

# The Examination of the Colonial Influences on Hong Kong's Higher Education System and its Impact on Youth Identity Formation

Jinxu He<sup>1, a</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Faculty of Education and Society, London University, London, UK

<sup>a</sup>jensonjh912@gmail.com

## Abstract

The present study investigates the influence of tertiary education on the formation of the younger cohort's identity in Hong Kong. The text explores the role of higher education in the formation of identity and cultural socialization, extending beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge. The present study underscores the historical backdrop of Hong Kong as a previous British colony, wherein the educational framework accorded precedence to Western knowledge and culture at the expense of traditional Chinese knowledge. The enduring impact of colonialism is evident in the cultural and educational landscape of Hong Kong. The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of colonialism on the educational opportunities available to young individuals, specifically in terms of the restricted quality and accessibility of higher education. The text delves into the enduring effects of colonialism on the self-concept, cultural identification, and perspective of the populace. By comprehending these impacts, significant perspectives can be obtained to establish a fairer and more reachable educational system in Hong Kong.

## Keywords

Higher education, Youth identity, Colonialism, Hong Kong.

## 1. Introduction

Higher education plays a pivotal role in identity formation amongst the newer generation in Hong Kong. Trede (2012) opines that "secondary education is not merely about acquiring knowledge and skills; it also serves as a process of identity construction and cultural socialisation." In Hong Kong, higher education is paramount in enhancing one's social and cultural stature. Beyond mere career advancement, the experiences and perspectives imbibed through higher education can profoundly influence an individual's worldview and self-concept. Tracing back to its history, Hong Kong was a British colony from 1841 to 1997. During this colonial era, the curriculum predominantly emphasised Western knowledge and culture, undermining Western and traditional Chinese knowledge and culture. This education system established a hierarchy with Western knowledge superior to Chinese knowledge (Lin, 2012). Consequently, colonial influences still significantly permeate the culture and education in Hong Kong.

The study of Hong Kong's higher education system and the shaping of young identities in this post-colonial city offers a unique perspective. Okazaki (2008) posits that colonialism had a "profound and lasting impact" on the colonised population, affecting their self-perception, cultural identity, and relationship with the broader world. Colonial theories shed light on how colonialism moulded Hong Kong's education system and its current cultural norms. This paper will critically examine how colonial power in Hong Kong stifled the development of its youth by diminishing the quality of and accessibility to higher education. The residual effects of

colonialism on Hong Kong's youth and their identity formation can provide valuable insights into how to create a more equitable and accessible education system.

## 2. Challenges and Limitations

The decolonisation of the higher education system in Hong Kong presents significant challenges and limitations. One of the major challenges lies in overcoming the deeply ingrained colonial ideologies that persist in the current system. It involves revising and reconstructing educational curriculums, methodologies, and materials that heavily favour Western knowledge and perspectives. There is also the complex issue of language in education, where the dominance of the English language in institutions reinforces colonial influence. Attempts to shift the medium of instruction to the local language may face resistance, not only from within the education system itself but also from students and parents who may perceive English as a more advantageous language globally. Rectifying the power dynamics within educational institutions is another daunting task. Furthermore, this requires promoting diversity and inclusivity in the faculty, often dominated by those with Western academic backgrounds. Another limitation is the lack of resources and support for promoting indigenous research and scholarship initiatives, which are essential for decolonisation.

## 3. Critical Analysis

Analysing the current state of the higher education system in Hong Kong, it becomes evident that the influence of British colonialism is deep-seated. While there are apparent attempts to decolonise the educational system, the emphasis on Western knowledge and the predominance of the English language signal a continuous alignment with colonial principles. Critics may argue that the Western focus in higher education equips students to compete in a globalised world, where English and Western knowledge are often valued. However, this approach risks marginalising local knowledge and cultural values, contributing to cultural estrangement among students. The movement toward decolonisation, while commendable, must be undertaken with careful consideration of the local cultural context and global realities. The challenge lies in balancing relevance to the international academic discourse and preserving the uniqueness and validity of indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

