unqualified staff, leaving little hope for students to receive adequate training. In addition there is considerable instability/mobility among teaching staff at vocational schools. Due to an unsatisfactory salary structure, a large number of teachers are likely to leave their teaching job for some kind of employment in industry and commerce, thus creating a permanent lack of qualified manpower in the schools (p.124).

The employment system has contributed additional resistance to vocational education. Lin commented (1993):

Since the national Entrance examination was restored in 1977, the employment system has rewarded people with higher education handsomely: They have high social status, comparatively stable and high salaries, secure jobs and numerous

opportunities for promotion, and chances to go abroad. This reinforces the idea already in people's minds that it is noble to pass the exam and become a scientist, a professor, or an engineer, while it is of low status to fail the exam and become a farmer or a skilled worker earning a living by doing manual labour (p.62).

At present, business education is not officially offered in the secondary curriculum, but courses like Accounting and Business Basics are very popular and students will pay high tuition fees to private institutions offering these (Cheung, 1997). In Shenzhen, a place close to Hong Kong and a Special Economic Zone and where many foreign investors have ploughed in money, a comprehensive reform of secondary education has occurred. More vocational-technical courses have been introduced and demonstration centres have been established to provide research and development. There are linkages between schools and employers to provide hands-on instruction and facilitate the transition from school to work. Adults are also trained in subjects like finance, information science and computers by instructors from Hong Kong. This is a rudimentary form of business education.

#### b. Japan

In Japan, a formal educational system (a 6-3-3-4 system) was established with compulsory education at elementary and lower secondary school for all children between the ages of 6 and 15. The upper secondary school provides children who have completed compulsory education with generalized upper secondary education. The courses in upper secondary school include general educational courses and specialized courses (agricultural, industrial, commercial, fishery, home economics, nursing, science-mathematics, English language and others). The following table shows the

percentage distribution of upper secondary school students by the types of course, as of May 1996.

Table 7: Percentage distribution of upper secondary school students by types of course as of May 1996

Types of Course	Percentage distribution of upper secondary students
General	74.0
Agricultural	2.8
Engineering	8.9
Commercial	9.3
Fishery	0.3
Home economics	1.9
Nursing	0.5
Integrated course	0.3
Others	2.0

Source: Monbusho, 1997

Students taking commercial courses can study business subjects like accounting, business economics, and international business (Monbusho, 1997). Though there are some good business secondary schools, and in theory students in the business stream can still get into university, the business curriculum in secondary schools holds no particular interest or future for most of the students. Many see it as blocking the way

of preparing for higher education. Rohlen (1983) noted that Yama Commercial High School in Kobe, for example, is a typical school that draws its students only from the lower third of Kobe's graduating ninth graders; and 80 percent of Yama's students say that given a choice they would choose an academic high school. This confirms what the Japanese already expect: schools like these are known to collect the less able and the more troubled. It was even proposed that vocational schools should be closed. In fact, vocational schools had their glory days at a time when most of its graduates could find well-paid jobs. In 1947, vocational subjects are part of the compulsory curriculum for junior secondary students. But when economy prospers, society demands graduates with better skills and knowledge. Moreover, as academic schools begin to grow, the general quality of vocational school graduates has dropped significantly, together with their reputation. As a consequence, the number of students studying secondary business education is decreasing (Table 8).

Table 8: Trends in student composition by type of course over the last 40 years

Year	General courses	Vocational courses	Other specialised courses
1955	59.8	40.1	0.1
1965	59.5	40.3	0.2
1975	63.0	36.3	0.7
1985	72.1	27.1	0.8
1994	74.2	24.1	1.7

Source: Monbusho, 1995.

### c. India

In India, business education started with the limited objective of providing British traders with clerical and accounting personnel from the local resources. The first commerce school was established in Madras in 1886. According to the National Policy of Education (1968), a 10+2 pattern of education has been introduced. Previously, it took eleven years to finish higher secondary education. Now, the ten-year school curriculum consists of general education providing for a core curriculum. In this stage, a student must take three business subjects. Students at the completion of class eight can take vocational courses and special courses in business and commercial education at Industrial Training Institutes. The higher secondary (+2) provides a specialized curriculum where business and commercial education has been accepted as one of the major areas of specialization in both the academic and vocational streams.

After finishing higher secondary education, students can take business education in polytechnics, colleges, and universities and in other professional institutions. As time changes, India has become more developed and the demand for graduates with some knowledge of business has increased. In 1986, the National Policy on Education gives priority to vocationalization of education at the secondary stage. About 150 vocational courses have been introduced in six major areas. Business and commerce is among one of them. Business education has recently received more attention as the University Grants Commission now gives more financial assistance to improving business education in colleges and universities.

#### d. Indonesia

In Indonesia, the education system is administered by the heads of a number of departments: the Department of Education, the Department of Higher Education and Science, and the Department of Sports. Within the Department of Education, the Office of Vocational Education looks after technical, business, and other vocational education.

Indonesia applies the 6-3-3 system up to the secondary education level. Six main tracks are offered at the senior secondary school level: Academic Senior Secondary, Technical Senior Secondary, Commercial/Business Senior Secondary, Home Economics Senior Secondary, Teacher Training senior secondary, and Sport Teacher training. In general, business education is offered at a limited number of secondary schools as a part of general education with the objective to prepare individuals for the business environment. The majority of schools, however, are academically oriented and offer no business subjects, with the exception of bookkeeping offered to those taking the cultural section in senior high school. In 1986, for example, around two-thirds of the students were enrolled in the academic track while the business track attracted only 14.5 per cent of the students (Rangukamen Statistik Persekolahan, 1987). However, there are vocational secondary schools offering business courses. Moreover, the three-year junior commercial high schools prepare students for setting up businesses on a modern basis. After secondary schools, students can enter institutions like colleges, polytechnics, academies, and universities to receive tertiary education.

The growth of business education was stimulated by a survey executed in 1974 by the World Bank in which it was noted that in order to improve business and commerce in the country, middle-level skilled workers in the area of business and commerce were badly needed. The School of Business and Commerce, which mainly trains this type of middle-level skilled workers, was established to provide adequate manpower of this kind. As the economy prospers in recent years, together with the return of foreign investors, the demand for graduates with business skills and knowledge is high (Habir, 1991). The government now continues to grant support to programmes for in-service and pre-service education in business subjects. The integration of and more effective business educational programmes are called for.

e. Malaysia

The present structure of the Malaysian educational system consists of six years of primary education, then a three-year lower secondary school, a two-year upper secondary school and a two-year sixth form. Secondary schools in Malaysia offer a comprehensive education programme. There are four types of secondary schools, the academic schools, the national religious schools, the technical schools, and the vocational schools. The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects from the arts and sciences, as well as vocational and technical subjects that provide a practical approach to learning. Following the Lower Secondary Assessment examination at year three, students move into more specialised fields of study at the upper secondary level for two years, based on their choice and aptitude. Performance in different subjects would be assessed to select the students for post-comprehensive schools with different curricula – academic, technical, agricultural, commercial, or home science (Wong &

Ee, 1971). At the upper secondary level, several technical and vocational schools have been set up to provide technically-biased academic education and pre-employment skills (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 1997).

Business education has been one of the major areas within the education system in Malaysia. It began as part of the curriculum within the technical and vocational education (Report, 1969). It is now available to the students from lower secondary right through the upper secondary academic schools, upper secondary vocational schools, post secondary schools, polytechnics, to the universities.

At the lower secondary level the business curriculum includes pre-vocational and practical subjects like Commercial Studies, which consists of Elements of Commerce and Elementary Book-keeping. Two business subjects, Principles of Accounts and Commerce, are available to the students at the upper secondary level in academic schools. In the vocational schools, students who take commerce courses study Typewriting, Shorthand/Book-keeping, Commercial English, Commercial Practice, and Commercial Arithmetic.

## 2. Western countries

Taking its roots from vocational education, secondary business education has been developing very quickly in the West, where business subjects are increasingly being offered as part of general education in quite a large number of countries. This section

looks at the development of secondary business education in two selected western countries.

a. United States of America

Business education was first introduced when James Morton was hired in 1635 to teach children to cast accounts, but the primary method of learning the practical applications of business at that time was through the apprenticeship systems; all the apprentices were boys. Then in 1827, Benjamin Franklin Foster founded the first of the independent commercial schools where business subjects like book-keeping were offered in the curriculum. Private schools and commercial colleges expanded in response to a growing demand for office workers, and enrolment grew from 6,460 in 1871 to 91,459 in 1900 (Weiss, 1978). This growth was a response to the changes in the economy whereby clerical workers were badly needed. Schools, whether private or public, had to adapt their curriculum to meet workplace needs. By 1900, good courses in commercial education were offered in most public high schools. At first, commercial courses were provided for those students who could not qualify for the regular classical courses. Later on, educators realised that students should be prepared for the business world and that better organisation was needed to prepare teachers and students for the business world and the public schools (Bartholome, 1997, pp.8-9). After the First World War, countries started to rebuild their nations and the development of business education was seen as important. In 1926, Elwood P. Cubberley, Dean of the School of Education at Stanford University, said:

‘In the future competition will be keener than ever before. The European continent, with the possible exception of Russia, has today a different idea as to what war means. They realize that war does not pay. Far keener competition than ever before is ahead. Commercial preparation is the watchword’ (Business Education – A Retrospection, p.9, quoted in Bartholome, 1997).

The growth of business education was also a result of the increase in female office workers. They learnt their office skills in schools, and schools thus played an important role in facilitating women’s presence in offices. Business courses were popular among women and business was only second to teaching as the preference for most young women. Its success can best be summarized by the following words of Powers (1992):

Students who were trained for office work could look forward to the possibility of moving up the job ladder, even as the ladder got longer. Social mobility was possible by virtue of exposure to eligible men. Employers benefited from the training offered by public schools. Administrators appreciated the high enrollments in their commercial classes and parents who could afford to keep their daughters in school were pleased with a vocational course that provided tangible benefits. Thus, regardless of the female ghetto they helped to create, commercial programs were the most successful vocational education programs to emerge from that era and they were the product of client preferences rather than instrumentality on the part of vocational educators (p.120).

Following the Sputnik I incident, Americans were afraid that their leadership in business and industry would be weakened. Thus it was proposed that business education should consist of both general education and vocational preparation for store and office occupations. Every American should be exposed to business education. A proposal was made for teaching business-economic subjects to all students in all secondary schools with the following proclamation (Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education, 1961):

In our desire to meet the needs of the Space Age and to be able to combat military aggression, we have stressed the importance of having a large body of trained scientists and mathematicians to carry on research with the result that some of our schools have overlooked the equally important task of having a large body of trained men and women of high talent to carry on the business and industrial administration of our economy. This, we believe, can lead to major problems for business and industry and thus weaken our power and leadership as a nation.

We believe it is imperative that every American should have as a part of his general education, regardless of his personal or professional goal, at least a one-year course at the secondary school level that will provide the learner with an opportunity to become competent to deal with everyday business-economic issues and problems (p.1).

Business education was included as a vocational area in the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and was primarily governed by the vocational divisions of state departments.

Business education curriculum in the sixties addressed a two-fold purpose: vocational education preparing students for entry-level positions in industry and general education providing basic business knowledge to students. Many students took some business subjects as part of a general curriculum.

Then in the seventies and eighties, Americans found that their high-school students were being outperformed by students of the same level in other countries, and so the *Nation at Risk* report in 1983 recommended the return to the new basics with the strengthening of academic subjects at secondary level. As a consequence, business education, considered to be a practical subject, was negatively affected. Nevertheless, it is still popular, and, according to a study by the National Centre for Educational Statistics, (cited in Ober, 1989), business courses are offered in 99 per cent of the nation's secondary schools. Its popularity continues in the nineties.

#### b. United Kingdom

When business education first started in the U.K., subjects like Accounts, Commerce, Typewriting and Office Practice were only available as options for boys who did not do well academically (in the case of Accounts and Commerce) and girls who were weak academically (in the case of Typewriting and Office Practice).

During the 1980s, the labour market in the U.K. was growing, and programmes like Technical and Vocational Initiative (TVEI) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) were designed to respond to the calls for changes in education

and training. The TVEI enhanced the provision of technical and vocational subjects and its emphasis on process and skill-based approaches to learning fitted in well with the nature of business education. Thus, the relationship between business education and vocational education was tightened. The problem then is that this association makes it difficult for secondary business education to be highly valued.

The relatively low status of business subjects of course does not satisfy the curriculum developers within business education. They want to see business subjects enjoy a more prominent place in the curriculum, and the development of Business Studies has contributed much to this aim. For a long time, business education was seen as a collection of isolated subjects, and so A-Level Business Studies was introduced and first examined by the Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate in 1969 to remedy this defect.

By 1975, A-Level Business Studies was being taught in about fifty schools in England and Wales. Its popularity increased with the introduction of the AEB Syllabus in 1976. Further syllabuses were developed, and Examination Boards introduced the subject at Ordinary Level in 1978. Schools teaching these syllabuses received curriculum support from the CBSP.

Since then more and more students have chosen to take Business Studies while other skills-based business subjects like Typewriting and Office Studies have continued to lose their appeal, declining from a combined total of over 27,000 entries in 1988 to

fewer than 5,000 in 1992. Students of below average academic ability frequently choose these subjects while Business Studies recruit a more academic intake.

Business studies was further developed and are becoming more and more popular, attracting boys as well as girls and the higher as well as lower ability students. Her Majesty Inspectorate called it a “minor revolution” (HMI, 1992, p.29) and the following table shows how popular it has become.

Table 9: Number of candidates sitting A-level Business Studies examinations 1980-97

Year	1980	1985	1990	1993	1995	1997
Student number	1227	3460	12336	22678	26980	31052

Source: Hurd, Coates & Anderton, 1998

The reasons why Business Studies are becoming more and more popular, according to Dyer (1991), are:

- The subject is now a major one in further education institutions, which increasingly attracts the attention and interest of young people. It is no longer the poor relation of A-Level provision.

- It integrates qualitative and quantitative understanding, operating within a problem-solving and decision-making approach. This can be applied to other studies; mature skills may be developed in other contexts and greatly assist the transfer of skills matured in specific disciplines into a wider use.
- It has shown itself to be particularly adaptable to the student-centred, coursework and modular approaches.
- It greatly increases the sense of a school or college as part of the community and is rich in opportunities to work within the community as an integral part of the course of study (p.90).

The growth of business education has been remarkable and the following observations can be made:

- Between 1990 and 1995, the number of students entered for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in Business Studies has more than doubled to almost 136,000.
- Business Studies is the fastest growing General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-Level subject; between 1990 and 1995 the number of entries has more than doubled.
- Business is the most popular General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) choice among students: in 1995 the number of candidates entered for the GNVQ in business accounted for nearly half the total.(Business Education and Economics, an Inspection review 1993-1995, p.2)

While the subject Business Studies is gaining in popularity, the other business subjects also attract students. There has been a significant growth in the number of students taking courses in business education, so that business is now a major subject area in the overwhelming majority of schools. Williams & Yeomans (1994) observed that since adopting the new business curriculum, secondary business education has enjoyed better status.

### **3.5 Comparing the development of business education**

Looking at the development of secondary business education in other countries and making a comparison with that in Hong Kong, the writer observes the following common issues:

#### **1. The relationship between business education and vocational training**

A commonality across many countries is the association of business education with vocational education. In many countries, business education first started as part of vocational education to provide enough workforce for the economic development of society. A diligent worker equipped with basic skills is what employers are looking for. Business education was initially provided for only a very small proportion of students in periods prior to rapid economic growth. But when countries become more prosperous, the needs of employers change and so does the demand for quality

business education. But no matter how business education is developed, a part of it is still closely linked to vocational education, where simple technical skills and knowledge are taught to students.

## 2. Relatively low status of business education

Because of its close association with vocational education, which is of low status, the poor image of business education has been noted. Sweeting & Morris (1998), comparing the education of Asian countries, commented on the development of vocational/technical education:

Vocational/technical education continued to be plagued by its perennial problem of being seen to be a second-best alternative by pupils and parents, possibly influenced by a Confucian disdain for the non-scholastic (p.218).

In Western countries, the same problem exists. Though curriculum developers try hard to elevate the image of secondary business education, its connection with vocational education has a downgrading effect on the status of business education. As business education is linked with vocational education, it is not seen to provide the same opportunities as a more academically oriented curriculum, but rather, as a consolation prize for those who are not able to study further. These students provide a good supply of workers to fit in jobs requiring only low-level skills and knowledge.

### 3. Growing popularity of business education

Secondary business education was not considered important in many countries in the past. An important factor in the development of business education has been the rising proportion of the total economic activity devoted to the provision of services. As there is a change in the economy, the rapid expansion of the jobs available in business-related fields has been rapid, and students are motivated to take business education. It is observed that competition for a place in the Faculty of Business Administration in the universities has been strong. As business education tends to become more popular, the need to restructure the secondary business curriculum is called for.

As society prospers, the urgent call for a change in business education is heard. As its mission of preparing enough workers for the economy is completed, business educators and curriculum developers want to see an elevation in the quality of business education provided at the secondary level. As seen in later sections, the role of secondary business education is redefined. Overall planning of the secondary business curriculum is called for, including restructuring the nature of the secondary business curriculum.

After examining the brief development of business education in other countries and making a brief comparison with that in Hong Kong, the next chapter is a literature review concentrating on the issues and concerns of developing business education in secondary schools.

## **Chapter 4: Literature Review - Business Education in Hong Kong**

### **Secondary Schools: Issues and Concerns**

The previous chapter covered the development of business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong within an international context. As in the case of other countries, business education in the Hong Kong secondary curriculum first originated as part of vocational education. In typical grammar and technical schools in Hong Kong, students are “streamed” at S.4 into arts, science, or business classes. In many prevocational schools, students are streamed at S.1 into technical and business classes. Students cannot transfer from the technical stream to the business stream or vice versa after S.3. Students in the business stream need to take the common core subjects plus Typewriting, Commerce, Principles of Accounts and Art & Design. In Hong Kong, it is usually the case that the more able students will take Science whereas the less able will take Arts. The business stream is usually reserved for those with the worst academic results.

In this chapter the writer conducts a literature review on the issues and concerns of business education in the secondary curriculum in the context of the changes in Hong Kong as well as of the changes in the world around. The issues and concerns also form the base of information determining the future direction of secondary business education in Hong Kong, as they will be used as references to the questionnaires distributed to principals, teachers, and students.

#### 4.1 Issues and concerns in business education

A number of issues and concerns regarding secondary business education are pertinent. Some studies have evaluated the present situation while others focus on the future. The following are a few examples:

Bujea (1987) did a literature review of business education of authors from Canada, the U.K. and the U.S. After a thorough review, some of her recommendations are as follows:

- The course title “Typewriting” as such should be removed from the curriculum and replaced by “Keyboarding” and “Word Processing”.
- Shorthand should be gradually de-emphasized with a close watch being kept on the demands of business.
- Work experience should be built into the curriculum for all students at several points in their formal schooling.
- Business people should be invited to act in an advisory capacity on curriculum committees.
- The curriculum should be flexible and frequently evaluated and updated.
- Where necessary, obsolete business subjects should be removed from the programme or revised to suit the requirements of present day business.
- An in-service work experience programme should be provided to business teachers to update their skills and knowledge of present-day business practices.

- Business educators should have an in-service one-semester work experience, probably occurring once every five years.
- Business teachers should provide “hands-on” experience for their students wherever it is appropriate and in all subject areas.
- Methodologies should be revised and changed to suit the new content of business studies.

In the nineties, a few studies were carried out regarding issues concerned in the development of the secondary business curriculum. After studying sixteen schools in the U.K., TVEI (1992) identifies the following as factors contributing towards good practice in business education (p.90):

- enterprising/proactive staff;
- senior management support for business education;
- broad (business world) view of business education;
- existence of a “vision” of the place of business education as an important element in the whole-school curriculum;
- strong student preference for business education options;
- innovative, imaginative and integrative use of business education activities across the curriculum;
- progression in business education in knowledge, key ideas, skills and attitudes (ideally 11-18);
- innovative use of the timetable to accommodate business education activities (suspended timetable, use of modules etc.);
- range of teaching-learning styles applied;
- equal access for boys and girls;

- business information technology employed as a learning aid, not as an end in itself;
- active participation in In-service Education and Training (INSET) by all staff involved in business education;
- wide use of local support networks by schools; and
- attempt by senior staff to translate national policy into the school curriculum in such a way as to produce a possible view of the place and role of Business education within it.

In the U.S., La Salle (1993) researched what the curricular offerings in business education in American high schools should become. Recommendations were that major changes should be made in business education offerings and that the secretarial image that had dominated business education programmes for many years be replaced with an image reflecting computer technology and business administration. Courses dealing with entrepreneurship, business ethics, and critical thinking should be offered.

The above studies provide a basis of what the issues and concerns in secondary business education are and they can be grouped and further elaborated into the following areas of focus:

#### 1. Aims and objectives of business education

The first issue to be discussed is the aims and objectives of secondary business education. What are the objectives of business education in the secondary curriculum? Does business education exist only to prepare students to work in a low-paid job? Is it an objective of business education to prepare students to become business

professionals in the future?

In the U.S., the objectives of business education, as advocated in “This We Believe about Business Education in the High School” in 1970 (as quoted in McDonnell 1988), are to provide students with specific skills, knowledge, and abilities needed for jobs in business as well as a broad general background. Later on, the Commission (1985) states that the business education in high schools aims to:

- educate individuals for and about business,
- provide opportunities for non-business students to acquire business knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively in their careers,
- provide a continuous programme of planned learning experiences designed to help students effectively fulfill three roles:
  - a. Make intelligent socio economic decisions as citizens.
  - b. Produce and distribute goods and services as workers.
  - c. Use the results of production as consumers.
- provide career information that will help students relate their interests, needs, and abilities to occupational opportunities in business.

In the U.K., as described by TVEI (1992), secondary business education should provide ‘a wide range of learning activities, both subject-based and cross-curricular, aimed at developing students’ knowledge and understanding of key ideas, enhancing personal skills, and developing informed attitudes, in matters relating to the economy, the world of work, and to business’ (p.9).

In Hong Kong, the objectives of secondary business education can be found from the various syllabuses of business subjects, including POA, Shorthand, Typewriting, and Commerce recommended by the CDC. Under the heading of the role of commercial education, the following paragraph describing the aims of secondary business education was written when Commerce was first introduced to the senior secondary curriculum (CDC, 1976):

The field of commerce is such a wide one that it can include the work of the professional man, the administrator, the executive, the statistician, the organization and method specialist, the clerk, the secretary, the typist, the office machine operator and many more.

These occupations are dispersed over a wide variety of industries, but the common thread that runs through all commercial education is the training of girls and boys, who directly or indirectly, earn their living by the purchase and sales of goods and services. In Hong Kong there is an urgent need to raise the level of commercial efficiency in the industry and there is no doubt that the future will demand a far higher standard of commercial education than has been the practice to date. Education for the office worker should receive at least as much attention as education for the technical side or the general side of the industry. Manufactured products of the best quality can fail to achieve the commercial success they should if the administrative and clerical work in the office is not of equivalent quality (p.2).

Later when subjects like POA and Business Studies were fully established in the senior secondary curriculum, the aims and objectives of business education can be read from the Preamble of the Syllabus of Commercial Subjects, where it states (CDC, 1991):

It should be understood that the purpose of commercial education at secondary level is not to provide industry and commerce with "trained" personnel, but rather to offer to students the following advantages:

- a. To understand better the importance of "Commerce" and the significant role it plays in the prosperity of our city.
- b. To gain insight into the field of commerce through the study of commercial subjects and to give students a wider choice in the expression of their individual technical aptitudes so that on leaving school they are able to make a sensible decision as to their choice of employment, training or further studies.
- c. To provide basic knowledge of the many forms of commercial activities to assist them to cope with any situation they happen to encounter when they leave school (p.3).

Similar wordings can be read in the aims and objectives from the syllabus of different business subjects. The change in the contents and wordings of the revised edition of these syllabuses in 1998 is negligible. One commonality of the aims and objectives of various subjects of business education in different countries is the emphasis on the dual role of business education. What used to be the fundamental aim of business education in the past, that is, preparing students for entry into and development in jobs within business and providing the necessary workforce for the economy, has now changed to preparing

students to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy, and training them to become business professionals, when the economy prospers.

## 2. The role of business education in the secondary curriculum

The overview of the aims and objectives of secondary business education is now followed by an investigation of the role of business education in the secondary curriculum. The following questions are asked? If business education is so important, should it be made compulsory or should it start early? What is the relationship between business education and general education? If the aims and objectives of secondary business education change according to changes in society, should business education be separated from its vocational image? Is the integration of academic and vocational education a way out?

### a. Should business education be made compulsory in secondary schools?

The issue of whether business education should be made compulsory in secondary schools is of concern. A national survey of State Superintendents of Public Instruction and State Directors of Employment and Training in the U.S. gives business education programmes, courses, and competencies high marks (Crews & Stitt-Gohdes, 1995). Moreover, the findings of many proclaim that business education should be part of the curriculum of virtually every secondary school student (White, 1992; Brumley et. al., 1993; Yopp, 1994; Treichel, 1995).

Yopp (1995) notes from prior research that business education is viewed positively by many managers, secondary principals, and business leaders. Thus, there is an urgent need for business education to 'become a "required" rather than an "elective" component of public education' (p.297) and she advocates that now is the time in the U.S. when at least one comprehensive business course should become a requirement for high school education in all fifty states. She urges business educators to 'influence lawmakers and policymakers to make at least one, one-or two-semester course for and about business a requirement for high school graduation throughout the country' (p.297).

The question of making business education compulsory does not only concern business educators. In Castellano's survey (1992), business people believe business education is so important that it should be regarded as a compulsory component in high school education.

#### b. Business education and general education

The question of whether business education should be interpreted in the curriculum as vocational preparation or as part of general education is constantly in the minds of business educators. The notion of business education being part of general education has long been considered. Enterline (1949) states:

Certain types of business education, such as general business information, an understanding of business, consumer business education, and social-business education, contribute to the economic well-being of all persons regardless of occupational choice, since all use the services of business or live in a business environment (p.5).

In many European education systems, where business education is considered a part of vocational education, the general education content of vocational tracks has been steadily increased, and the difference between them and the mainstream academic curricula has steadily narrowed. Noah & Eckstein (1988), after comparing education in France, Germany, and the U.K. commented, 'Also, as the general education component in vocational education curricula has grown, the distinction between general and vocational education has become less well defined' (p.62). It can thus be interpreted that business education has moved out of the vocational track and become part of general education.

In the U.S., the importance of business education as part of general education is recognized. When business education first started as part of education, its contribution to general education was identified. In the statement, "This we believe about the mission of business education", the Commission (1977) advocated that business education must be recognized as both vocational and general education. In the reflection of the relationship between business education and general education, Sapre (1988) states that 'The emphasis on academic subjects and basic skills challenges us to reaffirm and enhance our contribution to general education'. A statement by the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education issued in 1989 stated that business education is a critical component in the general education of all students. When the state and city supervisors of business education were asked to comment on why business education should be a number one priority with the general curriculum in the future, a point raised frequently was that 'business education is general education and should therefore be used as a vehicle for teaching the basics' (Moore and Hanes,

1987, p.157). This view was shared by the Commission for Business and Economic Education (1985):

Business courses, such as business communication, business economics, keyboarding and occupational program sequences contribute greatly to meeting the general education needs of high school students.

Business education originated as a part of vocational education but as times change and business activities become an integral part of daily activities, the distinction of business education as a part of general or vocational education is questionable. Instead of a sharp distinction between the two, Rust (1973) advocates a tripartite division of educational types. Between the two extremes of general and vocational education, there is general vocational education with both academic and vocational elements. He also finds that many of the commercial courses in the U.K. for senior secondary students were more broadly educational than the highly specialized subjects typically studied in the academic stream.

Some research done by Bujea (1987) tracing the practices and trends in business education in the U.K., the U.S. and Canada revealed that business education will be extended downward into the elementary school. By making business education in the junior forms a part of a general education for all, business education will have avoided the stigma of being second best. As well as these comments made by educators, from a survey of executives in New Jersey, there has also been a suggestion that employers are indeed more supportive of a general education within the business sector (Castellano, 1992).

In Hong Kong, the secondary business curriculum consists of both general education and vocational preparation (CDC, 1991). In a group discussion at a conference for business educators, it was agreed that business education in the secondary school curriculum is definitely part of the general education (Cheung & Lewis, 1995).

c. Business education: academic or vocational?

Now that the idea of business education as part of general education is accepted by many, the next issue is the academic and vocational divide of business education.

i. *Academic vs. vocational education*

The general view is that a general education that is more academic in nature is favoured more highly than a vocational education. Watts (1983) commented that 'the overwhelming majority of industries are of the opinion that education should be more general rather than vocational in character'. Vocational education has always suffered from a status problem. Pring (1995) commented:

Young people, unable to succeed within the framework of liberal education, are branded failures and ineducable. Those who succeed in vocational pursuits are denied the status accorded to academic success. There is a hierarchy of values and academic excellence is at the top of that hierarchy (p.134).

Another criticism of vocational education is on its selective nature (Brown, 1988; Coles, 1988; Holt & Reid, 1988). It has been argued that specialized vocational subjects lack flexibility, and are thus not a favourable preparation for job training. Studies have shown that vocational education does not necessarily produce workers needed by employers and that the success of the economy has little correlation with it (Ashton and Maguire, 1986; Brown, 1988; Raffe, 1988; Roberts et al., 1988, 1989). Furthermore, vocational education tends to limit students' choices of occupation instead of exposing them to more options. Thus Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development publications have argued that broad curricula are preferable to specialized vocational courses both for the individual and society (OECD, 1985, pp.93-95, 1986). Business educators try to avoid linking business education with vocational education. When it was rumoured in the U.K. that A-Level Business Studies could be phased out and removed from the school curriculum because it was perceived to contain a "vocational" element, objections were raised. The following are taken from email messages of the Organization for Business and Economic Educators:

This proposal must be resisted as strongly as possible. It is typical of those who know nothing of A-Level business studies that they could possibly consider it vocational. It has vocational aspects, but so do many other subjects. A-Level business studies requires students to acquire different and important skills (Richard Barrett, Email response, 1997).

I feel most strongly that the academic route to Business should be maintained and that it does provide an opportunity to appreciate the rigours of numerical and qualitative analysis with an opportunity to look closely at relevant examples from the real world. A-Level Business Studies provides (because it was originally intended to provide) a

useful insight into the decision-making processes of the modern commercial world combined with the necessary academic content for A-Level (Michael, Email response, 1997).

As noted in an earlier section, the separation of business education from vocational education is called for, and business educators hope to see the attachment of business education to academic education. It is noted that the tension between academic education and vocational education has been strong, and the distinction between the two was postulated by Blaug (1970) as follows:

This distinction, which is actually grounded in the nature of the two curricula, is allowed to carry the implication that some education prepares students for the "world of work" and some does not. All too frequently, however, those who have taken courses of study generally called "academic"...reap substantial financial returns from their education, thus producing the paradoxical conclusion that academic education has a greater "vocational" value than vocational education (p.247).

Hodkinson (1991) also describes the key factors distinguishing between the two extremes as:

Academic education is primarily concerned with learning for its own sake, while vocationalism is concerned with education for a purpose. Academics are concerned with cerebral activities. Knowing and understanding for them are the core of education. Vocationalists see their job as training people to do things.

Knowing how is more important than knowing what. Where academics are concerned with personal development, they see it in terms of personal autonomy: the ability to think critically and to arrive at logically supported independent ideas and beliefs. Vocationalists, similarly concerned with personal development, will talk about personal competence or effectiveness: the ability to do things, and to make things happen (p.75).

As in the case of Hong Kong, a historical divide has developed with liberal academic education associated with high status, central to the public schools and something for the more able students; whereas vocational education is of low status, peripheral to the school system and is more appropriate for the less able only. Most students wish to stay on for further studies in the academic mainstream so as to pursue better qualifications and therefore better jobs (Morris and Marsh, 1992). Many believe that academic subjects can provide students with a grounding of basic knowledge and skills, and business education, which originated as a kind of vocational education, has reduced learning, understanding and knowledge into skills and a list of competencies that prepares students for low entry jobs. However, as noted by Rust (1973, p.27), 'It is possible to argue now that every form of education is leading towards some kind of occupation. Hence the former prestige of "general" education as against "vocational" education has become open to question.' So now instead of a sharp contrast between "general" education and "vocational" education at the extreme of two ends, the differences between traditional academic subjects and vocational subjects are less obvious. This leads us to a discussion about the possibility of an integration of academic and vocational education.

*ii. Integration of academic and vocational education*

As noted in the previous discussion, the academic and vocational divide of business education is a poorly defined dichotomy. The debate can go on and on, but students will not benefit from it. The real issue here is about providing the best choice for our students. Historically, academic and vocational education are of two extremes but now many have called for the integration of them (Hyland, 1993; Proctor, 1987; Spours and Young, 1990).

In the U.S., the 1984 Carl Perkins Act emphasized the need for strengthening the academic foundation of vocational education so that students achieve both academic and occupational competencies. Several states in the U.S. made an effort to integrate vocational and academic education. Since then, the integration of academic and vocational instruction has often been presented as the needed educational format that provides relevance and strong academics at the same time. Hull (1993) agrees to the integration of academic and vocational education when he comments:

Preparing students for careers is one important purpose of public education. But useful, effective occupational or technical education requires that the student not just be trained for entry-level job tasks, but also be given a solid foundation of academics. In today's technically sophisticated society, it is both unfair and irrational to continue past practices of training some students in head skills and others in hand skills; good education is the blending of the two. Workers with a solid academic foundation will be able to learn new skills as they are needed, not

only for maintaining their jobs in an ever-changing workplace, but also for advancement toward higher career levels (p.9).

Gray shares a similar view (1991, p.443):

The primary goal of integrating academic and vocational education is to make the experience of applied vocational education more accessible to academic students at the same time that advanced academic courses are made more accessible to students concentrating in vocational education. In integrating academic and vocational education, we would promote greater intermingling of students in both curricular streams.

Love and Gloeckner (1992) noted, after reporting on a number of studies involving the cooperation of vocational and academic teachers, that those who participated found the benefits included 'increased job satisfaction, increased ability to teach basics and theory, new knowledge of real world applications of theory, a more positive school climate, and acquisition of new teaching strategies' (p.16). Lewis (1994) also finds that vocational teachers welcome the idea, as they believe the integration of academic and vocational education can provide long-range, positive benefits for students and the workforce. In the U.K., the integration of academic and vocational education is also under discussion. Pring (1995) states:

A broadly based general education, with a vocational orientation and with the opportunity to experience different kinds of employment, was required - courses

which prepared young people psychologically and economically for a rapidly changing and uncertain future. Such courses should be based on the needs of the young people themselves and of the society into which they were entering. There should be a closer connection between their extended education, albeit with a vocational bias, and the adult world, than had been experienced in the subject-based courses of school (p.60).

In Japan, an integrated course was introduced to upper secondary education in 1994 with the aim of creating an educational framework that could flexibly accommodate students' different aptitudes, abilities, and career paths. In the past, the general course existed primarily to provide general education, while the specialised course, centred on vocational subject areas, catered for vocational education. The dividing line was clear-cut and it was difficult to provide general-course students with a wide range of vocational subjects and vice versa. Thus perceptions of the general course as the path to higher education, whereas the specialised course was vocationally-biased were reinforced. It was decided to establish the integrated course, which 'encompasses content from both the general and the specialised courses, to overcome the limitations of the two-course structure and create an additional framework that would provide students with the widest possible range of learning opportunities' (Monbusho, 1995, p.10).

### *iii. Business education: where integration begins*

Business educators have been criticized for promoting specific vocational training whereas academic educators are accused of providing a curriculum that does not

connect learning to the real world. It is thus essential to call for the integration of academic and business education. Whilst it is true to say that business education is not an historic academic subject in the Mathematics, History or Physics sense, it is a subject that accurately meets the diversity of students' capabilities. Business education is based on academic fundamentals and practical application. When the academic side of business education is strengthened, students can combine the rigours of numerical and qualitative analysis with an opportunity to look closely at relevant examples from the real world. Thus integration will make business subjects academically stronger and academic subjects more relevant.

A study by McEwen et al. (1992) found that it is beneficial to integrate academic and business education, both by improving the quality of graduates and by improving the relationships between academic and business teachers. Hudelson (1994) echoes this and states that:

Education reformers hope the school-to-work projects will bring about lasting change in the high schools by encouraging integration of academic and vocational course work, teaching all aspects of an industry, integrating work-based and school-based learning and promoting the formation of partnerships among elementary, middle, secondary and postsecondary schools. In the ideal school-to-work system, all students are expected to meet high academic and occupational standards (p.2).

In Hong Kong, the relatively low image that business education received originates from its initial development as subjects for students in prevocational schools. As time

changes, the direction of business education has changed. It can be noted that most of the prevocational schools, where business education is provided, offer sixth form places where students aim at furthering their studies in universities. Furthermore, many grammar schools have also introduced business education into their “academic” programme.

It is noted that business education is accused of being an easy subject catering for the needs of low-achievers, but a careful look at the business curriculum may help dispel this notion. At least the A-Level Business Studies and POA are as difficult as other subjects. If these subjects cater for students furthering their studies and it is observed that these subjects carry a similar degree of difficulty as other A-level subjects, should we not have two sets of curricula in business education? Cheung (1998a) proposes to have one set providing the necessary facts and knowledge to those who may not further their studies, and another links students to studying business subjects in tertiary institutions.

### 3. Status of business education

Because of its association with vocational education, business education was marginalized and stigmatized as being inferior. Business subjects were accorded low-status as they were seen only as subjects for the preparation of students for future jobs requiring few skills and little knowledge. In Gaskell’s (1986) words:

Business education is described by students and teachers as a “non academic elective”. “Non-academic” means that the business courses do not fulfill admission requirements for university. “Elective” means that courses are not required for high school graduation, as English, social studies and math are (p.426).

This view is echoed by Goodson and Marsh (1996) after studying different subjects at secondary level:

Neither commercial nor technical education was ever seriously considered as a new dimension, which could be added to the classical curriculum. It was specialized training for a particular class of man, and its confinement to low-status areas of the curriculum has remained a constant feature of English curriculum conflict (p.43).

Business education is also seen as a programme that could offer a path leading to a low paid job and students do not like it (Wolf, 1993; Barnes, 1993). A similar situation can be observed in Africa when Sifuna (1992) looked into the implementation of prevocational education in Kenya and found that students show more interest in academic subjects, for these subjects could provide them with ‘greater opportunity for further education to university and eventually to prestigious white collar careers’ (p.141).

In Taiwan, Boyd and Lee (1994) find business subjects under vocational education still bears the implication of “less than worthy”. Especially within the middle-class and

upper-class families, children are directed more into a traditional mode of education. The situation is similar in Hong Kong where students studying secondary business education will normally end up with low-paid jobs. In view of this, Lee (1991) expressed his discontent:

Education has an intrinsic responsibility for the well being of the students including the care about their future subsistence in the society. However, if this kind of employment is limited to certain low status jobs, the students entering such a stream will be greatly restricted in their future careers (p.148).

The result is that students try to avoid taking business education in secondary school. Some research by Wong (1996) indicates that there are six types of career models of young people in North America but in Hong Kong there tends to be only two career models, based upon the Arts and the Sciences. Students wishing to take up a career in business frequently take subjects other than business subjects in schools prior to a university course in business.

In order to change its low status image, business education has to change from the mission of preparing students for support roles in business and industry. The role of business educators is important (a more detailed discussion can be found later in this chapter). Business teachers must become more actively involved in promoting business education as more than basic job-entry skills and promote it as an occupational preparatory curriculum in which students are trained to become business professionals in this modern world (Fry, 1988). They have to address issues, and determine policies and courses of action in business education constantly in order to keep pace with the

ever-changing, rapidly expanding business world. The challenge to business educators will be in convincing parents and students that secondary business education can be the first step on the ladder to further education and/or a rewarding and lucrative career. The recent writings of Stout (1997) best summarize what business educators can do to elevate the status of business education:

Business educators must promote the business course curriculum in terms of basic skills (Core areas), life skills, information technology skills, entrepreneurship skills, international business knowledge, and lifelong learning needed by all students regardless of their career goals. When the business education curriculum is recognized as an essential component in the total school curriculum, the image of the courses changes. This improved image impacts the learning environment by appealing to more students with varying ability levels (p.50).

#### 4. Linkage between subjects

Curricula for any level of education cannot be formed in a vacuum, and each level of education should link up with the previous and the following ones. One of the criticisms of business education is its lack of cohesion as a subject area. Unlike many other subjects that provide linkage of knowledge from junior level to secondary level, business subjects are spread too widely. Continuity exists more in general academic subjects than in practical subjects. Most of the general academic subjects have long

been established, with the curriculum carefully planned, running through junior level, senior level, and some even up to sixth form level. But with the practical subjects available at junior level, only around half are available at senior level, and only two, namely Business Studies and Principles of Accounts are available at the sixth form level. Through a careful reading through the syllabus of Business Studies, a connection is found between Commerce at S.5 and Business Studies at S.7, as the introduction of the two syllabuses is the same except that “commerce” is replaced by “business” and “senior form” is replaced by “sixth form”. It looks as if these two subjects are linked, but by a careful examination of their syllabuses the difference is apparent. Commerce at the Certificate level is easy and factual, whereas students studying A-Level Business Studies need more skills and knowledge. Moreover, not every school providing A-Level business education will require students with Certificate level business subjects. The lack of continuity is understandable as prevocational schools did not offer sixth form classes until 1992. Now that prevocational schools can offer S.6, they are required to offer a non-academic curriculum, and it is arduous to produce a sixth form curriculum that has progression and continuity in areas where students have studied in S.4-5.

One of the ways to solve the above problem, which in turn would lead to the upgrading of the status of business education, is by the articulation among different levels of business education. Warmbrod (1987) believes that a better articulation of business curricula is an effective means to attract students because it ‘generates more options, students can see where the program is leading, students are enthusiastic about using high school work to meet college course requirements, it is time and cost effective’. Similar arguments have been presented earlier in this chapter in the discussion of the integration of academic education and vocational education.

Indeed business subjects have the potential to be moved on to a broader and more academic basis to ensure a stronger place in the curriculum if the linkage is better. In the U.K., the Associated Examining Board (AEB) syllabus makes it clear that ‘[It] is not intended to be vocational. It aims to make candidates think about business in a critical manner’ (AEB, 1976 A-Level syllabus). A similar situation applies here in Hong Kong, and the importance of curriculum continuity is recognized in the *Review of Prevocational and Secondary Technical Education* (1997) where it is suggested that some new subjects should be introduced into the present curriculum and some out-dated subjects should be eliminated to ensure a better linkage of subjects. One example is the inclusion of Business Fundamentals in S.1-3, which serves as a better link to other business subjects in senior forms.

