

*Teaching human rights and rule of law in class-  
A case study of two secondary schools in Hong Kong*

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Abstract

The writing of this article was supported by the findings obtained from a Quality Education Fund project which aimed at assisting Hong Kong teachers to teach human rights and rule of law as part of Liberal Studies, which is a new senior secondary subject. Choosing 2 schools as a case study, the article reports how teaching approaches can differ and explain how teacher style, school ethos, and student expectation can shape pedagogical choice. Impact of the teaching and the difficulties teachers encountered are also reported. Whilst this article is probably one of the first to explore the issue of human rights and rule of law teaching in Hong Kong, the fact that it is a small case study needs to be noted when generalization is to be made.

## 1. Introduction

The authors took part as researchers in a project that supported Hong Kong teachers in their teaching of human rights and rule of law when the Basic Law<sup>i</sup> was introduced to secondary students. This article reports the different teaching approaches observed and examines the factors behind such pedagogical choices. It further explains the difficulties the teachers encountered and the possible impacts of such teaching.

## 2. The Basic Law Education project

Basic Law, the mini-constitution, spells out the government structure and the rights of the people in Hong Kong...etc. “One Country, Two Systems”, “high degree of autonomy”, and “Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong” are also enshrined in the Basic Law (CAB, 2004). Human rights and the rule of law are emphasized in the Basic Law as they have long been the cornerstone of Hong Kong’s success.

Between 2009 and 2011, a research team of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, comprising the two authors and other faculties, embarked on a university-school partnership project aiming at developing human rights and rule of law education. Eight secondary schools took part in the project. This project, entitled ‘The Basic Law Education Project, was funded by the Quality Education Fund of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government. It provided teachers with the values and knowledge pertaining to the teaching of the Basic Law, the rule of law and human rights. It studied in particular how teaching of the rule of law and human rights can be implemented in class and the educational impacts such teaching can bring.

This project provided school-based curriculum development supports to schools in teaching the subject Liberal Studies, a subject in the new senior secondary curriculum, which was argued by Leung & Lo (2010) as a possible platform for human rights education. Liberal Studies is a compulsory senior secondary subject that requires students to apply analytical skills, use multiple-perspectives, and form own conclusion on issues about human condition in different contexts. It thus cultivates social and civic awareness and value judgment (CDC & HKEAA, 2007). One of the modules entitled “*Hong Kong Today*” talks about the rule of law and people’s right under the aegis of the Basic Law (CDC & HKEAA, 2007).

The research team adopted an approach with an action research flavor (Elliot, 1991) to facilitate the school-based curriculum development. The project team members first identified the strengths, weakness, and needs of the schools through focus group interviews with teachers. Seminars were conducted to facilitate the development of subject and pedagogical knowledge. To avoid top-down curriculum development (Lee 2004:5), the project team encouraged teachers’ incentive and self-decision in the process of school-based curriculum development (Bolstad, 2005). The project team supported the teachers by providing professional advice in lesson planning, useful reference materials, staff development...etc. Lessons were observed by the researchers and post-class in-depth discussions were held with the teachers and students. The discussion about the work out and advantages of action research in teaching is found in the literature (Ferrance, 2000; Stenhouse, 1975).

## 2. Profile of the two schools in this case study

### 2.1 School background

The two schools reported in this study joined the QEF project on a voluntary basis.

They were taken care of by the authors in the project. This allowed the authors to obtain data from the schools through lesson observations and interviews with both teachers and students.

*School A (a pseudo name)*

School A is an aided co-educational secondary school with a good reputation. It was founded by a local charity organization. Academic learning is rigorous and the school also encourages active extra-curricular activities. The school has been offering Integrated Humanities in S1-S3 and this gives the students a foundation, at least in terms of knowledge and concepts, as well as analytical and skills, to study Liberal Studies in senior forms.

*School B (a pseudo name)*

School B is a Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS)<sup>ii</sup> senior secondary school, taking S4-S7 students. As a DSS school, it enjoys more freedoms over management, curriculum, and recruitment of staff and students etc. It has a unique mission to actualize creative education through a school-based curriculum, comprising both multimedia performing arts and academic subjects. The school encourages student participation including enlisting students in school governance. The school ethos is liberal, participatory, and human right-respecting (Leung and Yuen, 2009; Yuen and Leung, 2010).