## 4. In-depth Discussion of Relevant Theories

As a researcher, comprehending the complexity of the issue at hand is essential, thus the need to delve into the relevant theories. The theory of colonialism can shed light on colonial rule's impact on colonised societies' knowledge systems. Colonialism often imposed a particular power dynamic where the coloniser's knowledge was seen as superior and the colonised's knowledge inferior. This dynamic persists in the higher education system of post-colonial societies like Hong Kong. The theory of decolonisation provides another perspective. This theory advocates for liberating knowledge systems from the confines of colonial ideologies. It emphasises the importance of indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and local language in the educational system. The post-colonial theory also holds relevance. It critically examines the lasting impacts of colonialism, often focusing on issues of identity, language, culture, and power relations. In the context of higher education in Hong Kong, it can offer insights into how the colonial past has shaped the current education system and the identity of its students. Understanding these theories in depth can provide a solid theoretical framework to analyse the ongoing efforts and challenges in decolonising the higher education system in Hong Kong. It may also offer guidance on potential strategies for effectively addressing these challenges.

## 5. Analysis of the Relevant Theories

### 5.1. Theory of Colonialism

As a theory and historical practice, colonialism often involved the direct political control of one nation over another, substantially impacting the colonised societies' cultural, social, and economic aspects. A fundamental feature of colonialism was the imposition of the coloniser's knowledge system, which was used to maintain control and hegemony over the colonised people. Besides, this resulted in a power dynamic that favoured the coloniser's knowledge as superior, with the colonised's knowledge often marginalised or even erased. In the context of higher education in Hong Kong, the influence of British colonialism is still felt, with a significant emphasis on Western knowledge and methodologies. The colonial ideology, which placed Western knowledge on a pedestal, has implications for the curriculum design, the medium of instruction, and the overall educational policies, which all heavily reflect a Western bias.

### 5.2. Theory of Decolonization

The decolonisation theory emerged as a counter to colonialism, focusing on dismantling the established structures and ideologies perpetuating colonial dominance. Education calls for a shift from Eurocentric perspectives, thus promoting the importance of indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and local languages. Besides, this involves the decolonisation of the curriculum, which means moving away from a singular, Western-oriented perspective and embracing a plurality of knowledge systems, especially those inherent to the local context. The goal is not to replace Western knowledge, but to position it alongside other forms of knowledge, ensuring they are valued and validated equally within the educational system. In Hong Kong, this translates to greater inclusion of Chinese history, language, and cultural studies in the curriculum.

### 5.3. Postcolonial Theory

The postcolonial theory involves critically examining the enduring impacts of colonialism even after political control has ended. The concept focuses on identity, language, culture, power relations, and resistance issues in postcolonial societies. It critiques the persistent dominance of Western ideologies and explores how the colonial past continues to shape the present and future. In the context of Hong Kong's higher education, postcolonial theory can provide a lens to critically examine how colonial legacies have shaped the education system, the attitudes and aspirations of its students, and society as a whole. It also offers insights into understanding the struggles around identity formation among the youth of Hong Kong, caught between their indigenous heritage and a heavily Western-influenced educational system.

## 6. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach underpinning colonial theory to investigate the correlation between Hong Kong's higher education and youth identity formation. The research primarily relies on a review of the existing literature, encompassing academic articles, books, and reports. A comprehensive exploration of academic resources such as JSTOR, EBSCO, and Google Scholar was conducted using keywords like "higher education," "youth identity," "colonialism," and "Hong Kong". This literature review explored various themes, including colonialism, Hong Kong's history, higher education, and youth identities. The search yielded numerous results, from which the most relevant and significant were subjected to detailed examination to extract key themes and arguments relevant to the research objective. By combining literature review and critical discourse analysis, this study scrutinises the relationship between Hong Kong's tertiary education and the identities of its youth, as viewed through the lens of colonial theory. The driving motive of this research is to discern the reality

behind the narratives surrounding Hong Kong's universities and the identity of its contemporary youth.