Another means of dealing with the issue of a better linkage between subjects is an integration of business subjects. In Nigeria, it was intended that a business curriculum should be developed for junior secondary students. This was done by replacing the five traditionally compartmentalised single subjects, book-keeping, commerce, office practice, shorthand and typewriting, with a new subject called “Business Studies”. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE, 1987, p.iv) stated:

The new concept of Pre-Vocational courses at the JSS level is different from the traditional one. For example, the business studies components transcend the narrow commercial knowledge that restricted students to take one of typewriting, shorthand, accounting, economics, etc., for five years. The new approach emphasises the integrated nature of business studies and includes modules of secretarial skills (i.e. shorthand and typewriting), accounting, economics, business methods, commerce, etc.

The newly innovated Business Fundamentals (Review, 1997) which will take place in junior secondary business curriculum in Hong Kong is an integrated business subject with a dual role to perform. As part of general education, it provides students with basic business principles, facts of the business world, and simple business skills enabling them to fit better in a business society like Hong Kong. As a specialized course it provides linkage with later courses in business education where the advanced subjects are based. In fact, there are many who take business education in secondary school but the present low-status and poor articulation of business subjects prevent them from a further pursuit of these studies. It is recommended in the Review (1997) that:

At the same time we are of the opinion that the background knowledge which would form a solid basis for subsequent instruction in commercial subjects proper could usefully be introduced into the teaching in the upper forms of secondary schools for those students who intend to make commerce their career (para. 293).

We therefore recommend where practicable the introduction of a Commercial side in the higher forms of Anglo-Chinese secondary schools for the benefit of those who intend to enter commerce education (para. 294).

Lau (1996), the principal of a prevocational school and the chairperson of the Hong Kong Prevocational Schools Council, says there has been discussion with representatives from the VTC to see the possibilities of exemption of certain subjects when graduates of prevocational schools continue their studies at VTC. Now about 20 per cent of these graduates continue their studies at courses offered by the VTC. This suggested scheme can be further extended to secondary schools, for every secondary school student is a potential student of VTC institutes, and a mechanism to ensure

close coordination between VTC and secondary schools in general, aiming at smooth transition from school education to studying in VTC institutes, is expected to be welcomed. This can be done if business education across all levels is better articulated.

Besides aiming at the interface between secondary schools and VTC institutes, some students may find strong interest in furthering their studies in business education in tertiary institutes. The problem now is that business subjects are not treated as prerequisites in admission to year 1 of some degrees in tertiary institutes. The Review (1997) urges the tertiary institutes to seriously take the above recommendation into consideration so that students are given a chance to experience coherence, continuity and progression in studying business education.

## 5. Implications of a future business curriculum in secondary schools

The first four issues considered in this chapter deal with the theoretical background of business education and how it is perceived by the public. This part of the discussion is concerned with what the future business curriculum in secondary school should be like. A good and balanced business curriculum will prepare students to function as viable members of tomorrow's society. As the significance of business education has continued to be recognised, it needs to respond to dynamic changes and to be future-oriented. Economic and political changes will take place, and these will have far reaching consequences on the future of business education. When a curriculum has been in place for a period of time, it should be reviewed or evaluated and then further

developed. This is done to ensure the revision and updating of the curriculum content. The research on the future business curriculum is very important for different groups in the education system. For students, the curriculum is what they experience. Most of the skills and knowledge they learn in school is embedded in the curriculum. To a certain extent their future depends on what and how well they have learned in school. For teachers, the curriculum is what they implement. They need to deliver the curriculum content so that learning takes place. For government officials, the constant redefining and evaluating of the curriculum is their responsibility. Changes in curriculum often reflect societal changes. Because of the above, the curriculum is of vital importance in the education system.

The business curriculum in secondary school has to change in order to keep pace with changes in business, equipment, organizations, policies, and market demands. There have been many changes in the workplace. Manual typewriters have been replaced by word-processors, key-driven calculators by computers, and the use of electronic mail, laser printers and fax machines were simply unimaginable decades ago when business education first started. Now business principles and concepts are changing, shifting the focus 'from secretarial office procedures to management systems and entrepreneurship and from a local economic community to an international one' (Philips, 1994). For the future development of secondary business curriculum, what more needs to be changed? The following is a list of suggestions of what should be considered in the future business curriculum of secondary school.

a. The use of information technology (IT)

i. *The importance of IT*

The term IT has only been used in the American ERIC (Education Research Information Centre) database since 1986. The definition of IT varies according to different writers, but the following given in the Macmillan Dictionary of Information Technology (1985) is widely accepted:

The acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination of vocal, pictorial, textual and numerical information by a microelectronics-based combination of computing and telecommunications (Longley and Shain, 1985:164).

Wellington (1989) advocated that an extended definition should be employed to describe IT, which will include its constituent parts, including activities at many different levels, both in education and employment:

IT may include word processing, desk-top publishing, and the use of databases and spreadsheets. It may include artificial intelligence, chip manufacture, telecommunications, robotics, software engineering and system analysis at a higher level of generality and expertise (p.xx).

Doyle (1992) goes a step further and defines an information literate person as the one who:

- recognises that accurate and complete information is the basis for intelligent decision making,

- recognises the need for information,
- formulates questions based on information needs,
- identifies potential sources of information,
- develops successful search strategies,
- accesses sources of information including computer-based and other technologies,
- evaluates information,
- organises information for practical application,
- integrates new information into an existing body of knowledge, and
- uses information in critical thinking and problem solving.

TVEI (1992) states that IT ‘enables users to create, process, display, store, retrieve, and transmit information electronically by means of a computer, word processor, modem, printer, or other device for collecting or transmitting data. The information may consist of text, numbers, pictures, sound or other signals’ (p.35).

IT capability, as defined in the National Curriculum (DFE, 1995), is an ability to use effectively IT tools and information sources to analyse, process and present information, and to model, measure and control external events. This involves:

- using information sources and IT tools to solve problems,
- using IT tools and information sources, such as computer systems and software packages, to support learning in a variety of contexts, and
- understanding the implications of IT for working life and society.

In Hong Kong, IT is seen to 'embrace the methods and techniques used in information handling, transmission and retrieval by automatic means, including computing, telecommunication, office automation, and industrial automation. It can also be stated to be a technology resulting from the convergence of several other technologies such as artificial intelligence and optoelectronics' (VTC, 1993).

IT is now an essential part of everyday life. The exponential developments in personal communications and the use of computers in all aspects of life illustrate this point. The underlying technology that makes it all work is developing at an ever-increasing rate that will continue to significantly affect the working life of all current and future students. Worthington (1985) has commented, 'Today, basic literacy can no longer be defined only on the basis of a fixed inventory of skills - reading and writing. Rather, basic literacy includes the ability to cope with the needs and demands placed on individuals in the society'. IT is so important that it surely qualifies as one of the basic skills in education, as a part of students' functional literacy.

Since the information-processing environment today is more dynamic than in the past, the continuing growth of business activities urges the increased implementation of IT. The growing business importance of IT makes it essential for business personnel to understand emerging technologies and ways of organizing information processing. Schultheis & Summer (1992) suggested that applications of IT be designed to have an impact on the individual, the functional unit and the organization as a whole. The applications that IT can provide are directly linked with improving business performance. For companies to succeed in the 1990s and beyond, they must face the challenge of the 1990s - the effective marriage between business and IT.

Many countries have hitherto realized the importance of IT. A considerable portion of the GNP in their national expenditure is devoted to IT. According to Wang's study (1994), the national expenditure on IT as a percentage of the GNP is relatively high in the U.S. (3.5%), Japan (2%), South Korea (1.3%), Singapore (1.71%) and Taiwan (1%). All of them aim at promoting better utilization of IT in order to exploit IT for global business expansion.

Unfortunately, there is still no proper IT coverage in the secondary level of education in Hong Kong. There is a need for educational changes. Educators, especially those in business education, should equip graduates with indispensable skills to address the importance of IT for business. To better cope with this, integrating IT in business education is essential.

ii. *Business education and IT*

If you were to be in any school in five years' time, you should find children learning about and being prepared to live in a society in which devices and systems based on micro-electronics and associated technologies were commonplace and pervasive, and where these technologies may have altered and be altering the relationships between people, and between individuals and their work...the curriculum of the school will be amended in general terms, in the content of individual disciplines and by the development of new subjects. At the same time, the methods of teaching and learning will naturally incorporate the use

of new devices such as the computer, with more stress on self-instructional learning and information retrieval (Fothergill & Anderson 1981:124).

Fothergill and Anderson (1981) stated this around two decades ago and since then the use of computer technologies has increased substantially in many countries. Right now, business education has taken a leading role in the implementation of IT into the curriculum. The relationship between business education and IT can best be explained in the following words of Haff & Herrin (1997):

Today, a wealth of information is available at the touch of a computer key. The ability to effectively use information technology will be a required skill for productive citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In order to prepare today's students for tomorrow's challenges and the knowledge economy, schools must integrate technology as a tool to enhance and facilitate the learning process. Business educators can look at the strong information systems base in our business curricula and build courses and units that continually update students' knowledge about the changing workplace. Business educators must continue to teach students to live and work productively as technology changes. The efficient utilization of information technology will help schools and students achieve world-class education standards (p.45).

There is a paradigm change in business education as it moves into the information age and Harmon (1986) writes that American schools have identified business education as the subject area where the microcomputer is most applicable in the secondary educational area. The primary reasons for this are the rapidity of change in the

conditions of work. Graduates entering the business field today will experience technological revolution from time to time. The business world has changed more in the last few years with the introduction of the computer than it has ever done before. Now business and industry are demanding a computer literate workforce. It is obvious that these developments have already effected considerable changes in the nature of employment in most countries. It is also a fact that these developments are continuing and have to be a factor in curriculum development, especially in business education.

Various business educators have recognized this impact. Stainton-Skinn (1982) states that it 'should be a major aim to give all students, whether business or secretarial, an appreciation of technological developments and their implications.' It was recommended by the NBEA Task Force on New Concepts and Strategies for Business Education in 1983 that every business education course should be interfaced with a computer. Erikson and Barr wrote the following in 1985:

Business education has joined the computer revolution. Demands for the traditional business / office education skills courses - typewriting, shorthand, and office practice - are decreasing, while demands for business / office courses with content in the newest electronic office technology are increasing. The question is not whether secondary school business education programs should be teaching electronic office use, but rather how secondary school business education programs can do it effectively. Updating business / office course content, selecting and purchasing technologically current equipment, and upgrading the technical skills of business education teachers present major challenges to secondary school administrators (p.25).

Poole, Blank, & Zahn (1988) remarked that there is one certainty in business education. 'Because of creative applications of new technologies and continuous international economic shifts, change is constant. Future challenges and opportunities are inevitable' (p.22). The significance of IT skills are identified as one of the new "basics" in business education (Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education, 1989). Kizzier (1991) in her study argues that the business education department should be in charge of teaching IT. In 1995, the American National Business Education Yearbook devoted its thirty-third issue to the topic "Technology in the Classroom" and in 1998, the National Business Education Association's yearbook is titled *Integrating the Internet into the Business Curriculum*.

In 1983 in the U.K, Ben Kelsey, a Business Studies adviser in Hampshire, headed the development of a course that became known as the Hampshire Project. It was later to carry the title Business and Information Studies. It emphasized process and student centred learning and it recognized that it would be very difficult to teach a relevant business course without the use of computers.

The National Curriculum requires that all students aged from 5-16 become competent in IT. The National Curriculum orders for Technology (DES, 1989) suggest that IT capability is designed as a cross-curricular competence to be delivered across the whole curriculum. Thus all subjects and all subject teachers must play a role in fulfilling this requirement. Business Studies is seen as an ideal vehicle for the delivery of IT. All students who go on to post 16 education are likely to be competent with using IT and as such will expect to use IT in their Business Studies courses from 16-18. Teachers will need to be able to meet these students' expectations and advice

from schools where this is already happening will be very valuable. TVEI (1992) also states that business education can contribute to the development of IT capability.

A U.K. survey done recently revealed that business education was the heaviest user of IT in secondary schools (Lepper, 1997) and Business Studies teachers have been second only to English teachers in their use of IT in England and Wales, according to the DES in its *Statistical Bulletins* published in 1980, 1984 and 1988 (Davies, 1995, p.123).

The National Curriculum (1995) continued to emphasize the importance of IT, and students are expected to:

- use information sources and IT tools to solve problems;
- use IT tools and information sources, such as computer systems and software packages, to support learning in a variety of contexts; and
- understand the implications of IT for working life and society.

The development of IT skills in business education is said to be a factor contributing to the popularity of business education in the U.K. (Business Education and Economics, An Inspection review). Dyer (1991) commented:

I would find it difficult to run a Business Studies course without considerable use of IT. It is invaluable in preparing work, in modifying it later, in preparing

resource material. It revolutionizes the teaching of accounting, and enables me to give students opportunity for supported self-study (p.83).

In Japan, in the area of vocational education where business subjects are based, information-related subjects have been enhanced and increased to ensure that students can cope with a changing industrial society. In Hong Kong, Lau (1996) concluded from observation and sample surveys carried out in prevocational schools that the future business curriculum should provide training in IT and the use of computers to students.

### *iii. IT situation in Hong Kong secondary schools*

The Statement of Aims produced by the Education and Manpower Branch of the Hong Kong government in 1993 states:

In a complex modern society, the skills of literacy and numeracy are the essential foundation for developing individual potential and promoting social and economic development. The nature of that economic development is clearly changing, especially in terms of the change in employment patterns and even the availability of employment, and the school curriculum has an obligation to reflect those changes (p.15).

In the case of the business curriculum, this has to mean integrating computing with existing content and practices to ensure functional literacy. On a welcoming address of

a business education conference, Cooke (1996) outlines what he perceives business education to be in the future:

It is clear to me that business education has a role to play in our schools and in other institutions. Not I think in a narrowly focused technical and utilitarian fashion but as part of a progressive, enlightened - what I call a confluent-curriculum. In a confluent curriculum, cognitive, affective, and practical objectives are integrated, well balanced, and are valued, and important innovative developments such as information technology are built in and feature strongly (p.5).

It is noted by Pong & Chung (1996) that educators in Hong Kong are not unaware of this trend and various issues were discussed. Two actions are worth mentioning. In 1992, it was minuted in the meeting of the Commercial Studies Subject Committee that there was a general agreement on the need for incorporating IT elements into Commercial Studies curriculum. However, the form of integration was not properly communicated among teachers of Commercial subjects. Although a pilot scheme was carried out in 1992-94 to integrate wordprocessing into the Typewriting curriculum, no formal syllabus or guidelines are available at present.

In 1993, the Education Department (ED) started to review the Commercial Studies curriculum to keep pace with the technologically rapidly changing business world. Then in early 1995, the ED provided a one-off funding for the provision of computer facilities in twenty-one local prevocational schools, in which Commercial Studies is offered in the school curriculum. Each of the schools was then provided with thirteen

sets of computers and other peripherals. Training sessions and workshops, as well as seminars for the teachers involved were also conducted. The upgrading exercise aimed to initiate an introduction of IT into the Secondary 1-3 Commercial Studies curriculum in the recipient schools. The *Review of Prevocational and Secondary Technical Education* (1997), recommended the inclusion of IT into the existing business curriculum. This will be done by providing an Information Technology Learning Centre (ITLC) to each secondary technical school (as well as to each prevocational school) for the teaching and learning of various business and technological subjects.

The government's support of the development of IT has been strong. Mr Leung Kam-chung, member of the Executive Committee of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, suggested that the government should make a comprehensive policy on IT education. He criticised the current education system for forcing students to choose art or science streams but failing to provide them with a wide international exposure. Thus the students' ability to adapt to a changing world cannot be developed. It is, therefore, recommended that the new business curriculum should include:

- introduction to the business environment of China, South East Asia, America and Europe,
- impact of IT on business operations and services, and
- application of IT on understanding the business world.

Meanwhile, C.H. Tung, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, in his first ever policy speech, addresses the importance of IT (Tung, 1997):

‘We will launch a five-year IT education strategy to promote the use of IT to enhance teaching and learning. The main tasks are to equip our teachers with the necessary IT skills; to apply computer-assisted teaching and learning across the curriculum; and to place students in an environment where they can use this technology as part of their daily activities and grow up to use it creatively.

Within five years, we are aiming to have teaching in at least twenty five per cent of the curriculum supported through IT. Within ten years, we aim to see IT being applied comprehensively in school life, and all our teachers and Secondary 5 graduates being able to work competently with IT tools. To move firmly in that direction, within the next school year we will:

- increase the number of computers in each primary school from 15 to an average of 40 and in each secondary school from 20 to an average of 82,
- procure and develop new software to support teaching, especially for languages,
- enhance training to over 30000 teachers in IT use, and set up an IT Education Resource Centre to support the management of school IT systems,
- introduce pilot schemes in 20 schools to establish best practices for IT applications in teaching and learning,
- connect all schools to the Internet, and
- make preparations for an education-specific intranet for multi-dimensional communication and sharing of information within the school sector.’

Although there is a worldwide recognition that IT should constitute part of students' business education, it is new to most local business teachers, and most schools do not have an IT component in their business subjects. The introduction of IT, if implemented, would in fact constitute a curriculum innovation. However, the introduction of IT has to proceed in a well planned manner to avoid mistakes resulting from a hurried implementation of policy. The writer, researching on the implementation of IT into S.1-3 Commercial Studies, has found that while teachers see IT as an important component in business education and students are aware of the application of IT in their daily lives, the effectiveness of the implementation suffers due to the following reasons (Cheung, 1998b):

- Inadequate teacher training: although teacher training is provided, it is insufficient for not every teacher is computer literate.
- The level of computer literacy between teachers varies. While there are some who know very little, there are others whose computer knowledge is very advanced. To these teachers, the training is too basic. It is recommended that two sets of training should be provided: one covering the basic skills and knowledge while the other deals with the more advanced level of skills and knowledge.
- Teachers and students do not have priority in assessing computer facilities at school. As business education is of low status, many principals are afraid that the “naughty” students studying business subjects would destroy the computers. Even when this is not the reason, principals still give preference to science students as they are expected to perform better in examinations.
- The storage of computers is a difficult task. They have to be stored in a special room with good security and it is difficult to find such a room in schools,

especially when most schools do not even have enough classrooms to accommodate every class.

- There is not enough software to accompany the innovation.
- Future maintenance can be a problem.

b. Keyboarding/typewriting or word-processing?

Related to the issue of IT is whether typewriting should be replaced by word-processing. Typewriting was first introduced in the business curriculum in many countries to equip students, especially females, with skills that enable them to become secretaries in the future. In Hong Kong, as described in the syllabus, Typewriting at S.4 and 5 provides students with a foundation of general knowledge and an introduction to broad-based commercial skills upon which future development may be based. The course enables students to continue the general education and at the same time receive something of a general preparation for life as well as a specific training for commerce (CDC, 1993). Now when most of the typewriters have been replaced by computers in the offices, could typewriting continue to fulfill its role or should it be replaced by word-processing?

The following claims the importance of typewriting. In a national study in the U.S. (Sormunen et al. 1989), it is concluded that keyboarding skills were perceived to be necessary before using the microcomputer for word processing and programming. Binderup (1988) stated:

In many schools, word-processing and other programs that require typing are being introduced before the students have been taught the correct way to handle the keyboard. Unfortunately, this encourages hard-to-break habits, such as struggling with single fingers and looking at the keys while typing, which may stay with the child in the future (p.31).

Britten also stresses the need of learning typewriting instead of word-processing for young children (1988):

The increasing use of personal computers in the elementary grades has led to many innovative educational experiences for young children. However, the application of this technology at these grade levels also presents what many feel may be a significant problem: the acquisition of "hunt-and-peck" keyboarding skills. It has been suggested that this method of typing is in itself inefficient and furthermore, may have a negative impact on a student's ability to at a later date learn proper keyboarding skills (p.34).

Even in the nineties, it has been suggested that keyboard learning should be taught prior to using a computer (Prigge & Braathen, 1993; Nieman, 1996). The importance of typing is also noticed in Hong Kong, where Mak (1997) noted that it is a skill that is considered basic to many occupations, and is being given increasing emphasis not only because of its importance in the business world, but also as a very useful personal skill. The continuous rise in the demand for business records and communication has led to an increasing reliance on typing as the most important office skill.

The above summary suggests that typing skills should be acquired by secondary business students, but whether they learn it by using a typewriter or by using a computer is a debatable issue. Recent studies indicate that the latter is preferred. Frankeberger (1990) suggests converting typewriting classrooms to microcomputer classrooms. Lewis (1994) even proposes the inclusion of computer keyboarding (word-processing) in general education for all students in the public schools. The Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education stated that business educators should equip their keyboarding classrooms with microcomputers (This We Believe About Keyboarding, 1984). Wentling (1988) finds that the majority of business professionals in all fields use the computer every day and it is essential for them to process the knowledge of keyboarding. Those who do not have keyboarding skills will want to learn. Those business professionals also think that keyboarding skills should be taught at the secondary school level. It is also stated that 'returning graduates are reporting that they need word processing and computer skills in addition to their secretarial and clerical skills in order to acquire and to advance in their jobs in today's market' (What's Happening: Exemplary Programs in Business Education, 1983). With keyboarding becoming a basic for all types of jobs and careers, students who have keyboarding skills will be able to function more adequately in today's information and technological society.

In Hong Kong, the idea of replacing Typewriting with a new subject, Word-processing & Business Communication (English, S.4-5), was recently proposed and a questionnaire on the development of this subject was circulated to all secondary schools in January 1998 (CDI, 1998).

c. The introduction of business mathematics

Business mathematics covers topics related to loans, taxes, bank services, insurance, and statistics etc. that are essential to accounting, book-keeping, buying and selling (Millar, Salzman & Hoelzle, 1994). It also serves as a foundation to other advanced business education courses and is an established subject for qualifying examinations for many professional associations, such as the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants (CACA) or the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA).

In the U.S., business mathematics is offered to students who do not intend to further their studies in tertiary institutions. In Australia, subjects like “mathematics at work” or “business mathematics” is offered to senior secondary students oriented towards vocational training. In Malaysia, commercial arithmetic is offered to those taking vocational education in lower secondary school.

In Hong Kong, it was suggested at a meeting in 1975, about discussing the development of business education in secondary schools, that commercial arithmetic should be offered. This proposal was not well received. However, the call for the introduction of business mathematics has been heard from time to time and Chow (1996) argued that the regular mathematics curriculum is not for everyone and that business mathematics is more suitable to students studying business education.

In practice, the technical, prevocational and arts stream students are disadvantaged by having to study a mathematics curriculum that is designed mainly for science students. Students preparing to work in the commercial field who take practical subjects like commerce, principles of accounts and typewriting are handicapped by not having

sufficient training in business mathematics. The mathematics curriculum they are studying simply does not match with their study in other subjects (Chow, 1996:28).

Curriculum developers have been calling for the revision of secondary mathematics curriculum (Wong, Wong, & Lam, 1995; Wong, 1997). It is proposed that business mathematics be included in the subject Business Fundamentals when it is implemented for junior secondary students in 2000.

d. The teaching of value/ethics in business education

One of the major purposes of business education is to help students grow into effective, well-informed citizens who understand what is going on around them. This involves the making of value judgements, and thus the teaching of ethics in business education is suggested. If business education mirrors the real world, it must deal with topics involving values. Now the increasing complexity and scale of different kinds of business practices have left many searching for clear guidelines. It is essential that students undertaking business education should think through the ethical implications of the various aspects of business practices before becoming practitioners themselves. They should be prepared for the problems they will almost certainly encounter in the business sector in the future. Some may even say that students are already involved in the business sector, as it is not unusual for them to work part time or during summer holidays.

In fact, business ethics is commonly taught at university in the Faculty of Business, but by this stage, as suggested by Macfarlane (1996) 'students have been inculcated with a set of attitudes and values which they have not previously been asked to question'

(p.172). Students are now exposed to this materialistic world earlier and ethical issues constantly confront them. It cannot be assumed that they have learnt how to deal with these problems if ethics is not taught formally in secondary classrooms. In business education, students come to understand the aims of real business practices, which involve the maximisation of profits, and in the process of doing so, decisions have to be made that a conflict often involve between personal interests, the interests of others and society's interests. The teaching of values in business education forces decision making and analysis into dimensions beyond individual interests. It is about the training of awareness and the raising of consciousness. Students are trained not only to see their own interests but also be exposed to the needs of society. That is why ethics should be appropriately emphasised in business education.

Some research done by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC, 1996) suggested that university business graduates in Hong Kong were willing to act unethically in order to maximize their own interests. Many young people believe that honesty only brings poverty and there is nothing wrong with breaking the law to make money as long as they are not caught. In another study carried out by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups on behalf of the ICAC, more than one-fifth, or 22.5 per cent, of young people aged between 15 and 29 said they would "give bribes" if it would solve an immediate problem, with around three-quarters, or 74.6 per cent saying that would be the most likely reason for giving one (SCMP, 16.7.97). Another survey done by Oxfam found that the secondary school students in Hong Kong placed self-interest over other virtues in importance (Economic Times, 1996). This result is not surprising; Hong Kong people are often labelled as money-minded, placing their self-interests over moral issues. Professor K.M. Cheng, member of the Education Commission, a renowned figure in the educational scene in Hong Kong, alarmed by the decline in moral standards of the

youths in Hong Kong, strongly recommended including value teaching in the present curriculum. Teaching ethics in business education is essential, for the damage caused by an unethical employee, such as abuse of sick leave, accepting bribes, and employee theft will cost a company a lot.

An employee with good business ethics is also valuable to society. At the Conference on Work Ethics of Young People on 15 March 1996, the following conclusions were made:

- To maintain the competitive edge of Hong Kong, the next generation must possess high ethical standards and the right aims for work.
- Honesty, trustworthiness and ethical staff are valuable assets of a company and the community as a whole. They can win the trust of clients and enhance the reputation of a company.
- Work ethics basically includes honesty, fairness, responsibility and respect for others and for work.
- The government, schools, families, social workers, the business sector, youth organizations and the mass media should co-operate and complement each other in putting more efforts to enhance the ethical standards of young people.

Cheung (1998a) has also noted that as there is a stronger economic link between China and Hong Kong, the teaching of business ethics to business students is vital as it is observed that China and Hong Kong are very different in terms of ideologies and business practices. Though the teaching of business ethics was not previously included in the secondary business curriculum, the CDI has planned business ethics as part of

the curriculum of Business Fundamentals, a new business subject that will be launched for the junior secondary students in prevocational and technical schools.

e. Internationalization of materials

With the advancement in technology and an efficient transport system, it is possible to view the world as getting smaller. It has become a global village. Students who join the business community at all levels will be required to possess the appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes enabling them to adapt to other cultures and countries. To remain competitive, employees are expected to possess competent skills and knowledge, as well as global perspectives. Main (1989) stated that getting a global perspective should be a priority for business students. In 1992, the chief executive officers of the Wisconsin 100 companies were surveyed to identify the most important issues for businesses at that time and ten years from then (Ostheimer, 1996). Having a global perspective was rated the top issue in 1992 now by ten per cent of the executives. That figure doubled to twenty per cent for 2002.

In the U.S., Carlock (1991) and Beistel (1991) called for the integration of international business concepts into present courses. Virginia (1991) and Delaware (1990) have developed materials for international business at secondary schools. LaRosa (1990) drew attention to the challenge of globalizing business education. Bundai (1992) postulated that internationalizing a business education curriculum is an extension of any business curriculum. Zelif and Heldenbrand (1993) confirmed the importance of including international business competencies into the secondary business curriculum.

As information is now more readily accessible, it is easy to know what is going on around the world in a split second, and interaction with people from all around the world has become more and more frequent. This has implications for business education. Scott (1990) stated that 'Innovative business educators can strengthen the relevancy of the secondary school curriculum by developing needed international knowledge, skills, and attitudes in all secondary school business courses' (p.35). As Thanopoulos (1986, p.4) rightly pointed out, 'Of foremost significance is the ability to adapt to other people's turfs, to know the rules of their games, their cultures, their languages, and the international ethics.' The business curriculum should prepare students for that. A business curriculum with an international flavour should be considered. It could start by infusing international content into existing ones.

Hong Kong has long enjoyed the status of being an international city, and the economic prosperity of Hong Kong in the future may have to depend on our ability to compete effectively in the world economy. Recent years have seen an increase in demand for a stronger infusion of international perspectives into the business curriculum, brought about by the following three factors:

- many Hong Kong firms have become international in operation,
- the ever increasing number of international companies doing business in Hong Kong, and
- the increased interdependency among nations for economic growth.

With the change of sovereignty from Britain to China in 1997, the business curriculum would welcome a more international flavour. Global issues and their relevance to

business education need to be promoted, as internationalizing the business curriculum materials is necessary to equip students in Hong Kong with the skills and knowledge to compete in a global marketplace. It is also recommended in the examiner's report that students should keep abreast of current business activities in the ever-changing commercial world and try to stay informed of the current developments of commercial affairs (Examinations Authority, 1997). With the introduction of Business Fundamentals in S.1 - S.3, the globalization of business is dealt with, allowing topics like business environments, cooperation of countries, and the international business environment to be explored.

f. Entrepreneurship education/small business education

The French word *entrepreneur* is derived from two Latin roots, meaning *one who undertakes*. The goal of entrepreneurship education is to provide students with a broader look at career options and identify routes to achieve these options. It develops the skills and knowledge for business initiation and operation. It provides students with an understanding of business - in the perceptions of employers as well as those of employees. Educating for enterprise, educating about enterprise, and educating through enterprise are definitions offered by the Mini-enterprise in Schools Project (MESP) and Durham University Business School (DUBS). DUBS sees the specific aims of Enterprise Education as follows:

- fostering the personal development of young people,
- developing appropriate, transferable and useful skills and attitudes for young peoples' future roles as producers, consumers, citizens etc.,

- developing competency in numeracy, communication, decision-making and social skills,
- providing young people with a better understanding of how and why business - in its broadest sense – operates, and
- developing an awareness and appreciation of the roles of small business, entrepreneurship and self-employment in society (TVEI, 1992).

The provision of entrepreneurship education has been an issue in many countries. In Canada, for example, it is noted that there is an increase of new business start-ups each year and the need of entrepreneurship education is called upon (Clayton, 1989). The value of entrepreneurial education has been noted (Plaschka & Welsch, 1990; Standing Committee on Industry & Technology, 1990), and there are studies indicating the link between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial success (Ronstadt, 1985; Sexton & Upton, 1987). Ross et al. (1984) notes that it has been the policy of the US Department of Education to include entrepreneurship education and training in all vocational programmes in high schools since 1983, and the Commission (1987) in its report *The Role of Business Educators in Teaching Entrepreneurship* set forth the elements of entrepreneurship education to be incorporated into the business curricula. Kourilsky (1995, p.15) observes that since many young people want to start businesses and create jobs instead of taking jobs, it is appropriate to introduce to them entrepreneurship education.

Waldman (1997) stated that encouraging a more entrepreneurial attitude in students can 'result in broader benefits than just educating potential entrepreneurs in how to start a business. It will also provide them with general skills and outlooks that are

necessary for success in any venture' (p.22). His study has concluded that the introduction of entrepreneurship education at the high school stage has triggered students' interest in starting their own businesses sometime after leaving school.

The recent currency crisis in Hong Kong has led to a slowing down of the economy with an increase in the unemployment rate. Rents are lower, so are labour costs. It is easier now compared to a few years ago for people to start their own businesses on a small scale and the government also encourages people to develop a sense of entrepreneurship. There are courses on how to set up your own business. In this depressing economic situation, many graduates have contemplated being involved in small business development. If this is where the society of Hong Kong is heading, why not start entrepreneurship education early in the secondary business curriculum?

## 6. Teacher

The last section explores the different possibilities of the future secondary business curriculum. A curriculum is useless if it is not delivered. Teachers are agents who translate the curriculum into teaching. However, the "same" curriculum could be taught differently by different teachers resulting in students learning different things from different teachers in the "same" curriculum (McCutcheon, 1976). As it presently stands, business education may not be able to meet the future economic, societal and business needs of a changing Hong Kong. As explained in an earlier section, the role of business educators is vital. Business teachers cannot sit idly by and wait for things to happen. They must become proactive now and avoid the perceivable problems that lie ahead. They must equip themselves to serve their students. This section will focus

on the important area of business teachers in the future development of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools. Four issues, namely, the role of business teachers, the professionalization of business teachers, teacher training, and teaching methods will be dealt with.

a. The role of business teachers

The role of the teacher is changing. Decades ago, teachers were seen as knowledge providers but things started to change, and in 1975, Unesco identified the trends of change in the role of the teacher, pointing at a new direction, that is the strengthening of the links between theory and the realities of the classroom and the community in which the teacher works. The Hong Kong Education Commission (1992) in its fifth report proposed a more comprehensive scheme of professional training for raising the quality of the teaching profession. Lee (1993) asserts that professional development of teachers should mean much more than upgrading knowledge and skills. Teachers have to take a more leading role in the development of their subjects. The role of business teachers is summarized in the following paragraph:

Because of the rapid changes in society today as evidenced in technological advances which influence business activity and personal living, business educators have an expanding leadership and planning role in educational circles. Business teachers are increasingly involved in curriculum planning, in-service education programs, team teaching, and other educational endeavours. Many business teachers are working with other teachers in joint efforts for general education. Today the accomplishment of educational objectives appears to be more

important than “what belongs in this subject” or “who teaches it” (*This we believe about the expanding leadership and planning role of the business educator in general education*, 1971).

Business educators must be proactive, not reactive. Bartholome (1989) stresses that business teachers should be competent in the areas of curriculum development, professional development, and guidance and leadership. If business education is to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, business teachers must continue to change with the changing times. They must seek every opportunity to explain to the public the importance of business education. Regular meetings, conferences or seminars should be held to discuss issues in business education. They must take the lead to shape the business curriculum so that it can truly reflect the needs of both society and students.

La Salle (1993) noted the importance of business teachers to participate in establishing and promoting the establishment of a national set of curriculum guidelines for business subjects that are relevant to the nineties and to the turn of the century. His study addresses two questions to business educators throughout the U.S. They are (1) What should be offered in a business education programme that will prepare students for continued study and learning in the twenty-first century? and (2) What priorities are given to the subjects listed in the survey? The respondent's replies suggest that business educators should participate in establishing and promoting the establishment of a national set of curriculum guidelines that are relevant to the nineties and to the turn of the century, be equipped to teach IT courses, be prepared thoroughly to know the current trends in the world of work and the ever-changing economic society (national and global) in which we

live, and revise their programmes to eliminate the secretarial image. Another study by Carlock (1991:6) proposes that the business educators should do the following:

- take advantage of every opportunity to learn more about the international society, different cultures, and the changing world,
- establish an educational setting filled with such human values as acceptance of others, respect for all people's cultures, and an understanding of and competence in basic skills, productive work habits, and attitude development,
- be future oriented,
- look outside the classroom and beyond textbooks for information, knowledge, and research pertaining to international education,
- work with businesses to bring reality to the global society concept for students,
- establish a philosophy of lifelong learning in classes so students never stop thirsting for new knowledge of their changing world,
- encourage travel and student/teacher exchange programs that provide first-hand experiences, and are the best way to learn of other countries,
- join professional organizations teach students the skills of decision-making, critical thinking, and communicating,
- provide opportunities for creative problem-solving,
- encourage students to examine the relationships between global issues and local issues or concerns, and
- when reviewing, planning, and implementing curriculum changes, always keep in mind the global perspective.

Cummins & Sayers (1995) assert that business educators must take the lead to ensure that the business curriculum reflects current and future needs of students. They must also infuse global learning, ethics, and collaborative learning environments into their teaching.

In Asia, the APEID study of business teachers recommended the following as necessary qualities of a good business educator (1982):

- A prospective business teacher should be exposed to a wide variety of teaching and learning experiences including team teaching and learning in business offices.
- A business teacher should be recruited carefully and exposed thoroughly to a wide variety of business subjects.
- A business teacher should be prepared in such a way that he can behave like a professional person possessing all necessary knowledge, skills and competence required.
- A business teacher should continue his professional growth by all available means including innovative endeavours, constantly seeking of better ways to teach, professional papers writing, active participation in teachers and other professional associations, and research studies in business education, etc.
- Teacher upgrading centres responsible for providing in-service training for teachers and implementation of the same should be set up.
- On-the-job training of the teachers in the offices of business and industrial organizations should be organized.

- Continuous efforts should be made for upgrading teachers with the accreditation of certificate.

In Hong Kong, teachers of business education are very seldom involved in the development of the business curriculum. Only a few teachers participate in the CDC subject committee, which usually meets once a year to talk about the examination paper taken the previous year with very little focus on the future development of the subject. In order to better fulfill their role in the future as business educators with a mission and a vision, teacher training should be provided to teachers, and the professionalisation of business teachers should be realized.

b. The professionalisation of business teachers

Dedicated and motivated teachers boost the image of the profession. The Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (1975) in *This we believe about professionalism in business education* states that the business teacher as a professional:

- Is recognized for mastery of the content, theory, structure, and methodology of the business education field.
- Demonstrates a commitment to continuing study.
- Believes in the intrinsic potentiality of all learners and recognizes their desire to know, their desire for competence and mastery, and their purposes in life.
- Exhibits high standards of personal achievement and conduct.

- Makes contributions, based on experience and personal views, to the improvement of the profession and respects the contributions that others make.
- Demonstrates a commitment to the profession as evidenced by the quality of teaching, by growth in learning, and by participation in professional activities of the field.
- Places the status and development of business education above personal or specialized professional interests.
- Is respected by students, parents, colleagues, and the business community.
- Has a perspective for the total area of business education and an understanding of and respect for the inter-relatedness of the various parts.
- Has a substantial understanding of the role of state and federal governments in education and accepts responsibility for being an active agent for endorsement, refinement, and/or change in matters related to business education.

In determining what increases professionalism, Bennett (1988) did a national survey of business teachers in the U.S. and the responses revealed that business teachers do consider research high priority for increased professionalism in business education and the majority believed that business educators were not fulfilling their professional responsibilities in the area of research. La Salle (1993) proclaimed the importance of bringing the business teachers together where professionalisation is actualized (p.58):

It is increasingly evident that the changes needed in business education will not occur unless business educators at all levels join in a team effort designed to effect the kind of changes that are required....Working together as a team in schools and in professional associations will contribute much to bring about the needed changes

necessary to support strong business education programs that address the needs of today and the future. Teamwork is essential to that future!

White and Roach (1997) suggest that business teachers need to exhibit professionalism by staying current on teaching methodology. Additionally, they should 'attend workshops and business education conventions, develop their expertise in leadership, express concern for their profession, and continue to improve their teaching styles' (p.121).

In Hong Kong, the *Llewellyn Report* in 1982 sparked off interest in teacher professionalization where teachers join together to feel part of a "collegial network of professionals" and a "corporate professional entity" (III.8.31). The publication of *ECR5* (1992) further advocates the need for the professionalization of teachers. To develop professionalization, business teachers should join together and there should be a forum for them to express their opinions such that in the end they would improve themselves as professionals. Business education can be promoted and improved through professional publications such as newsletters, journals, and other resources that disseminate new research and other information of value about the field. An association for business educators should be formed with the provision of resource materials, promotion of the subjects taught, and the improvement of the quality of business teaching through training and seminars.

Some enthusiastic business teachers in Hong Kong grouped together and established the Hong Kong Association for Business Education in 1985. Through the association and the journal published, the aim was for business educators to have a venue to exchange experiences and share problems. Unfortunately, its aims have not been met.

For example, the journal stopped publishing after a few issues and the annual meeting does not draw much support from secondary business teachers.

### c. Teacher training

The importance of teaching training, may that be pre-service or in-service, is recognized by many (CERI, 1982; Cooke & Stimpson, 1991; O'Hair & Odell, 1995) and the needs of teachers should be identified before any training takes place. In Hong Kong, the *Llewellyn Report* (1982) shared a similar sentiment:

...the most common criticisms of in-service programs which we heard from teachers were: failure of the activities to meet the perceived needs of classroom practitioners...(p.94).

However important it is, very few studies dealing with the training needs of business teachers, may it be in-service or pre-service, have been carried out. In the U.S., Wray (1990) investigated the in-service education needs of Illinois secondary Marketing Education teachers. Wiedegreen (1992) identified the professional development needs of members of the Virginia Business Education Association. McEwen (1994) researched the in-service training needs of secondary accounting teachers. Hartley et al. (1990) and Thomas et al. (1989) studied the needs of vocational teachers. Brendel (1984) focused on the training needs of teachers. Lai (Quoted in Chung, 1997), the Curriculum Officer of business subjects, said in an interview that the following five training topics were ranked as the most needed by the business teachers at prevocational schools:

- acquiring skills to handle subject related equipment,
- acquiring computer skills,
- changing technology and its effect on the teaching of business education,
- preparing for curriculum changes, and
- guidance and counselling.

These studies have shown that keeping abreast with technology and updating skills and knowledge relevant to the subject are areas of concern for professional development. Teachers must therefore be trained continuously to cope with the new content and the technological changes if they are to successfully incorporate them in the business programme. Good teachers, with or without industrial experience, keep up to date.

In Hong Kong, when business education was first offered as a kind of vocational education, teachers of these subjects were graduates from Technical colleges (HKTTC). It was established in 1974 to train technical teaching staff for prevocational schools, technical secondary schools, technical institutes and grammar secondary schools with technical or commercial subjects. HKTTC also offers a number of short courses for in-service technical teachers and instructors who are working in the educational, governmental, commercial and industrial sectors of the community. These non-graduate teachers might have received enough training to cater to the needs of students in the sixties and seventies, but society in the eighties started to be more demanding. Morris (1987) lamented:

Superficially Commerce looks like a relatively easy subject to teach and this is one reason why it is usually taught by non-specialists (p.3).

When the CDC recommended teacher teaching for business teachers in 1986, the Faculty of Education of the University of Hong Kong responded and started training in-service business teachers on a part-time basis in 1986. Students who want to become business teachers could go through the pre-service teacher training offered by the University of Hong Kong in 1993. Thirteen years have passed and it remains the only structured in-service and pre-service training course for business teachers in Hong Kong. The Chinese University of Hong Kong also offers in-service training for POA teachers but the course is mainly taught by part-time staff. With the growth of business subjects, there is a demand for more and more business teachers and there is a new challenge to teacher education. Given enough resources and expertise, one may argue that teacher training for business teachers should exist beyond the graduate level. Courses leading to the Master of Education for business teachers should be considered and planned, for we need in the future business teachers who have the knowledge, experience and necessary qualifications to be involved in the planning and implementing of business curriculum relevant to the needs of Hong Kong. The involvement of business teachers is urgently called upon (The Report 1997):

To equip serving teachers of business and technological subjects with updated knowledge about the subjects to be taught, Government should commission tertiary institutes to run relevant teacher training courses. ED, on the other hand, should conduct seminars and workshops with emphasis on teaching methodology and classroom application. Furthermore, we recommend that there should be a

long-term plan for retraining teachers of business and technological subjects. The plan should include not only formal courses but also less formal retraining opportunities for these teachers, e.g. short attachment to an industry or business or to a VTC training centre relevant to their teaching subjects every three to five years to keep them close to the technological trend of the world (p.25).

