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## THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**EL24: Comparative Study of Education Systems***M.Ed. 'List A' Elective Module (1999/2000)*

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This module will introduce students to (i) some basic concepts of comparative education as a field of study, (ii) the education systems of selected countries, and (iii) some common educational issues in an international context. The module has been designed as a general introduction which can be taken as a 'List A' elective by students from every specialism.

Classes will be held on Fridays, from 5.10 to 6.30 pm in KK LG110.

**Basic Reading**

The most recent and most appropriate general textbook in the field is:

Arnove, Robert F. & Torres, Carlos Alberto (eds) (1999): *Comparative Education: The Dialectic of the Global and the Local*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Course participants are recommended to acquire their own copies of this book as soon as it becomes available in the bookstore. For some specific topics, however, other books and articles are more useful. Separate guidance will be given on this, on a topic-by-topic basis.

**Module Outline and Schedule**

- Sept. 10 1. *Introduction: Identifying and Comparing Education Systems*  
What the module is about, and why; how it links with other M.Ed. modules; how to define and recognise an education system; some of the major traditions in comparative education.
- Sept. 17 2. *Cross-national and Sub-national Comparisons: Themes and Lessons*  
Traditionally, the main emphasis of the field of comparative education has been on cross-national comparisons. However, these are not the only types of comparison which can be useful. Much can also be learned from internal comparison of education systems. This session will take some examples to demonstrate the point.
- Sept. 24 3. *Administration and Control of Education Systems*  
Is the Hong Kong education system centralised or decentralised? On what basis do you

make your judgement? One of the best ways is through comparison. This session will highlight the advantages and disadvantages of different systems of governance for systems of different types. It will also note changes over time in different societies.

October 1<sup>st</sup>: No Class (Public Holiday)

- Oct. 8 4. *Case Study I: Education in Mainland China*  
China has the largest education system in the world. China is also a society which has undergone major political and social changes during the last few decades. How have these changes affected the nature of education? And what are the implications for Hong Kong in its interaction with the mainland?
- Oct. 15 5. *Equity and Elitism in Education Systems*  
Equity and elitism seem to be constant tensions, and no system seems ever to satisfy everybody. This session will identify ways in which the tensions are addressed (and not addressed) in different parts of the world.

October 22<sup>nd</sup>: No Class (Reading Week)

- Oct. 29 6. *Case Study II: Education in Russia*  
During this session, we will be assisted by Nina Borevskaya. She will tell us about the nature of the Russian education system, and will compare it with that in mainland China. This discussion will give insights into communism and capitalism in education systems, as well as into other features.
- Nov. 5 7. *Education and Political Transition*  
Hong Kong has gone through its reversion of sovereignty, but many legacies remain. How is Hong Kong's situation similar to and/or different from transitions in other places and at other points in history? What can we learn from these similarities and differences?
- Nov. 12 8. *Case Study III: Education in the United Kingdom*  
The UK has been chosen to contrast with the other countries because it has a very different tradition of education (and has also been influential in Hong Kong). As in other countries, comparisons can be undertaken within the UK as well as between the UK and other countries.
- Nov. 19 9. *Case Study IV: Education in Macau*  
Macau contrasts with the PRC as one of the smallest territories in the world. However, small does not mean simple. Macau makes a fascinating case for academic comparison, especially because in education it is so different from Hong Kong. What forces have shaped education in Macau, and what can we learn from comparisons?
- Nov. 26 10. *Continuity and Change in Education Systems*  
It appears that every society in the world is in some ways dissatisfied with its education system! This leads to desire and pressure for innovation and reform. But education systems also show considerable continuity.
- Dec. 3 11. *Conclusion: Uses, Issues and Trends in Comparative Education*  
A summary of the module; commentary on some major themes, dimensions, uses and

misuses of comparative education, and on ways in which the field can relate to other fields of study in education.

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