## 7. Theoretical Framework: Colonialism

The term "colonialism" refers to the practice of a dominant nation ("coloniser") establishing and maintaining colonial rule over another nation ("colony") typically located in a different geographical region. The exploitation of the colonised—their resources, labour, and culture—is a defining characteristic of colonialism. The objective of colonial theory is to deconstruct the many facets of colonialism by analysing the interplay between the ideology's socio-economic, political, and cultural dimensions. Additionally, the theory investigates how colonialism affected the colonisers and the colonised. Besides, the dependency theory is a valuable theoretical framework for gaining deeper insights into colonialism. According to this perspective, the colonised become economically and politically dependent on the coloniser. Dependency theory underscores colonialism exacerbating poverty and underdevelopment in colonised countries. Another valuable lens for examining colonialism in Hong Kong is a post-colonial theory, which emphasises colonialism's psychological and cultural impacts.

The post-colonial theory argues that the exposure of colonised people to "otherness," culminating in a loss of cultural affiliation and dominance, is a central feature of the colonial experience. It also critiques the role of colonialism in constructing and perpetuating Western supremacy and cultural imperialism. Colonialism has considerably shaped the power dynamics in Hong Kong. Among its most significant and enduring impacts is the legacy of British political and economic dominance. During the colonial era, the British instituted a governance structure that continued to shape Hong Kong's political and economic decision-making, giving the British absolute control over the territory. Furthermore, the practice of colonisation led to the perpetuation of power disparities among various social groups. Ashcroft (1998) asserts that "colonial interaction was never simply about power dynamics; rather, it was a complex cultural process that involved the exchange of meanings, values, and concepts."

## 8. Colonialism and the Formation of Youth Identity

Academics are interested in colonialism's complex and diverse impact on Hong Kong adolescents attempting to discover their position in the world. Over the city's more than 150 years as a British colony, enormous changes have impacted Hong Kong's younger generation. These modifications have occurred throughout the city's history. Sweeting and Vickers (2005) state that 'colonialism influenced Hong.' The time frame during which English was selected as the language of teaching in Hong Kong's institutions may coincide with the time frame during which the British colonial government governed Hong Kong. These schools aim to help the children of Hong Kong's upper class integrate into British society by providing them with a rigorous Western education. Since then, English has been the default teaching medium, levelling the playing field for those pupils whose native language is not English. Identity formation processes in the following generations were profoundly affected by the need to assimilate British culture and values imposed on the Hong Kong population during the British colonial administration.

The results were devastating because when the British colonial power was expanding, the English language, Christianity, and Western educational institutions that prioritised the study of literature, mathematics, and science were all introduced to the region. Hong Kong's colonial rulers implemented the system, which has become widespread there. In addition, the British educational system contributed to the stratification of knowledge throughout society, bolstering colonial rulers' authority. Besides this was achieved by utilising the English language. Due to the prevalence of English-speaking schools and Western educational institutions, this

intellectual hierarchy positions Western culture above Chinese culture in importance. This knowledge hierarchy, which exacerbated existing socio-economic disparities, ensured the continued control of colonial authority and left an indelible mark on the Hong Kong educational system, has left an indelible mark on the modern Hong Kong educational system.

Li contends in his book that “the British education system has created a body of knowledge that privileges Western culture while marginalising other forms of knowledge, such as Chinese culture and history” (Li, 2017). I must restate the situation differently. The laws regulating education reflect this degree of comprehension by providing Western sources greater weight in the humanities and sciences than Chinese sources. The British colonial government’s involvement in Hong Kong’s educational system can be traced to the establishment a knowledge hierarchy and the colonial power dynamics resulting from this hierarchy. The colonial experience greatly influenced how young Hong Kong residents viewed the educational and cultural expectations of the West. The persistence of British colonial control in Hong Kong contributed to the formation of a belief among the city’s youth that Western values of education and culture are superior to Chinese ones. Children and adolescents educated or exposed to Western institutions and culture frequently report feeling estranged from their traditional Chinese origins. Consequently, they typically seek ways to resolve conflicts by establishing new identities.

The impact of colonialism on the identities of young individuals has given rise to a distinct Hong Kong identity, setting it apart from mainland Chinese identity. According to Luc (1991), the colonial experience has led to a unique identity for Hong Kong, blending elements of both Chinese and British cultures. This identity is influenced by the city’s heterogeneous population, its vibrant and dynamic history, and the democratic, individualistic, and legalistic values inherited from the British. Colonialism’s impact has engendered a perception among Hong Kong students that Western culture is more intricate and complex than Chinese culture. Chinese culture is often portrayed in media and popular culture as outdated and unattractive, while Western culture is painted as alluring and sophisticated. According to a study by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, many people in Hong Kong see Western culture as more contemporary and fashionable than Chinese culture, which they perceive as antiquated and unappealing (Chan, 2000).