Apart from the pre-service and in-service training course offered by the tertiary institutions for business teachers, the CDI and the ED also offer some training seminars or courses of short duration, mainly for the present business teachers. However, the present training organised by government officials is less than satisfactory. The problem is that the training usually comes as a result of changes in or the introduction of a new syllabus with the focus often on giving explanations of how and why the syllabus has changed. If further training is needed to provide teachers with more knowledge of the subjects, a very brief training course will be conducted. The provision of such training courses is piecemeal and ad-hoc, with little follow-up and evaluation. From the circular issued by the E.D. to schools, what the E.D. has done to develop business education in secondary schools is minimal. The biggest event seems to be the “Commercial Subjects Project Competition” held usually once every two years.

#### d. Teaching methods

Studies found that teachers perceived themselves to be the main determinant of the teaching approach they used (Taylor, 1975; Doyle and Ponder, 1977; Schools Council, 1981). This is true for most have the autonomy to teach freely in the classroom. If they can use methods to gain their students’ attention, then their students will be more

motivated to learn. Many students study well in a particular subject because their teachers use a variety of teaching methods that are interesting to them.

In business education, however, because of its descriptive nature, teachers tend to use methods such as chalk-and-talk and deductive modes of teaching students that are perceived as boring. Because the teacher uses demotivating methods to teach business education, the already low-band students will not be motivated to learn, and their results will be poor. Thus the vicious cycle continues. Morris (1987) comments on this with regard to the situation of Hong Kong:

If the teaching is boring, and if the pupils lack interest then it is learning that becomes problematic, not the teaching. Pupils will not be able to learn anything if they are bored, restless, and if there are discipline problems. Thus whilst Commerce is not a difficult subject to teach, it can be a difficult subject for pupils to learn if they are taught in a way which emphasizes the mere description of commercial institutions and processes (p.3).

A study done in Georgia, U.S., finds that both teachers and students of business education agree that an effective teacher 'is one who genuinely loves learning and helping others learn and reach their goals. The effective teacher is also one who challenges students to do their best' (Stitt-Gohdes & Kelly, 1992, p.46). The question then is what teaching methods should business teachers employ to motivate students to learn? Studies have shown that business teachers should focus on teaching methods that involve more learning by doing (Main, 1989; Malhotra, Tashchian, & Jain, 1989; Raymond & McNabb, 1993). Everett (1995) states that business teachers need to

choose as many activities as possible from the “real” world to teach business skills and knowledge to their students.

As the contents of business education involve the teaching of higher-order thinking skills such as problem-solving and decision making, business educators need to provide students with a foundation of higher-order thinking strategies that will, as suggested by Maxam (1990), ‘enable them to think through new situations and transfer specific knowledge, skills, and concepts practiced in the classroom to entirely new situations and applications found in the business world’ (p.32).

In Hong Kong, So and Yu (1996) studied what teaching methods business students prefer and recommended the use of problem-based learning in business education courses by quoting how much their students could learn from this teaching method:

We can learn through the process of finding, to keep in touch with practising commercial teachers to seek their advice, and to learn how to get along with classmates, most importantly, to broaden our horizons about the curriculum development, and to develop our critical thinking (p.37).

Yu (1996) also finds cooperative learning, defined by Johnson et al. (1994:3) as the instructional use of small groups that allows students to work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning, a good way to teach POA at secondary four and five levels. She asserts, ‘Cooperative learning provides opportunities for students to work together to accomplish common goals. Students share ideas, explain their

reasoning, notice their weak points in thinking and reach deeper understanding of POA' (p.63).

Cheng (1996), a secondary school teacher in Hong Kong, has adopted a student-centred teaching approach in teaching A-Level Business Studies and finds that students like learning business subjects through case studies. He thus suggested that this teaching approach is useful and should be practised as early as possible. His recommendation ties in with the findings of many (Oldham & Forrester, 1981; Lewis 1991, Cheung, 1992). Training Agency (1990) relates the development of business education in school with the flexible, student-centred approach teachers adopted in teaching. The comments by Shuell (1986) on the student-centred approach of teaching give a nice summary:

If students are to learn desired outcomes in a reasonably effective manner, then the teacher's fundamental task is to get students to engage in learning activities that are likely to result in their achieving those outcomes....It is helpful to remember that what the student does is actually more important in determining what is learned than what the teacher does (p.429).

It is noted in Hong Kong that though the above-mentioned teaching approaches are useful, many business teachers are reluctant to adopt them. The writer will show in the next section that the employment of different methods of teaching is associated with the form of assessment used in examinations. If project work is adopted as a means of assessment in public examinations for business subjects, then teachers will not hesitate

to employ such a teaching method. Similarly, if case studies are widely used in examinations, business teachers will employ this in their daily teaching.

## 7. Assessment

Over the years, teachers and business educators in Hong Kong have been advocating the adoption of different methods to assess students taking different business subjects (Lewis, 1991; Cheung, 1992). Using case studies in examination has long been called for, and Oldham & Forrester (1981) commented that the employing of case studies in business education will help students to develop a higher sense of thinking and that the solving of case studies does require the students' ability to apply, analyse, synthesize and evaluate. In some research of business teachers covering fifty high schools in North Carolina, U.S., McEwen (1994) found that the use of case studies and project work could encourage critical thinking in students. In Japan, the introduction of project work as a means of developing problem-solving skills and creativity in business subjects was adopted in 1994. It has been mentioned earlier in this chapter that using project work is a major feature of assessment methods in business education in the U.K. and the U.S. With the implementation of IT, students can retrieve information from the net, and that facilitates students to undertake project work.

In Hong Kong, the comments from the examiner's report clearly indicate that Hong Kong students at Certificate level and A-Level lack the ability to analyse in business subjects like commerce and business studies. More practice of these sorts of questions is recommended. Moreover, the use of case studies can enable students to match

learning experience with the reality, thus heightening the relevance of the curriculum. It agrees with the recommendation from the report on candidates' performance on Hong Kong A-Level Examination in the subject of business studies that students need more practice in doing cases and should put more emphasis on the application of concepts and theories in analysing problems (Examinations Authority, 1997).

Apart from case studies, project work as part of assessment can be considered. This is not a new idea as it is already happening in other subjects like chemistry, liberal studies, and government & public affairs. It suits business subjects as students can learn a lot of practical matters related to the knowledge they acquire while they are working on the projects. Recently in Hong Kong, a thorough examination of assessment methods is being undertaken. A review committee will look into the different possibilities, and the idea of having students assessed not only by one single public examination is being explored.

With the change in the forms of assessment, as discussed in the previous section, changes in the use of different methods of teaching by business teachers is inevitable. In the long run, both teachers and students will benefit, as knowledge is applied through working on case studies and project work.

## 8. Allocation of resources

Allocation of resources is of concern to the importance of a subject. Resources can be categorized into three types: physical resources, monetary resources, and time. When

the subject is regarded as important, money will be spent to further develop that subject. Similarly, facilities will be provided to enhance the development of the resources. With regard to facilities, the review of prevocational and technical education in 1997 recommends the provision of more resources for the teaching of business education. Computers have been installed for students studying business subjects. With regard to time, Bernstein (1971) stated that we assign time to what is regarded as important. For example, subjects like English and Chinese Language are given quite a substantial amount of time in the timetable whereas music and physical education, treated as marginalized subjects, are being neglected (Ng, 1998). The following table shows the number of lessons allocated to each subject in secondary schools in Hong Kong as suggested by the CDC. It is noted that the time allocated to the teaching of business subjects in S.4-5 is less than English Language, Chinese Language, and Mathematics, which are compulsory in almost every school, but is comparable to other subjects.

Table 10: A comparison of the number of hours per week allocated to each subject in secondary schools in Hong Kong

Subject/level	S.1-3	S.4-5	S.6-7
English Language	6-7	6-7	8
Chinese Language	6-7	6-7	8
Chinese History	2-3	4	8
Geography	2	4	8
History	2	4	4-5
Music	2	1-2	8
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>3-4</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Principles of Accounts</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>3-4</b>	<b>8</b>
Physics	NA	4	8
Chemistry	NA	4	8
Biology	NA	4	8
Mathematics	6	6	8

\*Commerce becomes Business Studies in S.6-7

With the change in society, there is much students need to learn besides the regular academic subjects. For example, some will suggest the inclusion of civic education to provide students with more knowledge about the society they are living in, and personal and social education is said to be of importance to tackle many teenage problems like poor human relationships and low self-image. Though the importance of business education is recognized, the inclusion of it will mean a sacrifice of other subjects. That implies a reallocation of resources, promotional aspects of teachers of

other subjects, and a rearrangement of the timetable. The trouble this causes may be too much for some principals.

## 9. Business links

The final group of issues that will have an effect on the development of the future secondary business curriculum is related to the external factor of business links. In this last section, three aspects, namely, the links with the business sector, placement, and expectation of work, will be looked into.

### a. The links with the business sector

Many see the importance of linking education with the business sector. For example, Sir Keith Joseph, the Secretary of State of Education of the U.K. stated: (1982)

Schools and business need to understand each other better. Business should be helped to appreciate the aims of the schools and the context in which these seek to achieve them. Conversely, schools and pupils need to be helped to understand how the nation earns its living in the world. This involves helping pupils to understand how industry and commerce are organized; the relationship of producers and consumers; the process of wealth creation.

After comparing the business and industry involvement with education in Britain, France and Germany, Noah & Eckstein (1988) commented:

This exclusion of business/industry from general education has been modified somewhat in recent years, as schools have recognised that they need to improve collaboration with the world of work. It is increasingly conceded that educators need to become better informed about employers' wishes; that, as education becomes more costly, it can profit from the material and political support the business sector can provide; and that the schools need access to the workplace in order to bring a greater degree of realism and sense of immediacy to their curricula (p.62).

Studies have shown that effective business links have a positive effect on standards of business education (Business Education and Economics, An Inspection Review 1993-1995). Business education has a theoretical background as well as a practical reality. Students learn theories regarding organizational behaviour, investment models, accounting principles and the like. They also need to know the practical side of business education. Since business education is by nature a subject that relates to daily business activities, the connections between the subjects and the practical business field are essential. The acquisition of real-life experience and practical approaches is vital to the study of business. Many skills and knowledge cannot be extracted from books, but are gained by the field practice. In a study measuring career maturity, Pumfrey and Schofield (1982) found that 'pupils who undertook work experience scored significantly higher than those who did not'.

In fact, business and education working together in the planning and evaluation of programmes in business education has many benefits (Coffey, 1992). For business, these benefits include a supply of potential employees trained to meet labour market needs. Education benefits from better linkage through up-to-date training, work experience that relates theory to practice, and potential job opportunities. Educators in return receive updated information and resource support from business. Crews and Stitt-Gohdes (1995) conclude that a partnership between educators and business and industry will facilitate the development of best practice business education programmes.

Waters (1979a) spoke about the importance of school / industry links in Hong Kong, but still the involvement of the business sector in education in Hong Kong is very minimal, ranging from sponsoring the establishment of a school to the founding of scholarships, with very little participation in the running of the school. The only exception is The Hang Seng School of Commerce (HSSC). The Hang Seng Bank had long organized a part-time Elementary Banking Programme as a community service. Then the HSSC was established in 1980 to offer full time training at post Form Five level to students to take up careers in Hong Kong's commercial and financial sectors on completing a basic course of study. Later in 1995, it became a regular sixth form college subsidized by the government to provide A-Level courses to students.

## b. Placement

Education and business can collaborate in a number of ways. Leading personnel from the business and industrial sector can be involved in the planning of the business curriculum. Furthermore, placements for teachers and students could be offered.

The placement programme is vital for teachers and students of business education as a linkage between the workplace and the classroom. By actually incorporating education into real world situations, placements will help to bridge the gap between school and work. Students could taste what it is like in the real business world where teachers could have updated knowledge of business practices. Placement for teachers enables them to have better experience or understanding of business, industry or technology; their attitudes are influenced accordingly and, in turn, influence students. Kitson (1985) states that 'Awareness of current trends and developments in business is a vital part of the weaponry of an effective teacher of business studies, just as it is for any other teacher in his/her own field' (p.14). Placement can help students solve problems, applying the knowledge learned into real life. In addition to the above, Raymond & McNabb (1993) conclude from their study that placements can teach students to think, examine ethical issues, and compete in a global marketplace.

A similar view is expressed by Bujea (1987) after reviewing the business education literature from different countries:

Cooperative work experience in business is another way to increase the skills and abilities of business educators. It is a very practical and effective way to accomplish the retraining of in-service business educators. Business, industry and community leaders along with business educators should be active participants in determining the educational objectives and course content for the new and changing environment (p.25).

and

...business educators should have an in-service one-semester work experience, probably occurring once every five years (p.39).

Work experience is a means of helping students acquire skills and habits which will enable them to move smoothly into the world of work and obtaining feedback from employers on students' levels of competence. Through placement, students will be able to taste what is involved in work and thus help them decide which career paths to follow upon graduation and business teachers to understand the real situation. In the U.S., the National Business Education Association has a business partnership with Manpower Temporaries, allowing business teachers to get hands-on experience in business.

In Hong Kong, the notion of placement was regarded as important by many business educators at a conference where the following recommendations were made (Cheung & Lewis, 1995):

- Business firms should open their doors so that students could pay visits to different kinds of firms and do their project work on various business operations.
- Attachments to business firms during seasonal holidays and the summer vacation would be greatly beneficial to graduating students in commercial disciplines.
- The curriculum should be changed to meet the demands of the business environment.

The recent *Report of Prevocational and Secondary Technical Education in Hong Kong* also echoes this view (1997):

To maintain and enhance the quality of technical education, it is important that schools and employers work in partnership. Government should, through chambers of commerce and federation of industries, fully involve the business and industry sector in developing, updating and evaluating the technical curricula in prevocational and secondary technical schools to ensure that they are in line with technological development and the needs of our economy. The business and industry sector should also support or sponsor the implementation of related technical education programmes in schools. This would widen the perspectives of teachers and students of the world at work, match employers' needs more precisely and result in closer links between schools and the business and industry sector (p.26).

The Hong Kong Prevocational Schools Council has worked with the Clothing Industry Authority, Metal Working Industry Training Centre and Retailing Training Centre of the VTC, and Hong Kong Food Council to organise workplace educational

programmes for students. A short course of three to five days is scheduled to provide learning and working experience for students. This programme is well-received and further support from the commercial and industrial sectors is sought.

c. Expectation of work

The relationship between education and employment is a complex one in which the worlds of school and work have traditionally enjoyed separate and relatively autonomous status. Though education performs different functions for different persons there is, however, a responsibility upon general education to prepare students for an adult existence in which work is an important aspect of their lives. The relationship between business education and work is recognised by Sculley (1987), the 1987 Delta Pi Epsilon Distinguished Lecturer, when he perceived that in the future young people will have three or four or five careers during their lifetime, meaning that education, and 'especially business education, has a responsibility not to end at the boundaries of the institution and become a lifelong experience'.

When business education first started as part of vocational education, it aimed to prepare students with skills and knowledge so as to work in the future. So what kind of a business curriculum is needed in order to fully equip students to fulfil their roles as productive employees in the future? In order to answer this question, one has to find out what employers want from their employees. There is evidence that employers also seek, in addition to academic qualifications, various qualities, attitudes, and personal attributes. Blackburn and Mann in their survey of the "Working Class in the Labour Market" (1979) found that 'Responsibility and discipline are...the qualities valued by management and thought to be in short supply'. The Holland Report for the

Manpower Services Commission in the U.K. (1977) stated that ‘Most firms emphasized...that personality, alertness, and other qualities were more important than paper qualifications’. In its response to the British Government’s Green Paper on higher education in 1986, the Confederation of British Industry asserted that employers were placing more and more emphasis on personal qualities, which cannot be taken for granted even in applicants with very good academic qualifications. The ability to communicate, both orally and in writing, together with good motivation, potential leadership qualities, breadth of outlook and a positive attitude to change, are obvious requirements alongside numeracy and specialist skills. A survey of employers’ needs carried out in 1987 by the Polytechnic of Wales found that qualities such as “reliability and trustworthiness”, “willingness to learn”, and “ability to work as a member of a team” were rated more important than formal qualifications. Similarly, Birmingham University’s “Quality of Higher Education Project” in 1994 found that “willingness to learn”, “teamwork”, “communication skills”, and “problem-solving” were among the most desirable attributes of graduate employees.

McCoy and Reed (1991), in their survey of 148 small business employers, concluded that schools should teach youngsters basic skills like maths, reading, and writing, along with specialized skills needed for technology, business, public service, personal service and consumer occupations, as well as healthy habits and the old-fashioned work ethic.

Hallak and Calliods (1981), in their studies of work and employment in several countries, have adopted a three-fold classification for firms’ approaches to recruitment. They cite three broad categories - (a) cognitive criteria, which include mainly educational and training aspects; (b) ascriptive criteria such as age, status, and health; and (c) affective criteria which determine personal qualities and attitudes.

In the U.S., studies have shown that employers want an employee to be competent in the basic skills for entry-level jobs, and work-related social skills and habits such as being presentable, responsible, cooperative, enthusiastic, communicative, positive in work attitudes, disciplined, responsible, and flexible are regarded as significant (Cambell and Sechler, 1984; Crain, 1984; Gainer, 1988; Carnevale, Gainer, and Meltzer, 1989; Vasu & Frazier, 1989; South Carolina Council, 1990; U.S. Department of Labour, 1991; Anderson-Yates & Penny, 1996; Smith, Jones, & Lane, 1997).

In a seminar “Graduate Output and Graduate Employment in Hong Kong” held in April 1993, the University of Hong Kong Careers Advisory Board cited the following “core competencies” that major employers would like to see in their employees: communication skills, analytical reasoning, lateral thinking, practical orientation, interpersonal sensitivity, motivation, planning, decision making, leadership, and emotional stability.

In the context of business education, The Committee for Economic Development (1985), in its report *Investing in Our Children*, emphasised the importance of the “invisible curriculum”:

Business needs people who have learned how to learn. Schools should demand higher standards of behaviour from their students, and they should institute policies and practices that encourage students to develop such positive traits as self-discipline, reliability, and perseverance. Improving this “invisible curriculum” should be as important as upgrading instruction in basic academic skills (p.2).

It declared that business is not 'interested in narrow vocationalism. They prefer a curriculum that stresses literacy and mathematical and problem solving skills' (p.6). Therefore business education should continue to provide practical skills related to the workplace outside the school, and offer broad enough knowledge for students to pursue further studies and be adaptable to changes in the future. The problem is that when you choose the first avenue, then you are doomed to the kind of business education with low-status, training clerks and secretaries. So instead of having a descriptive business education initially, maybe we need to start with a general business education to equip students with adequate knowledge to survive and adapt well in this society and then prepare them with a more specialised knowledge like accounting and finance to prepare them for future jobs or further studies in tertiary institutions in that area. For business education to fulfill its mission by preparing students for future employment, it first has to ask what kinds of employment it is preparing students for and how it can deliver the necessary preparation. Unlike in the past where general basic skills only refer to reading and writing, business education in the future should equip students with basic skills like communications, information technology, reasoning and problem-solving. Mundrake and Brown (1987) put it nicely:

Business educators will search for ways to develop and integrate reasoning and problem-solving skills into the repertoire of students going into the labour force, as well as continue to develop and refine their communication and computational skills. As job titles change through organisational changes for efficiency and technological integration, basic skills alone are not guarantee of employment (p.19).

In the nineties, business education will be faced with a continuing need to adapt to technological change and to prepare its traditional students to adapt to a constantly changing workplace, requiring more skill. Business educators at all levels will also need to provide non-traditional students with training and upgrading to maintain and increase skills for current and future positions (p.20).

Ober (1989:6) perceives that the real future of secondary business education is in the genuine and systematic teaching of basic skills, work habits, and attitudes that are necessary for employment. Bailey (1990) points out that there will be fewer opportunities in the future for workers who lack basic skills and thus more education is needed. Besides teaching students skills and knowledge, secondary business education should also focus on productive work habits and attitude development. NBEA (1992) believes that future jobs will require workers 'who have the analytical thinking skills to solve problems, who can communicate well, who can read and understand what they have read, who have a firm grounding in English and math, and who can continue to learn as jobs continue to change' (p.1). Williams and Yeomans (1994) advocated that skills-based courses in typing and office practice were appropriate to a fordism economy, but are no longer relevant under post-fordism with its new, more fluid work processes and organizational structures.

In Hong Kong, a research study published by Cheung & Lewis (1998) indicates that what employers expect of school-leavers is a general knowledge of skills with a good work attitude. Renwick (1992) noted that the communication skills and interpersonal sensitivity of employees are as important as the business skills and knowledge they acquire from schools. In a recent meeting between business educators and

representatives from business firms, the opinion was expressed that many graduates nowadays do not have a correct working attitude (Cheung, 1996). They are labelled as inconsiderate, insensitive, and irresponsible. A good secondary business curriculum must strike for a balance between the visible skills and knowledge delivered and the attitude students pick up from the invisible curriculum. Perhaps the industrial / business sector should be more actively involved to ensure the quality of the future workforce in Hong Kong.

#### **4.2 A summary of literature review**

Research in Hong Kong on business education was sparse. The historical document was significant in tracing the development of secondary business education in Hong Kong and papers presented and discussion raised from the two business education conferences organized at the University of Hong Kong were essential, leading to many of the issues and concerns in business education described in this chapter.

From the wealth of literature review just quoted, many issues and concerns of business education are discussed. The issues and concerns addressed are not just merely a listing of points, but involve analysis and interpretation along certain themes. They served as the basis of the questions put forth in the questionnaire survey and interview.

There are three parts of issues and concerns in business education as identified in this study. The first part deals with the theoretical background of business education where

the role, the aims, and the status of business education are discussed in depth. The second part concerns what the future business curriculum in secondary schools should be like. Issues and concerns like the use of IT, the deletion and introduction of various business subjects and the revision of contents of business education are discussed. The third part focusses on the how and what the allocation of resources, teachers, and business links can affect the secondary business curriculum.

The different policy statements on various issues related to business education as addressed by the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education were significant to deal with both the philosophies and issues and concerns in business education in different period of time. Bujea's research (1987) is significant as it presents an extensive literature review of business education of authors from Canada, the United Kingdom and the U.S., leading to the discussion of various issues and concerns in business education in this study. Researches done by TVEI (1992) in the U.K. and La Salle (1993) in the U.S. help to identify factors contributing towards good practice in business education and some of the issues were discussed extensively in this chapter. From these sources came insights of different issues and concerns in business education and each major issue is broken down into smaller analysis where relevant literature is reviewed to substantiate the points put forth.

The questions about the aims and objectives of secondary business education in the questionnaire and the interviews were inspired by policy statements framed by the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education in the U.S., the description by TVEI in the U.K. of what secondary business education should provide, and the various syllabi of business subjects recommended by the CDC in Hong Kong. The

research of Castellano (1992), Yopp (1994), and Crews & Stitt-Gohdes (1995) gave rise to the questions about whether business education should be made compulsory in secondary schools. The work of Moore & Hanes (1987), Noah & Eckstein (1988), and Cheung & Lewis (1995), together with the research done by Bujea (1987) and the Commission's policy statement (1977) formed the basis of the questions exploring the relationship between secondary business education and general education.

Issues relating to the academic and/or vocational side of secondary business education formed the basis for another set of questions that both the survey and interviews embodied. These were inspired by the writings of Love & Gloeckner (1992), McEwen *et al.* (1992), Hull (1993), Hyland (1993), and Print (1995). The question about the status of business education arose as a result of the work of Gaskell (1986), Goodson & Marsh (1996), Sifuna (1992) in Africa, and Boyd & Lee (1994) in Taiwan. Questions about what business teachers could do to elevate the status of business education were suggested by the writings of Fry (1988) and Stout (1997). Wambrod's work (1987) and the Review of Prevocational and Secondary Technical Education (1997) dealt with the questions of the linkage between subjects.

A number of questions about the business curriculum of the future were included in both the questionnaire and the interviews. The literature reviewed recognised the importance of IT in business education, and the surveys done by Kizzier (1991), Davies (1995), and Lepper (1997) all confirmed the heavy use of IT in business education. These findings, together with the action taken by the Education Department in 1993 and the emphasis on the importance of IT by the Chief Executive, Mr. Tung, in 1997, led the writer to ask questions related to the use of IT in business education in both the questionnaire and the interviews.

Questions were asked in the questionnaire and in the interviews about what should be added to the business curriculum in the future. The study by Frankeberger (1990) and Lewis (1994), as well as responses to a questionnaire sent to all secondary schools by the Curriculum Development Institute suggested the usefulness of a question about whether typewriting should be replaced by word-processing. The idea of introducing business mathematics in Hong Kong originated from Chow 's work (1996); and a question along those lines was in both the questionnaire and the interviews. A decline in values among young people, at least as reported by the local newspapers, inspired the researcher to ask in this study if it is necessary to teach values/ethics in business education.

'Internationalisation' has been a popular term in business education, and the findings of many (Carlock, 1991; Virginia, 1991; Bundai, 1992; Zelif & Heldenbrand 1993; Ostheimer, 1996) have confirmed the importance of integrating the concept of internationalisation into the business curriculum. The present research takes up the question of whether the secondary business curriculum should be more internationally focused. The provision of entrepreneurship education has also been an issue (Clayton, 1989; Plaschka & Welsch, 1990; Waldman, 1997). Kourilsky (1995) argued for the introduction of entrepreneurship education in the business curriculum; and there was a related question in the present study.

A number of questions in both the questionnaire and the interviews concerned the qualifications and methods of those responsible for the teaching of business. The issue of the professionalization of teachers, for example, was investigated along lines suggested by the work of La Salle (1993), Cummins & Sayers (1995), White & Roach (1997), and two business education conferences held in Hong Kong. Questions

concerning teaching methods (Everett, 1995; Cheng, 1996; So & Yu, 1996), methods of assessment (Lewis, 1991; Cheung, 1992; McEwen, 1994), and teacher training (Wiedegreen, 1992; McEwen, 1994; Lai, 1996) were also asked in the questionnaire and the interviews. Ng (1998) has argued that marginalized subjects are allocated less time in the timetable; and the present study, through the questionnaire and the interviews, asks of both principals and teachers whether Ng's findings hold true in the field of business education.

Finally, the issue of business links was dealt with in both the questionnaire and the interviews. Building upon the work of Coffey (1992), Crews & Stitt-Gohdes (1995), and Waters (1979) in Hong Kong, the questionnaire and the interviews explored respondents' views about the involvement of business and industry in education. The related issue of placement, arising from the work of Kitson, (1985), McNabb (1993), and Cheung & Lewis (1995), was also addressed in the questionnaire and the interviews.

It is hoped that the present study would contribute to the literature with a comprehensive study in the development of the past and future of secondary business education in Hong Kong and fill in some gaps of knowledge that now exist in the issues and concerns of business education.

Having identified the issues and concerns about the past, present, and future development of business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong, the next chapter will discuss the research methods used in this study in order to answer the research questions identified in chapter one.

## **Chapter 5: Methodology**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research design, selection of the teachers, principals, and students, the survey method, development of the questionnaire and validation procedures, data collection, and statistical techniques chosen for data analysis.

### **5.1 Introduction**

The writer will first distinguish between “method” and “methodology”, which are often used interchangeably. In this research, “methodology” denotes the “logic-in-use” involved in selecting particular observational techniques, assessing their yield of data, and relating these data to theoretical propositions. “Method”, on the other hand, refers to the sequence of operations employed to extract information.

There are many research methods that could be employed as described in the relevant literature (Best & Kahn, 1993; Goom & Woods, 1993; Vockell, 1995; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996; Charles, 1998). They fall mainly into two dimensions: quantitative and qualitative. The former focuses on the production of data through counting and measuring while the latter reports observations in the natural language of the context without making counts or assigning numbers to the observations. Patton (1990) briefly describes the two as:

Qualitative methods permit the evaluation to study selected issues in depth and detail. Approaching fieldwork without being constrained to the depth, openness and detail of qualitative inquiry. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, require the use of standardized measures so that varying perspectives and experiences of people can be fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned.

The advantage of a quantitative approach is that it is possible to measure the reactions of a great many people to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of the data. This gives a broad, generalizable set of findings presented succinctly and parsimoniously. By contrast, qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases. This increases understanding of the cases and situations studied but reduces generalizability (pp.13-14).

Many researchers have proposed the use of the two approaches though they differ in nature (Husen, 1988; Sherman, 1992). Patton (1990) even recommends the use of multiple methods in research:

Studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method than studies that use multiple methods in which different types of data provide cross-data validity check (p.188).

It is important to decide which method to employ in the study as it will influence the outcome. Before making a decision, it is advisable to first look at the research questions asked, for these will greatly influence the choice of research methods. Strauss and Corbin (1990) state:

The ways that one asks the research question is extremely important because that determines to a large extent the research method that is used (p.36).

In this study, the following questions are posed:

- Why has business education emerged as part of the curriculum in secondary schools in Hong Kong?
- How do principals, teachers and students perceive business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong?
- What are the issues involved in the future development of business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong?

## **5.2 Research methods**

Three levels of questions were studied and three major research methods were employed in this study. An overview of the research methodology in this study is

provided in Table 11. Each of the research methods used for collecting the data is described and explained below.

Table 11: Questions asked and methods employed in this study

Levels of analysis	Questions	Methods
I. Policy level	Why has business education emerged as part of the curriculum in secondary schools in Hong Kong?	Documentary analysis and interviews
II. School level	How do secondary principals, business teachers, and students perceive business education?	Questionnaires and interviews
III. Subject level	What are the issues in the future development of secondary business education?	Questionnaires and interviews

Level one deals with the policy context aiming at examining the origin and purposes of the development of business education. Documentary analysis and interviews were the methods employed.

To provide an understanding of why the policy emerged, the researcher first traced the various documents related to the development of business education in secondary schools. After identifying the key personnel involved, the writer interviewed them in depth. The interviews took the form of face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, and questions and answers through correspondence. These interviews provided the researcher with a clearer understanding of the processes of policy making and the politics that surround it. From these sources emerged a “thick description” of the development of business education (Geertz, 1973:7).

Level two deals with the school context aiming at examining the problems and issues in developing business education in schools. Questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews were the methods employed.

Questionnaires were sent to principals, business teachers and secondary students taking business subjects to seek their views on business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong. Follow-up interviews were conducted later to gain better understanding of respondents' views.

Level three deals with the subject itself. The aim is to examine the perceptions of principals, business teachers and secondary students taking business subjects, towards business education and discuss the issues involved in the future development of business education in secondary schools. Questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews were the methods employed.

There are three sets of questionnaires tailored for the three different types of target respondents: the principals, teachers, and students.

The questionnaires allowed the researcher to build up a general understanding of the respondent's view towards different aspects of business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong. The follow-up interviews provide the researcher with a better understanding of the respondent's perceptions, which is necessary in the analysis of the results and statistics from the questionnaire survey.

### **5.3 Documentary analysis**

Part of this thesis involved a historical study and the researcher employed documentary analysis aiming to

- examine the reasons leading to the development of business education in secondary schools, and
- what has been done in the development of such education?

In order to analyse a curriculum it is necessary first to look at what motivated and guided its developers. Posner (1992, p.35) sums it up nicely:

Curricula, like constitutions, treaties, and laws, must be understood in terms of their historical context. Who were the architects of the curriculum, and what were their guiding principles? What existing educational situation - including current curricula - or set of problems was the curriculum addressing? To what social or political pressures was the curriculum responding? What was the focus of the curriculum development effort?

The documentary analysis conducted in this research attempted to answer some of the above questions mentioned by Posner on the development of business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong.

The main types of documents collected were:

1. Official documents

The E.D. published these documents. They are:

- Commercial Subjects in Secondary Schools: Views Expressed by the Commercial Subjects Section, Advisory Inspectorate, E.D.(1976)
- Commercial Subjects in Secondary Schools: A Report of Recent Visits to Schools In Response to a Survey by E.R.E.(1976)
- Teaching Syllabuses of Commercial Subjects for Secondary Schools, CDC (1976)

- Teaching Syllabuses of various Business Subjects for Secondary Schools, CDC (1977-1996)
- 2. Circulars
- 3. Minutes of the subject committee
- 4. Annual report of business subjects examined
- 5. Advisory reports from various committees
- 6. White Paper

#### **5.4 Questionnaire survey**

The use of a questionnaire survey is to determine what people are thinking, whether it is about the extent of something they know or their values or beliefs or attitudes towards a certain issue. It is useful for extracting information needed for decision-making.

According to Nachmias (1987), the use of the questionnaire has the following advantages:

- Low cost - It is cheaper than personal interviewing. It does not require a trained staff of interviewers; all it needs is the cost of planning, sampling, duplicating, mailing, and providing stamped, self-addressed envelopes for the returns. The processing and analysis are usually also simpler and cheaper than those of the personal interview.
- Greater anonymity - The assurance of anonymity with postal questionnaires is helpful when dealing with sensitive issues.
- Reduction in bias - A postal questionnaire reduces biasing errors that might result from personal characteristics of interviewers.
- Accessibility - A postal questionnaire permits wide geographic contact with minimal cost.
- Considered answers and consultations - A postal questionnaire is preferable when questions demand a considered rather than an immediate answer.

Despite these advantages, there are limitations in using a questionnaire:

- It is difficult to know the conditions under which the questionnaire is answered, and
- Unacknowledged ignorance and unconscious biases are difficult to detect.

## 1. The questionnaire design

The design of the questionnaire started in January 1996. In this study, three sets of questionnaires were employed. A preliminary review of the literature related to business education was performed to look for suitable questions to be included in the questionnaire, but it was found that there were very few existing questionnaires that measure views about business education in secondary schools. There were a substantive number of materials regarding various issues of business education in secondary schools, and based on the relevant literature, the researcher designed the questionnaire. The initial draft was ready by the end of August 1996. There were three sets of questionnaires, one for principals, one for business teachers, and one for students taking business education. The questionnaires contained different sections asking for respondents' background and their general view of different issues of business education. The respondents were asked to respond to each item indicating their general view of different issues of business education by selecting the appropriate response on a 5-point Likert-type scale of 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree). There are different procedures to develop measures of attitude. Tittle and Hill (1967) did an important study concerned with the use of attitude scales. They compared the effectiveness of various types of attitude scales (Guttman, Likert, Self-Rating, Semantic Differential) in predicting objective indices of voting behaviour and found that the Likert scale was superior to all other scale types. The Likert method of constructing and applying attitude scales is regarded by far the most common and easiest method of developing scales needed in research projects (Borg & Gall, 1989; Keats, 1997).

The questionnaires completed by principals and teachers were in English whereas those completed by students were in Chinese. This means that the questionnaires for students were translated into Chinese. A pilot study was done in October 1996. After the pilot test, the respondents, fifteen teachers, eleven principals, and thirteen students were interviewed by the researcher to see if changes should be made in the questionnaires. Views were expressed and minor changes were made. The final draft of questionnaire was ready in March 1997.

## 2. Structure of the questionnaire

There are three sets of questionnaires. They contained questions which were used to obtain information on the following:

- a. Background information of respondents.
- b. Perceptions of respondents about their general view of different issues of business education with regard to the aims of secondary business education, status of secondary business education, secondary business curriculum, recruitment of business teachers, and resource allocation and the use of technology in business education.
- c. Opinions and suggestions of respondents towards the above-mentioned issues of business education.

### 3. Questionnaire for principals (Qh.)

The survey instrument for principals consisted of three sections with a total of 32 questions (Appendix 1). Section 1 of the survey instrument was used to gather background information concerning the respondents. The second section contained a total of eight items designed to measure the respondents' perceptions of why secondary schools offered / did not offer business education in their curriculum. Section three contained twenty-one questions, involving five themes: aims of secondary business education, status of secondary business education, secondary business curriculum, recruitment of business teachers, and resource allocation and the use of technology in business education. These themes explore respondents' views and perceptions of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools. For sections two and three, respondents were asked to respond to each item by selecting the appropriate response on a 5-point Likert-type scale of 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree).

It took around fifteen minutes to complete the questionnaire. Below is a description and explanation of each question with regard to its aim and structure.

#### a. Background information

Question 1 identifies the nature of the school and question 2 checks if the respondent's school offers any business education. Question 3 asks how old the respondent's school is.

b. On reasons concerning schools not offering business education (Table 12)

A review of the literature showed some reasons why schools did not offer business education. The following eight questions are intended to find out, in the respondents' views, reasons why some secondary schools in Hong Kong do not offer business education.

Question 4 aims to identify whether it was because parents did not think it was a good idea for the school to offer business education. Question 5 aims to identify whether it was because teachers did not think it was a good idea for the school to offer business education. Question 6 aims to identify whether it was because there was no room for business education in the present timetable. Question 7 aims to identify whether it was because the present business education curriculum was too simple. Question 8 aims to identify whether it was because business education is of low status. Question 9 aims to identify whether it was because students could take business education after graduating from secondary school. Question 10 aims to identify whether it was because students did not like to study business education. Question 11 aims to identify whether it was because it was difficult to recruit teachers to teach business subjects.

Table 12: On reasons concerning schools not offering business education

Item no.	Statement
Qh.4.	Parents do not think it is a good idea for the school to offer business subjects.
Qh.5.	Teachers do not think it is a good idea for the school to offer business subjects.
Qh.6.	There is no room for business subjects in the present timetable.
Qh.7.	The present business education curriculum is too simple.
Qh.8.	Business education is of low status.
Qh.9.	Students can take business subjects after graduating from secondary school.
Qh.10.	Students do not like to take business subjects.
Qh.11.	It is difficult to recruit teachers to teach business subjects.

c. Aims of secondary business education (Table 13)

The aims of secondary business education can both be found from the policy statements and the syllabus of different business subjects. Questions 12, 14, and 32 deal with the aims of business education. Question 12 asks if business education in secondary schools should aim to prepare students for entering the faculty of business at university. Question 14 asks if business education in secondary schools should aim to prepare business professionals for Hong Kong. Question 32 asks if secondary business education should prepare students with general business knowledge.

Table 13: Principals' perceptions of the aims of secondary business education

Item no.	Statement
Qh.12.	Business education in secondary schools should aim to prepare students for entering the faculty of business at university.
Qh.14.	Business education in secondary school should aim to prepare business professionals for Hong Kong.
Qh.32.	Business education should provide students with general business knowledge.

d. Status of secondary business education (Table 14)

The literature review showed that the status of secondary business education was low with different reasons. The following questions deal with the status of business education. Question 17 checks the status of business teachers in the eyes of other teachers as perceived by the respondents. Question 21 deals with the question of whether business subjects are difficult. Question 23 asks whether parents prefer their children to study business education. Question 25 aims to identify if students studying business education in secondary schools are of lower academic ability. Question 27

aims to find out whether selectors for business faculties in tertiary institutions regard business subjects at A-Level or CE as a prerequisite. Question 29 checks the status of business teachers in the eyes of the principals. Question 31 asks if secondary business education is regarded as superior to other subjects by most secondary students and teachers.

Table 14: Principals' perceptions of the status of secondary business education

Item no.	Statement
Qh.17.	Teachers of business education are perceived by teachers of other subjects as inferior.
Qh.21.	The content of business subjects taught in secondary school now is simple.
Qh.23.	Parents like their children to take business subjects in secondary schools.
Qh.25.	Only students of lower academic ability will take business subjects in secondary schools.
Qh.27.	Admission tutors for business faculties in tertiary institutions should regard business subjects at A-level or CE as a prerequisite.
Qh.29.	I think teachers of other subjects have higher status than teachers of business subjects.
Qh.31.	Secondary business education enjoyed better status than other subjects did.

e. Secondary business curriculum (Table 15)

From the literature review, quite a lot have been said on the relationship between business education and general education, as well as with vocational education. Questions 15, 16, 24, and 28 aim to identify the relationship between business education and education in general. Question 15 asks if business education should be made compulsory for every secondary student. Question 16 explores the possibility of having two sets of business curriculum. Question 24 asks if business education should start in S.1. Question 28 explores the relationship between secondary business education and vocational education.

Table 15: Principals' perceptions of secondary business curriculum

Item no.	Statement
Qh.15.	Business education should be compulsory for every secondary student.
Qh.16.	There should be two sets of business curriculum – one for vocational education and one for general education.
Qh.24.	Business education should begin in S.1.
Qh.28.	The academic side of business education should be more emphasized.

f. Recruitment of business teachers (Table 16)

Questions 13 and 26 are about the recruitment of business teachers. Question 13 aims to find out if it is difficult to recruit teachers teaching business subjects and Question 26 asks if university business graduates want to become teachers upon graduation.

Table 16: Recruitment of business teachers

Item no.	Statement
Qh.13.	Compared with other subjects, it is relatively difficult to recruit teachers of business subjects.
Qh.26.	Most university business graduates do not take teaching as their first career choice.

g. Resource allocation and the use of technology in business education (Table 17)

The following questions deal with the allocation of resources to business subjects. Question 18 compares the time allocated to business subjects and other subjects. Question 19 asks whether students of business education are given priority in using computers in school. Question 20 compares the resources allocated to business subjects and other subjects. Question 22 deals with the use of computers in business

education. Question 30 asks whether there should be more involvement of business and industrial sectors in the planning of the business education curriculum

Table 17: Resource allocation and the use of technology in business education

Item no.	Statement
Qh.18.	Compared with other subjects, the allocation of time for teaching business education in the present timetable of my school is adequate (Don't answer this question if your school does not offer business education).
Qh.19.	Students of business education are not given a high priority in using computers in my school. (Don't answer this question if your school does not offer business education)
Qh.20.	Compared with other subjects, fewer resources are allocated to business subjects in my school.
Qh.22.	The use of computer and information technology in business education should be emphasized.
Qh.30.	The business/industry sector should be more fully involved in the planning of the business education curriculum.

#### 4. Questionnaire for students (Qp.)

The survey instrument for gathering data for the study consisted of sections with a total number of 25 questions (Appendix 2). Section 1 of the survey instrument was used to gather background information concerning the respondents. The second section contained a total of 22 items designed to measure the respondents' perceptions of secondary business education in Hong Kong. The questions are categorized into six themes: students studying business education, aims of secondary business education, status of secondary business education, secondary business curriculum, assessment, and placement. Respondents were asked to respond to each item by selecting the appropriate response on a 5-point Likert-type scale of 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree).

This questionnaire took around twenty minutes to complete. Below is a description and explanation of each question with regard to its aim and structure.

a. Background of respondents

Questions 1 to 3 collect such background information of the students as their gender, the type of schools they attend and the forms they are in.

b. Students taking business education (Table 18)

The literature review showed that students taking secondary business education are of low academic ability. The following questions are about students studying business education. Question 4 checks the respondents' motivation to study. Question 5 aims to identify if students with better grades are inclined to study science subjects. Question 14 asks if students take business education in secondary school as their first choice of study.