## 2.2 Teachers

*Teacher X (School A)*

Teacher X, the Liberal Studies co-coordinator. He was selected in this study as he set the tone of teaching in School A. He was selected in this study for comparison purpose. Teacher X is an experienced teacher (in early 40s) with 20 years of experiences in teaching humanities subjects. He was a student union leader when he was studying in the university, and since that time, he has developed a good knowledge of Hong Kong's social and political issues. He is well-recognized in the field and a Liberal Studies teachers association was formed with X as chairperson.

*Teacher Y (School B)*

Only 1 teacher in School B (called Y hereafter) took part in this project. He is young

(in mid 20s), new in the teaching profession, understands current issues well, and has profound knowledge about Hong Kong's society and politics. Y has been a social activist. When the project with the school came to a close in mid 2010, it was known that Y would leave the teaching profession to work for an advocacy NGO that aims at advancing social justice in the society. This can show his social mission.

### 3. Literature about human right and rule of law education

Human rights are exalted to a high status and carry powerful rhetorical force since the 1990s (Chan, 1995). The language of human rights becomes pervasive nowadays, because it pervades civil, political, social, cultural, and economic spheres, in addition to the international humanitarian law (Haas, 2008). Governments in many parts of the world have begun mainstreaming human rights into public administrations. Human rights NGOs have multiplied in numbers, and signals abound that human rights is becoming a profession, a field of academic research, and teaching (Ergas, 2009). University level research centers and schools of human rights that support both research and teaching in human rights can be found in many Western European countries (Coomans, Grunfeld & Kamminga, 2010). Human rights education thus is regarded as a foundation of human rights alongside with international law etc. (Dembour, 2010).

Chan (1995) noted that some Asian countries have developed their own version of attitudes towards human rights, most notably through the Bangkok Declaration in 1993 (Kausikan, 1993). This represented a political debate between particularistic considerations versus the universality of human rights. Basok, Ilcan and Noonan (2006) noted that there is also a contradictory treatment of civil and political rights, on the one hand, and social and economic rights on the other. Social and economic rights that legitimate claims against the control of market forces are either ignored or attacked. In China, while the official citizenship education is tied to discourses of socialism, there were also studies of important empirical studies of localized rights issues in China (Diamant, Lubman & O'Brien, 2005; O'Brien & Li, 2006), which centered on the "rights-defending movement". Taiwan's human rights education is one of the most effective in the Asia-Pacific region. Tang (2010) discussed the common understandings of human rights in Taiwanese social context against Confucian heritages and the universality of human rights.

With regard to education, teaching methods which emphasizes students' construction of knowledge such as issue-based approach and experiential learning are considered effective (Meintjes 1997; Tang, 2006). In Hong Kong, the Education Bureau and the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education of the Home Affairs Bureau are responsible for human rights education in schools and community respectively. Shortly before 1997, the Education Department published new guidelines on civic education which represented an enriched and more complete conception of citizenship. Human rights and rule of law are among the aims of this new framework (Choi, 1999). However, in formal school curriculum, human rights are not taught in their own right but can only be found in discrete topics in subjects such as Integrated Humanities and Liberal Studies. Occasional extra-curricular activities relating to human rights education are provided by NGOs, instead of by teachers. In a nutshell, human rights education has never received serious attention from school civic educators in Hong Kong (Leung, 2008a).

Meanwhile, there has been proliferation of human rights NGOs in the recent decade. Leung (2007) argued that NGOs can help schools to explore human rights education. Research has also revealed that NGOs are effective in helping schools to use experiential learning for the cultivation of democratic citizenship (Finkel, 2003).

Leung (2008a) placed a stringent standard on HRE, demanding the incorporation of international covenants and conventions into the curriculum Whilst Leung (2007) explained that it can be effective only if the Hong Kong SAR government gives strong green light to it, Fok (2001) argued that some of the recommendations on HRE by the Council of Europe in 1985 have already been incorporated into the aims of the educational reform initiated by the Education and Manpower Bureau in early 2000. Against this, Leung (2008b) argued that HRE should be strengthened in Hong Kong's civic education in view of its de facto neglected status. Leung & Yuen (2009) also noted that there is poverty of research in HRE of Hong Kong. This study represents an attempt to explore HRE education by way of a case study that shows contrasting orientations when HRE is implemented in the school context. It is intended to be a contribution to the literature about HRE, especially in the Hong Kong context.