There is also a common belief among the youth that Western education is superior to that of China. This perception contributes to the popularity of international schools in Hong Kong that employ Western pedagogical approaches and use English as the medium of instruction.

Nevertheless, the youth in Hong Kong presents a contrasting view concerning Western educational and cultural norms. They display scepticism towards Western education while showing a solid appreciation for Chinese cultural values. A group of young Hong Kong activists has been advocating for preserving the Cantonese language and culture despite societal pressures to adopt Mandarin and conform to dominant Chinese cultural norms. These pressures primarily originate from mainland China.

Remarkably, colonisation has provided Hong Kong’s youth opportunities to develop resilience and resourcefulness. They demonstrate a strong sense of self-identity, distinct from British and Chinese cultural identities. Lau (1997) suggests that the youth in Hong Kong have inherited a legacy of tenacity and resistance from their ancestors, continuing to protect their rights and individuality amidst political and societal challenges. In conclusion, the unique identity that characterises Hong Kong has had a profound and enduring impact on its cultural and political landscape, which persists to the present day. The legacy of colonialism is evident in the attitudes of contemporary Hong Kong youth towards Western educational and cultural standards. The idea that Western culture and education are of superior quality to Chinese culture and education has been reinforced through the establishment of Western-oriented education and the prevalence of the English-language education system.

## 9. The Impact of Higher Education on Youth Identity

The critical role of higher education in shaping the identities of young individuals in Hong Kong cannot be understated. Due to its past as a British colony, the educational system in Hong Kong is greatly influenced by the Western academic model (Yang, 2006). Consequently, the curriculum heavily emphasises the study of Western classics and natural sciences. This system fostered a class with cognitive advantages, which helped maintain colonial power structures and shaped the development of youth identities in Hong Kong. Moreover, a postgraduate degree is often seen as a pathway for career advancement and social status elevation in Hong Kong. The common belief that attaining a university education can bolster employment prospects and social status is evident in the vital interest among Hong Kong's youth in pursuing higher education. Many students aim for upward social mobility by gaining advanced academic qualifications. The high interest in higher education among young people in Hong Kong mirrors this mindset. A study indicated that the younger generation in Hong Kong sees higher education as a means to improve their social standing and achieve financial prosperity (Wan, 2011). This significant finding is worthy of attention.

The role of higher education in forming the identities of Hong Kong's youth is intrinsically tied to students' exposure to novel ideas and perspectives. University education allows students to delve into various academic fields, interact with people from diverse cultural and social backgrounds, and develop analytical and reflective skills. Exposure to experiences that challenge ingrained beliefs can help students develop a more sophisticated understanding of the world around them, which could be beneficial (Ball, 2009). However, pursuing higher education can also trigger an identity crisis among Hong Kong's youth. Transitioning from high school to a prestigious university can be daunting for many students, given the immense pressure associated with succeeding in higher education. Furthermore, the Western-inspired education system in Hong Kong may lead some students to feel culturally alienated (Pritchard, 2011). Besides, this could potentially result in an emotional disconnection from China's historical and cultural heritage.

Recent empirical studies suggest that Hong Kong's higher education institutions have increasingly become a platform for political activism and social demonstrations (Canagarajah, 2002; Chan, 2015). Students from various Hong Kong educational establishments have significantly advocated for greater autonomy and self-rule and supported the region's pro-democracy movement. These actions were partly sparked by dissatisfaction with Hong Kong's political and economic structures and a desire to influence the city's future. The higher education system in numerous former colonial territories, including Hong Kong, perpetuates a colonial mentality. These beliefs are likely rooted in the legacies of colonialism and the imposition of Western-centric educational models. The impacts of colonial ideology can be observed in various aspects of Hong Kong's academic environment, such as the curriculum's subject matter, the language used in classrooms, and the power dynamics shaping the learning atmosphere (Boyle, 1997).