Table 18: Students' perceptions of those taking business education

Item no.	Statement
Qp.4.	In general, I lack the motivation to study.
Qp.5.	Students with better grades study Science in my school.
Qp.14.	I do NOT take business education as my first choice of study in secondary school.

c. Aims of secondary business education (Table 19)

Question 7 checks if business education prepares respondents for employment in business-related jobs and Question 13 checks whether students think business education in secondary school only prepares them for low-paying jobs. Question 12 checks if students are motivated to start their business after studying business education in secondary schools. Question 16 asks whether business education could motivate students to develop an interest in a business career.

Table 19: Students' perceptions of the aims of secondary business education

Item no	Statement
Qp.7.	Business subjects prepare me for employment in business-related jobs.
Qp.12.	I expect to start my own business in the future after studying business education in secondary school.
Qp.13.	Business education only prepares you for low-paying jobs.
Qp.16.	My interest in a business career has increased since I began studying business education.

d. Status of secondary business education (Table 20)

Question 6 asks whether the respondents perceived business subjects as easy. Question 15 examines if teachers of business subjects were considered as inferior in the eyes of students. Question 23 aims to identify if students think that the business subjects taken were as beneficial to them as the other academic subjects and Question 24 aims to identify if students think that business subjects enjoy better status than other subjects in secondary schools. Question 9 checks if business education prepares respondents for further studies in Business faculties in tertiary institutions and Question 10 seeks to

discover if students think that Business faculties of universities should treat business subjects as a prerequisite for admission.

Table 20: Students' perceptions of the status of secondary business education

Item no.	Statement
Qp.6.	Compared with other subjects, the business subjects taught in secondary school now are easy.
Qp.9.	Business subjects prepare me to further my studies in the business faculty in tertiary institutions.
Qp.10.	Business subjects should be treated as a prerequisite for study in business faculties of tertiary institutions.
Qp.15.	I think teachers of other subjects have higher status than teachers of business subjects.
Qp.23.	The business course in my school is just as beneficial to me as the academic courses (such as economics, physics, geography, and English) that are required of all students.
Qp.24.	I think business education in secondary school enjoys higher status than other subjects.

e. Secondary business curriculum (Table 21)

There are two parts under this section. The first part checks if students think business education should be offered in secondary schools, and, if so, when. Question 11 examines if students wish business education to be available in earlier school years. Question 19 asks if students think business education should begin in S.1. Question 21 aims to find out if students think it is not a good idea to offer business education in secondary schools.

Question 20 aims to see if subjects like typewriting and shorthand should be replaced by word-processing. Question 22 asks if students think the use of computers in business education should be emphasized. Question 25 asks if students think that

business mathematics should replace the current mathematics curriculum for business students.

Table 21: Students' perceptions of the secondary business curriculum

Item no.	Statement
Qp.11.	I wish business education were available earlier in school.
Qp.19.	Business education should begin in S.I.
Qp.20.	Subjects like typewriting and shorthand should be replaced by word-processing
Qp.21.	Business education should not be taught in secondary schools.
Qp.22.	The use of computers in business education should be emphasized.
Qp.25.	For business students, the current mathematics curriculum should be replaced by business mathematics.

f. Assessment

Question 8 aims to find out if students prefer to have project work as a form of assessment in business education.

g. Placement (Table 22)

The literature review showed that placement for students is important to help students learn business concepts better. Question 18 checks if students lack the practical experience to understand the business subjects taken and Question 17 examines if the respondents see there is a need for placement.

Table 22: Students' perceptions of placement

Item no.	Statement
Qp.17.	There should be placements in the summer vacation for students studying business education.
Qp.18.	I lack the practical experience to understand the business subjects I take.

#### 5. Questionnaire for teachers (Qt.)

The survey instrument for gathering data for the study consisted of three sections containing a total number of 70 questions (Appendix 3). Section 1 of the survey instrument is used to gather background information concerning the respondents. The second section contained seven items designed to measure the respondents' perceptions of the aims of secondary business education in Hong Kong. Section three contained fifty-three questions involving seven themes: status of secondary business education, secondary business curriculum, students taking secondary business education, career/professional development/teacher training, assessment, resources/teaching facilities/technology, and industry involvement/work placement. These themes explore the respondents' views and perceptions of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools. Respondents were asked to respond to each item by selecting the appropriate response on a 5-point Likert-type scale of 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree).

This questionnaire took around thirty-five minutes to complete. Below is a description and explanation of each question with regard to its aim and structure.

a. Background information

Questions 1 to 8 concern the background information of the respondents. Question 1 asks about the type of school the respondent is teaching in. Question 2 asks the gender of the respondent. Question 3 asks the age of the respondent. Question 4 asks the number of years of teaching experience each respondent has. Question 5 asks the number of years of working experience the respondent has before teaching. Question 6 asks what business subjects the respondents teach at school. Question 7 establishes the types of academic qualification each respondent has and Question 8 aims to identify the levels of study of business subjects each respondent has taken.

b. Aims of secondary business education (Table 23)

Questions 9 to 15 deal with the aims of business education. Question 9 checks if business teachers think secondary business education aims to develop students' ability to analyze and solve problems. Question 10 investigates whether business teachers think that secondary business education aims to produce clerks and secretaries for Hong Kong. Question 11 checks if business teachers think that secondary business education aims to produce business professionals for Hong Kong. Question 12 checks if business teachers think secondary business education aims to promote students' interests in learning business subjects. Question 13 checks if business teachers think secondary business education aims to equip students for future jobs. Question 14 investigates whether business teachers think secondary business education aims to equip students for further studies in tertiary institutions. Question 15 checks if business

teachers think secondary business education aims to provide students with a general business knowledge.

Table 23: Teachers' perceptions of the aims of secondary business education

Item no.	Business education aims to
Qt. 9.	Develop students' ability to analyze and solve problems.
Qt.10	produce clerks and secretaries for Hong Kong
Qt.11	produce highly skilful and/or knowledgeable business personnel such as managers and accountants.
Qt.12	promote students' interest in learning business subjects.
Qt.13	equip students for future jobs.
Qt.14	prepare students for further studies in tertiary institutions.
Qt.15	provide students with a general business knowledge.

c. Status of secondary business education (Table 24)

The following questions deal with the status of business education. Question 16 wants to find out if teachers think that studying business subjects at school is a prerequisite for admission by Business faculties of universities. Question 28 aims to identify if business teachers think that business education in secondary schools is considered by the general public as a programme that prepares workers with limited skills and knowledge. Question 30 aims to identify if business teachers think that business education should train students to be business professionals. Question 37 asks whether students taking business subjects have a better chance of entering the faculty of business. Question 41 aims to identify if business teachers think that teachers of other subjects have higher status. Question 44 aims to identify if business teachers think that most secondary students will not take business subjects as their first choice of study in secondary school. Question 50 checks if business teachers perceive that teachers of other subjects think that business subjects are easy to teach. Question 52 aims to find

out what business teachers think about the status of business education in secondary school in the eyes of students and teachers. Question 56 examines if the content of secondary business subjects is easy. Question 57 aims to find out if respondents think that parents prefer their children to take business subjects in secondary schools.

Table 24: Teachers' perceptions of the status of secondary business education

Item no.	Statement
Qt.16.	CE level or A-level business subjects should be regarded as prerequisite of entering Business faculty at tertiary institutions.
Qt.28.	Business education in secondary schools is considered by the general public as a programme that prepares secretaries and clerks.
Qt.30.	Business education should train students to be business professionals.
Qt.37.	Students who have taken business subjects at A-level or CE level have a better chance of entering Faculty of Business at tertiary institutions.
Qt.41.	I think teachers of other subjects have higher status than teachers of business subjects.
Qt.44.	Given a chance, most secondary students will not take business subjects as their first choice.
Qt.50.	Teachers of other subjects think that business subjects are easy to teach.
Qt.52.	Business education in secondary school is regarded as superior by most secondary students and teachers.
Qt.56.	The content of business subjects taught in secondary school now is NOT difficult.
Qt.57.	Parents like their children taking business subjects in secondary schools.

d. Secondary business curriculum (Table 25)

The literature review indicated how the future business curriculum should be revised. The following questions are about the curriculum of business subjects. Question 24 asks if business teachers think that the syllabus in business education is too simple. Question 25 asks if business teachers think that the CE level and A-Level business curriculum are well coordinated. Question 29 asks if business teachers think that the amount of IT implemented in the present curriculum is adequate.

Question 39 asks if business teachers think that values should be taught in business education. Question 40 asks if business teachers think that business education should be considered as part of vocational education rather than general education. Question 42 asks if business teachers think that the vocational side of business education should be emphasized. Question 43 asks if subjects such as typewriting and shorthand should be replaced by word-processing. Question 51 asks if business teachers think that business education should begin in S.1. Question 53 asks if business teachers think that the academic side of business education should be emphasized. Question 54 asks if business teachers think that the use of computer and IT in business education should be emphasized.

Question 58 asks if business teachers think that business education should be compulsory for every secondary student. Question 59 asks if business teachers think that there should be two sets of business curriculum - one for vocational education and one for general education. Question 49 checks if business teachers think that business subjects should not be taught in secondary schools. Question 64 asks if business teachers think that the syllabus of present secondary business curriculum does reflect the needs of society. Question 63 asks if the respondents think that the current business syllabus is too long. Question 68 asks if business teachers think that business education should be more internationally flavoured. Question 69 asks if entrepreneurship education should be included in secondary business curriculum. Question 70 asks if business mathematics should replace the current mathematics curriculum for business students.

Table 25: Teachers' perceptions of the secondary business curriculum

Item no.	Statement
Qt.39.	Values should be taught in business education.
Qt.40.	Business education should be considered as part of vocational education rather than general education.
Qt.42.	The vocational side of business education should be emphasized.
Qt.43.	Subjects such as Typewriting and Shorthand should be excluded as part of the business curriculum and replaced by Word-processing.
Qt.49.	Business subjects should NOT be taught in secondary schools.
Qt.51.	Business education should begin in S.1.
Qt.53.	The academic side of business education should be emphasized.
Qt.54.	The use of computer and information technology in business education should be emphasised.
Qt.58.	Business education should be compulsory for every secondary student.
Qt.59.	There should be two sets of business curriculum - one for vocational education and one for general education.
Qt.63.	The syllabus in business education is too long.
Qt.64.	The syllabus in business education does NOT reflect the needs of society.
Qt.68.	Secondary business curriculum should be more internationally flavoured.
Qt.69.	Entrepreneurship education should be provided in secondary business curriculum.
Qt.70.	There should be Business mathematics to replace the current mathematics curriculum for business students.

e. Students taking secondary business education (Table 26)

Questions 18, 23, 33, and 62 deal with students taking business education in secondary schools. Question 18 asks if business teachers think that the poor academic ability of students has contributed to the low passing rate in business subjects. Question 23 asks if business teachers think that students taking business education understand the subject matter taught. Question 33 asks if business teachers think that only students with lower abilities will take business subjects in secondary schools. Question 62 investigates whether business teachers think those students taking business subjects lack strong motivation to learn.

Table 26: Teachers' perceptions of students taking secondary business education

Item no.	Statement
Qt.18.	The reason why the pass rate in CE business subjects is low is because the majority of the students taking business subjects are of low ability.
Qt.23.	Most secondary students taking business education understand the subject matter taught.
Qt.33.	Only students of lower academic ability will take business subjects in secondary schools.
Qt.62.	Students lack strong motivation to learn.

f. Career/Professional Development/Teacher Training (Table 27)

The issues of teacher training and professional development of business teachers have been dealt with from the literature review. Questions 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 32, and 48 are about teachers' professionalism. Question 19 asks if business teachers use various teaching methods in teaching business subjects. Question 20 asks if business teachers think that the present link between business teachers is weak. Question 21 asks if business teachers think that they do not have enough practical business experience. Question 26 asks if business teachers think that if there are enough chances for business teachers to have further studies and professional development. Question 27 examines if teachers have limited access/opportunities to learn new knowledge related to business subjects. Question 32 asks if business teachers think that there is enough teacher training for them. Question 48 identifies the importance of having an association and a journal for business teachers.

Question 35 examines if university business graduates want to take teaching as their first career choice. Question 31 examines if respondents prefer to teach business subjects to other subjects. Question 38 examines the importance of using varied teaching methods in teaching business subjects. Question 45 asks whether there should

be placements for teachers. Question 60 checks if teachers of business education are perceived by teachers of other subjects as inferior. Question 65 asks if business teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach well in class.

Table 27: Career/Professional Development/Teacher Training

Item no.	Statement
Qt.19.	I use various teaching methods in teaching business subjects.
Qt.20.	The present links between business teachers are weak.
Qt.21.	Teachers do not have enough practical business experience.
Qt.26.	There are few opportunities for business teachers to have further studies and professional development.
Qt.27.	Teachers have limited access/opportunities to learn new knowledge related to business subjects.
Qt.31.	I prefer to teach business subjects rather than other subjects.
Qt.32.	There is enough teacher training for teachers in business education.
Qt.35.	Most university business graduates do not choose teaching as their first career choice.
Qt.38.	It is important to use varied teaching methods in teaching business subjects.
Qt.45.	There should be placements in the summer vacation for teachers of business subjects.
Qt.48.	There should be an association and a journal for business teachers.
Qt.60.	Teachers of business education are perceived by teachers of other subjects as inferior.
Qt.65.	Most of the business teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach well in class.

g. Assessment (Table 28)

The notion of assessment has been discussed in the literature review. Question 36 examines if the present method of assessment in business subjects is satisfactory. Question 46 investigates whether project work should be used as a form of assessment. Question 67 examines if the use of case studies should be more heavily emphasised in business education.

Table 28: Teachers' perceptions of assessment

Item no.	Statement
Qt.36.	The present method of assessment in business subjects is satisfactory.
Qt.46.	Project work should be introduced as a form of assessment.
Qt.67.	The use of case studies should be more heavily emphasised in business education.

h. Resources/teaching facilities/technology (Table 29)

Questions 17, 22, 55, and 61 are about resources in business education. Question 17 asks if business teachers think that the allocation of time for teaching business education in the present timetable of the respondent's school is adequate. Question 22 asks if business teachers think that teaching facilities in business subjects are sufficient. Question 55 asks if business teachers think that compared with other subjects, fewer resources are allocated to business subjects in their school. Question 61 asks if business teachers think that there are enough teaching materials in business subjects.

Table 29: Resources/teaching facilities/technology

Item no.	Statement
Qt.17	Compared with other subjects, the allocation of time for teaching business education in the present timetable of my school is adequate.
Qt.22.	There are not sufficient teaching aids.
Qt.55.	Compared with other subjects, fewer resources are allocated to business subjects from schools.
Qt.61.	There are enough teaching materials in business subjects.

i. Industry involvement/Work placement (Table 30)

The involvement from industry/business in business education is an issue from the literature review. Questions 47 and 66 are about business links. Question 47 asks if

business teachers think that the business/industrial sector should be more fully involved in the planning of business education curriculum. Question 66 asks if business teachers think that students taking business education should be provided with opportunities to practise the skills and knowledge learned. Question 34 asks if business teachers think that there should be placements for students in the summer vacation.

Table 30: Industry involvement/Work placement

Item no.	Statement
Qt.34.	There should be placements in the summer vacation for students taking business subjects.
Qt.47.	The business/industry sector should be more fully involved in the planning of business education curriculum.
Qt.66.	Students taking business education should be provided with opportunities to practise skills and knowledge learned in the workplace.

## 5.5 Interviews

In order to supplement the collected data from the questionnaire survey and documentary analysis, interviews were used to obtain additional information from persons knowledgeable about the development of business education in Hong Kong. Interviews are, in the words of Taylor and Bogdan (1984), ‘face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants’ perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words’ (p.77). Moreover, as described by Huby & Dix (1992), ‘In-depth interviews often revealed complex sets of attitudes and experiences underlying apparently simple

responses given to survey questions' (p.182). The advantages of using the interview are:

- People are more willing to talk than to write.
- It usually takes place at the interviewee's office, which is secure to them.
- Information can be obtained more easily. If there are things that the interviewee needs to refer to, they can find them in their office.
- The interviewer can explain more clearly in case the interviewee needs clarification.
- By talking face-to-face, the interviewer may evaluate the sincerity of the interviewee.
- It is also possible to solicit the same information, in several ways, at various stages of the interview, thus providing a check of the genuineness of the responses.
- The interview may enable the interviewees to gain greater insight into their own experiences, and thereby lead to further exploration of significant areas not anticipated in the original planning.
- Interviews can be used to deal with the topic in greater depth.

There are, of course, some disadvantages of using interviews. These are:

- Interviews are costly and time consuming.
- If more than one interviewer is involved, inter-interviewer reliability is difficult to establish and the subjective element in the interview is difficult to detect.

- Unlike questionnaires which respondents can respond to at their own convenience, it is necessary to arrange a time convenient to both the interviewer and the interviewee.
- Interviewees may be less willing to provide accurate information in an interview than in an anonymous survey, for their opinions may cause embarrassment to others.
- Confidentiality may not be guaranteed. Though the name of the interviewee remains anonymous, it is possible to identify him or her.
- Not everybody is comfortable with tape recording.

To minimize the intrusiveness of the instrument, a small recorder was used and the interviewee's permission was sought before recording. Moreover, starting the interviews, the researcher would casually talk to the interviewee for a few minutes to ease the tension. The researcher tried to create a friendly atmosphere where normal conversation took place and the sense of its being an interview was reduced to the minimum.

## 1. Types of interviews

There are three types of interviews as described by Patton (1990):

a. Informal conversational interview

This interview is very flexible, with no predetermined questions. This method works well when the interviewer can spend quite a long period of time with the interviewee and have repeated interviews with them.

b. The general interview guide approach

Before the interview, the researcher has developed a set of questions and asks them accordingly. During the interview, the interviewer could still be flexible and open to other questions arising from the conversation.

c. The standardized open-ended interview

This approach is very systematic with the questions are written out in advance exactly the way they are asked during the interview.

2. The process

The process for conducting the research interview included:

- selecting interviewees,
- developing and selecting interview questions,
- conducting interviews through conversations guided by selected issues and questions,
- requesting interviewees to reflect on the interview to validate information and illicit new understandings,
- conducting a second interview if necessary,
- transcribing interviews to a written text, and
- sorting the data.

In this study, the researcher mostly employed the general interview guide approach as the informal conversational interview would take too much time and the standardized open-ended interview was too rigid with the questions were written out in advance exactly the way they were asked during the interview. While performing the documentary analysis, the researcher identified the few key people to be interviewed about the development of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools. The interview questions were not difficult to develop as there have been similar studies on the development of other subjects in Hong Kong secondary schools (Wong, 1992; Lo, 1995). Pre-designed questions were not asked exactly as they were written to allow more flexibility and the follow up of any unexpected answers. The interviews aimed to identify:

- the reasons why business education was developed, which links to the specific research question,

- the perceptions from curriculum developers towards different issues in business education, and
- the perceptions of students, teachers, and principals towards different issues in business education.

Altogether 65 persons were formally interviewed. These interviewees were grouped into the following categories:

a. Curriculum developers

Dexter's (1970) method of elite interviewing, which is especially useful with well-informed individuals was employed in this part. Interviewees are selected on the basis of getting the most crucial information from a limited number of people. One advantage of including comments from the officials (insiders) is, according to Shipman (1974), their ability to tell you things that are rarely examined in observational studies. Another is to show that the views of those on the inside also differ between themselves. The five curriculum developers interviewed included the former and current curriculum planning officers and inspectors from the Curriculum Development section and subject sections in the E.D., and an expert of business education from the University of Hong Kong.

#### b. Principals

Altogether twenty principals were interviewed and, among these, four were identified as elite interviewees, as one was a member of Hong Kong Prevocational Schools Council and three were involved in the development of secondary business education in various aspects. The other sixteen were the principals of teachers studying PCEd. in the University of Hong Kong under the writer's supervision.

#### c. Teachers

Altogether twenty teachers were interviewed. Five of those were identified as elite interviewees as these teachers were involved in the development of secondary business education in various aspects, ranging from members of the subject committee to members of the business teachers organization. Others are either practising teachers taking Postgraduate Studies in the Certificate of Education (PCEd.) in the University of Hong Kong or their colleagues.

#### d. Students

Altogether twenty students were interviewed. They come from schools, of which some of the teachers study PCEd. in the University of Hong Kong under the writer's supervision.

## 5.6 Procedure

The interviews took place between December 1995 and April 1997. The types and number of interviews are grouped in Table 31. For elite interviews, the interviewees were identified and appointments made. For general interviews, since one of the duties the writer has to perform as a teacher trainer is to visit the schools where his students teach, he took this opportunity to conduct the necessary interviews. Arrangements were made with the teachers he was about to visit to see whether that teacher would like to be interviewed. He also asked the teacher if there were any business teachers in their school who would not mind being interviewed. Similarly, he asked whether students and principals would like to be interviewed. The researcher used the questionnaire survey as a guide to conduct the interview with the respondents, seeking their views and the other opinions they might have on each question. They could also give comments on different issues of business education that were not mentioned in the questionnaire. The result would not be counted as part of the questionnaire survey as there might be a possibility that those interviewed had done the survey already and a double count would then be avoided. The researcher was only interested in their views. The detailed background information of the interviewees can be found in Appendix 4.

Table 31: Number of different types of interviews

	Number of Elite Interviews	Number of General Interviews
Officials	5	0
Principals	4	16
Teachers	5	15
Students	0	20

Apart from face-to-face interviews, the researcher also made use of interviews by telephone and correspondence to gather information from Mr. Halliwell (see p.73) who was the pioneer in the development of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools. Mr. Halliwell is now retired, residing in a quiet area in the U.K. He did not want to be disturbed. The researcher made the initial contact with him through mail and used correspondence and telephone interviews as a means to draw information from him, finally paying him a visit to conduct an in-depth interview. Each interview with an interviewee was designed to take 45 minutes, but the actual duration varied from 15 to 90 minutes.

The interviews with the curriculum developers were undertaken in their offices, while the interviews with the teachers and principals were undertaken in various places, ranging from their offices, the school playground, and the researcher's office. Except for the interview with Mr. Lewis (University lecturer in business education), Dr. Waters (a high-ranking ex-ED official), and Mr. Halliwell, where English is used as the

medium of communication, all other interviews were conducted in Cantonese, a dialect used by over ninety percent of the population in Hong Kong.

### **5.7 Reliability and validity of the research instruments**

Validity is important to research. Franekel and Wallen (1996) stated that 'validity refers to the degree to which evidence supports any inferences a researcher makes based on the data he or she collects using a particular instrument' (p.153). Vockell (1983) stated that 'validity is the most important characteristic of a measurement technique. It deals with the question of whether or not the measurement technique is really measuring what it purports to measure' (p.37).

In the case of questionnaires, the first thing to check is the content validity, sometimes also named the rational or logical validity (Koul, 1997). This is the degree to which 'the sample of test items represents the content that the test is designed to measure' (Borg and Gall, 1989, p.250). A valid item accurately reflects the desired aspect of the respondent's behaviour, characteristics, or thoughts. The content validity of the questionnaires in this study was ensured firstly in the development of the questionnaires where questions were developed from the literature. Then in the process of developing the questionnaire, the researcher discussed the research questions with other experts to avoid the problem of subjectivity (Yin, 1989). A pilot study was conducted and irrelevant items were identified and eliminated.

The next thing to check is external validity. This refers to the degree to which results are generalizable, or applicable, to groups outside of the survey setting. The sample design in this study assured external validity of the study by ensuring that the sample was representative of the population as a whole.

Besides validity, reliability is also very important to the research. This may be defined as 'the level of internal consistency or stability of the measuring device over time' (Borg and Gall, 1989, p.257). According to Freeman (1965, p.66), the term reliability has two closely related but somewhat different connotations in psychological testing.

First, it refers to the extent to which a test is internally consistent, that is, consistency of results obtained throughout the test when administered once. In other words, how accurately is the test measuring at a particular time? Second, reliability refers to the extent to which a measuring device yields consistent results upon testing and retesting. That is, how dependable is it for predictive purposes?

In this study, instrument reliability was established only in the pilot study of teachers, principals and students where the same group of teachers, principals and students was surveyed on two occasions. The group of teachers attended PCEd. year one and two, and principals and students were twice surveyed in October 1996 and December 1996, within a span of three months. Since the same questionnaire was used on the two occasions, the coefficient of stability (test-retest reliability) was calculated to determine the level of reliability of the instrument used in the study. The formula for

calculating the correlation coefficient is:

$$r_{XY} = \frac{N(\sum X_i Y_i) - (\sum X_i)(\sum Y_i)}{\sqrt{[N(\sum X_i^2) - (\sum X_i)^2][N(\sum Y_i^2) - (\sum Y_i)^2]}}$$

$N$  = the number of pairs of values in the questionnaire

$X_i$  = score for the respondents on the first administration of the questionnaire

$Y_i$  = score for the respondents on the second administration of the questionnaire

Weinberg and Goldberg (1990) indicated that when the same test is given twice in a relatively close period of time, a strong correlation value might be considered typical and desirable for the setting. In general, Pearson correlation values ranging from 0.80 to 1.00 are considered strong (p.118). With this in mind,  $r_{xy} = 0.85$  was set in this study as the criteria to be used to determine whether an adequate correlation exists between the first and second administration of the questionnaire. Using the equation, the correlation coefficient was computed to be 0.87 for the questionnaires for principals and students, 0.86 for the questionnaire for teachers, which is said to be reliable.

For interview, the best way of achieving greater validity and reliability is to minimize the amount of bias, such as the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent, and the content of questions, as much as possible (Cohen and Manion, 1994).

## 5.8 Pilot Study

This pilot study was done in October 1996 and had a very high response rate; 88.6 per cent for teachers, 80 per cent for principals, and 86.7 per cent for students (Table 32). The researcher first distributed the questionnaire for teachers to those who studied his PCEd. course in the University of Hong Kong. There were sixteen teachers in year one and nineteen in year two in 1996. These teachers were used as a source. They were asked to fill in a questionnaire, to ask one of their colleagues teaching business subjects to fill out another one, to request their principals to fill in one, and to ask one class in their school taking business education to fill in one. The same respondents were asked to complete identical questionnaires three months later to measure the reliability coefficient. The figures for returns were the same on both occasions (Table 13).

Table 32: Return rate of different groups of respondents in pilot test

	No. of questionnaires distributed	No. of questionnaires returned	Return rate (%)
Principals	35	28	80.0
Teachers	70	62	88.6
Students	1200	1040	86.7

## 5.9 Data collection

Data on the history of development of business education were gathered through documents. These include examination and teaching syllabuses, public examination papers, curriculum guides, and circulars from education authorities, government reports and research reports, journal articles, textbooks and other books written on the subject. They were supplemented by interviews with the people concerned.

Supplementing the documentary data by interviews was especially important since there are relatively few documents or journal articles on the history of the development of business education. Literature concerning the present curricula was also limited to government publications. So in order to reconstruct the history of the development of business education and to collect the views of educators, interviews with the relevant personnel were essential.

The next kind of data gathered was done by questionnaires sent to principals, teachers of business education, and secondary students taking business education. The school address of the secondary school in Hong Kong was used. The researcher put the schools in three categories, giving each school a number: 1, 2, or 3. The researcher mailed the questionnaire to school bearing the number one and requested the principal to fill in the questionnaire. This is a kind of systematic sampling, a modified form of simple random sampling where subjects are selected from a population list in a systematic rather than a random fashion. The researcher then mailed the questionnaire for teachers and students to every school bearing the number two on the list. Schools

bearing the number three will not be bothered. Altogether a total of 296 packets of questionnaires were mailed, 148 for principals and 148 for teachers and students. English School Foundation schools (schools that use a different curriculum), evening schools, and schools that only provide one kind of curriculum, e.g. City College of Commerce, were excluded from the mailing list. The packet contained a cover letter (Appendix 5), one survey instrument for principals in schools bearing the number one, and two questionnaires for teachers teaching business education and two questionnaires for students taking business education in schools bearing the number two, together with a stamped, self-addressed, envelope in which to return the completed surveys to the investigator. The principal was requested to fill in the questionnaire. The Panel Chair (ie. The Head of the Department) was requested to fill in one questionnaire and to ask another business teacher to fill in another one. The teacher is then requested to distribute one questionnaire to a student in S.4 or S.5 and another to a student in S.6 or S.7. who is taking business subjects. In order to achieve sampling consistency, the student chosen was the tenth on the class register.

### **5.10 Return of the survey instrument**

The initial mailing of 296 survey instrument packets took place in April 1997. The respondents were requested to return the questionnaires by May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1997. For the questionnaires mailed to the principals, a total of 95 usable surveys were returned before the deadline, an initial response rate of 64.2 per cent. Another 8 surveys were returned after the deadline, and these were not used. For the questionnaires mailed to

teachers, only those where schools offered business subjects were used, and a total of 178 usable surveys were returned before the deadline, an initial response rate of 60.1 per cent. Another 4 surveys were returned after the deadline, and these were not used. For the questionnaires mailed to students, only those where schools offered business subjects were used, and a total of 199 usable surveys were returned before the deadline, an initial response rate of 44.8 per cent. Another 3 surveys were returned after the deadline, and they were not used. Details of the distribution and return on the instrument are provided in Table 33. The data-gathering period using surveys ended on June 1997.

Table 33: Return rate of different groups of respondents

Respondents	No. of questionnaires distributed	No. of questionnaires returned	Return rate (%)
Principals	148	95	64.2
Teachers	296	178	60.1
Students	296	199	67.2

### 5.11 Data analysis

There were three types of data gathered. The data obtained from the documents were analyzed in Chapter 3. The data obtained from the questionnaire survey were collated,

coded and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The first step of data analysis was purely descriptive in nature. Means, standard deviations, and frequencies were computed for all response items (except the demographic item). Then comparisons were made to see if the various groups of respondents, namely principals, teachers, and students agree with one another. Since three sets of questionnaire were produced, some questions were applicable to two groups, and some to all three. For items applicable to two groups, comparisons were made using Z test. Comparisons of three groups were made using analysis of variance procedures (ANOVA). If the null hypothesis was rejected in ANOVA, Scheffé test was employed to see where the difference was.

## 1. Testing of hypotheses

There are a total of twenty-four null hypotheses, each stating that there is no statistically significant difference among principals, teachers, and students regarding their different perceptions of different issues. The level of significance was set at .05.

## 2. Using NUD\*IST in theorizing data

The data of the recorded interviews were transcribed. These data, together with those from the notes of the telephone interviews and correspondence were analysed using NUD\*IST, a computer package for handling non-numerical and unstructured data in

qualitative analysis. Because the major part of the interviews with principals, teachers, and students undertaken in this study was structured using the questionnaire as a guide, themes could be identified easily and responses from different subjects could be grouped together to see if there is an inclination of agreement or disagreement towards certain issues. There are parts where subjects can freely say what they want, and in this part of the unstructured interview, NUD\*IST can easily pick up whether there are commonalities in the interviews.

## **5.12 Limitations of the methodology used**

The methodologies used in this study are the best possible ways of finding the answers to the research questions that the researcher could employ. However, there are still limitations:

### **1. Interviews**

The researcher anticipated that the reliability and validity of interviews might cause trouble. There may be bias both in the interviewer and interviewees. That includes a tendency for the interviewer to guide the interviewees to give him the answer he wants and, in the process of interview, there may be misunderstandings of what is being asked and answered from both parties. The other kind of bias may result from

transcriptions of the interview. Since all of the interviews, except three, were done in Cantonese, the researcher may have bias in the process of transcription, translating Cantonese into English, with terms he thinks the interviewee might have meant. This is especially likely to happen in the case of students, since not every student is expressive, or communicates in a logical manner. The researcher tried to reduce bias by a careful formulation of questions and, apart from going through the questionnaire, different questions were addressed to different interviewees according to their roles in the development of business education. Next, in the process, the researcher constantly reminded himself of the possible problems. Finally, the tape and transcription were carefully examined.

The careful examination of the tape and transcription was done in the following way. The researcher first finished the transcription. Three secondary business teachers were recruited as assistants, each handling one group of interviewees, i.e. principals, teachers, and students. Out of the twenty interviews with each group, each assistant randomly selected five sets of tape and transcription, went through it and checked to see if they agreed with the transcription the researcher made. If a discrepancy arose, the researcher went through the part of disagreement and made the final judgement.

## 2. Unavailability of the key personnel

The researcher had sought extensively from different sources to identify key personnel in the development of secondary business education. Since the subjects were

developed more than two decades ago, many of the key members could not be located. The researcher finally managed to get in touch with Mr. Halliwell, the person who triggered the development of business education in secondary schools, and Dr. Waters, a high ranking official overseeing the development of technical education in the ED. Through them a few people were identified, but they could not be located.

### 3. Accessibility to documents

Many documents relevant to the study, e.g., the minutes of the Commercial Subjects Committee, the evaluation report of business subjects and many related reports, were not available. The researcher only managed to obtain most of these documents in an incomplete form. The researcher was also shocked to find that the major part of the minutes of the subject committee of commercial subjects dating from 1978 to 1986 were missing even within the ED.

### 4. Test-retest reliability

Test-retest reliability was done in the pilot study, but when the actual study was administered, difficulties arose. The reasons for this are many. Teachers and principals were reluctant to do it again as they said that they were very busy, and there were too many similar requests for them to complete similar tasks. Many students were busy preparing for their examinations and those who were S.5 and S.7 had already left the school for public examination. Because of the above limitations, the questionnaires

done in the first round were counted as genuine.

## 5. Problem with students

Students were not very expressive, especially those in the lower forms. More often, their responses were in the form of yes and no. It is rather difficult to draw points worthy of discussion from them. As a result, most of the responses taken were from students of senior forms.

### **5.13 Assumptions**

The success of this study relies much on the cooperation of the respondents. It is assumed that the sample of the respondents included in this study was representative and typical of the population and the responses of participants represent an honest reflection of their opinions toward secondary business education in Hong Kong.

## **Chapter 6: Statistical Analysis**

After describing the research methods employed in this study and the means of proceeding, the next few chapters provides a description of the result. This chapter starts with the statistical analysis of the returned questionnaires. The next chapter will be a summary of responses from the interviews. The analysis will be completed in chapter eight where the findings of the questionnaires and responses from different groups of subjects will be discussed and compared.

### **6.1. Results from different groups of respondents**

#### **1. Principals**

There were 95 responses. Table 34 shows the characteristics of the schools who responded to the questionnaire and appendix 6 gives a statistics of response from principals.

a. Characteristics of the schools in this study

The majority of the returns were from grammar schools. Since the majority of the respondents are from grammar schools (86%), answers from principals of prevocational and technical schools are too few to make a difference. More than half the grammar schools in this study offer business subjects. For those who offer business subjects, eighty per cent are schools with a history of less than ten years. For grammar schools with eleven to twenty years of history, eighty per cent of them offer business subjects, and twenty-five per cent of the grammar schools in this study with more than twenty years of history offer business subjects.

Table 34: Characteristics of the schools who responded to the questionnaire

Types of school	Grammar	Prevocational	Technical
Number of returns	82 (86.3%)	10 (10.5%)	3 (3.1%)
Offer business education	46 (56%)	10 (100%)	3 (100%)
History of schools: Less than 10 years	5 (4)*	1	0
11-20 years	41 (33)*	9	3
More than 20 years	36 (9)*	0	0

\*denotes number of grammar schools in this study offering business subjects

b. On reasons concerning schools not offering business education

In the questionnaire, there are eight reasons (Qh.4 - Qh.11) given as to why some schools do not offer business education (36 in this study). If the respondent's school did not offer business education, they were requested to identify reasons in the questionnaire why business education were not offered in their schools. If the respondent's school offered business education (59 in this study), they were requested to see if the statements are reasons why other schools did not offer business education (Table 35).

The survey indicated that the majority of the respondents (whether business education is offered in their schools or not) perceived Statements 6 'There is no room for business education in the present timetable' (54% either strongly agreed or agreed) and 9 'Students can take business education after graduating from secondary school' (63% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed) as reasons why schools do not offer business education in their curriculum. Another interesting finding is that with the exception of Qh.5, the answers from the respondents on reasons concerning schools not offering business subjects, regardless of their backgrounds, were quite similar. Seventy per cent of principals of schools offering business education either strongly agreed or agreed with Qh.5, compared with forty-two per cent of principals of schools do not offer business education.

Table 35 : Principals' perceptions on reasons concerning schools not offering business education

Item no	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)
Qh.4	5 (5.3)	15 (15.8)	11(11.6)	40 (42.1)
Qh.5	2 (2.1)	8 (8.4)	19 (20.0)	47 (49.5)
Qh.6	13 (13.7)	38 (40.0)	6 (6.3)	15 (15.8)
Qh.7	7 (7.4)	19 (20.0)	17 (17.9)	36 (37.9)
Qh.8	6 (6.3)	16 (16.8)	19 (20.0)	41 (43.2)
Qh.9	16 (16.8)	44 (46.3)	4 (4.2)	9 (9.5)
Qh.10	7 (7.4)	17 (17.9)	16 (16.8)	30 (31.6)
Qh.11	15 (15.8)	29 (30.5)	12 (12.6)	25 (26.3)

Qh.4: Parents do not think it is a good idea for the school to offer business subjects.

Qh.5: Teachers do not think it is a good idea for the school to offer business subjects.

Qh.6: There is no room for business subjects in the present timetable.

Qh.7: The present business education curriculum is too simple.

Qh.8: Business education is of low status.

Qh.9: Students can take business subjects after graduating from secondary school.

Qh.10: Students do not like to take business subjects.

Qh.11: It is difficult to recruit teachers to teach business subjects.

conclusion is that from the background information of the schools, many of the schools that do not offer business subjects are grammar schools with a history of more than twenty years. These schools were established at a time when the image of secondary business education was low and the situation in Hong Kong was not such that there was a pressing need for students in those schools to study business subjects.

c. Aims of secondary business education

With regard to principals' perceptions of business education aims (Table 36), the majority (85%) think it should provide students with general business knowledge (Qh.32). Around half of the sample (48%) either strongly agreed or agreed that business education in secondary schools should aim to prepare students for entering the faculty of business in tertiary institutions (Qh.12) and around fifty-seven per cent either strongly agreed or agreed that business education in secondary school should aim to prepare business professionals for Hong Kong (Qh.14). That is the overall response but there is a slight difference in perceptions between principals of schools offering business education and those whose schools did not. For the former, the answers are more positive, with fifty-five per cent and sixty-one per cent on the agreeing side of Qh.12 and Qh.14 respectively. The latter registered a forty-seven per cent and fifty-six per cent on the agreeing side of the same questions.

Table 36: Principals' perceptions of business education aims

Item no.	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Qh.12	15 (15.8)	31 (32.6)	10 (10.5)	32 (33.7)
Qh.14	15 (15.8)	39 (41.1)	8 (8.4)	21 (22.1)
Qh.32	26 (27.4)	55 (57.9)	1 (1.1)	3 (3.2)

Qh.12: Business education in secondary schools should aim to prepare students for entering the faculty of business at university.

Qh.14: Business education in secondary school should aim to prepare business professionals for Hong Kong.

Qh.32: Business education should provide students with general business knowledge.

d. Status of secondary business education

i. *Status of teachers*

The status of business teachers is not low in the eyes of the principals (Table 37).

Around three-quarters of the sample (73%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that teachers of business subjects were of lower status than teachers of other subjects

(Qh.29). A similar 71% also either strongly disagreed or disagreed that teachers of business subjects were perceived by teachers of other subjects as inferior (Qh. 17).

Table 37: Principals' perceptions of the status of teachers of business education

Item no.	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)
Qh.17	4 (4.2)	1 (11.6)	19 (20.0)	48 (50.5)
Qh.29	6 (6.3)	10 (10.5)	19 (20.0)	50 (52.6)

Qh.17: Teachers of business education are perceived by teachers of other subjects as inferior.

Qh.29: I think teachers of other subjects have higher status than teachers of business subjects.

*ii. Status of business education*

With regard to the status of business education in secondary schools (Table 38), about two-thirds of the respondents (65%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that it enjoyed better status than other subjects (Qh.31). Less than a quarter of the sample (23%) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that parents like their children to study business subjects in secondary schools (Qh.23) and more than one-third of the respondents (34%) either strongly agreed or agreed that only students with less academic ability will take business subjects in secondary schools (Qh.25). With

regard to whether the content of business subjects taught in secondary school now is simple (Qh.21), more than half of the sample (51%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

Table 38: Principals' perceptions of the status of secondary business education

Item no.	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Qh.21	5 (5.3)	15 (15.8)	15 (15.8)	33 (34.7)
Qh.23	7 (7.4)	15 (15.8)	8 (8.4)	19 (20.0)
Qh.25	10 (10.5)	22 (23.2)	13 (13.7)	38 (40.0)
Qh.27	18 (19.0)	31 (32.6)	8 (8.4)	19 (20.0)
Qh.31	4 (4.2)	11 (11.6)	13 (13.7)	49 (51.6)

Qh.21: The content of business subjects taught in secondary school now is simple.

Qh.23: Parents like their children to take business subjects in secondary schools.

Qh.25: Only students of lower academic ability will take business subjects in secondary schools.

Qh.27: Admission tutors for business faculties in tertiary institutions should regard business subjects at A-level or CE as prerequisite.

Qh.31: Secondary business education enjoyed better status than other subjects did.

Related to the status of business education is whether secondary business subjects are regarded by tertiary institutions as prerequisites in entering some programmes (Qh.27). With regard to this, slightly more than a half of the sample (52%) either strongly agreed or agreed that admission tutors for business faculties in tertiary institutions should regard business subjects at A-Level or CE as a prerequisite.

e. Curriculum

With regard to perceptions about the curriculum (Table 39), around four-fifths of the respondents (79%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that business education should be compulsory for every secondary student (Qh.15). The answers were quite similar for principals whose schools offer business subjects (78%) and principals whose schools did not (81%). Less than two-thirds of the sample (62%) also either strongly disagreed or disagreed that business education should begin in S.1 (Qh.24). Fifty-eight per cent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the academic side of business education should be emphasised (Qh.28). More than two-fifths of the respondents (42%) either strongly agreed or agreed with Qh.16 that there should be two sets of curriculum - one for vocational education and one for general education.

Table 39: Principals' perceptions of the secondary business curriculum

Item no.	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Qh.15	2 (2.1)	8 (8.4)	19 (20.0)	56 (59.0)
Qh.16	11 (11.6)	29 (30.5)	7 (7.4)	25 (26.3)
Qh.24	5 (5.3)	14 (14.7)	13 (13.7)	46 (48.4)
Qh.28	10 (10.5)	45 (47.4)	5 (5.3)	15 (15.8)

Qh.15: Business education should be compulsory for every secondary student.

Qh.16: There should be two sets of business curriculum - one for vocational education and one for general education.

Qh.24: Business education should begin in S. I.