Some argue that the continued presence of a colonial mindset in higher education is associated with selecting and prioritising academic material. The pedagogical content disseminated in the context of higher education can potentially sustain a colonial mentality. Several higher education institutions in Hong Kong, modelled after the Western education system, emphasise Western history, culture, and literature more than Chinese equivalents (Lewis, 2015). This practice echoes the colonial era belief in the superiority of Western knowledge over non-Western knowledge. This mindset has persistently influenced the topics and subjects in higher education institutions. Ruan (2021) points out that in Hong Kong, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects are prioritised over those in the humanities and

social sciences. Notably, this can be traced back to the colonial emphasis on technical proficiency and practical understanding.

The hierarchical structuring of knowledge has favoured colonial power structures and the belief in the supremacy of Western knowledge. Chan (2003) argues that Hong Kong's educational curriculum is still significantly influenced by Western standards and principles, reinforcing the notion of Western knowledge as the norm and Chinese knowledge as "the other." Additionally, the medium of instruction in higher education settings plays a critical role in perpetuating Hong Kong's colonial perspective. English, the dominant language of instruction in most of Hong Kong's educational institutions, strongly influences the education system, fortifying its colonial impact and possibly reinforcing the notion that Western culture and education are superior to Chinese counterparts. Financial barriers also contribute to this issue. The imposition of high tuition fees can deter the admission of students from financially disadvantaged communities. Notably, this exacerbates economic inequality and strengthens the belief that higher education is a privilege reserved for the wealthy. Ergin and Alkan (2019) note that higher education institutions in post-colonial regions tend to replicate colonial disparities.

Furthermore, there is a noticeable lack of diversity in many higher education institutions regarding race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background. This situation reinforces the prevailing notion that specific demographics are more deserving of higher education than others. Finally, a significant proportion of educational institutions in Hong Kong are currently managed by administrators and academic staff who received their training from Western institutions. These individuals may unintentionally perpetuate colonial ideology through their pedagogical practices and academic pursuits. According to Chan and Mork (2001), many Hong Kong academic administrators and faculty members were educated in Western institutions. The higher education system in Hong Kong preserves colonial ideologies through various mechanisms, including curriculum content, the language of instruction, and classroom power dynamics. These practices, rooted in colonialism and the imposition of a Western-centric education system (Okazaki, 2008), have become deeply ingrained in the structure and operations of higher education institutions, making their challenge and eradication a complex task. These practices serve not only to maintain colonial hierarchies but also contribute to the reemergence of socio-economic disparities in post-colonial territories like Hong Kong.

Tackling these issues necessitates establishing an education system that shows greater openness, cultural sensitivity, and respect for the knowledge and wisdom of the Chinese people. The role of higher education in shaping the identity of Hong Kong's young individuals is intricate and multifaceted (Sung, 2022). While it is perceived as a pathway to social mobility and professional advancement, higher education in Hong Kong can also induce identity crises and cultural alienation among young people. Moreover, the sphere of higher education in Hong Kong has emerged as a platform for political engagement and societal discontent. Besides, this underscores the sector's significant role in shaping the city's future. As such, reevaluating and restructuring the current education system to better represent and respect the diverse identities within Hong Kong, particularly in the post-colonial context, is paramount.

## 10. Resistance and the Decolonisation of Education

In Hong Kong, many young individuals have been at the forefront of anti-colonial education. It is imperative to acknowledge that there has been a concerted effort to advocate for a more comprehensive and decolonised educational framework that reflects indigenous customs and principles while simultaneously confronting the colonial inheritance that has persisted within Hong Kong's educational infrastructure. Besides, this is a practice that has been implemented. The subsequent enumeration delineates how the educational opposition of Hong Kong's youth

to colonialism has been revealed and condensed, with a particular focus on elucidation and exposition. Some of the four notable techniques adopted by the Chinese youth include;

(1) Advocating for local language education

One of the critical steps taken by young individuals in Hong Kong in their resistance to colonialism is advocating for the inclusion and preservation of local language education. Promoting Cantonese, the primary spoken language of Hong Kong, in classrooms and educational institutions aims to preserve the city's unique linguistic heritage and cultural identity. This advocacy counters the dominance of the English language in education and challenges the notion that Western languages and knowledge are superior.

(2) Protesting against the implementation of national education

Hong Kong's youth have also expressed resistance by protesting against implementing national education, which they view as an attempt to further mainland Chinese influence and potentially undermine the city's distinctive identity and autonomy. These protests emphasise the importance of preserving Hong Kong's unique historical, political, and cultural context within the educational system.

(3) Creating alternative educational spaces

To counteract the impact of colonialism on the education system, some young individuals have taken the initiative to create alternative educational spaces. These spaces allow students to learn about local history, culture, and values that may be marginalised or underrepresented in the mainstream education system. By doing so, they are promoting a more inclusive and diverse learning environment that empowers students to evaluate and question the colonial legacy in their education critically.

(4) Challenging the Hierarchy of Knowledge

Lastly, Hong Kong's youth have been challenging the hierarchy of knowledge imposed by colonialism by promoting the study of Chinese history, culture, and literature in higher education institutions. They argue that recognising the equal importance of both Western and non-Western knowledge is essential for fostering a more balanced and inclusive educational experience. This challenge to the knowledge hierarchy directly confronts the colonial power dynamics and addresses the historical marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems.

As documented by numerous scholars, many young individuals in Hong Kong proactively resist the vestiges of educational colonialism through various forms of activism and lobbying. Law's (2009) study unveils that students in Hong Kong are gradually acknowledging the importance of their cultural identity and native language in the face of colonial influences. One effective method employed to counteract educational colonialism includes language activism, where the significance of Cantonese as more than just a language but as an integral part of Hong Kong residents' lifestyle is emphasised (Vickers and Kan, 2003). This recognition points to the increasing emphasis on integrating Cantonese as a primary language within the Hong Kong educational system.

Another form of resistance evident amongst Hong Kong's youth is the propagation of traditional Chinese culture and education, serving as a counterweight against the prevailing dominance of Western knowledge. Glenwright (2000) notes a growing student movement aiming to balance the influence of Western knowledge by integrating Chinese history and culture into classroom curricula. Li (2017) argues that an enhanced focus on Chinese culture and history instruction is crucial to safeguard Hong Kong's unique cultural identity and foster a more rounded educational system. In response to these colonial influences, Hong Kong's youth are actively challenging the dominance of educators and administrators in tertiary education who bear Western academic backgrounds. Additionally, to ensure the inclusion and respect of Chinese knowledge and perspectives within the academic sphere, there is a call for a broader inclusion of Chinese educators and researchers and an improved representation of these cohorts. This



approach promotes the decolonisation of higher education in Hong Kong, enabling a more balanced and inclusive learning environment.

The complex and multifaceted process of decolonising higher education in Hong Kong might require a reassessment of the power dynamics and core principles that underpin the existing educational system. Various efforts offer potential avenues for decolonising Hong Kong's education system (Postiglione, 2017). These include initiatives focused on cultivating diversity and inclusivity, encouraging involvement from local scholars and educators, and integrating indigenous knowledge and traditions into educational resources. The task of dismantling colonial structures within the sphere of higher education demands a comprehensive strategy that incorporates a diverse range of perspectives and equitable methodologies. One such objective is to amplify the representation of women and individuals from minority groups in leadership positions within educational institutions and related organisations. Forlin (2010) argues that diversity is critical in establishing a more inclusive and equitable educational system, particularly at the university level.

The decolonisation process of higher education could be significantly facilitated by providing more influence to local educators and researchers (Stanton, 2014). This involves allocating financial resources to support indigenous research and scholarship initiatives while advocating for integrating local language and cultural knowledge into academic pursuits and educational settings. The aim is to counter the dominance of Western information and perspectives. Furthermore, it is critical to develop initiatives and programs to assist marginalised communities while advocating for diversity in leadership roles by increasing the representation of faculty members from various backgrounds. Higher education institutions have the potential to address the lingering effects of colonialism and foster more equitable and inclusive education systems by enhancing diversity and representation among their student populations (Williams, 2021).