Qh.28: The academic side of business education should be more emphasized.

f. On recruitment of business teachers

Table 40 shows the principals' perceptions on recruitment of business teachers. Though mentioned above where less than half of the respondents (46%) agreed that the difficulty of recruiting teachers to teach business subjects is a contributory factor why some schools do not offer business education (Qh.11), slightly more than half of the sample (53%) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that compared with other subjects, it is relatively difficult to recruit teachers for business subjects (Qh.13). Around two-thirds of the respondents (63%) either strongly agreed or agreed

that most university business graduates do not take teaching as their first career choice (Qh.26).

Table 40: Principals' perceptions on recruitment of business teachers

Item no.	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Qh.13	15 (15.8)	35 (36.8)	9 (9.5)	30 (31.6)
Qh.26	19 (20.0)	41 (43.2)	2 (2.1)	8 (8.4)

Qh.13: Compared with other subjects, it is relatively difficult to recruit teachers of business subjects.

Qh.26: Most university business graduates do not take teaching as their first career choice.

g. Resource allocation and the use of technology in business education

Table 41 shows the principals' perceptions on resource allocation and the use of technology in business education. The majority of the sample (62%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that compared with other subjects, fewer resources are allocated to business subjects in the respondent's school (Qh.20). The next two questions were answered only by respondents whose schools offer business education. With regard to the allocation of time for teaching business subjects in the present timetable (Qh.18), the majority of the respondents whose schools offer business education (68%) either strongly agreed or agreed that it was adequate. However, more than half of the respondents (53%) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that students of business education were not given a high priority in using

computers in the respondent's school (Qh.19). With regard to the use of computers and IT, the majority of respondents (87%) either strongly agreed or agreed that this should be emphasized more in the business curriculum (Qh.22). With regard to the extent of business /industry involvement, the majority of the respondents (86%) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the business/industrial sector should be more fully involved in the planning of the business education curriculum (Qh.30).

Table 41: Principals' perceptions of resource allocation and the use of technology in business education

Item no.	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Agree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Qh.18	11 (18.6)	29 (49.2)	2 (3.4)	7 (11.9)
Qh.19	6 (10.2)	25 (42.4)	4 (6.8)	13 (22.0)
Qh.20	5 (5.3)	15 (15.8)	14 (14.7)	45 (47.4)
Qh.22	17 (17.9)	66 (69.5)	0 (0)	4 (4.2)
Qh.30	14 (14.7)	68 (71.6)	1 (1.1)	4 (4.2)

Qh.18: Compared with other subjects, the allocation of time for teaching business education in the present timetable of my school is adequate.

Qh.19: Students of business education are not given a high priority in using computers in my school.

Qh.20: Compared with other subjects, fewer resources are allocated to business subjects in my school.

Qh.22: The use of computer and information technology in business education should be emphasized.

Qh.30: The business/industrial sector should be more fully involved in the planning of the business education curriculum.

## 2. Teachers of secondary business education

The second group of respondents participating in the questionnaire survey was teachers of business subjects. Appendix 7 gives a statistics of response from teachers.

### *i. Types of school*

Most of the teachers answering the questionnaire teach at grammar schools, with only eleven per cent teaching at prevocational and seven per cent at technical schools (Table 42).

Table 42: Types of schools where respondents teach

Types of school	Grammar	Prevocational	Technical
Number of returns	145 (81.5%)	20 (11.2%)	13 (7.3%)

### *ii. Age and gender*

The majority of the sample was female, i.e. 71 per cent; and the remainder male, i.e. 29 per cent. Two per cent of the sample were aged under 25 years; 39 per cent between 26 and 30 years, 37 per cent between 31 and 40 years; and 22 per cent were aged 41 years and above.

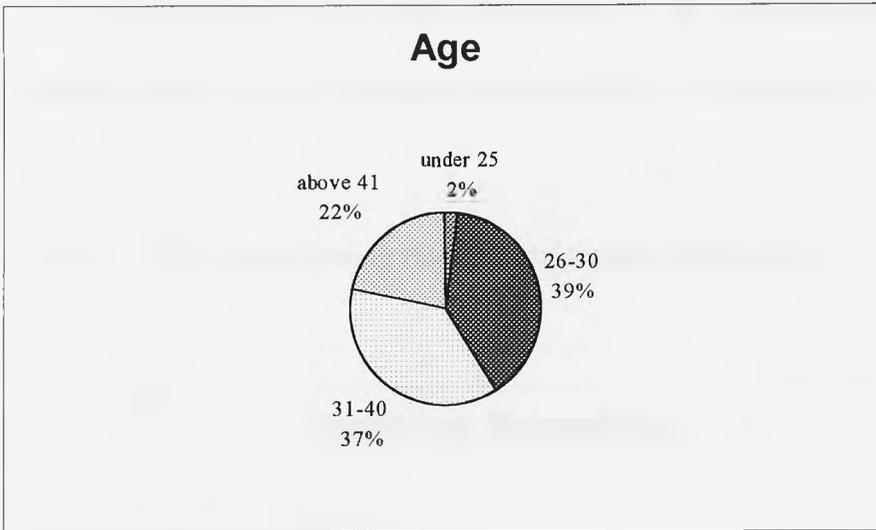


Fig. 6.1: A pie chart showing the percentage of respondents at different age groups

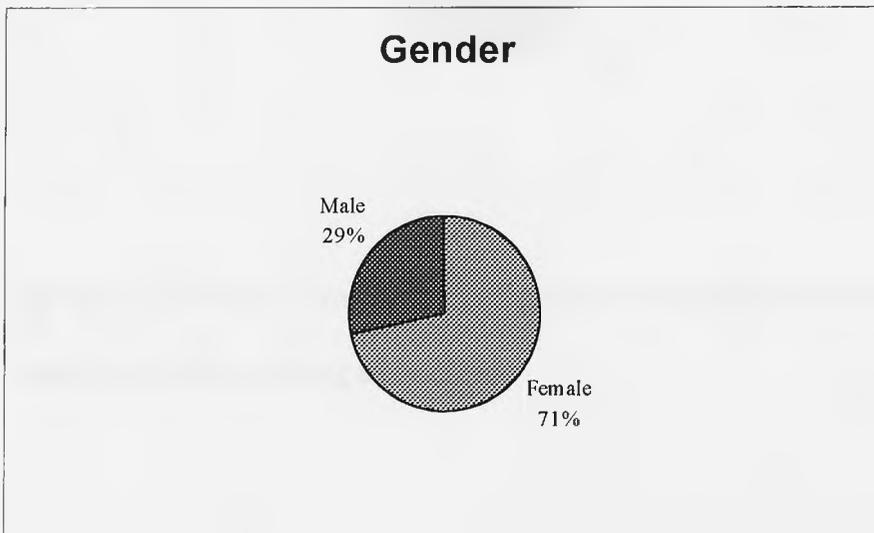


Fig. 6.2: A pie chart showing the percentage of male and female respondents

*iii. Subjects taught and teaching experience*

Respondents teach a variety of business subjects in secondary schools ranging from junior level Office practice to A-Level POA. With regard to teaching experience, 71 per cent of respondents possessed 4 - 10 years; 19 per cent 1 - 3 years; and 10 per cent

11 or more years; 79 per cent had worked in the business/industrial field before teaching, and 21 per cent became teachers directly after graduation.

Fig. 6.3: A pie chart showing respondents' teaching experience

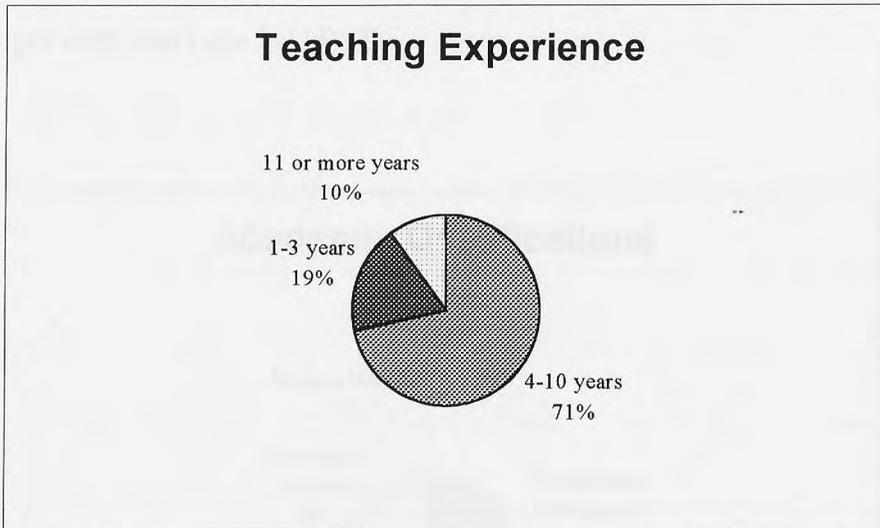
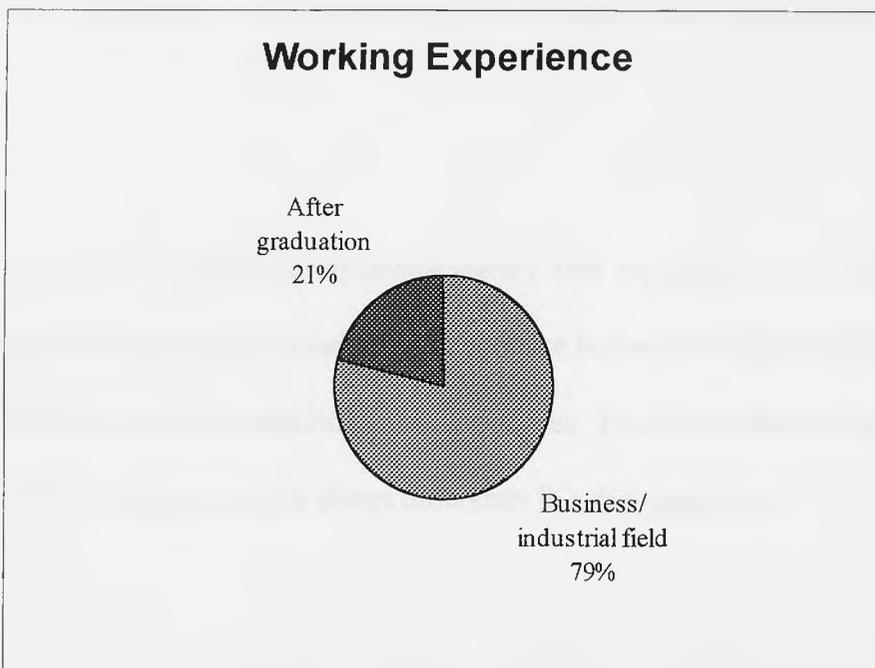


Fig. 6.4: A pie chart showing the percentage of respondents with business/industrial experience before working as teachers



iv. *Academic qualifications*

The highest qualification of the majority of teachers in this sample was a postgraduate Certificate of Education (42 per cent); followed by a Bachelor's degree (39 per cent); then Diploma of teaching (18%). Only a minority of the sample held Masters Degrees (1 per cent) and none held Ph.D.

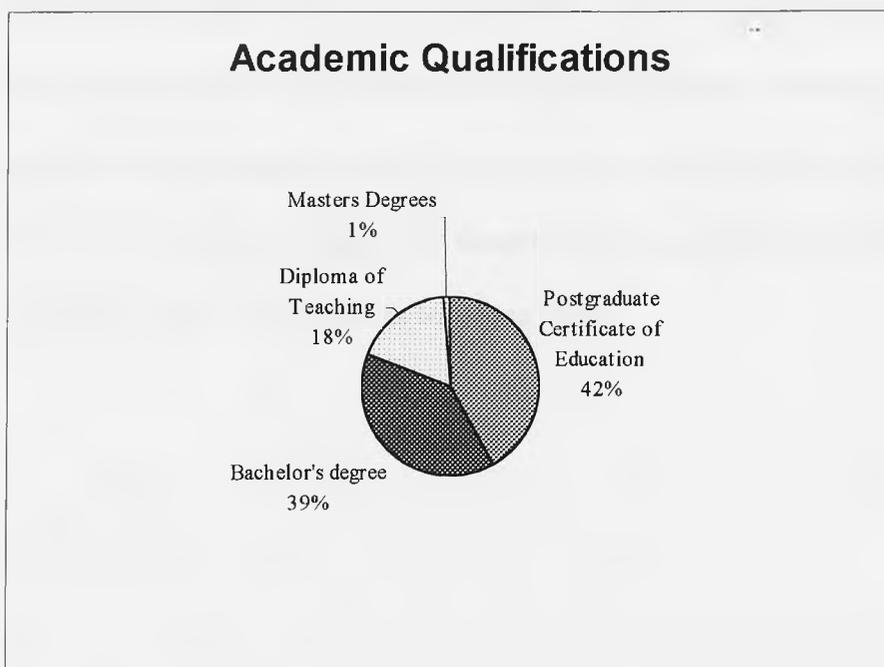


Fig.6.5: A pie chart showing respondents with different academic qualifications

It is noted from the questionnaire survey that regardless of their gender, teaching experience, and business/industrial experience before working as teachers, respondents did not have much variation in their responses. The only difference is age where those who are younger may see things differently in a few questions.

a. Aims of secondary business education

With regard to teachers' perceptions of the aims of secondary business education (Table 43), the majority of the sample were positive about the aims of business education, and either strongly agreed or agreed that business education aims to promote an interest in learning business education subjects (92%, Qt.12); develop students' ability to analyse and solve problems (91%, Qt.9); produce highly skilled and/or knowledgeable business personnel (78%, Qt.11); equip students for future jobs (91%, Qt.13); and provide students with a general business knowledge (84%, Qt.15). Besides the high sounding ideals, it is noted that over half of the respondents (52%, Qt.10) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that secondary business education aims to produce clerks and secretaries for Hong Kong.

Table 43: Teachers' perceptions of the aims of secondary business education

Item No.	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)
Qt.9	40 (22.5)	122 (68.5)	1 (1.1)	5 (2.8)
Qt.10	10 (5.6)	39 (21.9)	20 (11.2)	73 (41.0)
Qt.11	36 (20.2)	103 (57.9)	5 (2.8)	16 (9.0)
Qt.12	46 (25.8)	117 (65.7)	0 (0)	6 (3.4)
Qt.13	45 (25.3)	117 (65.7)	0 (0)	7 (3.9)
Qt.14	21 (11.8)	62 (34.8)	20 (11.2)	51 (28.6)
Qt.15	34 (19.1)	115 (64.6)	2 (1.1)	9 (5.1)

Qt.9: Business education aims to develop students' ability to analyze and solve problems.

Qt.10: Business education aims to produce clerks and secretaries for Hong Kong.

Qt.11: Business education aims to produce highly skilful and/or knowledgeable business personnel such as managers and accountants.

Qt.12: Business education aims to promote students' interest in learning business subjects.

Qt.13: Business education aims to equip students for future jobs.

Qt.14: Business education aims to prepare students for further studies in tertiary institutions.

Qt.15: Business education aims to provide students with a general knowledge.

Responses were mixed as to whether the aim of secondary business education was to prepare students for further studies in tertiary institution, with forty percent on the disagreeing side and forty-seven per cent on the agreeing side (Qt.14). A further investigation reveals that teachers who are younger in age tend to agree more that the aims of secondary business education are to prepare students for further studies in tertiary institutions and to equip them to become business professionals in the future (Table 44).

Table 44: Younger teachers' perceptions of the aims of secondary business education

Item no.	Qt. 11 Strongly agree N (%)	Qt. 11 Agree N (%)	Qt. 14 Strongly Disagree N (%)	Qt. 14 Disagree N (%)
< 30	10 (13.7)	51 (69.9)	9 (12.3)	31 (42.5)
31-40	9 (13.6)	43 (65.2)	7 (10.6)	27 (40.9)
> 40	4 (10.3)	22 (56.4)	4 (10.3)	12 (30.8)

b. Status of secondary business education

There are several statements on the status of secondary business education (Table 45). Less than one-fifth of the respondents (19%) believed that students who have taken business subjects at A-level or CE-level have a better chance of entering the faculty of business at tertiary institutions (Qt.37). The majority of the sample (69%) either strongly agreed or agreed that CE level or A-Level business subjects should be regarded as a prerequisite for entering the business faculty at tertiary institutions (Qt.16) and if this could be the case, the status of secondary business education could

be elevated.

The majority of the respondents (64%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that parents like their children to take business subjects in secondary schools (Qt.57). Around half of the respondents (52%) either strongly agreed or agreed that given a chance, most secondary students will not take business subjects as their first choice (Qt.44).

Slightly less than one-third of the respondents (32%) either strongly agreed or agreed that teachers of other subjects think that business subjects are easy to teach (Qt.50) and only thirty-five per cent either strongly agreed or agreed that the content of business subjects taught in secondary school now is not difficult (Qt.56). Around two-thirds of the sample either strongly agreed or agreed (67%) that business education was perceived by the general public as a programme that gives students limited skills and knowledge (Qt.28).

Around fifty-seven per cent of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed that business education subjects were as popular with students when compared with other subjects (Qt.52), and around half of the respondents (49%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that teachers of other subjects had a better status than business education teachers; with twenty-eight per cent indicating a neutral response (Qt.41).

Table 45: Teachers' perceptions of the status of secondary business education

Item no.	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Qt.16	34 (19.1)	89 (50.0)	4 (2.3)	13 (7.3)
Qt.28	39 (21.9)	80 (44.9)	8 (4.5)	23 (12.9)
Qt.37	10 (5.6)	23 (12.9)	26 (14.6)	80 (44.9)
Qt.41	9 (5.1)	32 (18.0)	21 (11.8)	67 (37.6)
Qt.44	21 (11.8)	71 (39.9)	10 (5.6)	31 (17.4)
Qt.50	17 (9.6)	40 (22.5)	21 (11.8)	66 (37.1)
Qt.52	10 (5.6)	36 (20.2)	26 (14.6)	75 (42.1)
Qt.56	18 (10.1)	44 (24.7)	25 (14.0)	52 (29.2)
Qt.57	9 (5.1)	21 (11.8)	20 (11.2)	94 (52.8)

Qt.16: CE level or A-level business subjects should be regarded as prerequisite of entering Business faculty at tertiary institutions.

Qt.28: Business education in secondary schools is considered by the general public as a programme that prepares secretaries and clerks.

Qt.37: Students who have taken business subjects at A-level or CE level have a better chance of entering Faculty of Business at tertiary institutions.

Qt.41: I think teachers of other subjects have higher status than teachers of business subjects.

Qt.44: Given a chance, most secondary students will not take business subjects as their first choice.

Qt.50: Teachers of other subjects think that business subjects are easy to teach.

Qt.52: Business education in secondary school is regarded as superior by most secondary students and teachers.

Qt.56: The content of business subjects taught in secondary school now is NOT difficult.

Qt.57: Parents like their children taking business subjects in secondary schools.

### c. Curriculum of secondary business education

With regard to the secondary business curriculum (Table 46), around forty-eight per cent of the sample either strongly agreed or agreed that the syllabus in business education does not reflect workplace needs (Qt.64). Around sixty-eight per cent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the academic side of business education should be emphasised (Qt.53). Only twenty-three per cent either strongly agreed or agreed that the vocational side of business education should be emphasised (Qt.42) and less than one-third of the respondents (31%) believed that business education should be considered as part of vocational education rather than general education (Qt.40). Furthermore, only twenty-four per cent of the sample either strongly agreed or agreed that business education should begin in S.1 (Qt.51). Around three-quarters of the respondents (74%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that business education should be made compulsory in secondary schools (Qt.58). As to whether or not business education subjects should not be taught in secondary school, an overwhelming majority of seventy-eight per cent either strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement (Qt.49). Less than half of the sample (46%) either strongly agreed or agreed that there should be two sets of business education curriculum, i.e. one for vocational education; and one for general education (Qt.59). More than seventy-one per cent either strongly disagreed or disagreed that the junior and secondary business education curriculum are well co-ordinated (Qt.25) and around forty per cent of the respondents think that the syllabus of secondary business education is too long (Qt.63). Moreover, most respondents (60%) did not perceive the syllabus of business education as being simple (Qt.24).

Table 46: Teachers' perceptions of the present secondary business education

Item no.	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Qt.24	8 (4.5)	23 (12.9)	21 (11.8)	85 (47.8)
Qt.25	5 (2.8)	15 (8.4)	33 (18.5)	94 (52.8)
Qt.40	18 (10.1)	38 (21.4)	18 (10.1)	55 (30.9)
Qt.42	10 (5.6)	31 (17.4)	18 (10.1)	74 (41.6)
Qt.49	0 (0)	8 (4.5)	29 (16.3)	110 (61.8)
Qt.51	11 (6.2)	31 (17.4)	21 (11.8)	79 (44.4)
Qt.53	33 (18.5)	89 (50.0)	5 (2.8)	17 (9.6)
Qt.58	8 (4.5)	20 (11.2)	30 (16.9)	102 (57.3)
Qt.59	25 (14.0)	57 (32.0)	16 (9.0)	49 (27.5)
Qt.63	18 (10.1)	54 (30.3)	12 (6.7)	37 (20.8)
Qt.64	21 (11.8)	65 (36.5)	14 (7.9)	44 (24.7)

Qt.24: The syllabus in business education is too simple.

Qt.25: The junior and senior secondary business curriculum is well coordinated.

Qt.40: Business education should be considered as part of vocational education rather than general education.

Qt.42: The vocational side of business education should be emphasized.

Qt.49: Business subjects should NOT be taught in secondary schools.

Qt.51: Business education should begin in S. I.

Qt.53: The academic side of business education should be emphasized.

Qt.58: Business education should be compulsory for every secondary student.

Qt.59: There should be two sets of business curriculum - one for vocational education and one for general education.

Qt.63: The syllabus in business education is too long.

Qt.64: The syllabus in business education does NOT reflect the needs of society.

With regard to what should or should not be taught (Table 47), the majority of the sample (74%) either strongly agreed or agreed that subjects such as Typewriting and Shorthand should be replaced by Word-processing (Qt.43) and most respondents (84%) either strongly agreed or agreed that values should be taught in business education (Qt.39). With regard to whether there should be business mathematics to replace the current mathematics curriculum for business students (Qt.70), those who are in agreement (40.4%) outnumbered those who disagreed (32.6%).

With regard to the use of computers and IT, the majority of respondents (89%) either strongly agreed or agreed that this should be emphasized in the curriculum (Qt.54) and the amount of IT in the present business curriculum is perceived by around three-quarters of the sample (76%) as being inadequate (Qt.29). With regard to whether the business curriculum should be more internationally flavoured (Qt.68), the majority of the respondents (55%) either strongly agreed or agreed that this should be the case. Furthermore, over half of the respondents (54%) either strongly agreed or agreed that entrepreneurship education should be provided in the secondary business curriculum (Qt.69).

Table 47: Teachers' perceptions of what should/should not be taught in the secondary business curriculum

Item no.	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Qt.29	5 (2.8)	15 (8.4)	36 (20.2)	99 (55.6)
Qt.39	39 (21.9)	110 (61.8)	3 (1.7)	13 (7.3)
Qt.43	35 (19.7)	97 (54.5)	5 (2.8)	10 (5.6)
Qt.54	38 (21.4)	120 (67.4)	2 (1.1)	7 (3.9)
Qt.68	26 (14.6)	71 (39.9)	13 (7.3)	39 (21.9)
Qt.69	23 (12.9)	73 (41.0)	12 (6.7)	34 (19.1)
Qt.70	23 (12.9)	49 (27.5)	17 (9.6)	41 (23.0)

Qt.29: The amount of Information technology in the present business curriculum is adequate.

Qt.39: Values should be taught in business education.

Qt.43: Subjects such as Typewriting and Shorthand should be excluded as part of the business curriculum and replaced by Word-processing.

Qt.54: The use of computer and information technology in business education should be emphasized.

Qt.68: Secondary business curriculum should be more internationally flavoured.

Qt.69: Entrepreneurship education should be provided in secondary business curriculum.

Qt.70: There should be Business mathematics to replace the current mathematics curriculum for business students.

d. Students taking secondary business education

Table 48 is on teachers' perceptions of students taking business education. Opinion was divided as to whether or not students with less academic ability were attracted to business subjects in secondary schools with forty-one per cent on the agreeing side and thirty-three per cent on the disagreeing side (Qt.33). Around half of the respondents (49%) either strongly agreed or agreed that students lack strong motivation to learn (Qt.62). A similar number (43%) either strongly agreed or agreed that most students undertaking business education subjects did not understand the subject matter being taught (Qt.23). Around two-thirds of the sample (66 per cent) either strongly agreed or agreed that the reason why the pass rate in business subjects is low is because the majority of the students taking business subjects are of low ability (Qt.18).

Table 48: Teachers' perceptions of students taking secondary business education

Item no.	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)
Qt.18	30 (16.9)	87 (48.9)	8 (4.5)	26 (14.6)
Qt.23	17 (9.6)	59 (33.2)	21 (11.8)	61 (34.3)
Qt.33	14 (7.9)	58 (32.6)	12 (6.7)	46 (25.8)
Qt.62	21 (11.8)	67 (37.6)	16 (9.0)	40 (22.5)

Qt.18: The reason why the pass rate in CE business subjects is low is because the majority of the students taking business subjects are of low ability.

Qt.23: Most secondary students taking business education understand the subject matter taught.

Qt.33: Only students of lower academic ability will take business subjects in secondary schools.

Qt.62: Students lack strong motivation to learn.

e. Career/Professional Development/Teacher Training

Table 49 is on teachers' perceptions of issues regarding career/professional development/teacher training. Though the majority of the respondents (60%) either strongly agreed or agreed that most university business graduates do not select teaching as their first career choice (Qt.35), teachers in this survey have a positive image of business teachers. Four-fifths of the respondents (80%) either strongly agreed or agreed that most business teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach well in class (Qt.65). Most of them (77%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they prefer to teach business subjects to other subjects (Qt.31). Only sixteen per cent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they were perceived by teachers of other subjects as being inferior (Qt.60).

Around three-quarters of the sample (75%) either strongly agreed or agreed that it is important to use varied teaching methods in teaching business subjects (Qt.38) and a similar proportion of respondents (76 per cent) claimed that they use various teaching methods in teaching business subjects (Qt. 19).

The majority of the respondents (84%) either strongly agreed or agreed that opportunities for business education teachers to undertake further studies in the area were few (Qt.26) and a similar proportion (85%) felt that teachers have limited access/opportunities to learn new knowledge related to business subjects (Qt.27). Seventy-one per cent of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed that there was enough teacher training for teachers in business education (Qt.32). Many complain about the lack of practical experience, and around seventy-one per cent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that teachers did not have enough

practical business experience (Qt.21).

Over half of the sample (52%) either strongly agreed or agreed that there should be placements in the summer vacation for teachers of business subjects (Qt.45). Many of the respondents (71%) either strongly agreed or agreed that there should be an association and a journal for business education teachers (Qt.48), but three-quarters of the sample (76%) thought that the present links between business teachers are weak (Qt. 20).

Table 49: Teachers' perceptions of issues regarding career/professional development/teacher training

Item no.	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Qt.19	31 (17.4)	104 (58.4)	5 (2.8)	18 (10.1)
Qt.20	33 (18.5)	102 (57.3)	5 (2.8)	18 (10.1)
Qt.21	33 (18.5)	94 (52.8)	8 (4.5)	23 (12.9)
Qt.26	42 (23.6)	108 (60.7)	5 (2.8)	10 (5.6)
Qt.27	42 (23.6)	109 (61.2)	4 (2.3)	10 (5.6)
Qt.31	39 (21.9)	99 (55.6)	5 (2.8)	11 (6.2)
Qt.32	8 (4.5)	20 (11.2)	34 (19.1)	92 (51.7)
Qt.35	30 (16.9)	76 (42.7)	6 (3.4)	21 (11.8)
Qt.38	36 (20.2)	98 (55.1)	8 (4.5)	16 (9.0)
Qt.45	26 (14.6)	66 (37.1)	13 (7.3)	55 (30.9)
Qt.48	37 (20.8)	89 (50.0)	10 (5.6)	24 (13.5)
Qt.60	7 (3.9)	21 (11.8)	26 (14.6)	79 (44.4)
Qt.65	42 (23.6)	100 (56.2)	8 (4.5)	18 (10.1))

Qt.19: I use various teaching methods in teaching business subjects.

Qt.20: The present links between business teachers are weak.

Qt.21: Teachers do not have enough practical business experience.

Qt.26: There are few opportunities for business teachers to have further studies and professional development.

Qt.27: Teachers have limited access/opportunities to learn new knowledge related to business subjects.

Qt.31: I prefer to teach business subjects rather than other subjects.

Qt.32: There is enough teacher training for teachers in business education.

Qt.35: Most university business graduates do not choose teaching as their first career choice.

Qt.38: It is important to use varied teaching methods in teaching business subjects.

Qt.45: There should be placements in the summer vacation for teachers of business subjects.

Qt.48: There should be an association and a journal for business teachers.

Qt.60: Teachers of business education are perceived by teachers of other subjects as inferior.

Qt.65: Most of the business teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach well in class.

f. Assessment

On the area of assessment (Table 50), only one-third of the respondents (34%) either strongly agreed or agreed that the present method of assessment in business subjects is satisfactory (Qt.36), and around seventy per cent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that project work and case studies should be introduced as a form of assessment (Qt.46, Qt. 67).

Table 50: Teachers' perceptions of assessment in business subjects

Item no.	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)
Qt.36	16 (9.0)	44 (24.7)	21 (11.8)	52 (29.2)
Qt.46	33 (18.5)	91 (51.1)	10 (5.6)	31 (17.4)
Qt.67	31 (17.4)	91 (51.1)	10 (5.6)	23 (12.9)

Qt.36: The present method of assessment in business subjects is satisfactory.

Qt.46: Project work should be introduced as a form of assessment.

Qt.67: The use of case studies should be more heavily emphasised in business education.

g. Teaching facilities/resources/technology

Table 51 is on teachers' perceptions of teaching facilities/resources/technology in secondary business education. With regard to resources, more than two-thirds of the respondents (68%) either strongly agreed or agreed that the allocation of time for

teaching business education in the present timetable was adequate (Qt.17), but around sixty-one per cent of the respondents believed that when compared with other subjects, fewer resources were allocated to business subjects (Qt.55). Regarding teaching facilities, the majority of the respondents (83%) either strongly agreed or agreed that there were not sufficient computers in their schools (Qt.22), and the majority of the sample (61%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that there are enough teaching materials in business subjects (Qt.61).

Table 51: Teachers' perceptions of issues regarding teaching facilities/resources/technology in secondary business education

Item no.	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)
Qt.17	33 (18.5)	88 (49.4)	9 (5.1)	21 (11.8)
Qt.22	41 (23.0)	106 (59.6)	6 (3.4)	11 (6.2)
Qt.55	33 (18.5)	76 (42.7)	9 (5.1)	18 (10.1)
Qt.61	13 (7.3)	31 (17.4)	31 (17.4)	78 (43.8)

Qt.17: Compared with other subjects, the allocation of time for teaching business education in the present timetable of my school is adequate.

Qt.22: There are not sufficient teaching aids.

Qt.55: Compared with other subjects, fewer resources are allocated to business subjects from schools.

Qt.61: There are enough teaching materials in business subjects.

h. Industry involvement/Work placement

Table 52 is on teachers' perceptions of industry involvement and work placement. In order to keep pace with changes in society, the majority of the respondents (78%) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the business/industrial sector should be more involved in the planning of the business education curriculum (Qt. 47). More than four-fifths (82%) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that students taking business education should be provided with opportunities to practise skills and knowledge learned in the workplace (Qt.66).

Finally, around seventy-two per cent of the respondents thought that there should be placements in the summer vacation for students taking business subjects (Qt.34).

Table 52: Teachers' perceptions of issues regarding industry involvement and work placement

Item no.	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)
Qt.34	34 (19.1)	94 (52.8)	8 (4.5)	24 (13.5)
Qt.47	39 (21.9)	100 (56.2)	8 (4.5)	18 (10.1)
Qt.66	42 (23.6)	104 (58.4)	2 (1.1)	5 (2.8)

Qt.34: There should be placements in the summer vacation for students taking business subjects.

Qt.47: The business/industrial sector should be more fully involved in the planning of business education curriculum.

Qt.66: Students taking business education should be provided with opportunities to practise skills and knowledge learned in the workplace.

### 3. Students

The final group of respondents participating in the questionnaire survey was students taking business subjects. Appendix 8 gives a statistics of response from students.

#### a. Characteristics of students responding to the questionnaire

The characteristics of students responding to the questionnaire are summarized in Table 53. It shows that the majority of the respondents (82%) were from grammar schools; another thirteen per cent from prevocational schools; and five per cent from technical schools. The majority of the sample was female, i.e. 58 per cent; and the remainder male, i.e. 42 per cent. Forty-three per cent of the respondents were in S.4; thirty per cent S.5; eighteen per cent S.6; and eight per cent S.7. It is observed that the responses made by students of different genders were similar but students of different levels seemed to have different answers towards certain questions.

Table 53: Types of students responding to the questionnaire

	Grammar		Prevocational		Technical	
Number of returns	164 (82%)		25 (12.6%)		10 (5.4%)	
Level of students	M	F	M	F	M	F
S.4	40	27	8	4	4	2
S.5	31	17	6	2	3	1
S.6	19	13	3	2	0	0
S.7	10	7	0	0	0	0

b. Students of business education

Table 54 is an evaluation of business students on those taking secondary business education. Less than one-third of the sample (31% overall: 34% in S.4 and S.5, 24% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that in general, students lack the motivation to study (Qp.4). Most (77%), with similar answers from respondents of different levels, either strongly agreed or agreed that students with better grades study science in secondary school (Qp.5). Less than two-thirds of the sample (60% overall: 63% in S.4 and S.5, 52% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that they did not take business education as their first choice of study in secondary school (Qp.14).

Table 54: Students' self evaluation

Item no.	Strongly agree/agree		
	Overall (%)	S4/5 (%)	S6/7 (%)
Qp.4	31.2	34	24
Qp.5	77.4	77	79
Qp.14	59.8	63	52

Qp.4: In general, I lack the motivation to study.

Qp.5: Students with better grades study Science in my school.

Qp.14: I do NOT take business education as my first choice of study in secondary school.

c. Aims of secondary business education

Table 55 is students' perceptions of the aims of secondary business education. The majority of the respondents (77% overall: 71% in S.4 and S.5, 94% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that business education prepares them for employment in business-related jobs (Qp.7). However, with regard to the kind of jobs students could get, less than one-third of the respondents (33% overall: 34% in S.4 and S.5, 31% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that business education prepares them for low-paying jobs (Qp.13).

Half of the sample (50% overall: 48% in S.4 and S.5, 56% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that their interest in a business career increased after studying business education (Qp.16). Triggered by what was learnt in business education, most of them (56% overall: 53% in S.4 and S.5, 63 % in S.6 and S.7) even wanted to start their own business in the future (Qp.12).

Table 55: Students' perceptions of the aims of secondary business education

Item no.	Strongly agree/agree		
	Overall (%)	S4/5 (%)	S6/7 (%)
Qp.7	77.4	71	94
Qp.12	55.8	53	65
Qp.13	33.2	34	31
Qp.16	50.3	48	56

Qp.7: Business subjects prepare me for employment in business-related jobs.

Qp.12: I expect to start my own business in the future after studying business education in secondary school.

Qp.13: Business education only prepares you for low-paying jobs.

Qp.16: My interest in a business career has increased since I began studying business education.

d. Status of secondary business education

Table 56 records the students' perceptions of the status of secondary business education. Nearly half of the sample (45% overall: 41% in S.4 and S.5, 54% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that compared with other subjects, business subjects are easier (Qp.6). The majority of the respondents (69% overall: 66% in S.4 and S.5, 78% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that the business course in their schools was just as beneficial to them as the academic courses (such as

economics, physics, geography, and English) that are required of all students (Qp.23). The majority of respondents (69%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that business education in secondary school enjoys higher status than other subjects (Qp.24) whereas around two-thirds of the respondents (64%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that teachers of other subjects are better in status than teachers of business subjects (Qp.15). Respondents from different levels have similar answers.

Table 56: Students' perceptions of the status of secondary business education

Item no.	Strongly disagree/disagree		
	Overall (%)	S4/5 (%)	S6/7 (%)
Qp. 6	44.7	41	54
Qp.15	64.2	64	64
Qp.23	69.3	66	78
Qp.24	69.3	69	69

Qp.6: Compared with other subjects, the business subjects taught in secondary school now are easy.

Qp.15: I think teachers of other subjects have higher status than teachers of business subjects.

Qp.23: The business course in my school is just as beneficial to me as the academic courses (such as economics, physics, geography, and English) that are required of all students.

Qp.24: I think business education in secondary school enjoys higher status than other subjects.

Though the status of secondary business education does not seem to be high, students like to further their studies of business subjects at university (Table 57). Nearly half of the sample (47% overall: 44% in S.4 and S.5, and 54% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they wish to further their studies in the Business Faculty at university (Qp.9). More than half of the respondents (60% overall: 54% in S.4 and S.5, and 78% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that business subjects should be treated as a prerequisite for entry to the Faculty of Business in tertiary institutes (Qp.10).

Table 57: Students' perceptions of further studies in business education

Item no.	Strongly agree/agree		
	Overall (%)	S4/5 (%)	S6/7 (%)
Qp.9	46.8	44	54
Qp.10	60.3	54	78

Qp.9: Business subjects prepare me to further my studies in the business faculty in tertiary institutions.

Qp.10: Business subjects should be treated as a prerequisite for study in business faculties of tertiary institutions.

e. Secondary business curriculum

Table 58 shows students' perceptions of when secondary business education should be available. Responses were mixed as to whether business education should be available earlier in school (Qp.11), as forty-three per cent were neutral (the highest in this questionnaire). Less than one-third of the sample (29%) either strongly agreed or agreed that business education should begin in S.1 (Qp.19). However, more than half of the respondents (53%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed that business education should not be taught in secondary schools (Qp.21).

Table 58: Students' perceptions of when secondary business education should be available

Item no.	Strongly agree N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)
Qp.11	19 (9.6)	47 (23.6)	12 (6.0)	36 (18.1)
Qp.19	17 (8.5)	40 (20.1)	30 (15.1)	88 (44.2)
Qp.21	11 (5.5)	29 (14.6)	34 (17.1)	71 (35.7)

Qp.11: I wish business education were available earlier in school.

Qp.19: Business education should begin in S.1.

Qp.21: Business education should not be taught in secondary schools.

With regard to what business subjects should be offered (Table 59), more than three-quarters of the sample (75% overall: 73% in S.4 and S.5, 82% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that subjects like typewriting and shorthand should be replaced by word-processing (Qp.20). The majority of the sample (71% overall: 69% in S.4 and S.5, 76% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that the use of computers and information technology in business education should be emphasized (Qp.22). With regard to whether business mathematics should replace the current mathematics curriculum for business students (Qp.25), those who are in agreement (42.7%) outnumbered those who disagreed (32.7%). Respondents from different levels have similar answers.

Table 59: Students' perceptions of what should be taught in the secondary business education curriculum

Item no.	Strongly agree/agree		
	Overall (%)	S4/5 (%)	S6/7 (%)
Qp.20	75.4	73	81
Qp.22	70.8	69	76
Qp.25	42.7	42	44

Qp.20: Subjects like Typewriting and Shorthand should be replaced by Word-processing.

Qp.22: The use of computers and information technology in business education should be emphasised.

Qp.25: For business students, the current mathematics curriculum should be replaced by business mathematics.

f. Assessment

Nearly three-quarters of the respondents (overall 74%: 73% in S.4 and S.5, 78% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that project work should be used as a form of assessment in business education (Qp.8).

g. Placement

Table 60 is students' perceptions on placement. An overall of forty-three per cent of students (41% in S.4 and S.5; 48% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that they lack the practical experience to understand business subjects (Qp.18). The majority (66% overall: 64% in S.4 and S.5, 72% in S.6 and S.7) either strongly agreed or agreed that there should be placements for students in the summer vacation (Qp.17).

Table 60: Students' perceptions on placement

Item no.	Strongly agree/agree		
	Overall (%)	S4/5 (%)	S6/7 (%)
Qp.17	66.3	64	72
Qp.18	42.7	41	48

Qp.17: There should be placements in the summer vacation for students studying business education.

Qp.18: I lack the practical experience to understand the business subjects I take.

## 6.2 Testing of hypothesis

Comparisons were made to see if respondents of various groups agree with one another. There are a total of twenty-four null hypotheses, with the level of significance set at .05. Since three sets of questionnaire were produced, some questions were applicable to two groups, and some three. For items applicable to two groups, comparisons were made using Z test and the null hypothesis is retained if the Z score is less than 1.96. Comparisons of three groups were made using analysis of variance procedures (ANOVA). The null hypothesis is retained if the F value is less than 2.99. If the null hypothesis is rejected in ANOVA, Scheffé test will be employed to see where the difference lies. Further analysis of the data will be given later after presentation of the interview findings. For a summary of the result, please refer to appendix 9.

## **Chapter 7: Analysis of Responses - Interviews**

Chapter 6 covered the description of findings based on the questionnaire survey. This chapter provides an analysis of responses based on the interviews with principals, teachers, students, and officials. NUD\*IST is employed to retrieve indexed data and assimilate ideas for dissemination. The interviews are indexed under different category headings, each comprising a node. There are a few common themes regarding the aims of secondary business education, the future curriculum of secondary business education, the status of secondary business education, and business/industrial involvement and so on. The following represent what respondents said on various issues regarding secondary business education.

### **7.1. On reasons why schools do not offer business education**

This question was addressed only to principals. Questions 4 to 11 related to reasons why schools do not offer business education. Most of the principals interviewed did not think these were strong reasons, with the exceptions of Qh. 6 and 9, i.e. there is no room for business education in the present timetable and students can take business subjects after graduating from secondary schools.

## 1. Status problem

The following views, representing the opinions of most of the principals interviewed, on whether parents do not think it is a good idea for the school to offer business subjects (Qh.4), were recorded. A prevocational school principal asserted:

From my contacts with parents, I have not found a single one objecting to their sons and daughters studying business subjects in secondary schools. All their concern is whether their children could continue to study and find a good job in the future. Some even say that their children have more common sense after taking business education.

In fact, the phrase ‘parents do not think it is a good idea for the school to offer business education’ was not found in any of the twenty interviews. On the contrary, the following text units were retrieved from eight out of twenty interviews: ‘parents think it is appropriate for schools to offer business subjects’. One grammar school principal whose school did not offer business subjects holds a similar view when he commented:

It is not true. On the contrary, many parents suggested that business subjects be introduced into my school. They thought that it was essential for their children to study business subjects early in a money-oriented society like Hong Kong.

When principals were asked whether teachers do not think it is a good idea for the school to offer business subjects (Qh.5), most did not agree. The following text units were retrieved from twelve out of twenty interviews: 'teachers think the offering of business subjects in secondary school is appropriate'. The following comment from one grammar school principal whose school did not offer business subjects is representative:

I believed it is not the case. In fact, a few teachers, both old and new, did suggest the implementation of business subjects in our school to me.