Successful decolonisation of higher education requires integrating indigenous ways of knowing and practices into the education system. Besides, this can be achieved by incorporating local history, literature, and cultural traditions into existing curricula and developing new curricula emphasising local knowledge and perspectives (Woolman, 2001). "Local knowledge" refers to knowledge and traditions developed by a particular community or society over time, often passed down from generation to generation (Canagarajah, 2002). Including local knowledge and cultural values in education helps students learn about their cultural history, develop a sense of identity, and increase their understanding of their society and the world.

Recognising and respecting diverse forms of knowledge can foster social cohesion by promoting a sense of belonging and collective identity among diverse groups. Education systems can counter the dominance of Western knowledge and reduce educational disparities by offering students a more comprehensive range of learning resources and perspectives (Olaniran, 2008). Nevertheless, it is essential to highlight that the decolonisation process of higher education in Hong Kong encounters significant resistance from various quarters. Challenges come from more traditional factions and the enduring influence of colonialism on the educational structure. According to Cornwell (1999), decolonising higher education demands a fundamental change in power dynamics and principles, which can be daunting. This assertion suggests that a fundamental shift in power dynamics and values is needed to achieve decolonisation in higher education.

## 11. Conclusion

The study employs the theoretical framework of colonialism to explore the association between tertiary education and youth identity in Hong Kong. The research scrutinises British colonialism's impact on youth identity development and educational structure. Besides, this

research also employs the colonialism theory to examine the correlation between higher education and youth identity in Hong Kong, culminating in a conclusive statement. The impact of colonialism on the educational system is evident in the emergence of an intellectual elite that contributed to the formation of a distinct sense of identity among the youth of Hong Kong. Instructing colonial concepts within higher education institutions raises the possibility of exacerbating the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge and values. Accordingly, this is a matter that warrants consideration. Furthermore, the study examines the challenges and impediments that youth in Hong Kong encounter in their pursuit of tertiary education.

The enduring impact of Hong Kong's colonial past on the local higher education system and the self-conceptualisation of its younger generation is a subject of significance. Therefore, it is crucial to work towards decolonising educational systems and incorporating indigenous knowledge and cultural practices. Incorporating viewpoints and expertise from the indigenous populace into the educational program would augment the comprehensive learning experience of pupils in Hong Kong. The proposed methodology integrates individual students' distinct experiences and cultural heritage. Additionally, it is recognised that there exists community opposition and dedication to the endeavour of decolonising educational institutions in Hong Kong. Incorporating indigenous knowledge and cultural values into the educational framework is crucial for cultivating a more receptive and inclusive self-identity among the younger generation in Hong Kong. The enduring impact of colonialism in Hong Kong has presented obstacles for the youth in developing a coherent sense of self and securing a place within society. The resolution of this matter requires the process of decolonising the educational system of Hong Kong. Implementing an inclusive education system that recognises the significance of indigenous knowledge and cultural values would result in a more just and equitable future for the young population of Hong Kong.

## References

- [1] Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H., 1998. Key concepts in post-colonial studies. Psychology Press.
- [2] Ball, A.F., 2009. Toward a theory of generative change in culturally and linguistically complex classrooms. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(1), pp.45-72.
- [3] Boyle, J., 1997. Imperialism and the English language in Hong Kong. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 18(3), pp.169-181.
- [4] Canagarajah, S., 2002. Reconstructing local knowledge. *Journal of language, identity, and education*, 1(4), pp.243-259.
- [5] Chan, A.H.N., 2000. Fashioning change: Nationalism, colonialism, and modernity in Hong Kong. *Post-colonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy*, 3(3), pp.293-309.
- [6] Chan, D. and Mok, K.H., 2001. Educational reforms and coping strategies under the tidal wave of marketisation: A comparative study of Hong Kong and the mainland. *Comparative education*, 37(1), pp.21-41.
- [7] Chan, K.W., 2003. Hong Kong teacher education students' epistemological beliefs and approaches to learning. *Research in education*, 69(1), pp.36-50.
- [8] Chan, S.C.K., 2015. Delay no more: Struggles to re-imagine Hong Kong (for the next 30 years). *Inter-Asia cultural studies*, 16(3), pp.327-347.
- [9] Cornwell, G.H. and Stoddard, E.W., 1999. *Globalising Knowledge: Connecting International & Intercultural Studies. The Academy in Transition*. Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1818 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009. Web site: [http://www. accu-edu. org](http://www.accu-edu.org).