When asked whether students do not like to study business education in secondary schools if given a choice (Qh. 10), the general opinion from the interviews is affirmative with the text units of 'students in Hong Kong prefer to study science in secondary schools' appearing ten times out of the twenty interviews. One grammar school principal whose school did not offer business subjects commented:

It is a well-known fact that given a choice, students in Hong Kong prefer to study science in secondary schools. Take my school as an example: there was a survey a few years ago for S.3 students indicating what subjects they would like to study in S.4. The majority chose science, only a few took business as an option.

One principal from prevocational school adopted this view and further explained when that kind of perception changed:

In prevocational schools, many students think that they are already doomed, whether they study business or not. That image, however, could change when they get into A-Level when their concentration is on the next stage of school - university.

On the question of whether students can take business education after graduating from secondary school (Qh.9), many principals (whether or not their schools offered business subjects) from the questionnaire survey either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. The later interviews indicated that though principals agree with the statement, it does not mean that it is one major reason why schools do not offer business subjects. One grammar school principal whose school did not offer business subjects could sum up what many others had shared:

It is true that students can still take business subjects in the future without being exposed to it in secondary schools. But this is not the main point why my school does not offer business subjects. I just do not want the curriculum in my school to change so much.

On the question of whether secondary business education is of low status (Qh.8), responses varied during the interview. Principals from schools offering business subjects (mostly prevocational schools) in general did not think business education is of low status but many other principals, especially those whose school did not offer business subjects, agreed with the statement. Two typical comments were recorded, the first one from the principal of a prevocational school:

I do not think secondary business education is of low status. The increasing number of students taking business subjects had proved that it is popular among students.

A different comment was recorded from a grammar school principal whose school did not offer business subjects:

Secondary business education is definitely of low status. Take a look at the business courses offered and you will see what I mean. For example, typing is the training of skills to enable students to become clerks and secretaries. Take a look at the commerce syllabus. It is full of facts. It does not train students to have critical thinking. It is only for students with less academic ability.

## 2. On resources

### a. The problem of timetable (Qh.6)

It seems that the problem with timetable is a reason why schools do not offer business subjects. Principals of schools with more than twenty years of history react more strongly. Four out of four from the interviews indicate that this is the case. The following text unit from one principal of such a school could sum it up nicely:

This is the reason why my school did not offer business subjects. When our school was first established twenty-five years ago, the demand for business subjects was not strong. I know society has changed and it is now appropriate to include business subjects. The problem is the present timetable is already too crowded. If I allow business subjects in the timetable, how about other subjects that are important? To solve this problem, one teacher suggested to me that he would be willing to teach Commerce and POA after school but I think students should join some extra-curricular activities instead of studying at 4 p.m.

b. The problem of recruiting teachers (Qh.11)

The questionnaire registered a split response about the problem of recruiting teachers. Those who are on the agreeing and disagreeing side are quite close in number. The interview indicates that this does not seem to be the main reason why schools do not offer business subjects as perceived by the respondents. Only three out of the twenty interviews register it as a reason. One prevocational school principal commented:

It is not really the case. I can say that it is difficult to recruit fresh graduates to teach business subjects for most want to try their luck in the business field but there are many others who change their field from business to education. Most of my business teachers were like that. They worked in the business field for a few years, were tired of the competition, and came to our school to teach. They had something fresh graduates lack, the real business experience and this is what

business educators should have. If possible, I would definitely prefer my business teachers to have some field experience before joining us as teachers.

The following text unit from one principal whose school does not offer business subjects sums it up nicely:

It was a problem a few years ago for at that time the economy was good and business graduates could earn much money. I heard from other principals that it was not easy to get good business teachers. Now the situation has changed the other way round and I would consider whether business subjects would be offered next year.

### 3. Curriculum of business education

Question 7 explores whether the present business education curriculum is too simple. Most of the principals whose schools did not offer business subjects did not agree that business education is simple. The following text unit is recorded in twelve of the twenty interviews: 'Business subjects are not simple'. For those whose schools offer business subjects, the common expression was that business subjects in junior forms are relatively easy but when it goes to the upper forms then nothing is "simple". One respondent summed it up nicely:

You have to treat business subjects in junior forms and senior forms separately. In junior forms the aim of business education is to provide students with the necessary practical skills like typewriting and book-keeping. Because of its practicality, the curriculum is not that academic so some may regard them as simple. But in senior forms, nothing is simple. A-Level business studies and POA are as difficult as any subject you could find in the A-Level curriculum. The syllabus of POA is in line with what is required internationally and professionally so students can take recognized examinations. There is nothing simple about it.

## **7.2 Business education in Hong Kong secondary schools – issues and concerns**

The last section deals with, in the opinions of principals, through interviews, why schools offer/ do not offer business subjects. The rest of this chapter compares the responses of principals, students, and teachers, from the interviews, over many issues of business education.

### **1. Aims of business education**

With regard to the aims of business education in secondary schools (Qh.12 and Qh.14), the responses indicated that in the perception of some principals, business education is not necessarily an instrument for furthering studies in the field of business in tertiary institutions or enabling students to become business professionals in the future. It is

just a discipline exposing students to understand the economic activities in Hong Kong.

One principal commented:

Business subjects are no different than other subjects. Students study them because they need that kind of knowledge in society. Students studying chemistry and history in secondary school do not necessarily become a chemist or historian in the future. It is the kind of training and knowledge that students need.

There are others agreeing with the aims of business education as described in the questionnaire. One typical response is:

Every subject has its own distinct contribution. Like P.E. is useful for it trains students to have a healthy body. English is needed for comprehension and communication purposes of another language. In senior secondary school, students are streamed so as to enable them to work or continue to study in that particular stream. Following this logic, I tend to agree with the aims of business education as described in Qh.12 and Qh.14.

For teachers, it is noted from the questionnaire survey that the majority of the respondents do have positive views towards the aims of business education in secondary schools. The follow-up interviews recorded slightly different views. The question of whether secondary business education should produce highly skilful and/or knowledgeable business personnel such as managers and accountants (Qt.11) and whether it prepares students for further studies in tertiary institutions (Qt.14) recorded

different responses. A careful scrutiny into the text units found younger teachers say things like 'Sure, why not?' and 'Secondary business education starts preparing students who in the future become business professionals'. One teacher stated:

Many want to study business education in the university. Why? Because the future of a business graduate is bright. So it is natural to say that business education in secondary schools aims to prepare students to become highly skillful and/or knowledgeable business personnel such as managers and accountants in the future.

More experienced teachers seem to see the role of business education in secondary school conservatively. The following text unit is a good representative:

Business education in secondary schools has never met the high-sounding aims. It is determined to be part of vocational education, or at least it has started that way. This kind of image has hampered its development. Girls in my class were not that motivated to learn, as they do not see the bright future ahead of them. They do not intend to further their studies. S.5 is their limit. So what can they do afterwards? Going to work of course and clerks and secretaries fit them well, as compared with working in the factories, white-collar jobs enjoy better status. Business subjects are practical, equipping students with basic skill and knowledge to fit students into white-collar jobs.

Another teacher with fifteen years of experience in teaching business education and who was once involved in the subject committee commented:

Forget about the aims for they can be written in one way but the practice could be another. If you have a chance please read the syllabus and you will notice the differences. First, the aims of secondary business education do not seem to have changed a lot. Just compare the syllabus of any business subjects, say commerce in year 1980 and 1995 you will find there have not been many changes in the wordings while in reality many things have changed. I was involved in the subject committee and I knew what business education is really all about in secondary schools. It is for students who could not make it to university. It is a practical and vocational subject preparing students to work, not to further their studies in university.

Question 28 examines whether the general public considers business education in secondary schools a programme that gives students limited skills and knowledge. The response from teachers varied. The majority of the respondents (eleven out of twenty) did agree with the statement, but quite a significant number did not (nine out of twenty). A careful scrutiny into the text units found that one common theme that was expressed was 'the status of business education depends on the school itself'. The following response from a teacher could reflect this:

It depends on the schools. If students taking business education were from prevocational schools, then very naturally the public would think secondary business education would only prepare them for work requiring limited skills and knowledge. If students taking business education were from a band one school, then the public would tend to think that they study business education in order to equip themselves to be business professionals in the future.

Quite a few (six out of twenty) teachers called for an evaluation of the aims of secondary business education:

The nature and purpose of secondary business education should be evaluated. Should it continue to be treated as only a preparation for “support” roles in business by preparing students for repetitive, low-wage employment or is there more that secondary business education could achieve?

Question 30 asks if business education should train students to be business professionals. Answers from teachers were mixed. While some think it is one of the aims of business education to equip students to be business professionals (eight out of twenty), others think it is beyond the scope of secondary business education (nine out of twenty). The following text unit from an experienced teacher sums it up nicely:

Definitely not in secondary school. I think it would be enough if in secondary business curriculum students are exposed to the various aspects of business education and they should decide whether they could continue to become business professionals or not in the future.

Many student respondents were inclined to think that one of the aims of business education is to prepare them for employment in business related jobs (Qp.7). A typical answer from the senior students interviewed is:

When I was young, I thought the future was very far away, but now I am in S.7, I have to plan my future. Since I have been studying business education for so

many years, I will hope to continue to further my studies and work in business-related fields.

Many others find interest in studying business education and their interest in a business career has increased since they began studying business education (Qp.16). What one S.6 student said reflects this:

Though studying business stream was not my first choice, I must admit that I have found interest in it after a while. Furthermore, my interest in a business career increased, especially when I come to know more about the business world through case studies.

Some even expect to start their own business in the future after studying business education in secondary school (Qp.12). The following text unit from a S.7 student concurs with what others said:

Last year, our business teacher gathered twenty students from the class to rent a stall in a fair for 4 days before the Lunar New Year selling stuffed toys. We expected to earn a lot, but because of the poor weather we could only manage to break-even. That is a good experience and I think I have learned a lot and I would definitely like to explore ways to seek the possibilities of starting my own business. Too bad, I seldom study this from school, only a bit from business studies.

Still some, especially students from lower forms, thought that secondary business education only prepares them for low-paying jobs (Qp.13). The reason could be summed up by the comment of one S.6 student:

It only depends on when you quit study and go to work. If you start to find a job after finishing S.3, S.5 or even S.7, chances are you will get a low-pay job regardless of what you have studied.

Besides the preparation for future career, respondents, mostly those from senior forms (7 out of 8 senior secondary students), did agree in the interview that business subjects prepare them to further their studies in the business faculty in tertiary institutions (Qp.9). A S.7 student commented:

After studying business subjects in secondary school for four years, of course it is my goal to study business education in tertiary institutions.

## 2. The status issue

### a. Status of secondary business teachers

There are a few questions dealing with the status of secondary business teachers (Qh.17, Qh.28, Qp.15, Qt.31, Qt.41, Qt.50, and Qt.60). The following utterances can

be found from the text units of different groups: 'The status of a teacher is not associated with the subject s/he teaches, but rather the rank s/he holds'.

For the group of principals, most did not see business teachers as inferior. One principal even elaborated:

I do not think there is a difference in status between teachers of different subjects. In my school, Mr. Tam (a teacher of business subjects) is very popular among teachers. This is because teachers usually consult him for investment advice.

Most teachers were positive about their status as business teachers. The following text units are typical; 'I am happy as a business teacher', 'I see every teacher as being equal' and 'The deputy head of business subjects will definitely enjoy a better status than a teacher in English or mathematics'. In general, secondary business teachers enjoy teaching business subjects. The majority of sixteen out of twenty teachers from the interview expressed this opinion. One said:

I studied business in university. I then worked a few years in the commercial field. I wanted to have a change and then joined the teaching force. I have enjoyed teaching since. My principal approached me to teach English, but I prefer to teach business subjects.

Students also did not see business teachers as inferior. Opinions expressed by teachers like 'Every teacher is the same,' and 'It depends on whether you teach well or not' can also be found in the text units from students. A S.6 student stated:

I am not too worried about the status of business teachers; my concern is whether they could teach well. I know many say that teachers of business education were failures in business fields but then that can be applied to teachers of other subjects. My business teacher once worked in a bank for a few years and his practical experience gave him the authenticity in delivering his teaching to us.

b. Status of secondary business subjects

The status of business subjects is examined in various questions (Qh.31, Qp.24, Qt. 50, and Qt.52). Respondents in the interview did not perceive secondary business subjects, especially those offered in senior secondary curriculum, as having a low image. The following is common in the text units of the three groups: 'Business subjects in A-Level are as difficult as other A-Level subjects and should not have a low image'. Teachers also commented that the low image of secondary business education is linked to its association with vocational education

Besides the above common view points, business teachers in the interview do not have a feeling that teachers of other subjects regard business teaching as easy. A teacher explained:

Every subject is more or less the same. I know history has divided subjects as academic and practical but now the dividing line is blurred.

With regard to whether business subjects are easier compared with other subjects (Qp.6), most of the students, especially those in senior forms (seven out of eight), disagreed. A S.6 student commented:

It may be true in junior forms but certainly not in senior forms that business subjects are easy. Business subjects are not easy in A-Level at all.

Furthermore, it was noted from the questionnaire survey that the business course in school is just as beneficial to the respondent as the academic courses that are required of all students (Qp.23). The follow-up interview also supported this. While it is found from the text units that most students think that English is very important (seven out of twelve students in S.3-S.5, and six out of eight in S.6-S.7), the relevance of business subjects is acknowledged. One S.6 student commented:

I am taking Use of English, Business Studies, POA, and Economics this year. I think every subject is of the same use to me.

c. Factors affecting the status of business education

i. *Business subjects treated as prerequisite*

While whether secondary business education is of low status is debatable, the majority of the respondents did think that the status of secondary business education would be

boosted if it were regarded as a prerequisite by university admission tutors. In general, principals, teachers, and students think that business subjects should be treated as a prerequisite for study in business faculties of tertiary institutions (Qh.27, Qt.16, and Qp.10). It is noted that the following extract from the text units is common to quite a number of respondents from the three groups: ‘Absolutely, secondary business subjects should be regarded as prerequisite for admission into the Faculty of Business and Administration’. One principal advocated:

Many students are competing for a place in business faculties. If admission tutors in tertiary institutions could regard secondary business subjects as a prerequisite, I am sure the status of business education would be elevated quickly.

Another principal commented:

The argument here is what is the point of studying something if it is not regarded as worthy? Students are very practical. They know that they do not have to study business subjects in secondary schools if they want to enter business faculties in tertiary institutions. The implication is they could study other subjects in secondary level that give them more options in choosing faculties.

Many teachers shared this view and they demand that CE level or A-Level business subjects should be regarded as a prerequisite for entering the business faculty at tertiary institutions. One teacher commented:

It is quite unfair to students taking business subjects at A-Level when these subjects are not given any favour in entering Faculty of Business in university. You need to take A-Level biology to study medicine in university and A-Level mathematics to study engineering but business subjects are not given any preference when entering business faculty.

Another teacher echoed:

If it is given prerequisite then the whole situation will turn upside down. I am sure that more bright students will switch to business stream.

The present situation, however, is opposite (Qt.37), as exclaimed by one teacher:

It is just the other way round. Business subjects at secondary schools were not given any preference. Not only that, to many students, the study of business subjects at A-Level limits their choice for it is difficult for them to choose engineering, computer or medicine at university but those who take science in A-Level can easily change to business in university.

Responses from students were similar. A S.6 student opined:

When it comes to studying business in university, it is quite unfair for others who have not studied business education in secondary schools to be treated as equal candidates like us. The other problem is they have more options but it would be

difficult for me to change my subject into engineering or medicine in the university.

*ii. Choice of parents and students*

One reason contributing to the inferior status of business education is, as perceived by many, students studying business subjects are of lower academic ability. The following questions (Qt.18, Qt.33, Qh.23 and Qh.25) examine the relationship between the poor academic ability of students and business education. It is noted that ‘students prefer to take science’ and ‘parents prefer their children to take science’ are frequently found from the text units of different groups. The following view made by a principal represents what many have expressed during the interview:

It is quite clear that most parents would prefer their children to study science in secondary schools and business subjects is definitely not on their priority list. Logically, those who are academically less able will settle for a place in the business stream.

Answers from teachers during interviews were more or less the same. The following response from a respondent could basically summarise what many have said:

A typical Hong Kong student will like to study science in senior forms, and those who fail to do so will consider business or art stream. Because of this, you can say that students with less academic ability study business education in secondary schools.

This situation has slightly changed as changes in the economy in recent years have motivated more students to study business subjects, as opined by one teacher:

In my school, students in science class are now allowed to choose POA or commerce as options and many do that. Their performance in these two subjects is good.

With regard to whether business education is popular among students (Qt.44) and parents (Qt.57), the following response from teachers during the interviews is typical:

Obviously, boys prefer to study science and girls art. It has always been the case. Things have changed a bit lately and business subjects can attract boys who do not want to study art and girls who do not want to study science. But still, business education has never been the first choice for students.

Traditionally in Hong Kong, parents would prefer their children to study science so they could become engineers or doctors in the future. Business education in secondary school is definitely not their first choice. It could be observed from the questionnaire survey that only a few students study business education as their first choice (Qp.14) and they thought those with better grades study science in secondary school (Qp.5). The following extracts from the follow-up interview with students could explain why. A S.6 student explained:

Students in junior forms do not have many options in choosing subjects to study.

They have to take what schools offer. In S.4, students can opt for different

streams and usually the science stream is the most popular choice. In A-Level, however, students are clearer about what they want to study.

A S.7 student commented:

Business is definitely not my first choice, but because I was not good enough to study science, I ended up studying business subjects in A-Level. I have no regret though and I hope to perform well so I could make it to the business faculty in tertiary institutions.

A S.4 student echoed:

In my school students with good academic results are put into Class A and students with poorer grades are put into Class B, so on and so forth. I was in S.3A last year and the majority of my classmates were now in science stream. I was not good enough to make it and since I did not like to study art, I ended up now in business stream.

d. On students' motivation

With regard to whether students lack strong motivation to study business subjects (Qt.62), most teachers did feel that students in general, not only students taking business subjects, lack the motivation to learn, no matter what subject it is. One teacher commented:

I have taught in a few schools. All I can conclude is that students in general lack strong motivation to learn. Since business education is usually provided in prevocational schools where students in general are of lower ability, it is true to say that students are not that motivated, but that also applies to other subjects.

Teachers in Qt.23 were asked that if they think students taking business education understand the subject matter taught and the answer gives no hint that business students are poorer in understanding:

Again it really depends who the students are. Business subjects are no different than other subjects. If students score well in other subjects, there is no reason why they can not in business subjects, and vice versa.

The views from students were similar. It is noted from the questionnaire that less than one-third of the respondents agreed that they lack the motivation to study (Qp.4). The follow-up interview also revealed that most of the senior students interviewed thought they were very eager to study. Six out of eight mentioned the following: 'I have to study my A-Level well'. The following comment from a S.7 student can best summarize the situation:

It is true to say that my motivation to study is very weak in junior form. But now I know the importance of getting good results. Now I am in S.7 and I have spent most of my time preparing for examinations. I have to study my A-Level well.

e. Secondary business education: the issues of starting early and making compulsory

There were questions in the questionnaires for dealing with the issues of whether business education should begin early (Qh.24, Qt.51, Qp.19) and should it be made compulsory for every secondary student (Qh.15, Qt.58) or should it be taught in secondary schools (Qt.49, Qp.21).

i. *Should students study business education early?*

The majority of the principals and teachers did not think that business education should start early. The reasons were many, but quite a number of teachers mentioned the problem of fitting the subject into the present timetable. The following comment extracted from the text units was made both by the principals and teachers during the follow-up interview:

The present S.1 timetable is already full and it is difficult to accommodate a new subject.

The idea of starting business education early did not register support from teachers and principals of prevocational schools where students start to take business subjects in S.1. The following comment from a teacher at a prevocational school can summarize their views:

We have business education in S.1, and students do not like it. It really depends on the kind of business subjects you are offering. If it is something like what we have now where the focus is on the teaching of low-level skills, I would rather students not take it in junior forms.

A similar response was recorded from interviews with students. A S.5 student stated:

There is already too much to learn. I think it is just right to start business education in S.4.

*ii. Business education as compulsory*

Similarly, the idea of having business education as compulsory did not draw much support from principals and teachers (twenty-five out of forty say no). One principal stated:

I think it is a good idea for students to learn some business knowledge, but I do not think it should be compulsory for every student. It is not something every student needs to know in school. It is better for them to take business education when there is a need after graduation.

Another teacher commented:

I see the importance and relevance of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools, but I do not think it should be made compulsory. It is quite a sensitive issue, for many subjects are claimed to be equally significant to be made compulsory.

*iii. Should business subjects be taught in the secondary curriculum?*

Though the idea of starting business education in S.1 did not draw much support, respondents did perceive the importance of business education. It is noted from the text units that ‘the study of business subjects is essential’ appears more than ten times out of the sixty interviews. As asserted by a S.7 student:

Although I did not choose to study business education as my first choice, I find the study of business education has given me some common sense, like I know a bit more of what shares are and how the stock market operates. This is essential, especially in a society like Hong Kong where business dominates.

One teacher explained:

The reality is business activities are so important in Hong Kong that students should know about it at least in senior forms. Moreover, the business stream is a

good option preparing students interested in furthering their studies or developing their career in business. Business education should definitely be taught in Hong Kong secondary schools.

f. On academic/vocational divide

Whether secondary business education should be continued to be considered as part of vocational education or should the academic side of it be emphasized is investigated (Qt.42, Qt.40 and Qh.28). The majority of the respondents (twenty-nine out of forty) expressed the opinion that the academic side of business education should be emphasized while trimming down its vocational image. One principal stated:

I understand that secondary business education was first developed to cater to the needs of the less abled in vocational schools. But as time goes by and Hong Kong has become a major financial centre, I think there is a need for other students to study business education. Furthermore, business education is in high demand in tertiary education. In view of the above, business subjects should be offered as a part of general education.

Another teacher commented:

The tradition is academic subjects receive better status. When the academic side of the business curriculum is emphasized, the status of business education will thus be elevated.

g. Two sets of business curricula

On the note of establishing two sets of business curricula, principals and teachers in general agree that this could work - one for vocational education and one for general education (Qh.16 and Qt.59). The majority of respondents (twenty-two out of forty) agreed. A principal stated:

I know A-Level business subjects are not easy, so I think if it is possible to have two different sets of curricula for business education, like those in English where you have syllabus A for the weak students and syllabus B for the more abled ones.

One teacher commented:

I think this is a good idea. When you can have two sets of curricula for English catering for students with different levels, I think it can be the same with business subjects. Look also at the differences between subjects in A-Level and AS level. In A-Level economics, students have to study both micro and macroeconomics but they only have to take microeconomics when studying AS level. The point with business education is it should equip students to become business professionals as well as clerks and secretaries. For the future business professionals, the academic side of business education is emphasised and for clerks and secretaries, the vocational side of business education is stressed.

#### h. Future business curriculum

Most of the statements on the future curriculum of business education received a favourable response from teachers, with few differences in answers. The views of the curriculum developers are also in line with those of teachers and principals.

When discussing the possible changes to the business curriculum, Mr. Lai, the curriculum officer of commercial studies, stated that the incorporation of IT seems to be inevitable, there is also a need to refresh some topics, and, the inclusion of business ethics is necessary. He mentioned that the junior form commercial studies is under reconstruction with the introduction of a new subject “Business Fundamentals”. He expected to see a similar restructuring in the senior-form business curriculum.

The following discussion analyses what principals, teachers, and students have expressed in the interview.

#### *i. On value teaching (Qt.39)*

This question received a slanted response with most teachers interviewed supporting it (eighteen out of twenty). It is noted from the text units that ‘I want my students to have good business knowledge as well as good ethics’ is a common expression. The following elaboration of a teacher is a good summary:

I strongly think that values should be taught in school. While I teach business subjects, I try to seek opportunities to teach my students values. I do not want to

teach students to have business knowledge. It can be very dangerous. Money is neutral but it can be devilish if you do not know how to handle it. I highly recommend the teaching of values in business education.

Mr. Chau, the senior curriculum planning officer, also agrees as he wants to see the teaching of values in the newly-established subject “Business Fundamentals”.

*ii. On entrepreneurship education (Qp.16, Qp.7, Qt.69)*

Students expressed their interest in establishing their own businesses after graduation. ‘I want to be self-employed’ is a common expression found in the text units. The following comment made by a S.6 student is typical:

I want to be my own boss. I think I have better skills and knowledge than those who have not studied business education. It will even be better if I could learn more about starting my own business in school.

A few teachers during the interview also touched upon this issue. One even encouraged a group of students to have a try:

I remembered one time during the first lesson of S.4 commerce when I asked students what was the importance of studying business subjects, a few responded by saying it helped them to start their own business after graduation. They were serious. Every year before Chinese New Year, people can do their business by

renting the stalls in the market for a few days selling flowers, candies, stuffed toys and many other things. These students rented a stall and became their own boss for a few days. We had a good chat later on and I found that the concept of being an entrepreneur was in the minds of many students. I think it is not too early to share entrepreneurship education with them.

*iii. On keyboarding (Qt.43 and Qp.20)*

Though many respondents see the need for teaching keyboarding skills to students, the question of whether it should be introduced through the subject of typewriting or word-processing is controversial. During the interview, it is quite clear that the majority of the teachers (seventeen out of twenty) believe it is beneficial to students if word-processing, instead of typewriting, is taught. One typical response from teacher is as follows:

When you look at the real world, typewriting and shorthand could only be found in the museum. It has to be replaced by word-processing.

Responses from students are similar:

I learn how to type on my computer and I think it is a waste of time to spend a few years to train students how to type. They could easily pick this skill up.

The introduction of IT into the business curriculum draws tremendous support from principals (whether or not their schools offered business subjects) (Qh.22), students (Qp.22) and teachers (Qt.29 and Qt.54). All of the respondents interviewed support this idea favourably. The notion of ‘You need to be IT literate’ is a common expression found from the text units of different groups. One teacher advocated:

This is something you could not escape. I do think it is important to implement IT into the present curriculum but everything has to be planned in detail. There should be enough software around, with adequate back-up facilities and services.

A principal echoed his view:

It will be IT dominant in a few years’ time. We are quite far behind now. I am glad that the Chief Executive takes up this issue seriously. IT should be emphasized in education.

The comment from a S.7 student could sum up the discussion on the importance of IT in business education:

Computers and business are inseparable in the real world now, but the use of computers is kept to the very minimal in business education. I think it should be more emphasized.

v. *On coordination of subjects (Qt.25)*

Though not every teacher interviewed taught different business subjects from junior forms to senior forms, most of them (twelve out of twenty) express the opinion that the present link in business subjects is weak. The following comment is typical:

The present business curriculum is loosely coordinated with the exception of bookkeeping in junior forms and POA in senior forms. The rest is like a random collection of subjects.

Another experienced teacher commented:

The secondary business subjects seem to cater to the needs of different students. Office Practice and Typewriting are for students with lower academic ability and Business Studies and POA are for students aiming to further their studies. The coordination between subjects is very weak.

vi. *On the syllabus of business education*

Most teachers stated that they did not think the syllabus of business education is too long (Qt.63), but they thought that the syllabus of business education does not reflect the needs of society (Qt.64). A similar result was drawn from the follow-up interviews. The notion of ‘the present business curriculum does not reflect the needs of society’ is a common expression noted in the text units of teachers. A teacher commented:

The syllabus is just right. It is neither too long nor too short. I am not concerned about the length of the syllabus. My concern is on the coverage of it. To my disappointment, the syllabus of many business subjects does not reflect the needs of society. Take CE commerce as an example. I am shocked to see that the Postal Order is still included in the syllabus as a means of remitting money, where in real life this has not been practised in Hong Kong for a long time.

From the text units it is noted that many of the criticisms teachers have are about the present syllabus not reflecting the needs of society. An experienced business teacher offered another view:

I know the syllabus needs to reflect changes in society and it is especially true to the syllabus of business education. The only problem is since the business world is changing everyday, do we need to change our business syllabus day in and day out? I would think a major review once in every five years is enough. The other

solution is a better involvement from the business sector, which knows what the real business world needs.

*vii. On internationalization of materials (Qt.68)*

Most teachers in the questionnaire survey gave very positive responses with ten out of twenty being affirmative in the interview. Terms like “global village”, “one world”, and “Hong Kong as an international city” are common expressions found in text units of teachers. One teacher commented:

The trendy term today is “the world is a global village”. That is true. In order to be competitive, you need to know what is going on around the world and the more knowledge you have about others, the more competitive you are. The recent currency crisis that had affected the whole world could well illustrate my point. One needs to think globally and students need to be exposed to materials that carry an international flavour.

*viii. On replacing the current mathematics curriculum with business mathematics for business students (Qt.70, Qp.25)*

Teachers and students tend to agree with this in the interview (twenty-three out of forty). The phrase ‘the present mathematics curriculum is too difficult’ is recorded in the text units of both teachers and students. The following comment by a teacher can conclude what respondents have to say about this:

The secondary mathematics curriculum now is very difficult. It is beyond the ability of most students. I think only those who continue their studies in science can cope with this curriculum. For business students, I think the requirement of mathematics standard should not be that high, and business mathematics should be enough for them.

i. Allocation of resources and the use of technology in business education

Three questions from questionnaire for principals (Qh.18, Qh.19 and Qh.20) deal with the allocation of resources. The general view is the allocation of resources to business subjects is not biased. It is noted from the text units of the principals that nearly every respondent interviewed said the following:

For schools where business education is offered, the allocation of time to each business subject by the schools follows the suggestion of the E.D.

One principal further explained how he allocated resources to different subjects:

I have a strict formula for allocation of resources. I will look at the number of students taking each subject and the number of periods each subject occupies in the timetable as the basis of allocation of resources. Of course when you compare business education with English Language, it is obvious that English gets more resources as it is a compulsory subject for every student from S.1 to S.7, and around 20% of the timetable is dedicated to English Language. So the

difference is there. But if compared with subjects like geography or economics, I think business subjects get a similar treatment. It has its fair share.

Similarly, most teachers in the questionnaire survey agreed that compared with other subjects, the allocation of time and resources for teaching business education in the present timetable of their school is adequate (Qt.17, Qt.55). The following comments were extracted from the follow-up interview:

I do not know what resources you exactly mean. I am thinking of the overhead projector, computer, and number of lessons available and teaching materials. There are always not enough of those around. But comparing with other subjects, I do not think fewer resources are allocated to business subjects.

When dealing with the use of computers in schools (Qh.19), it is noted from the interview that students of business education do not have a high priority in using computers in schools. One principal commented:

We do not have enough computers for everybody, so I have to allocate resources using a few criteria. One of them is of course the “academic consequence”. Usually I will give students taking science a higher priority to use computer facilities because they are, whether you like it or not, the better students in our schools, and if the use of computers can help them in public examination, I will try to help them. You see, doing well in examination has a lot of implications for the school.

Similarly, teachers both in the questionnaire survey and interview (fifteen out of twenty) generally expressed the opinion that there were not enough computers and teaching materials in business subjects (Qt.61). One commented:

The lack of teaching materials is always a problem. There is not even a proper textbook for A-Level business studies. I understand this is because the market for it is small. But at least CDI could produce some teaching materials. They have that in other subjects, but nothing is available for business subjects.

j. On recruitment of business teachers

For principals, there are two questions (Qh.13 and Qh. 26) dealing with the recruitment of business teachers. Most of the principals interviewed did not find the recruitment of business teachers very difficult (thirteen out of twenty). One typical answer is as follows:

Well, if you asked me this question three years ago, the answer would have been different. There was a time when it was very difficult to recruit teachers especially in the case of recruiting teachers to teach business subjects. Many business graduates would like to venture in the real business world to make big money. But now because of the poor economic condition, it is very likely that there are over one hundred applicants applying for one job.

The business teachers in the questionnaire and interviews confirmed this view (Qt.35).

One commented:

I think most of the business teachers who graduated from university are like me, taking teaching as the last resort. The reason we studied business education was mainly because we want to pursue a career in the business field, but somehow either it is very competitive out there or some have lost interest after working in the business field for a certain period of time, so that they continue their career as teachers.

Though principals did not think that it is difficult to recruit business teachers, they agreed that most university graduates do not take teaching as their first career choice (Qh.26). One principal asserted:

Most fresh graduates would like to work in the business field, but that does no harm to the recruitment of business teachers in my school, for I prefer to recruit business teachers with a few years of working experience before joining us. The business teachers I have now belong to this category, and I think there are many who have worked in the business field before joining the teaching force.

k. Business / industrial involvement

With regard to the issue of placement and the involvement of the business/industrial sector in the planning of the business education curriculum (Qh.30, Qp.17, Qp.18,

Qt.34, Qt.45, and Qt.47), principals, students and teachers interviewed (forty-six out of sixty) rendered their support. For principals, it is noted from the text units that 'they know what business really needs' is mentioned quite a few times. One principal commented:

I can say that the business curriculum we have now is out-dated. Look at who is involved in the planning of the curriculum? They are government officials, school teachers, and university lecturers. They may not be the best possible people to know what the current business/industrial position looks like. I think the involvement of the business/ industrial sector is essential for many reasons. First, they are the best to know what is needed in business/industry. And they will sooner or later be affected when they employ fresh graduates. Finally, they can arrange placements for students, maybe also for teachers, if necessary.

Teachers share a similar opinion. One opined:

In the real business world, things change very quickly. The secondary business curriculum now does not reflect the needs of society, and I think that if people from the business sector were more involved then the situation may improve. I think they have the responsibility and obligation to be involved, as they will be getting our graduates sooner or later.

On the issue of placement, it is noted from the text units of students and teachers that “hands-on experience” is frequently mentioned. One teacher noted the importance of placement:

Business education is not something that you only study. Practical experience is equally important. I often take my students to different firms to see the many aspects of business. That is not enough. It will be ideal if they could really gain some working experience.

A S.6 student stated:

I think this is a good idea. I have learned so much knowledge from books, and I really want to put it into practice. It would be wonderful if I had a chance to taste what the real business field is like in the summer. It would give me better preparation.

Not only is the idea of placement for students supported by teachers, quite a number of respondents in the interviews (eleven out of twenty) also favoured the idea of having placements for teachers. One teacher explained:

Unlike many other subjects where knowledge of the subjects is enough, it is important for business teachers to be in the field. I always get updated by reading the relevant news and information, but I think it will be beneficial if I could be placed in a real working condition for a short period of time.

Related to placement for teachers is the question of whether teachers have enough practical business experience (Qt.21). Many asserted in the questionnaire survey that this was the case and the follow-up interview revealed that many business teachers did work in the business field before (twelve out of twenty) and it is important for them to keep up with the up-dated knowledge. One commented:

I worked in a bank for three years before joining the teaching profession and I found that three years had given me good exposure and practical knowledge to share with my students. It would be ideal if every business teacher could have worked in the real business field before becoming a teacher. But after teaching for a few years, teachers' practical knowledge should be up-dated.

#### 1. Teacher training and the professionalization of teachers

As noted from the questionnaire survey (Qt.26, Qt.32), teachers in the interview thought there was not enough in-service teacher training for them, and their opportunities to have further studies and professional development are few. Expressions such as 'I cannot find any related course to study' are commonly noted in the text units. One teacher stated:

I have been teaching business subjects for seven years and finished my certificate of education five years ago. I try to find some relevant courses available, but there are hardly any.

Another commented:

It has been four years after finishing my teacher training and I would like to refresh myself but I could hardly find anything. There were two business education conferences organized by the University of Hong Kong and that was all. CDI does not provide anything new and there is one organization for business teachers doing nothing very visible.

Though the issue of in-service teacher training was not addressed in the questionnaire for principals, it was discussed by some during the interview (six out of twenty). The general impression was that there is not adequate in-service teacher training for business teachers. One principal commented:

I think there should be more in-service teacher training other than the required teaching certificate for teachers, business teachers included. As a principal, I would like to see my teachers well-equipped with the updated knowledge and skills in teaching a certain subject. From the circulars I received, I can only see that English teachers have all sorts of training, but not the others. I am sure there is a lot our business teachers do not know, but apparently not enough in-service teacher training is available.

Another issue related to teacher training is the professionalization of teachers. Many teachers responded in the questionnaire survey that the present links between business teachers are weak (Qt.20) and there should be an association and a journal for business

teachers (Qt.48). The follow-up interview recorded a similar view. The expression of 'there should be a channel for business teachers to share' is often noted in the text units. One teacher elaborated:

One very important resource is the link of teachers. I remembered seven years ago that I was the only business teacher in my school. I then received my teacher training and there I came to know more business teachers and we shared our teaching resources and experiences. We still kept in touch with one another. I think there is a need to have an organization for business teachers. I know there is one around, but it is not functioning that well.

m. Teaching method and assessment

Respondents in the questionnaire survey stated that it is important to use varied teaching methods in teaching business subjects (Qt.38) and they have done so (Qt.19).

One commented:

Usually those taking business subjects are not the best students, and teachers have to use different teaching methods to capture their attention. I have adopted different teaching strategies like group discussions, case studies, projects, and press cuttings. I found students do respond to different teaching approaches.

Another mentioned the difficulties of using various teaching methods and related this to the lack of teaching materials:

My relatively busy schedule did not give me enough time to prepare my lessons. All I usually do is to follow the textbook. If there were more teaching materials suggesting different teaching methods of teaching, I might have a better pool of ideas. I envy those English teachers who have many resources; they could employ different strategies in teaching.

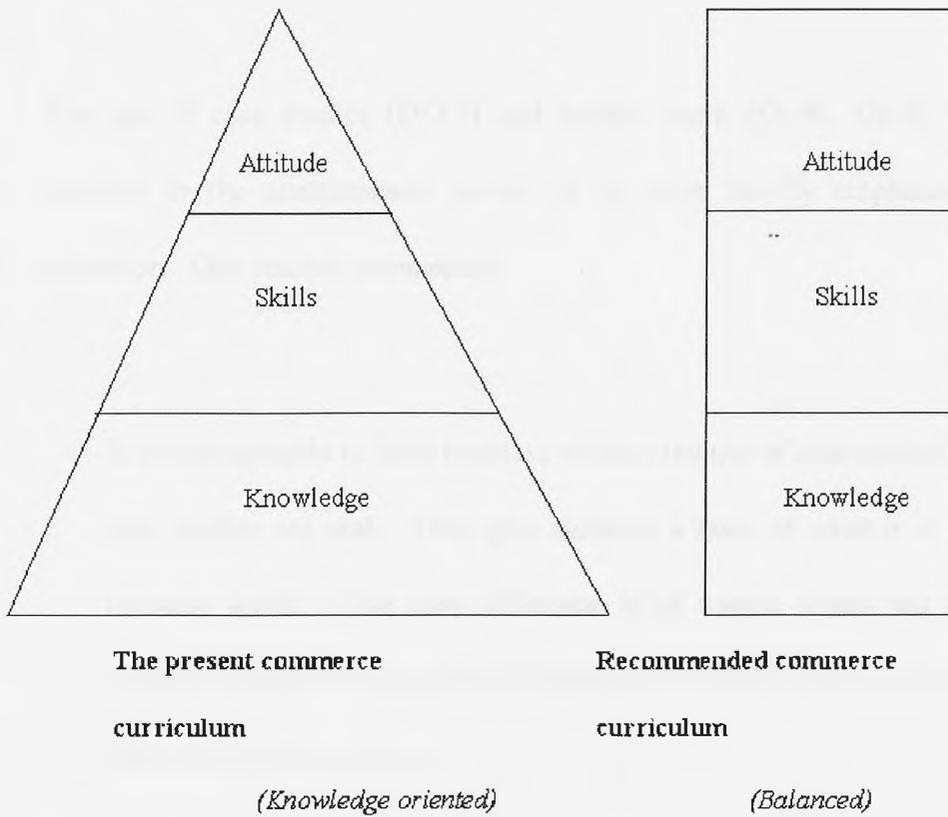
Mr. Lai, the Curriculum Officer of Commercial Studies, suggested teachers should organize some work for students to explore the knowledge themselves. He quoted a unit in certificate commerce as an example:

While dealing with the topic of “Business Ownership”, the teacher should tell students to form groups and interview the owners of some sole proprietorship (e.g. grocery). In so doing, students can learn the basic operations of a grocery and factors to consider when setting up a business.

He emphasized the teaching of transferable skills rather than mere transmitting of factual knowledge to students. These skills include conceptual skills, decision-making skills, interpersonal skills, language skills and so on. They are transferable because they are not confined to the subject matter itself but can be useful to their further studies and later at work. He commented that the current knowledge-transmission mode of learning is not healthy as the existing business curriculum places too much emphasis on rote memorisation, with little focus on skills development and a lot less emphasis on attitude fostering. He thought the present “pyramid of learning” (i.e. much knowledge, less skills, very little attitude) should be changed to a “flat block of

learning” (i.e. equal proportions of knowledge, skills and attitude), as illustrated in Fig.7.1

Fig. 7.1 Mr Lai’s ideal business curriculum versus the present one



With regard to the present method of assessment in business subjects, many teachers and students mentioned in the questionnaire that it is not satisfactory (Qt.36). Teachers in the follow-up interview agreed and one elaborated:

The present form of assessment may only be able to test students’ knowledge of business subjects. But in business education there should be more to be learned like their decision-making power, ability to think logically and analytically, etc. Unfortunately, I do not think the present form of assessment can test this. I think

the idea of a project work as a form of assessment can be pursued. I know in some ESF schools, students were asked to do some projects in business studies and the result was positive. I think working on a project involves many of the above-mentioned qualities that we wish students to acquire from business education.

The use of case studies (Qt.67) and project work (Qt.46, Qp.8) was agreed by teachers in the questionnaire survey to be more heavily emphasised in business education. One teacher commented:

It is unimaginable to learn business without the use of case studies. For one thing, case studies are real. They give students a taste of what it is like in the real business world. The only difference is of course when you make a wrong decision now in the case study, it does not cost you much but in real life we are talking about real money.

Another commented:

You can read from the examiner's report that the lack of analytical power in students is criticized. The way to deal with this is of course using more case studies. The only problem is where can I find all the case studies. There are not enough teaching materials on case studies suitable for secondary students around.

Most of the students interviewed (eleven out of twenty) like the use of project work

One S.7 student explained:

We did one project last year and I enjoyed it very much. We have to use all the knowledge we have learnt in project work. It is better than just grasping the facts from books.

In assessment, Lai (as quoted in Chung, 1997) thought the present form should be changed and project work should be included as part of the assessment method. Still, the difficulties are there, as stated by an experienced teacher:

The use of project work assumes students to have a high degree of self-initiative and an active learning style. The reality is many students taking business education were of lower academic ability. They might lack the motivation to do the project work themselves and the implication was teachers might need to put in a lot of effort if project work was adopted as a kind of assessment method.

After describing the results from questionnaire survey and interviews of principals, teachers, and students on their perceptions of different issues of secondary business education, the next chapter will provide a discussion of findings.

## Chapter 8: Discussion of Findings

The previous two chapters gave a descriptive picture of how principals, business teachers, and students of business education perceive secondary business education in Hong Kong. This chapter provides a discussion of the findings. The discussion is based on the results from the questionnaire survey and interview, the testing of hypothesis, with reference to the previous discussion from the literature review in chapter 4.

First it is observed in the questionnaire survey that the number of questions asked is different for the three different groups of respondents. The reasons are as follows:

- Teachers of business education were asked most questions because as professionals with responsibility, they should be able to give their opinions on various aspects of business education.
- Principals were only asked to deal with some general issues of business education.
- Students taking business education were asked questions that they experienced in the studying of secondary business education.

Though the number of questions is different and there may be variations in the contents of the questions, there are some common areas where mostly three, and

sometimes two, groups were asked similar questions. For items applicable to two groups, comparisons were made using Z test and the null hypothesis is retained if the Z score is less than 1.96. Comparisons of three groups were made using analysis of variance procedures (ANOVA). The null hypothesis is retained if the F value is less than 2.99. If the null hypothesis is rejected, Scheffé test will be employed to see where the difference lies. If the F value is less than 2.99, there is no significant difference between the mean of two groups. Based on the above, the following comparisons are made:

1. On why schools do not offer business education

Only principals were asked this question. The consistent result from the questionnaire survey and the interviews was that principals perceived the following as reasons why schools did not offer business education:

- The present timetable is too crowded.
- Students can take business education after graduating from secondary school.

The point of timetabling agrees with the description of factors contributing towards good practice in business education as identified by TVEI (1992) where it suggests an innovative use of the timetable to accommodate business education activities.

## 2. Aims of business education

In general, the aims of secondary business education as agreed by the respondents in this study are consistent with those described in the literature review in the U.S. (Commission, 1985) and in the U.K. (TVEI, 1992). Both state that business education should aim to educate students for and about business, and provide students with general business skills and knowledge. In this study, the majority of the respondents agreed that the aims of business education in secondary schools were to develop students' ability to analyse and solve problems (Qt.9); to promote students' interest in learning business subjects (Qt.12); to equip students for future jobs (Table 61: Ho1); and to provide students with a general business knowledge (Table 62: Ho2).

Table 61: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 1

Item no	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qt.13	1.962	0.72	91.0	1.49	Yes
Qp.7	2.116	1.24	77.4		

H<sub>0</sub>1 - There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students on the perception that secondary business education should equip students for future jobs.

Qt.13: Business education aims to equip students for future jobs.

Qp.7: Business subjects prepare me for employment in business-related jobs.

Table 62: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 2

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qt.15	1.769	0.652	83.7	1.60	Yes
Qh.32	1.934	0.886	84.3		

H<sub>0</sub>2 - There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals on the perception that secondary business education should provide students with general business knowledge.

Qt.15: Business education aims to provide students with general business knowledge.

Qh.32: Business education should provide students with general business knowledge.

On the issue of whether secondary business education aims to prepare students for further studies in tertiary institutions (Table 63: H<sub>0</sub>3), respondents agreed in general. The ANOVA test rejected the null hypothesis of no differences among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that secondary business education aims to prepare students for further studies in tertiary institutions. This implies that principals, teachers and students have different views. The means of principals and teachers are similar but the means of students is different. The Scheffé test (Table 64) indicated that the differences between teachers with students, and principals with students were statistically significant.

Table 63: ANOVA test results for null hypothesis 3

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	F value	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qt.14	2.892	0.749	46.6	19.4	No
Qh.12	2.925	1.066	48.4		
Qp.9	2.380	1.204	46.8		

H<sub>03</sub> - There is no statistically significant difference among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that secondary business education aims to prepare students for further studies in tertiary institutions.

Qt.14: Business education aims to prepare students for further studies in tertiary institutions

Qh.12: Business education in secondary schools should aim to prepare students for entering the faculty of business at university.

Qp.9: Business subjects prepare me to further my studies in the business faculties in tertiary institutions.

Table 64: Scheffé test for H<sub>03</sub>

Scheffé test	F value
Principals vs teachers	2.4
Principals vs students	8.4
Teachers vs students	7.3

On the issue of whether secondary business education aims to train highly skilful and/or knowledgeable business personnel such as managers and accountants (Table 65, H04), principals and teachers do agree that it should be the case. However, their means are different and teachers tend to agree more than principals do.

Table 65: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 4

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H0 retained
Qt.11	2.154	0.732	78.1	5.37	No
Qh.14	2.806	1.056	56.9		

H04 - There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals agreeing that secondary business education aims to train highly skilful and/or knowledgeable business personnel such as managers and accountants.

Qt.11: Business education aims to produce highly skilful and/or knowledgeable business personnel such as managers and accountants.

Qh.14: Business education in secondary school should aim to prepare business professionals for Hong Kong.

Respondents disagreed that the aim of secondary business education was to produce clerks and secretaries, earning low wages (Table 66: H05).

Table 66: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 5

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qt.10	3.277	1.265	27.5	1.76..	Yes
Qp.13	3.068	0.998	33.1		

H<sub>0</sub>5 - There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students disagreeing that secondary business education aims to produce clerks and secretaries, earning low wages.

Qt.10: Business education aims to produce clerks and secretaries for Hong Kong.

Qp.13: Business education only prepares you for low-paying jobs.

A further analysis indicates that respondents from different types of school tend to have different opinions towards certain aims of secondary business education. For example, those teaching in prevocational and technical schools tend to agree with Qt.10 more than those teaching in grammar schools do (Table 67). This is understandable, as students from prevocational and technical schools are of lower banding. It is usually the case that they would not further their studies but work in a career of lower income and status. Similarly, when Qh.14 stating that business education in secondary school should aim to prepare business professionals for Hong Kong was asked, principals of grammar schools would tend to agree more with the statement than principals of prevocational and technical schools (Table 67).

Table 67: Respondents (teachers as in Qt.10 and principals as in Qh.14) from different types of school respond to aims of secondary business education differently

	Grammar school	Prevocational school	Technical school
Qt.10 (Strongly agree/ agree)	25.5%	35.0%	38.5%
Qh.14 (Strongly agree/ agree)	58.6%	50%	33.3%

Besides the types of school, it is also noted from the questionnaire survey and interviews that respondents with different age and teaching experience may have different answers in some statements. Principals and business teachers who have been around for many years tend to perceive that business education as a means to provide low-level skills and knowledge for students who are not going to lead a professional life in business. Those who are younger in age with less teaching experience do have high hopes of business education (Table 68). They tend to agree that the aims of secondary business education are to prepare students for further studies in tertiary institutions (Qt.14) and to equip them to become business professionals in the future (Qt.11).

Table 68: Younger teachers' perceptions of the aims of secondary business education on preparing students' future

Age	Qt. 11 Strongly agree N (%)	Qt. 11 Agree N (%)	Qt. 14 Strongly Disagree N (%)	Qt. 14 Disagree N (%)
< 30	10 (13.7)	51 (69.9)	9 (12.3)	31 (42.5)
31-40	9 (13.6)	43 (65.2)	7 (10.6)	27 (40.9)
> 40	4 (10.3)	22 (56.4)	4 (10.3)	12 (30.8)

From the questionnaire survey and interviews, it is noted (Table 69) that for students taking business education in secondary schools, many do expect in the future to be employed in business-related jobs (Qp.7) or continue their business education in the tertiary institutions (Qp. 9). Many are motivated to have a business career (Qp.16) and some even wish to start their own business in the future (Qp.12). There is an old Chinese saying, 'An employee has no bright future'. There are many examples of successful young entrepreneurs and there here have been reports in newspapers and magazines on young people getting rich. Attracted by those stories, many students in Hong Kong want to try to become their own boss.

Table 69: Perceptions of students taking secondary business education on their future career/studies

Item no.	Statement	Strongly agree/ agree (%)
Qp.7	Business subjects prepare me for employment in business-related jobs.	77.4
Qp.9	Business subjects prepare me to further my studies in the business faculties in tertiary institutions.	46.8
Qp.12	I expect to start my own business in the future after studying business education in secondary school.	55.8
Qp.16	My interest in a business career has increased since I began studying business education.	49.3

### 3. Status of business education

The inferiority or superiority of a subject could be measured in a number of ways. The following provides some guidelines:

#### a. On whether business subjects are easy

From the viewpoint of many curriculum developers, most academic subjects are considered to be more difficult, with the curriculum carefully planned, starting from junior forms and extending to senior forms, with suitable theories and concepts,

linking with other subjects, and providing the next stage of schooling. Because of its association with vocational education, business subjects in secondary schools, however, are considered to be inferior (Boyd & Lee, 1994; Goodson & Marsh, 1996). Though it may be the case that the “outsiders” will regard business subjects as easy, business teachers and students who have taken business education had different opinions, as can be seen in the questionnaire survey and interviews (Table 70: Ho6).

Table 70: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 6

Item no	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	Ho retained
Qt.56	3.12	1.021	34.8	0.65	Yes
Qp.6	3.054	0.942	31.1		

Ho6 - There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students on the perception that secondary business education is not easy.

Qt.56: The content of business subjects taught in secondary school now is NOT difficult.

Qp.6: Compared with other subjects, the business subjects taught in secondary school now are easy.

Of an overall of forty-five per cent of students disagreeing with the statement that business subjects are easy when compared with other subjects (p.276), forty-one per cent of them are studying S.4 and S.5, and sixty-three per cent are A-Level students (Table 71). As noted in the follow-up interviews, business subjects may not be

difficult in junior forms, but definitely are not easy in A-Level for it has to be noted that the public examinations in Hong Kong are recognized by international standards. For example, a credit in CE examination is equivalent to a pass in GCSE in the U.K., and many universities in other countries recognize the A-Level results. Both business teachers and students raised this point.

A checking of respondents from students of different types of school gives further evidence. Responses are almost the same for respondents from prevocational and technical schools (with students usually in the lower band) and those from grammar schools (with students usually in the higher band), with students from senior forms strongly disagreeing/disagreeing more with the statement that compared with other subjects, the business subjects taught in secondary schools now are easy (Qp.6).

Table 71: Responses from students of different types of school and levels on whether compared with other subjects, secondary business subjects are easy (Qp.6)

	Prevocational and technical		Grammar	
	S.4-5	S.6-7	S.4-5	S.6-7
Level of students				
Total number of respondents	20	5	115	49
Strongly disagree/ disagree N (%)	10 (50%)	3 (60%)	45 (39%)	29 (59%)

b. On the perceptions of principals, teachers and students

It seems from the questionnaire survey that business education is not regarded by respondents as anything superior (Table 72). In the follow-up interviews, it was emphasized that the low image of secondary business education is linked to its association with vocational education (p.297).

Table 72: ANOVA test results for null hypothesis 7

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/agree (%)	F value	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qp.24	3.724	0.986	12.1	2.95	Yes
Qh.31	3.735	0.887	15.8		
Qt.52	3.68	0.802	25.8		

H<sub>07</sub> - There is no statistically significant difference among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that secondary business education is not regarded as anything superior.

Qp.24: I think business education in secondary school enjoys higher status than other subjects.

Qh.31: Secondary business education enjoyed better status than other subjects did.

Qt.52: Business education in secondary school is regarded as superior by most secondary students and teachers.

c. On the choice of parents, teachers, and students

It is noted from the literature review that students try to avoid taking business education in secondary school (Sifuna, 1992; Wong, 1996). Parents do have a role to play in the development of the curriculum, not as direct participants, but their influence can be subtle and powerful through their choice of schools. The example discussed in Chapter 2 about a school switching its medium of instruction from Chinese to English because parents stopped sending their children to that school explains clearly what parents like. Cheung (1993) found that in order to ensure a bright future for their children, parents would press for a place in a prestigious primary school. Qh. 4 and Qh. 23 addressed this issue. It is observed from the questionnaire survey that principals, whether or not business education is offered in their schools, think that while the majority of the parents do not think it is a bad idea for the school to offer business education, only one quarter of the principals think that parents prefer their children to take business subjects in secondary schools. The follow-up interview reveals that in the perception of principals, parents do not mind whether the schools will offer business education or not as long as their child can study the subjects that lead to a good career path. In most circumstances, science is the subject that most parents prefer (p.301).

From the questionnaire survey taken by teachers and students and later in the interviews, it is found that students do not want to take business subjects as their first choice if given a chance. This can be reflected in Qt. 44 and Qp. 14 (Table 73). It is true as again in Hong Kong, students, especially boys, prefer to study science subjects and the business stream is often their last resort (p. 302).

Table 73: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 8

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qt.44	2.32	1.03	51.7	1.85	Yes
Qp.14	2.47	1.21	59.9		

Ho8 - There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students on the perception that if given a choice, students do not want to take business subjects as their first choice of study in secondary school.

Qt.44: Given a chance, most secondary students will NOT take business subjects as their first choice.

Qp.14: I do Not take business education as my first choice of study in secondary school.

#### 4. Students taking business education

This part looks at students taking secondary business education. Many have accused them of being low achievers and the following will examine whether it is the case in the perception of the respondents.

##### a. Do they really lack the motivation to learn?

The questionnaire survey suggests that most students, especially those in senior forms, think they do not lack the motivation to learn (Qp. 4, p.273). This is the case, for

those in senior secondary will be confronted with the examination pressure as well as the choice of future career and in a society like Hong Kong, together with the traditional Chinese thinking, studying is a good way to succeed. Thus the motivation for students to learn is high. The views of teachers as indicated in Qt. 62 gives a slightly different opinion. A total of forty-nine percent agree with the notion that students lack motivation to learn business subjects. The later interviews found that teachers did not only pinpoint this at students taking business subjects but mentioned that students in general, lacked strong motivation to study any subjects (p.304).

b. Are they really weak academically?

Qt.33 and Qh.25 address the issue of whether only students with less academic ability will take business. While over forty per cent of business teachers agree with this statement in the questionnaire survey, principals have a slightly different view (Table 74: H09). Respondents in the follow-up interview addressed two points worth considering. First, many science students switch to study business subjects in A-Level and in university, and those who do so are not drop outs from the science stream, meaning that business subjects do attract students of different academic abilities (p.302). Second, currently in many secondary schools, business subjects are offered not only to those who study in the business stream, but also to students from different streams and schools of different types. It is quite often the case that many bright students from band one schools study business subjects as they know it is easy for them to score high marks as their competitors are mostly from prevocational and technical schools. The implication is that it is students of prevocational and technical schools, not students studying business subjects, who are weak academically.

Table 74: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 9

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qh.25	3.028	0.853	33.7	2.15	No
Qt.33	2.769	1.107	40.5		

H<sub>0</sub>9 - There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals on the perception that secondary students with less academic ability take business education.

Qh.25: Only students of lower academic ability will take business subjects in secondary schools.

Qt.33: Only students of lower academic ability will take business subjects in secondary schools.

## 5. Status of teachers

Business teachers do not have a low image of themselves. In fact, many have encouraged the active involvement of business teachers to elevate the status of business education (Fry, 1988; Stout, 1997). The result is consistent in this study (Table 74, H<sub>0</sub>10). Principals and students also do not think teachers of other subjects have higher status than teachers of business subjects. It was found from the questionnaire survey that business teachers would prefer to teach business subjects rather than other subjects (Qt.31, p.268). They do not think that teachers of other subjects have better status than them (Qt.41, p.260) and are not regarded by teachers

of other subjects as inferior (Qt.60). Follow-up interviews confirm that the status of teachers teaching business education is equivalent to those teaching other subjects (p.296).

Table 75: ANOVA test results for null hypothesis 10

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)	F value	Ho retained
Qt.60	3.508	0.993	15.7	1.68	Yes
Qp.15	3.543	1.138	17.6		
Qh.29	3.696	0.886	16.8		

H<sub>0</sub>10 - There is no statistically significant difference among teachers, students, and principals on their perceptions of the image of secondary business teachers.

Qt.60: Teachers of business education are perceived by teachers of other subjects as inferior.

Qp.15: I think teachers of other subjects have higher status than teachers of business subjects.

Qh.29: I think teachers of other subjects have higher status than teachers of business subjects

## 6. On the business curriculum

A major part of this study aims to determine the perceptions of students, teachers, and principals, the kind of future secondary business curriculum in Hong Kong. The following deals with this.

- a. Should business education be regarded as compulsory in the secondary curriculum?

Whether business education should be made compulsory in secondary school is a debatable issue. Many from the literature review think business education should be part of the secondary curriculum (Castellano, 1992; White, 1992; Brumley, 1993; Treichel, 1995; Yopp, 1995). In this study, from the questionnaire survey (Qt. 58 and Qh. 15) and the follow-up interviews, it is observed that both principals and business teachers do not think that it should be compulsory (Table 76: Ho11). Though making secondary business education compulsory does not get strong support from teachers and principals, respondents do think that it should be included in the secondary curriculum (Qt. 49, p.262). In the present situation, with the exception of prevocational and technical schools where the provision of business education is compulsory, grammar schools can choose whether to offer business education as part of their secondary curriculum or not. Students who want to take business education in their further studies will have to do so upon graduation from secondary school.

Table 76: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 11

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qt.58	3.738	0.824	15.7	1.61	Yes
Qh.15	3.913	0.873	10.5		

H<sub>011</sub> - There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals on the perception that secondary business education should be made compulsory.

Qt.58: Business education should be compulsory for every secondary student.

Qh.15 Business education should be compulsory for every secondary student.

b. Should business education begin in S.1?

While there is great support for the teaching of business education in secondary school, when it should be taught does draw some controversy. Some have proposed that business education should be extended downward to avoid the stigma of being low status (Bujea 1987). However in this study, the suggestion of starting business education in S.1, as shown in Table 77, does not draw very strong support from principals (Qh.24), students (Qp.19), and business teachers (Qt.51).

Table 77: ANOVA test results for null hypothesis 12

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qh.24	3.478	0.966	20.0	2.88	Yes
Qp.19	3.68	1.074	28.6		
Qt.51	3.42	1.098	23.6		

H<sub>0</sub>12 - There is no statistically significant difference among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that business education should start at S.1

Qh.24: Business education should begin in S.1.

Qp.19: Business education should begin in S.1.

Qt.51: Business education should begin in S.1.

The follow-up interviews revealed the reasons. First, as stated earlier, the present timetable is too full to accommodate another new subject into the present junior secondary curriculum. Even the new business subject, Business Fundamentals, can only be allowed to use three lessons per week in replacement of the subjects, office practice and bookkeeping (which take up a total of four lessons) in prevocational and technical schools. Secondly, many schools do offer E.P.A. in junior forms, and principals think that this is a subject related to business. One principal mentioned in the interview that E.P.A. does cover a unit on the form of ownership and another unit on supply and demand. Lastly, instead of elevating the status of business education, some will fear that if the present business curriculum remains unchanged, students may not like to be exposed to the practical side of business education in junior forms, which

may have a negative effect on the image of business education. Furthermore, principals said that many students would take business education after going to work (p.306). Some take business education because of promotional aspects, and many take it for they need the practical knowledge and skill to help them survive in their jobs. It is better for them to take business education when there is a need.

For business teachers, the answers were mixed. Some support this idea for the sake of the promotion of image. Most of the respondents who did not agree with it said in the interviews that the issue was too sensitive as many subjects were claimed to be equally important to be made compulsory (p.307)

Students are not particularly keen on supporting the idea of having business education in S.1. Most in the interviews said that S.1 students have enough to study and they do not see that there is an urgent need to study business subjects in junior forms.

c. Should business education be regarded as a part of general education or vocational education?

The association of business education with vocational education is very deeply rooted. It is observed in Chapter 3 that business education was first introduced to provide students who are not aspired to further their studies with some practical skills and knowledge to prepare them for future careers, normally of lower status. Now nine years of compulsory education in Hong Kong provides most students with free education up to the age of fifteen. The expansion of tertiary education in the nineties

has led to a tremendous increase of opportunities for students to continue their studies in university. Moreover, the rapid change in the economy has led to an increase in the demand for business professionals. In order to create a better status for business education, the separation from the vocational image is desired (Commission, 1977) and the integration of academic and business education is called upon (Hull, 1993; Hyland, 1993; Hudelson, 1994). Principals and business teachers generally agree, though not overwhelmingly, that there is a need to develop two sets of secondary business curriculum – one for vocational education and one for general education (Table 78: H<sub>0</sub>13).

Table 78: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 13

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qh.16	2.913	0.979	42.1	0.89	Yes
Qt.59	2.80	1.041	36.0		

H<sub>0</sub>13 - There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals on the perception that there should be two sets of secondary business curriculum.

Qh.16: There should be two sets of business curriculum - one for vocational education and one for general education.

Qt.59: There should be two sets of business curriculum - one for vocational education and one for general education.

has similar findings (Table 79: H<sub>0</sub>14). The follow-up interviews found that business teachers did not like the association of business education with vocational education. They expressed the opinion that this association should be dropped. Since business subjects are examined at certificate level and A-Level, they should be considered as academic subjects, and the emphasis on the academic side of business education will give it a boost in status (p.308-309).

Table 79: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 14

Item no	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qh.28	2.38	0.817	57.9	1.44	Yes
Qt.53	2.24	0.663	68.5		

H<sub>0</sub>14 - There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals on the perception that the academic side of secondary business education should be more emphasized.

Qh.28: The academic side of business education should be more emphasized.

Qt.53: The academic side of business education should be emphasized.

One of the main aims of business education is to educate individuals “for” and “about” business. Vocational education has, as mentioned by respondents in the interviews, in many cases, focussed more on the “for” side of business education. This is not a healthy situation. Atkinson & Zahn (1990) comment, ‘By focusing just on skills, we cheat our students of understanding concepts necessary to compete in the present and

future information society' (p.9). As society in Hong Kong advances, it is the kind of generic skills like problem solving, communication, language, and critical thinking skills that are appreciated by employers, and the future business curriculum should reflect these by providing students with knowledge "about" business.

d. Is secondary business education simple?

Business teachers, especially those from grammar schools, responded that the syllabus in business education is not simple (Qt.24, p.262). Principals hold a similar view (Qh. 21, p.247) (Table 80: H015). The fact is, as also mentioned by teachers both from grammar and prevocational schools in the interviews that, since business education comprises subjects ranging from junior level typewriting to senior level business studies, the level of difficulty is bound to be different. Typewriting is regarded by many as a simple subject that requires only practise in skills, but A-Level business studies is as difficult as, if not more difficult than, other A-Level subjects like chemistry and geography.

Table 80: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 15

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly disagree/ disagree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qh.21	3.198	0.794	50.5	1.94	Yes
Qt.24	3.4	0.860	59.6		

H<sub>0</sub>15 - There is no statistically significant difference between principals and teachers disagreeing with the statement that business education is simple.

Qh.21: The content of business subjects taught in secondary school now is simple.

Qt.24: The syllabus in business education is too simple.

e. Revision of the business curriculum

From the literature review, it is noted the constant revision of business curriculum is essential (Bujea, 1987; TVEI, 1992; La Salle, 1993). The change in society has a strong impact on the curriculum, and the effect is particularly visible in business education. It is observed from Qt.64 that business teachers criticized the syllabus of business education for not reflecting the needs of society. The business curriculum can be outdated very quickly if it does not follow what is going on closely. The following areas in secondary business curriculum need to be revised.

*i. The implementation of IT*

The implementation of IT in business curriculum receives much support (Erekson & Barr, 1985; Kizzier, 1991; Harmon, 1996; Haff & Herrin 1997; Lepper, 1997). This is an issue where the majority of the respondents give very positive answers. Respondents call for more emphasis on computers and IT in the business curriculum (Table 81: H<sub>0</sub>16) with various levels of agreement ranging between 70.9% to 88.8%. The ANOVA test rejected the null hypothesis of no differences among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that IT should be emphasized more in secondary business curriculum. This implies that respondents have different views. The means of principals and students are similar but the means of teachers is different. The Scheffé test indicated that the differences between teachers with students, and principals with teachers were statistically significant (Table 82).

Table 81: ANOVA test results for H<sub>0</sub>16

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	F value	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qh.22	1.882	0.705	87.4	27.5	No
Qt.54	1.76	0.663	88.8		
Qp.22	1.852	0.806	70.9		

H<sub>0</sub>16: There is no statistically significant difference among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that IT should be emphasized more in secondary business curriculum.

Qh.22: The use of computer and information technology in business education should be emphasized.

Qt.54: The use of computer and information technology in business education should be emphasized.

Qp.22: The use of computer and information technology in business education should be emphasized.

Table 82: Scheffé test for H<sub>0</sub>16

Scheffe test	F value
Principals vs. teachers	12.4
Principals vs. students	1.33
Teachers vs. students	18.4

A study by Cheung (1998) has suggested the matching of teacher training; provision of software and a change in the curriculum are successful factors facilitating the implementation of IT. Indeed a major change is expected. *The Review of Prevocational and Secondary Technical Education* (1997) states that a new subject, Information Technology, should be introduced for the senior secondary curriculum in prevocational schools, and an Information Technology Learning Centre should be included for secondary technical schools.

*ii. The dropping of out-dated subject(s)*

It is reflected from the literature review that the dropping of out-dated business subjects is essential to improve the image of business education (Bujea, 1987). In particular, the deletion of typewriting and shorthand has been proposed (Frankeberger, 1990; Lewis, 1994). Business teachers and students in this study demand an updating of the business curriculum by dropping some out-dated subjects such as typewriting and shorthand (Table 83: H017). The follow-up interviews show that respondents support this idea strongly (p.312).

Table 83: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 17

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qp.20	2.03	1.104	75.4	1.53	Yes
Qt.43	1.92	0.909	74.2		

H<sub>0</sub>17 - There is no statistically significant difference between students and teachers on the perception that secondary business curriculum should be updated by dropping some out-dated subjects such as Typewriting and Shorthand.

Qp.20: Subjects such as Typewriting and Shorthand should be replaced by Word-processing.

Qt.43: Subjects such as Typewriting and Shorthand should be excluded as part of the business curriculum and replaced by Word-processing

*iii. On teaching of values*

The teaching of values is also supported in the literature review (La Salle, 1993). From Qt. 39 (p.264), it is observed that the majority of business teachers agreed that values should be taught in business education. Business teachers do think that it is their responsibility not only to equip their students with business skills and knowledge, but also with values to discern what is right and wrong and act accordingly (p.310). One teacher mentioned that he was delighted to see the emphasis on business values in Business Fundamentals, a newly innovated business subject for junior secondary students. Though it was not mentioned in the questionnaire for principals, the follow-

noted that principals do usually support the teaching of values in principle. For the development of students into moral human beings is usually one of the educational goals of every school.

*iv. On entrepreneurship education*

The literature review supports the inclusion of entrepreneurship education into the business curriculum (Clayton, 1989; Plaschka & Welsch, 1990; Kourilsky, 1995; Waldman, 1997). Students mentioned both in the questionnaire survey (Qp.16, Qp.12, p.275) and in the follow-up interviews their interest in developing a career in business (p.311). Business teachers also support that entrepreneurship education should be provided in secondary business curriculum (Qt.69, p.264). It is thus observed, from the questionnaire survey, that business teachers and students agree that entrepreneurship education should be included in the secondary business curriculum (Table 84: H018). It should be noted, however, that not all business students would become entrepreneurs after receiving entrepreneurship education. It is hoped that students could have better business expertise and become more productive employers or employees in the future. It is thus legitimate to recommend the inclusion of entrepreneurship education into the future secondary business curriculum.

Table 84: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 18

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qp. 12	2.546	1.047	55.8	0.67	Yes
Qt. 69	2.75	1.04	53.9		

Ho18 - There is no statistically significant difference between students and teachers on the perception that entrepreneurship education should be included in the secondary business curriculum

Qp.12: I expect to start my own business in the future after studying business education in secondary school.

Qt. 69: Entrepreneurship education should be provided in secondary business curriculum.

v. *On internationalization of materials*

The support of the internationalization of materials in business curriculum has been strong (Main, 1989; Bundai, 1992; Zelif & Heldenbrand, 1994). Secondary business teachers express their support for internationalizing the current secondary business curriculum more (Qt. 68, p.264). Since Hong Kong is an international city, it is very natural for students taking business education to be equipped with knowledge of an international flavour. Furthermore, the advancement of technology has facilitated the searching of materials from the internet.

vi. *On replacing the current mathematics curriculum for business students with business mathematics*

Both educators from Hong Kong and the West have called for the introduction of business mathematics (Millar, Salzman & Hoelzle, 1994; Chow, 1996). In this study, business teachers and students indicate their support for replacing the current mathematics curriculum for business students with business mathematics (Table 85: H<sub>0</sub>19). They express their opinion in the interviews that the present mathematics curriculum is only suitable for a few, and is, too difficult for business students (p317).

Table 85: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 19

Item no	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qp.25	2.604	0.984	42.7	1.95	Yes
Qt. 70	2.822	1.162	40.4		

H<sub>0</sub>19 - There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students on the perception that business mathematics should replace the current mathematics curriculum for business students.

Qp.25: For business students, the current mathematics curriculum should be replaced by business mathematics.

Qt.70: There should be business mathematics to replace the current mathematics curriculum for business students

f. Coordination of subjects

Unlike the science or humanities curriculum that displays a developing interrelationship between constituent disciplines, the business curriculum seems to be a random collection of subjects (Cheung & Lewis, 1996). TVEI (1992) states that there should be a progression in business education in knowledge, key ideas, skills and attitudes. In this study, business teachers expressed their opinion in the questionnaire survey (Qt.25, p.262) and later in the follow-up interviews that business subjects in secondary schools are not well coordinated. For example, commerce in CE is very different from business studies at A-Level in terms of difficulty and coverage. It would be very strange that one could take A-Level chemistry without taking chemistry in S.5 but it is absolutely legitimate for one not taking S.5 commerce to take A-Level business studies, for the linkage between the two is weak. The only subject that provides a better link is POA, which is offered to students from S.4-S.7 and the subject is linked with bookkeeping, which is available in S.1-3.

g. On business subjects as a prerequisite

Subjects in the science or humanities curriculum areas enjoy parallel status and equality of opportunity in terms of entry to higher education and employment opportunities. The business subjects lack this same cohesive structure and the separate subjects are usually held in low esteem in terms of their acceptability for educational and employment development. While students have to study physics at A-Level when they want to take physics in university and those who wish to study architecture in the university have to study mathematics at A-Level, business subjects

are not treated as prerequisite to the programme of Bachelor of Business Administration in tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. When considering the admission of students, tertiary institutions in Hong Kong do not give students taking A-Level business education any preference. The fact is that in recent years many of the good students are attracted into the programme of Business Administration in university where many of these students usually score distinctions in science or arts subjects at A-Level examinations. The admission policy at the degree level in tertiary institutions is that a student who wants to take a business degree course need not possess any prior study of the subject. Because of this, business teachers did not think students who have taken business subjects previously in certificate level or advanced level have a better chance to enter business faculties at tertiary institutions (Qt.37, p.260).

As it is observed from Qp.10 (p.277), Qt.16 (p.260), and Qh.27 (p.247) that business teachers, principals and students all favour the idea of having business subjects as a prerequisite for admission by the Business faculties (Table 86: H020). It is important for students, teachers, and parents to realize that business subjects taken in high school may be used to meet in part the admission requirements of tertiary institutions. The follow-up interviews indicated that both principals and teachers anticipate that by featuring a post-secondary connection, the status of secondary business education will be increased, attracting better students into the programmes (p.299-300).

Table 86: ANOVA test results for null hypothesis 20

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	F value	H <sub>0</sub> retained
Qp.10	2.355	1.034	60.3	2.23	Yes
Qh.27	2.368	0.954	51.6		
Qt. 16	2.385	1.134	69.1		

Ho<sub>20</sub> - There is no statistically significant difference among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that secondary business subjects should be considered as prerequisites by the business faculties as a prerequisite for the admission of students.

Qp.10: Business subjects should be treated as a prerequisite for study in business faculties of tertiary institutions.

Qh.27: Admission tutors for business faculties in tertiary institutions should regard business subjects at A-level or CE as a prerequisite.

Qt. 16: CE level or A-level business subjects should be regarded as prerequisite of entering business faculty at tertiary institutions.

#### h. Teaching method and forms of assessment

It has been noted in Chapter seven that the use of teaching methods by business teachers is associated with the method of assessment and the teaching facilities available. From the literature review, it is argued that the use of case studies and project work should be used as a form of assessment (Oldham & Forrester, 1981; Lewis, 1991; McEwen, 1994). Different questions from the questionnaire survey

tackled this issue. Qt. 19 and Qt. 38 are on the importance of using various teaching methods; Qt. 36 is on business teachers' view of the present form of assessment; Qp.8 and Qt. 46 on project work as a kind of assessment; Qt. 67 on the use of case studies as a form of assessment. The majority of the respondents agreed that the use of various teaching methods is important in teaching business subjects and the use of project work should be adopted as forms of assessment (Table 87: Ho21). The relationship between the use of teaching methods and the form of assessment was clearly seen by business teachers during the follow-up interviews. When case study and project work are emphasized in public examinations, the need for them will be recognized and business teachers will seek every means to adopt them in their teaching (p.327-328).

Table 87: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 21

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	Ho retained
Qp.8	2.110	1.066	75.3	1.37	Yes
Qt. 46	2.04	0.61	69.6		

Ho21 - There is no statistically significant difference between students and teachers on the perception that project work should be used as a kind of assessment in secondary business education.

Qp.8: I prefer to have project work as a form of assessment in business education.

Qt. 46: Project work should be introduced as a form of assessment

Though supportive of the use of case studies and project work as forms of assessment, business teachers noted that the lack of teaching materials has prevented them from incorporating them (Qt.61, p.270). Many teachers just relied on the textbooks and other available teaching materials in teaching. They mentioned the lack of time to plan thoroughly before teaching. As a result, what is available on the market becomes their safety-vest. The problem is, as expressed by an overwhelming majority of teachers in the questionnaire survey and later in the follow-up interviews, that the teaching materials for business subjects are very limited. There was not even a single textbook for A-Level business studies until very recently. As a result, teachers have to write their own notes, which takes so much time, and the following expressions were frequently voiced by teachers during the interview: ‘How could I have time to think of different ways of teaching the lesson?’ ‘It will be lucky if I could have enough to say in class.’

#### i. Recruitment of business teachers

Two statements address this issue (Qt. 35 and Qh.26). It was observed that most of the business teachers and principals agreed with the statement that most university business graduates do not take teaching as their first career choice (Table 88: H022). The reasons why this happened are many. First, they may have better options in business fields and they could earn more as accountants or by applying their business knowledge in financial institutions. Furthermore, the teaching environment is not very attractive, especially as in prevocational schools, where most business subjects are offered, students are disruptive. It is mentioned in the follow-up interviews that there seems to be an inverse relationship between the economy and the willingness of

business graduates to become teachers (p.288). The better the economy, the less willing the business graduates are to become teachers. So in recent years, when the economy in Hong Kong has not been that prosperous, together with a large influx of overseas immigrants coming back to Hong Kong, it is not very difficult for schools to recruit business teachers (Sing Tao Daily, 16.5.98).

Table 88: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 22

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	Ho retained
Qh.26	2.288	0.882	63.2	1.87	Yes
Qt.35	2.08	0.862	59.6		

Ho22 - There is no statistically significant difference between principals and teachers on the perception that most university business graduates do not take teaching as their first choice of career.

Qh.26: Most university business graduates do not choose teaching as their first career choice.

Qt. 35: Most university business graduates do not choose teaching as their first career choice.

j. Involvement from business/industrial sectors

The importance of business/industrial involvement is noted from the literature review (Noah & Eckstein, 1988; Coffey, 1992). Two statements address this issue (Qh.30 and

Qt.47). The majority of the respondents call for the involvement of the business/industrial sector in the planning of the business education curriculum (Table 89: Ho23). The curriculum, especially the secondary business curriculum, should not only be in the hands of educators, as mentioned by the respondents. Business personnel could also have a say in the development of the business curriculum, for what schools train will be what businesses are going to employ in the future.

Table 89: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 23

Item no	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Z score	Ho retained
Qh.30	2.043	0.610	86.3	0.52	Yes
Qt.47	2.0	0.707	78.1		

Ho23: There is no statistically significant difference between principals and teachers on the perception that the involvement of the business/industrial sector in the planning of business education curriculum is important.

Qh.30: The business/industrial sector should be more fully involved in the planning of business curriculum.

Qt. 47: The business/industrial sector should be more fully involved in the planning of business curriculum.

k. Placement

Following the last point where the involvement from the business/industrial sectors is discussed, placement is one of the means of participation. This idea is supported by many (Kitson, 1985; Bujea, 1987; Cheung & Lewis, 1995). The issue of having placements for students and teachers is addressed in Qt.34 and Qp.17, with the majority of respondents supporting this statement (Table 90: Ho24).

Table 90: Two-tailed test results for null hypothesis 24

Item no.	Mean	Standard deviation	Strongly agree/agree (%)	F value	Ho retained
Qt.34	2.08	0.862	71.9	1.86	Yes
Qp.17	2.241	0.98	56.3		

Ho24: There is no statistically significant difference between students and teachers on the perception that there should be placement for students in secondary business education.

Qt.34: There should be placements in the summer vacation for students taking business subjects

Qp.17: There should be placements in the summer vacation for students studying business education.

The notion of placements is usually associated with the business/industrial link in education. It is especially important in business education, for students can gain

knowledge not only from textbooks, but practical experience from placements. They can learn what the real situation is like in the future and exposure to real workplaces will give them valuable experience that cannot be acquired from books. For employers, placement will give them a clue as to what their future employees will be like.

## 1. Resources

Resources are obviously scarce for marginal subjects (Ng, 1998). It is noted that even though the teaching time allocated in the timetable is adequate (Qt.17), business teachers perceived that compared with other subjects, fewer resources were given to business subjects (Qt.55). Teachers complained that there were not enough teaching aids for business subjects (Qt.22). Though principals disagreed with the statement that compared with other subjects, fewer resources are allocated to business subjects in their school (Qh.20), they admitted that students of business education did not have a high priority in using computers in schools (Qh.19). Cheung's study (1998) of the implementation of IT in the curriculum shares a similar conclusion. Though the computers were installed for the purpose of the implementation of IT into the business curriculum, business teachers and students were given fewer priorities in using them. The follow-up interviews revealed that given inadequate resources, science students or students with better academic ability were given higher priority when it came to using computers (p.318). Hopefully, when more computers are provided in the near future with the introduction of Business Fundamentals in the junior secondary curriculum, business students can get easier access to the use of computers.

Table 91: Resources allocated to the teaching of business subjects

Item no.	Statement	Strongly agree/ agree (%)
Qt.17	Compared with other subjects, the allocation of time for teaching business education in the present timetable of my school is adequate.	67.9
Qt.22	There are not sufficient teaching aids	82.6
Qt.55	Compared with other subjects, fewer resources are allocated to business subjects from schools.	61.2
Qh.19	Students of business education are not given a high priority in using computers in my school.	52.6
Qh.20	Compared with other subjects, fewer resources are allocated to business subjects in my school.	21.1

m. Professionalization

The professionalization of business teachers is an important issue in the future development of business education and it has been discussed quite thoroughly in Chapter 4. The following are two significant findings discussed in this study:

From the literature review, the significance of teacher training is noted (APEID, 1982; Brendel, 1984; O'Hair & Odell, 1995). However important teacher training is, as mentioned by business teachers in the questionnaire survey (Qt. 32) and the follow-up interviews in this study, there is not enough teacher training for them. The only training available is the post-graduate studies in the certificate of education provided by HKU started in 1990. There are also few in-service training courses for business teachers who have already received their teacher training (Qt.27). Business teachers expressed the urgent need for teacher training for them as, unlike other subjects where knowledge and skills can be relatively stagnant, the business field is always changing and teachers need to refresh themselves with the most up-dated ideas and skills (Qt.26). For example, years ago business teachers can teach without any knowledge of IT, but now every business teacher needs to be computer literate. Better provision of teacher training is thus urgently requested. It was also interesting to note that only a few business teachers had acquired a Masters Degree and none of them held a Doctoral qualification. To increase professionalization of business teachers, the introduction of postgraduate and higher degree courses in business education is needed to encourage teachers to undertake such programmes to not only update their knowledge and skills; but to undertake higher degree research in their field.

Table 92: Teacher training for business teachers

Item no.	Statement	Strongly agree/ agree (%)
Qt.32	There is enough teacher training for teachers in business education.	15.7
Qt.27	Teachers have limited assess/opportunities to learn new knowledge related to business subjects.	84.8
Qt.26	There are few opportunities for business teachers to have further studies and professional development.	84.3

*ii. Linkage between teachers*

Many from the literature review stated that business teachers should join together to air their views and promote business education (La Salle, 1993; Cummins & Sayers, 1995; White & Roach, 1997). However, many business teachers in this study expressed the opinion that the present linkage between business teachers is weak (Qt.20). The strong linkage between teachers is a sign of professionalism where teachers of the same subject join together to share their views and experiences, voicing their opinions and recommending changes to the present curriculum. This does not exist in Hong Kong. Business teachers want to be represented, and the majority of them favour having an organization for business teachers and a journal for them to air their views (Qt.48). There is one such organization for business teachers, but according to many business teachers in the interview, that organization does not meet

their needs, as it only meets once a year and provides seminars that may not necessarily serve their needs.

Table 93: Linkage between business teachers

Item no	Statement	Strongly agree/ Agree (%)
Qt.20	The present links between business teachers are weak.	73.8
Qt.48	There should be an association and a journal for business teachers.	70.8

After discussing the findings from the questionnaire survey and follow-up interviews, the next chapter provides a conclusion and recommendations of the study.

### **9.1 Conclusions and recommendations**

This study has provided a systematic and in-depth description and analysis relating to secondary business education in Hong Kong. The data were gathered by means of documentary analysis, questionnaire surveys, and interviews. The three specific questions asked are:

1. Why has business education emerged as part of the curriculum in secondary schools in Hong Kong?
2. How do principals, teachers and students perceive business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong?
3. What are the issues involved in the future development of business education in secondary schools in Hong Kong?

Within the limits under which this research was conducted, a number of conclusions and recommendations can be drawn and they are as follows:

## 1. The development of secondary business education in Hong Kong

For question 1, this study has confirmed that the development of secondary business education in Hong Kong was similar to what happened in other countries: it started off as part of vocational education, training students to perform support services to business and industry (see Chapter 3). However, with societal and economic changes, new challenges are presented and secondary business education has to change in order to fit into the new situation. At entry level, business education is descriptive, but at higher levels, it moves from the specialised nature to broad conceptual understandings. The findings are important as they have a direct relationship with questions 2 and 3.

## 2. Secondary business education in Hong Kong: the perceptions of principals, teachers, and students and the issues involved in its future development

A thorough investigation in the form of questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews was conducted regarding questions 2 and 3 of this study. The following conclusions and recommendations, basing on the discussion in Chapter 8, with different themes as discussed in Chapter 4, are drawn:

### a. Aims of secondary business education

- It is noted from the questionnaire survey and the follow-up interviews that respondents do recognise the importance of secondary business education.