- [10] Ergin, M. and Alkan, A., 2019. Academic neo-colonialism in writing practices: Geographic markers in three journals from Japan, Turkey and the US. *Geoforum*, 104, pp.259-266.
- [11] Forlin, C., 2010. Developing and implementing quality inclusive education in Hong Kong: Implications for teacher education. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 10, pp.177-184.
- [12] Glenwright, P.D., 2000. *The Hong Kong "culture of learning": origins and effects*. University of Leicester (United Kingdom).
- [13] Lau, C.K., 1997. *Hong Kong's colonial legacy*. Chinese University Press.
- [14] Law, W.S., 2009. *Collaborative colonial power: The making of the Hong Kong Chinese (Vol. 1)*. Hong Kong University Press.
- [15] Lee, J.F. and Li, X., 2020. Cultural representation in English language textbooks: A comparison of textbooks used in mainland China and Hong Kong. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 28(4), pp.605-623.
- [16] Lewis, P. and Rupp, K., 2015. Liberal education in Asia: Trends, challenges, and opportunities. *New Global Studies*, 9(3), pp.245-266.
- [17] Li, L., 2017. Education, culture and politics: the evolution of Chinese education at The University of Hong Kong, 1911–1941. *History of Education*, 46(6), pp.711-729.
- [18] Lin, A.M., 2012. Towards transformation of knowledge and subjectivity in curriculum inquiry: Insights from Chen Kuan-Hsing's "Asia as method". *Curriculum Inquiry*, 42(1), pp.153-178.
- [19] Luk, B.H.K., 1991. Chinese culture in the Hong Kong curriculum: Heritage and colonialism. *Comparative Education Review*, 35(4), pp.650-668.
- [20] Okazaki, S., David, E.J.R. and Abelmann, N., 2008. Colonialism and psychology of culture. *Social and personality psychology compass*, 2(1), pp.90-106.
- [21] Olaniran, B.A. and Agnello, M.F., 2008. Globalisation, educational hegemony, and higher education. *Multicultural Education & Technology Journal*, 2(2), pp.68-86.
- [22] Postiglione, G.A., 2017. The decolonisation of Hong Kong education. In *education and society in Hong Kong* (pp. 3-38). Routledge.
- [23] Pritchard, R., 2011. Re-entry trauma: Asian re-integration after study in the West. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 15(1), pp.93-111.
- [24] Ruan, N., 2021. Accumulating academic freedom for intellectual leadership: Women professors' experiences in Hong Kong. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 53(11), pp.1097-1107.
- [25] Stanton, C.R., 2014. Crossing methodological borders: Decolonising community-based participatory research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(5), pp.573-583.
- [26] Sung, C.C.M., 2022. L2 learning as gendered practices: Chinese female students' English learning experiences at an English-medium university in Hong Kong. *System*, 109, p.102871.
- [27] Sweeting, A. and Vickers, E., 2005. On colonising 'colonialism': The discourses of the history of English in Hong Kong. *World Englishes*, 24(2), pp.113-130.
- [28] Trede, F., Macklin, R. and Bridges, D., 2012. Professional identity development: a review of the higher education literature. *Studies in higher education*, 37(3), pp.365-384.
- [29] Vickers, E. and Kan, F., 2003. The reeducation of Hong Kong: Identity, politics and education in post-colonial Hong Kong. *American Asian Review*, 21(4), pp.179-228.
- [30] Wan, C., 2011. Reforming higher education in Hong Kong towards post-massification: The first decade and challenges ahead. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 33(2), pp.115-129.

- [31] Williams, B.C., Squire, D.D. and Tuitt, F.A. eds., 2021. Plantation politics and campus rebellions: Power, diversity, and the emancipatory struggle in higher education. State University of New York Press.
- [32] Woolman, D.C., 2001. Educational reconstruction and post-colonial curriculum development: A comparative study of four African countries. *International Education Journal*, 2(5), pp.27-46.
- [33] Yang, R., 2006. Transnational higher education in Hong Kong: An analysis. *Transnational higher education in Asia and the Pacific region*, 10, pp.35-58.