Respondents see that business education in secondary schools should aim to provide young people with general business knowledge and experience that will help them to understand and participate in the economic and business world as consumers, workers, and citizens, and to decide whether to pursue their studies in this field and/or embark on careers in related areas (Table 36: Qh.12, Qh.14, Qh.32, p.245.; Table 43: Qt.9, Qt.11, Qt. 12, Qt.13, Qt.14, Qt.15, p.257; Table 55: Qp.7, Qp.16, p.275).

- Over the years, the goals of secondary education have remained more or less the same, but the priorities have changed in response to scientific, technological, social, political and economic changes. For example, the importance of civic education was emphasized after the signing of the Sino-British Declaration in 1984. From studying the development of secondary business education in various countries, it is observed that secondary business education first arose to serve the needs of those who did not aspire to further their academic studies, or did not have the ability to do so (see Chapter 3). Now that Hong Kong is a society where business activities are progressing, the importance of secondary business education is recognised. Schools should help students to understand the social circumstances in which they find themselves, and provide them with the basic knowledge and skills with which they can earn a living. No matter what they will become in the future--engineers, athletes, entertainers, entrepreneurs, or clerks and secretaries--since they are living in a commercial society, students now should be equipped with a basic knowledge of business. Moreover, secondary business education should aim to produce an adequate workforce of business professionals as well as technicians to serve the future society of Hong Kong.

- The changes in society, the economy, technology, and business practices should all help shape a business curriculum very different from that in the past. The future development or revision of the business curriculum must reflect emerging needs while refining traditional offerings. This study has demonstrated that the current business education curriculum in Hong Kong has moved forward, but has not yet fully adapted to the need for a paradigm shift from a predominantly skills-based curriculum to one that requires students to understand concepts necessary to survive in this high-tech era.
- While it is true to say that business education is not a traditional academic subject like geography, physics or English, it is a subject based on academic fundamentals and practical applications. Since the future society calls for knowledge as well as practical skills, secondary business education should aim to provide both, with a balance of emphasis between the academic and practical side of business education (Table 39: Qh.28, p249; Table 46: Qt.53, p.262). This view is consistent with the work of Watts (1983) and Sapre (1988), while others take a step further to discuss the possibility of integrating academic and business education (McEwen, *et al.* 1992; Hudelson, 1994).

The above views are consistent with the literature review in which various policies advocated by the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education in the U.S. state that secondary business education should aim to help students effectively fulfill their roles as citizens, workers, and consumers. It also fits the description of TVEI (1992) in the U.K., to the effect that secondary business education should aim to develop students' knowledge and skills in matters relating to the economy, the world of work, and to business. Finally, the respondents' views also corroborate the

views of the Curriculum Development Council in Hong Kong, which has stated that the study of business education will enable students to better understand the importance of business and its role in society, and acquire better knowledge and skills in relation to their eventual choices of employment, and further training or academic study.

As a consequence, the following recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that business education continue in secondary schools to cater for the needs of all students in Hong Kong so that they may become informed and responsible citizens engaging in daily business activities in Hong Kong.
- In order to adapt to the rapid rate of technological, economic, and social change, it is recommended that the aims of secondary business education and its curriculum must be under constant review.
- It is also recommended that the academic and theoretical elements of business subjects should be emphasized, and their association with vocational education should be toned down. The possibility of integrating business and academic subjects should be investigated.

b. Status of secondary business education

- As noted in the literature review, business education, as part of vocational education, may not lead to higher education, and is regarded by the general public as being of low status (Sifuna, 1992; Boyd & Lee, 1994; Goodson & Marsh,

1996). In Hong Kong, the obsession with higher education arises from the dominant Chinese heritage, in which the importance of higher education is typically established as a social ladder providing students with opportunities for well-paid employment. Without a university degree or money, one's status in Hong Kong is low.

- Though the status of secondary business education is generally perceived as being low, this is not the reason why schools do not offer business subjects at secondary level, at least according to many principals (Table 35, p.243). This study has found that many of the schools that do not offer business subjects are grammar schools more than twenty years old (Table 34, p.241), having been established at a time when the image of secondary business education was low and the situation in Hong Kong did not seem to call for the study of business subjects. Even when these schools now want to offer business subjects, it is difficult for them to do so because the present timetable is already too crowded (Table 35: Q.6, p.243).
- Because of the traditional academic/vocational divide, much of our education is now narrowly geared to producing students with enough skills and knowledge to pass examinations, rather than aiming at providing a balanced education for our students (Morris & Marsh, 1992). Secondary business education is associated with low status, catering for the students who cannot succeed in achieving higher education (Wolf, 1993; Barnes, 1993). As noted in the questionnaire survey and the follow-up interviews, though the competition for a place to study business subjects is keen in university, university admission tutors do not give students studying business subjects in secondary school any preference. As a consequence,

respondents argued that students prefer to take science, which provides them with more options in higher education (see p.300-301).

It is therefore recommended that the following be done in order to elevate the present status of secondary business education:

- Many students will be reluctant to study business education when the universities do not treat A-Level business subjects as a prerequisite. The current situation in effect forces potential business students to enter the traditional subjects of arts and science, which they may not like, but which give them more choices of university destinations. It is therefore recommended that university admission tutors for business faculties consider business subjects as a prerequisite (Table 38: Qh.27, p.247; Table 45: Qt.16, p.260; Table 57: Qp.10, p.277).
- The present secondary business curriculum should be changed so that it loses its traditional association with merely vocational education (Table 39: Qh.28, p.249; Table 46: Qt.53, p.262).
- The present secondary business curriculum needs revision (details will be discussed in the next section).

c. The future secondary business curriculum

- The idea that business is a practical/technical subject should be changed. The business curriculum should also be restructured so that it is more acceptable to both grammar schools and non-grammar schools. The idea of business education

being part of general education is noted from the literature review (Moore & Hanes, 1987; Cheung & Lewis, 1995) and the results of the present study (Table 46: Qt.40, p.262) draw the same conclusion. Contrary to the literature review where many advocated making business education compulsory in secondary schools (White, 1992; Brumley, 1993; Yopp, 1994; Treichel, 1995), there is no strong evidence in this study that business education should be compulsory or that it should begin in S.1 (Table 46: Qt.51, Qt.58, p.262; Table 58: Qp.19, p.278).

- This study concludes that there should be an overall plan for the secondary business curriculum. It agrees with the literature review which calls for the solving of the linkage problem of different levels of the business curriculum (NBTE, 1987; The Review, 1997) and for eliminating the out-dated vocational orientation in the junior-form business curriculum (Bujea, 1987; La Salle, 1993; ED, 1997). The recent development of Business Fundamentals implemented in the junior curriculum of prevocational and technical schools is a good move. This integrates business subjects and provides better linkage to other business subjects in senior forms.
- Secondary business education should be closely related to the everyday business activities of Hong Kong. It should focus on the needs of the community, and on the necessity in general for Hong Kong to continue to develop its business and industry so that its people can enjoy a rising standard of living. The society of Hong Kong has changed rapidly and so has its economy. Curriculum developers have to redefine the role of secondary business education in order to best serve the people of Hong Kong. The business curriculum should be constantly updated to keep up with the ever-changing business world.

Based on the above, the following changes in secondary business curriculum are recommended:

- Since we are living in a world of advanced technology with a dramatic shift to an information-oriented society, the secondary business curriculum should be revised. Consistent with the views of Harmon (1986), Kizzier (1991), and Haff & Herrin (1997), respondents recognise the need for the introduction of IT, which can equip students with the up-to-date knowledge and skills necessary to meet the demands of the new technologies upon which economic growth is based (Table 41: Qh.22, p.251; Table 47: Qt.54, p.264; Table 59: Qp.22, p.279).
- With the development of IT, demands for traditional business education skills such as typewriting, shorthand, and office practice are decreasing while demands for business courses with IT content are increasing. Subjects such as typewriting and shorthand are considered out-dated in the literature review (Frankeberger, 1990), and the introduction of word-processing to replace typewriting is recommended (Table 47: Qt.43, p.264; Table 59: Qp.20, p.279). The implementation of IT is more than a mere novelty. The many implications will be discussed in the next section.
- The teaching of values is essential (Macfarlane, 1996; Cheung, 1998). Today's workplace is very different from that of the past, and students of business education should be equipped with basic academic skills permitting them to adapt to the fast-changing workplace, and with good working attitudes and a high standard of business conduct enabling them to be trustworthy employees. As business activities become part of students' everyday lives, they should be taught

about the ethics and values they should have in relation to money, individual people, and the society at large (Table 47: Qt.39, p.264).

- The world has become one in which goods and services move across seamless national borders. In order for Hong Kong to remain competitive, this study recommends that the secondary business curriculum should include materials with an international flavour (Table 47: Qt.68, p.264), which is a recommendation consistent with the comments of Carlock (1991), Bundai (1992), and Zelif and Heldenbrand (1993) from the literature review.
- In view of the present changes in the economy and the needs of society, and a rapid growth in entrepreneurship, the business curriculum must offer the knowledge and skills to enable students to develop and manage a business. The findings in this study are consistent with the literature review, where the importance of entrepreneurship education is noted (Clayton, 1989; Plaschka & Welsch, 1990; Waldman, 1997). Thus the introduction of entrepreneurship education as a subject or part of a business subject is recommended (Table 47: Qt.69, p.264; Table 55: Qp.12, p.275).
- It is also recommended from this study that business mathematics is needed, for it provides a basic foundation upon which some basic business knowledge and skills are built (Table 47: Qt.70, p.264; Table 59: Qp.25, p.279). The findings in this study agree with Chow (1996) and Wong (1997) in their comments on the present secondary mathematics curriculum, and it is thought that those who do not aim to further their studies in mathematics should be encouraged to study something easier.

d. Teaching methods and assessment in secondary business education

- With the implementation of IT into the business curriculum, instead of teaching students to develop skills with specific pieces of equipment, business teachers should teach their students how to use technology in business activities. This recommendation has implications for teaching methods and assessment. Gone is the day where the teacher acts as the sole provider of knowledge. The increasing use of IT has enabled students to find information from the Internet. The nature of business education has encouraged teachers to become facilitators, helping students to develop their critical minds and other higher-order thinking skills through the use of student-centred teaching approaches.

- As students are trained with necessary IT skills to extract appropriate information from the Internet, the form of assessment can be varied. Consistent with findings in the literature (Lewis, 1991; Cheung, 1992; McEwen, 1994) and the field study (Table 50: Qt.46, Qt.67, p.269), the use of project work and case studies as forms of assessment is recommended in the secondary business curriculum.

e. Teacher training and the professionalization of business teachers

- The role of business teachers is important in the development of the secondary business curriculum (Fry, 1988). It is noted from the questionnaire survey that the recruitment of business teachers used to be a problem (Table 40: Qh.13, Qh.26, p.250; Table 49: Qt.35, p.268); but the follow-up interviews with principals stated that it is no longer so, since economic declines have encouraged more graduates to seek teaching posts (p.288). This study has also concluded that neither teacher

training nor the professionalization of secondary business teachers has been successful so far (Table 49: Qt.26, Qt.27, Qt.32, Qt.48, p.268).

In order to have business educators who possess the knowledge and vigour to be involved in the restructuring of business education, at least two things, as revealed in this study, have to be done.

- It is recommended that more teacher training should be provided. The present lack of teacher training for business teachers hampers the development of business subjects. This conclusion is consistent with the literature review, where, in Hong Kong, Cooke & Stimpson (1991) recognised its importance, and Lee (1993) asserted that professional development of teachers encourages them to take a more leading role in the development of their subjects. In the West, Carlock (1991), La Salle (1993), Cummins & Sayers (1995), and White & Roach (1997) have suggested that business teachers need to take the lead to ensure that the business curriculum reflects current and future needs of students and stay current on the development of business subjects.
- From the questionnaire survey, it is also notable that business teachers wish to join together and have an organisation that serves their common interests, and forums and journals to publish research on different issues regarding business education, air their views and share their experiences with one another (Table 49: Qt.48, p.268). This observation is consistent with the literature review, where Bennett (1988), after completing a national survey of business teachers in the U.S., revealed that the research agenda is important for increased professionalism in business education. Through the participation of business teachers, the secondary

business curriculum can be evaluated and developed to suit the needs of the future society of Hong Kong.

f. Business/industrial involvement in secondary business education

- This study concludes that the involvement of business and industry is essential. This can be achieved by various means, perhaps most effectively by getting people in business and industry to join appropriate committees to develop the secondary business curriculum as direct participants, and providing placements for students and teachers as a linkage between the workplace and the classroom (Table 52: Qt.34, Qt.47, p.271).

From the literature review, Coffey (1992) identified the benefits of business and education working together, and Waters (1979) emphasised the importance of the link between schools and the business and industrial sector in Hong Kong. Thus, from the findings of the questionnaire survey and the interviews, together with observations from the literature review, it is recommended that:

- the involvement of the business/industrial sector is needed so that teachers can identify what the real needs are and students can understand the business world in which they will be engaged in the future.

g. Allocation of resources

- The development of the future secondary business curriculum in Hong Kong depends also on the adequate allocation of resources. The government must take

the initiative by channelling resources to develop business subjects with aspects of IT. Furthermore, additional resources should be given to develop the present business curriculum. In the literature review, Bernstein (1971) has stated that schools assign time to what is regarded as important; and in Hong Kong, Ng (1998) has argued that marginalized subjects are typically neglected. In the present study, principals have stated that the resources given to business subjects in their schools are sufficient; and teachers, though they expressed different ideas, did feel nevertheless that the teaching time given to business subjects is sufficient (Table 41: Qh.20, p.251; Table 51: Qt.17, Qt.55,- p.270). It is noted from the questionnaire survey and later in the interviews that many schools do not offer business education not because they do not want to, but simply because the timetable is already too crowded (p.282).

Following from the above, it is recommended that:

- schools need to find slots from the timetable to accommodate business subjects, and that business students should be given access to computers in schools.

## **9.2 Summary**

The title of this study is the future direction of business education in Hong Kong secondary schools: issues and concerns. To know what lies ahead, this study relies on

interviews and documentary analysis to trace the development of secondary business education in Hong Kong. When it is compared with the development of business education in other places, the conclusion is that business education finds its roots in vocational education, preparing students with lower academic ability to perform clerical and supportive work. Because of this, the status of secondary business education is low.

With the changes in society and economy, new situations have arisen and secondary business education has to be revised. From the literature review, a number of issues and concerns are identified in the future development of secondary business education in and they are categorized into different themes tackling the situation in Hong Kong. Based on the themes, questionnaires were set and principals, business teachers, and students taking business subjects were chosen as respondents. Interviews were also arranged with government officials and curriculum developers.

The result calls for a revision of the aims and curriculum of secondary business education with various recommendations. Furthermore, the provision of teacher training for business teachers and the involvement of business/industry should also be the focus of the future development of secondary business education.

### 9.3 Further research

After conducting this study and upon reexamining the literature, the researcher recognizes that this study has also unfolded many issues for further research. An obvious extension of the present study is to perform a comparative study between business education in Hong Kong and that of other places. It can further be broken down into comparing secondary business education in Hong Kong with other countries with similar cultural and/or social backgrounds, and those places where both cultural and societal structures are different. One obvious example is to research on the possibility of developing secondary business education in China. Findings from Chapter 3 indicate that like many other places, business subjects first appeared in vocational education in China. However, the development of secondary business education has been slow in the past and the recent change in political and economic background in China triggers the possibility of further research.

This study also confirms that the development of secondary business education has been quick and the changes in business curriculum have been drastic in many places. It paves the way for continuous research of a similar nature to the present study. Collecting the same kind of data as those collected in the present study and making comparisons of this study will yield illuminating cases, and the results will contribute greatly to our knowledge on the future development of secondary business education.

## 9.4 Limitations

It is obvious that for a study of this nature and scale, there will be limitations that affect the reliability of the research findings, and care should be taken in drawing inferences from the results. But it is hoped that despite all the following limitations, the present study has contributed to the literature the issues and concerns related to the future secondary business education in Hong Kong.

- This study is being completed during a time when business education may be on the edge of a new beginning. *The Report on Technical and Prevocational Education* (1997) gains much attention and issues discussed in the Report trigger much discussion. The attention given to the implementation of IT in secondary schools has also made an impact to the development of secondary business education. Finally, the society of Hong Kong has in the time of this study experienced the return of sovereignty to China as well as the Asian economic crisis. Educators and businessmen begin to think how education Hong Kong should change and nurture individuals capable of dealing with uncertainty and change in order to compete in the new millennium. This paves the way to educational reform and the recommendations on secondary business education in this study may one day be crystallized.
- Because of the rapid change in the local economic and educational scene, the views of the respondents can be different after a certain period of time. There are cases where certain principals and teachers call the researcher for a second

interview, stating that their opinions have changed because of the change in the local educational scene. While their reflections are precious and important to this study, the researcher has rejected their request.

- The comparative study of the development of business education in different countries in Chapter 3 can be conducted in a more comprehensive manner. While the countries chosen are of significance, the researcher does not claim that they can fully represent the other countries. In deciding which country to be included, the researcher is faced with the difficulty of not having enough primary, sometimes secondary sources, regarding the development of secondary business education in those countries. While the sources are few, not all of them are in English. That poses a problem to the researcher who only reads Chinese and English. The present comparison is a brief comparison relying on the review of literature and a certain level of official documents. A further and more detailed investigation may help explore more issues which worth discussing.

## **9.5 Concluding remarks**

This study has described thoroughly the development of secondary business education in Hong Kong and shown that there are issues to be tackled in its future development. The conclusions and recommendations described in this chapter were based from a detailed investigation of many concerned parties and if the recommendations are acted accordingly, the researcher is confident that the future of secondary business education

in Hong Kong is bright. Indeed the recent example of the implementation of information technology in the business curriculum and the introduction of Business Fundamentals in the junior business curriculum have received much positive attention. Act now and excel in the future.

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# Appendix 1

This is a questionnaire for principals. Please tick (✓) in the appropriate boxes.

## I. Background Information

### 1. Nature of the school

Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prevocational	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technical	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 2. Does your school offer any business education?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 3. How old is your school?

Less than 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
11-20 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 20 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

**II. To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning schools not offering business subjects?**

*Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), N (Neutral), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)*

	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>
4. Parents do not think it is a good idea for the school to offer business subjects.					
5. Teachers do not think it is a good idea for the school to offer business subjects.					
6. There is no room for business subjects in the present timetable.					
7. The present business education curriculum is too simple.					
8. Business education is of low status.					
9. Students can take business subjects after graduating from secondary school.					
10. Students do not like to take business subjects.					
11. It is difficult to recruit teachers to teach business subjects.					

**III. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding business education in Hong Kong?**

*Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), N (Neutral), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)*

		SA	A	N	D	SD
12.	Business education in secondary schools should aim to prepare students for entering the faculty of business at university.					
13.	Compared with other subjects, it is relatively difficult to recruit teachers of business subjects.					
14.	Business education in secondary school should aim to prepare business professionals for Hong Kong.					
15.	Business education should be compulsory for every secondary student.					
16.	There should be two sets of business curriculum – one for vocational education and one for general education.					
17.	Teachers of business education are perceived by teachers of other subjects as inferior.					
18.	Compared with other subjects, the allocation of time for teaching business education in the present timetable of my school is adequate (Don't answer this question if your school does not offer business education).					
19.	Students of business education are not given a high priority in using computers in my school. (Don't answer this question if your school does not offer business education)					
20.	Compared with other subjects, fewer resources are allocated to business subjects in my school.					
21.	The content of business subjects taught in secondary school now is simple.					

22.	The use of computer and information technology in business education should be emphasized.				
23.	Parents like their children to take business subjects in secondary schools.				
24.	Business education should begin in S. I.				
25.	Only students of lower academic ability will take business subjects in secondary schools.				
26.	Most university business graduates do not take teaching as their first career choice.				
27.	Admission tutors for business faculties in tertiary institutions should regard business subjects at A-level or CE as a prerequisite.				
28.	The academic side of business education should be more emphasized.				
29.	I think teachers of other subjects have higher status than teachers of business subjects.				
30.	The business/industrial sector should be more fully involved in the planning of the business education curriculum.				
31.	Secondary business education enjoyed better status than other subjects did.				
32.	Business education should provide students with general business knowledge.				

*End of Questionnaire. Thank you for your cooperation.*



21. 商業科目不應在中學教授
22. 電腦在商科的應用應被重視
23. 在校內，商科對同學的重要性和其他學術性的科目如經濟，地理，物理也差不多
24. 我覺得在中裏，商科的地位比其他科為高
25. 商科生應以商業數學課程取代現有的數學課程


- 全卷完，多謝合作 -

This is a questionnaire for secondary students taking business education. Please tick (✓) in the appropriate boxes.

I. Background Information

1. Nature of school

Grammar

Prevocational

Technical

2. Gender

Male

Female

3. I am in Form 4    5    6    7

*Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)*

		SA	A	N	D	SD
4.	In general, I lack the motivation to study.					
5.	Students with better grades study Science in my school.					
6.	Compared with other subjects, the business subjects taught in secondary school now are easy.					
7.	Business subjects prepare me for employment in business-related jobs.					
8.	I prefer to have project work as a form of assessment in business education.					
9.	Business subjects prepare me to further my studies in the business faculties in tertiary institutions.					
10.	Business subjects should be treated as a prerequisite for study in business faculties of tertiary institutions.					
11.	I wish business education were available earlier in school.					
12.	I expect to start my own business in the future after studying business education in secondary school.					
13.	Business education only prepares you for low-paying jobs.					
14.	I do NOT take business education as my first choice of study in secondary school.					
15.	I think teachers of other subjects have higher status than teachers of business subjects.					
16.	My interest in a business career has increased since I began studying business education.					
17.	There should be placements in the summer vacation for students studying business education.					
18.	I lack the practical experience to understand the business subjects I take.					
19.	Business education should begin in S.1.					
20.	Subjects like Typewriting and Shorthand should be replaced by Word-processing					
21.	Business education should not be taught in secondary schools.					
22.	The use of computers in business education should be emphasized.					
23.	The business course in my school is just as beneficial to me as the academic courses (such as economics, physics, geography, and English.) that are required of all students					
24.	I think business education in secondary school enjoys higher status than other subjects.					
25.	For business students, the current mathematics curriculum should be replaced by business mathematics.					

*End of Questionnaire. Thank you for your cooperation.*

## Appendix 3

### Questionnaire for teachers

This is a questionnaire for teachers of business education. If your school does not offer any business subjects, please ignore this questionnaire. Please tick (✓) in the appropriate boxes.

#### I. School Background

##### 1. Nature of the school

Grammar

Prevocational

Technical

#### II. Personal Information

##### 2. Gender

Male

Female

3. Age

Under 25	<input type="checkbox"/>
26 - 30	<input type="checkbox"/>
31 - 40	<input type="checkbox"/>
41 or above	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Teaching experience

less than 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 to 3 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 to 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 years or above	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Number of years of working experience before teaching

less than 1 year	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 - 3 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 to 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 years or above	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. What business subjects do you teach in school? Please (✓). You can tick more than one answer.

Commerce

Principles of Account

Business Studies

Shorthand

Typing

Office practice

<input type="checkbox"/>

Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

7. Which of the following academic qualification do you have? You can tick more than one.

Teacher's Certificate

Bachelor's Degree

Post-graduate Certificate of Education / Dip. Ed.

Master's Degree

B.Phil./Ph.D.

<input type="checkbox"/>

Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

8. Which of the following levels of study have you taken business subjects? You could tick more than one.

Certificate Level	
Advanced Level	
Bachelor's Degree	
Post-graduate Certificate of Education / Dip. Ed.	
Master's Degree	
M.Phil./Ph.D.	

Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**III. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?**

*Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), N (Neutral), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)*

Business education aims to:

		SA	A	N	D	SD
9	develop students' ability to analyze and solve problems.					
10	produce clerks and secretaries for Hong Kong					
11	produce highly skilful and/or knowledgeable business personnel such as managers and accountants.					
12	promote students' interest in learning business subjects.					
13	equip students for future jobs.					
14	prepare students for further studies in tertiary institutions.					
15	provide students with general business knowledge.					

**IV. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding business education in Hong Kong secondary schools?**

*Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)*

		SA	A	N	D	SD
16.	CE level or A-level business subjects should be regarded as prerequisite of entering business faculty at tertiary institutions.					
17.	Compared with other subjects, the allocation of time for teaching business education in the present timetable of my school is adequate.					
18.	The reason why the pass rate in CE business subjects is low is because the majority of the students taking business subjects are of low ability.					
19.	I use various teaching methods in teaching business subjects.					
20.	The present links between business teachers are weak.					
21.	Teachers do not have enough practical business experience.					
22.	There are not sufficient teaching aids.					
23.	Most secondary students taking business education understand the subject matter taught.					
24.	The syllabus in business education is too simple.					
25.	The junior and senior secondary business curriculum is well coordinated.					
26.	There are few opportunities for business teachers to have further studies and professional development.					
27.	Teachers have limited access/opportunities to learn new knowledge related to business subjects.					
28.	Business education in secondary schools is considered by the general public as a programme that prepares secretaries and clerks.					
29.	The amount of Information Technology in the present business curriculum is adequate.					
30.	Business education should train students to be business professionals.					





- 67. The use of case studies should be more heavily emphasised in business education.
- 68. Secondary business curriculum should be more internationally flavoured.
- 69. Entrepreneurship education should be provided in secondary business curriculum.
- 70. There should be business mathematics to replace the current mathematics curriculum for business students.


*End of Questionnaire. Thank you for your cooperation.*

## Appendix 4

Detailed background of interviewees during school visit

### Students

Time	Sex	Types of School	Level
21-10-96	M	G	3
21-10-96	M	P	5
23-10-96	F	P	4
23-10-96	M	G	6
29-10-96	F	T	4
29-10-96	M	G	7
05-11-96	F	G	4
11-11-96	M	T	3
26-11-96	M	P	6
26-11-96	F	G	5
28-11-96	M	G	6
29-11-96	M	T	4
29-11-96	F	T	3
13-01-97	M	G	7
13-01-97	M	G	6
14-01-97	M	G	6

15-01-97	M	G	4
15-01-97	F	G	6
16-01-97	M	P	5

Teachers (Elite interview)

Date	Sex	School	Age	Teaching experience
11-11-96	M	P	31-40	15
28-11-96	F	G	31-40	11
17-01-97	M	G	> 40	20
20-01-97	M	T	> 40	18
30-01-97	M	P	31-40	12

Teachers (General interview)

Date	Sex	School	Age	Teaching experience
21-10-96	M	G	31-40	12
05-11-96	F	G	31-40	10
11-11-96	M	P	21-30	6
28-11-96	F	G	21-30	5
16-01-97	M	P	31-40	10
17-01-97	M	G	21-30	6
20-01-97	F	T	21-30	7
24-01-97	M	G	31-40	13

30-01-97	F	P	21-30	4
03-02-97	M	G	> 40	16
19-02-97	M	P	21-30	4
19-02-97	M	G	> 40	18
21-02-97	M	T	31-40	10
04-03-97	F	G	31-40	8
07-03-97	F	G	21-30	6

Principals (Elite interview)

Date	Sex	School	Age	History of schools
04-11-96	M	G	> 40	< 10 years
04-12-96	M	P	> 40	11-20 years
10-03-97	M	T	> 40	11-20 years
11-03-97	F	G	> 40	> 20 years

Principals (General interview)

Date	Sex	School	Age	Teaching experience
21-10-96	M	G	31-40	11-20 years
05-11-96	F	G	> 40	11-20 years
17-01-97	F	G	> 40	> 20 years
24-01-97	M	G	31-40	11-20 years
30-01-97	M	P	> 40	11-20 years

19-02-97	M	G	> 40	< 10 years
19-02-97	M	P	31-40	11-20 years
21-02-97	M	T	> 40	> 20 years
04-03-97	M	G	> 40	11-20 years
07-03-97	M	G	> 40	11-20 years
14-03-97	M	P	> 40	11-20 years
17-03-97	M	T	> 40	11-20 years
22-04-97	M	G	> 40	> 20 years
23-04-97	F	G	> 40	11-20 years
24-04-97	M	P	> 40	11-20 years

## Appendix 5

### Covering letters

Letter to the Principals

Dear Principal,

This is Cheung Chi-kim from the Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Hong Kong. I am now conducting a research on the development of secondary business education in Hong Kong. Part of my research involves an investigation of the principals' perceptions on the various issues regarding secondary business education in Hong Kong. Enclosed please find a questionnaire and please take some of your precious time to fill it in and have it returned to me using the stamped, self-addressed, envelope on or before May 31, 1997. If you have any queries, please call me at 28578365.

Regards,



Cheung Chi-kim

March 28 1997

## Letter to the Panel Chairs

Dear Business Panel,

This is Cheung Chi-kim from the Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Hong Kong. I am now conducting a research on the development of secondary business education in Hong Kong. Part of my research involves an investigation of the perceptions of teachers and students on the various issues regarding secondary business education in Hong Kong. Enclosed please find two sets of questionnaire. The first set contains two questionnaires for teachers and the second set contains two questionnaires for students. For the questionnaire for teachers, please fill in one and ask one of your colleagues teaching business subjects to fill in the second. For the questionnaire for students, please distribute one to a student in S.4 or S.5 and another to a S.6 or S.7 student. Please note that the class number of students completing the questionnaire must be 10. Please have the completed questionnaires returned to me using the stamped, self-addressed, envelope on or before May 31, 1997. If you have any queries, please call me at 28578365.

Regards,



Cheung Chi-kim

March 28 1997

## Appendix 6

Principals' answers to the questionnaire

	Mean	Standard deviation	Neutral (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
Qh.4	3.286	0.636	25.3	5.3	15.8	11.6	42.1
Qh.5	3.763	0.666	20.0	2.1	8.4	20.0	49.5
Qh.6	2.355	0.917	24.2	13.7	40.0	6.3	15.8
Qh.7	3.207	0.604	16.8	7.4	20.0	17.9	37.9
Qh.8	3.342	0.775	13.7	6.3	16.8	20.0	43.2
Qh.9	2.143	0.530	22.1	16.8	46.3	4.2	9.5
Qh.10	3.194	0.656	26.3	7.4	17.9	16.8	31.6
Qh.11	2.748	0.730	14.7	15.8	30.5	12.6	26.3
Qh.12	2.925	1.066	7.4	15.8	32.6	10.5	33.7
Qh.13	2.849	1.122	6.3	15.8	36.8	9.5	31.6
Qh.14	2.806	1.056	12.6	15.8	41.1	8.4	22.1
Qh.15	3.913	0.873	10.5	2.1	8.4	20.0	59.0

Qh.16	2.913	0.979	24.2	11.6	30.5	7.4	26.3
Qh.17	3.696	0.886	13.7	4.2	11.6	20.0	50.5
Qh.18	2.446	0.859	16.9	18.6	49.2	3.4	11.9
Qh.19	2.764	1.052	18.6	10.2	42.4	6.8	22.0
Qh.20	3.450	0.992	16.8	5.3	15.8	14.7	47.4
Qh.21	3.198	0.794	28.4	5.3	15.8	15.8	34.7
Qh.22	1.882	0.705	8.4	17.9	69.5	0.0	4.2
Qh.23	3.067	0.761	48.4	7.4	15.8	8.4	20.0
Qh.24	3.478	0.966	17.9	5.3	14.7	13.7	48.4
Qh.25	3.028	0.853	12.6	10.5	23.2	13.7	40.0
Qh.26	2.288	0.882	26.3	20.0	43.2	2.1	8.4
Qh.27	2.368	0.954	20.0	19.0	32.6	8.4	20.0
Qh.28	2.38	0.817	20.0	10.5	47.4	5.3	15.8
Qh.29	3.696	0.886	10.5	6.3	10.5	20.0	52.6
Qh.30	2.043	0.610	8.4	14.7	71.6	1.1	4.2
Qh.31	3.735	0.887	18.9	4.2	11.6	13.7	51.6
Qh.32	1.934	0.886	10.5	27.4	57.9	1.1	3.2

## Appendix 7

Teachers' answers to the questionnaire

	Mean	Standard deviation	Neutral (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
Qt.9	1.805	0.563	5.1	22.5	68.5	1.1	2.8
Qt.10	3.277	1.265	20.2	5.6	21.9	11.2	41.0
Qt.11	2.154	0.732	10.1	20.2	57.9	2.8	9.0
Qt.12	1.808	0.634	5.1	25.8	65.7	0.0	3.4
Qt.13	1.962	0.720	5.1	25.3	65.7	0.0	3.9
Qt.14	2.892	0.749	13.5	11.8	34.8	11.2	28.6
Qt.15	1.769	0.652	10.1	19.1	64.6	1.1	5.1
Qt.16	2.385	1.134	21.3	19.1	50.0	2.3	7.3
Qt.17	2.462	0.859	15.2	18.5	49.4	5.1	11.8

Qt.18	2.231	0.992	15.2	16.9	48.9	4.5	14.6
Qt.19	2.231	0.992	11.2	17.4	58.4	2.8	10.1
Qt.20	2.308	0.838	11.2	18.5	57.3	2.8	10.1
Qt.21	2.346	0.797	11.2	18.5	52.8	4.5	12.9
Qt.22	2.077	0.845	7.9	23.0	59.6	3.4	6.2
Qt.23	3.077	0.758	11.2	9.6	33.2	11.8	34.3
Qt.24	3.4	0.860	23.0	4.5	12.9	11.8	47.8
Qt.25	3.528	0.736	17.4	2.8	8.4	18.5	52.8
Qt.26	1.876	1.065	7.3	23.6	60.7	2.8	5.6
Qt.27	1.867	1.102	7.3	23.6	61.2	2.3	5.6
Qt.28	2.131	0.874	15.7	21.9	44.9	4.5	12.9
Qt.29	3.711	0.992	12.9	2.8	8.4	20.2	55.6
Qt.30	2.131	1.232	13.5	11.2	54.5	3.9	16.9
Qt.31	1.983	0.845	13.5	21.9	55.6	2.8	6.2

Qt.32	3.492	0.939	13.5	4.5	11.2	19.1	51.7
Qt.33	2.769	1.107	27.0	7.9	32.6	6.7	25.8
Qt.34	2.36	0.810	10.1	19.1	52.8	4.5	13.5
Qt.35	2.08	0.862	25.3	16.9	42.7	3.4	11.8
Qt.36	3.04	0.889	25.3	9.0	24.7	11.8	29.2
Qt.37	3.455	1.19	23.0	5.6	12.9	14.6	44.9
Qt.38	2.208	0.833	11.2	20.2	55.1	4.5	9.0
Qt.39	1.917	0.717	7.3	21.9	61.8	1.7	7.3
Qt.40	3.292	0.908	27.5	10.1	21.4	10.1	30.9
Qt.41	3.304	0.927	27.5	5.1	18.0	11.8	37.6
Qt.42	3.428	0.881	25.3	5.6	17.4	10.1	41.6
Qt.43	1.92	0.909	7.3	19.7	54.5	2.8	5.6
Qt.44	2.32	1.03	25.3	11.8	39.9	5.6	17.4
Qt.45	2.56	0.916	10.1	14.6	37.1	7.3	30.9

Qt.46	2.04	0.611	7.3	18.5	51.1	5.6	17.4
Qt.47	2.0	0.707	7.3	21.9	56.2	4.5	10.1
Qt.48	2.16	0.746	10.1	20.8	50.0	5.6	13.5
Qt.49	4.16	0.943	17.4	0.0	4.5	16.3	61.8
Qt.50	3.108	0.862	19.1	9.6	22.5	11.8	37.1
Qt.51	3.42	1.098	20.2	6.2	17.4	11.8	44.4
Qt.52	3.68	0.802	17.4	5.6	20.2	14.6	42.1
Qt.53	2.24	0.663	19.1	18.5	50.0	2.8	9.6
Qt.54	1.76	0.663	6.2	21.4	67.4	1.1	3.9
Qt.55	2.12	0.927	23.6	18.5	42.7	5.1	10.1
Qt.56	3.12	1.021	22.0	10.1	24.7	14.0	29.2
Qt.57	3.28	0.843	19.1	5.1	11.8	11.2	52.8
Qt.58	3.738	0.824	10.1	4.5	11.2	16.9	57.3
Qt.59	2.8	1.041	17.4	14.0	32.0	9.0	27.5

Qt.60	3.508	0.993	25.3	3.9	11.8	14.6	44.4
Qt.61	3.408	0.981	14.0	7.3	17.4	17.4	43.8
Qt.62	2.654	0.967	19.1	11.8	37.6	9.0	22.5
Qt.63	2.808	1.021	32.0	10.1	30.3	6.7	20.8
Qt.64	2.615	0.898	19.1	11.8	36.5	7.9	24.7
Qt.65	2.177	0.744	5.6	23.6	56.2	4.5	10.1
Qt.66	1.962	0.774	14.0	23.6	58.4	1.1	2.8
Qt.67	2.123	0.891	12.9	17.4	51.1	5.6	12.9
Qt.68	2.742	1.036	16.3	14.6	39.9	7.3	21.9
Qt.69	2.75	1.04	20.2	12.9	41.0	6.7	19.1
Qt.70	2.822	1.162	27.0	12.9	27.5	9.6	23.0

## Appendix 8

Students' answers to the questionnaire

	Mean	Standard deviation	Neutral (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)
Qp.4	3.128	1.102	24.1	5.5	25.6	10.1	34.7
Qp.5	2.108	1.068	10.6	17.1	60.3	3.5	8.5
Qp.6	3.054	0.942	24.1	7.0	24.1	10.1	34.7
Qp.7	2.116	1.240	8.0	13.1	64.3	3.0	11.6
Qp.8	2.110	1.066	10.6	13.1	62.2	3.0	12.1
Qp.9	2.380	1.204	28.1	10.6	36.2	6.5	18.6
Qp.10	2.355	1.034	24.6	12.6	47.7	3.0	12.1
Qp.11	2.810	1.128	42.7	9.6	23.6	6.0	18.1

Qp.12	2.68	0.996	18.1	8.5	47.3	7.0	19.1
Qp.13	3.068	0.998	28.1	6.0	27.1	9.1	29.7
Qp.14	2.47	1.21	24.6	10.6	49.3	3.5	12.1
Qp.15	3.543	1.138	18.1	4.5	13.1	15.1	49.2
Qp.16	2.546	1.047	28.1	11.1	38.2	5.0	16.6
Qp.17	2.241	0.98	12.1	12.1	44.2	6.0	15.6
Qp.18	2.412	1.124	27.1	8.0	34.7	6.5	23.6
Qp.19	3.68	1.074	12.1	8.5	20.1	15.1	44.2
Qp.20	2.03	1.104	8.0	12.6	62.8	3.0	13.6
Qp.21	3.368	1.246	27.1	5.5	14.6	17.1	35.7
Qp.22	1.852	0.806	17.6	14.1	56.8	3.0	8.5
Qp.23	1.804	0.894	18.6	13.1	56.3	3.0	9.1
Qp.24	3.724	0.986	18.6	3.0	9.1	10.1	59.3
Qp.25	2.604	0.984	24.6	6.0	36.7	6.0	26.6

## Appendix 9

A summary of results of the testing of null hypothesis

Item No.	Null hypothesis	Z	F	Retained
Qp.7 Qt.13	Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students on the perception that secondary business education should equip students for future jobs.	1.49		Yes
Qt.15 Qh.32	Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals on the perception that secondary business education should provide students with general business knowledge.	1.60		Yes
Qp.9 Qt.14 Qh.12	Ho3: There is no statistically significant difference among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that secondary business education aims to prepare students for further studies in tertiary institutions.		19.4	No
Qt.11 Qh.14	Ho4: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals agreeing that secondary business education aims to train highly skilful and/or knowledgeable business personnel such as managers and accountants.	5.37		No
Qp.13 Qt.10	Ho5: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students disagreeing that secondary business education aims to produce clerks and secretaries, earning low wages.	1.76		Yes
Qp.6 Qt.56	Ho6: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students on the perception that secondary business education is not easy.	0.65		Yes

Item No.	Null hypothesis	Z	F	Retained
Qp.24 Qt.52 Qh.31	Ho7: There is no statistically significant difference among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that secondary business education is not regarded as anything superior.		2.95	Yes
Qp.14 Qt.44	Ho8: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students on the perception that if given a choice, students do not want to take business subjects as their first choice of study in secondary school.	1.85		Yes
Qt.33 Qh.25	Ho9: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals on the perception that secondary students with less academic ability take business education.	2.15		No
Qp.15 Qt. 60 Qh.29	Ho10: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers, students and principals on the image of secondary business teachers.		1.68	Yes
Qt.58 Qh.15	Ho11: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals on the perception that secondary business education should not be made compulsory.	1.61		Yes
Qp.19 Qt.51 Qh.24	Ho12: There is no statistically significant difference among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that business education should not start at S.1		2.88	Yes
Qt.59 Qh.16	Ho13: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals on the perception that there should be two sets of secondary business curriculum.	0.89		Yes

Item No.	Null hypothesis	Z	F	Retained
Qt.53 Qh.28	Ho14: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and principals on the perception that the academic side of secondary business education should be more emphasized.	1.44		Yes
Qt.24 Qh.21	Ho15: There is no statistically significant difference between principals and teachers on the perception that business education is not simple.	1.94		Yes
Qp.22 Qh.22 Qt.54	Ho16: There is no statistically significant difference among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that IT should be emphasized more in secondary business curriculum.		27.5	No
Qp.20 Qt.43	Ho17: There is no statistically significant difference between students and teachers on the perception that secondary business curriculum should be updated by dropping some out-dated subjects such as typewriting and shorthand.	1.53		Yes
Qp.16 Qt.69	Ho18: There is no statistically significant difference between students and teachers on the perception that entrepreneurship education should be included in the secondary business curriculum.	0.67		Yes
Qp.25 Qt.70	Ho19: There is no statistically significant difference between teachers and students on the perception that business mathematics should replace the current mathematics curriculum for business students.	1.95		Yes
Qp.10 Qt.16 Qh.27	Ho20: There is no statistically significant difference among principals, teachers, and students on the perception that secondary business subjects should be considered by the business faculties as a prerequisite for the admission of students.		2.23	Yes

Item No.	Null hypothesis	Z	F	Retained
Qp.8 Qt.46	Ho21: There is no statistically significant difference between students and teachers on the perception that project work should be used as a kind of assessment in secondary business education.	1.37		Yes
Qt.35 Qh.26	Ho22: There is no statistically significant difference between principals and teachers on the perception that most university business graduates do not take teaching as their first choice of career.	1.87		Yes
Qt.47 Qh.30	Ho23: There is no statistically significant difference between principals and teachers on the perception that the involvement of the business/industrial sector in the planning of business education curriculum is important.	0.52		Yes
Qp.17 Qt.34	Ho24: There is no statistically significant difference between students and teachers on the perception that there should be placement for students in secondary business education.	1.86		Yes