#### 4. Contrasting patterns of teaching observed in the 2 schools

The 2 schools in this case study were chosen based on purposive sampling (Babbie,

2011): the 2 schools studied can give the contrast in teaching approaches the article aims at revealing. The schools were also chosen as a result of convenience sampling as the researchers were responsible for them in the project and this allowed the researchers to develop insights of the teachers' pedagogical choices. The researchers did not jointly observe lessons in the two schools but as such lessons were taped, the recordings allowed the researchers to better understand teaching in both schools when they compared the differential teaching approaches. The two authors held meetings to discuss about the data available to them (interview transcripts, video recordings of classes etc.). This generated the concepts and theories that can be derived, as well as tentative conclusions that can be drawn from the data set.

### Being academic or action- oriented

In School A, Teacher X helped students to make connections among different disciplines and examine issues from a variety of perspectives as spelt out in the Liberal Studies curriculum (CDC & HKEAA, 2007). X opined that students' application of higher order thinking skills in analyzing social and political issues is an imperative in teaching. In line with this belief, X taught analytical skills to the students, and encouraged them to analyze rule of law issues from different perspectives and make their own conclusions. For instance, in discussing the need to enact national security laws, students were asked to reflect from the angles of human rights principles; and differential concerns of the central government and civil society in Hong Kong.

Acquiring relevant knowledge and conceptual construction were emphasized in School A. Intellectual development predominated and the instructional approaches adopted encouraged students to acquire understandings and concepts. Students were asked to classify and differentiate related concepts. For example, students were asked to differentiate between meanings of rule of law. The heavy intellectual tones rendered X a person of authority, an ultimate resort, in the students' journey to tackle concepts and theories. Students acquired basic skills, cultural values and mores in relation to rule of law and human rights that are necessary to function in society. A mechanistic view of human behavior and competency based learning orientation (Miller & Sellar, 1985) was at work whereby student skills were developed through specific instructional strategies. The deliberations and conclusion given by teacher X was crucial to student who became very attentive once the teacher spoke and often promptly jotted down the learning points given by the teacher.

In contrast, Teacher Y in School B adopted a relatively less academic approach. He rolled back the conceptual content of teaching. In a lesson observed about the meaning of rule of law he used a lot of examples and materials just to bring out 4 concepts pertaining to rule of law – having laws to observe; having to follow the laws; having laws to restrain powers; and having law to serve justice, which is borrowed from Tai (2007). Instead, he often emphasized the sharing of personal experience as a social activist, and that perspective as a protestor of course was highly critical. As a young social activist himself, Y was willing to accept different views the students put forward. Y commented on students' answers but didn't try to conclude for them. By being less conceptual and theoretical and concentrating more on action implications of social and political events, Y taught students not as disinterested observers but as potential participants. Interesting questions of a first person nature asked in Teacher Y's class comprised for example: "What would you do if you are stopped by the police in the street for interrogation? Do you think it's against human rights in Hong Kong?" These question didn't come out in Teacher X's class which by comparison was more macro and distant to the students.

### Steering issue-based teaching to different courses

Issue-based teaching (Wells, 2001; CDC & HKEAA, 2007) was used by both teachers in the 2 schools but the reasons and the way it was adopted differed substantially. In School A, Teacher X used issues as a means to help students to build up understanding of various concepts inherent in the human rights and rule of law. On the contrary, when interviewed, Teacher Y explained that issues were used not just to help students grasp the related concepts but also to see the complications in social realities, particularly how social justice is still a long way off. These differential aims also affected how issues and cases were identified.

In both schools, whilst the issues discussed and analyzed in the lessons were not confined to Hong Kong, how cases outside Hong Kong were chosen differed between the two teachers. Teachers X was more concerned about whether the concepts taught could be covered in the cases chosen, and he gave the following account: "I used the cases of death penalty in South Korea and the voting rights of 18 years old Taiwanese to illustrate the concepts of limitation of human rights that are covered in the planned curriculum". Y gave the following interesting account: "I tended to use cases like the dictatorship of North Korea and how human right activities were suppressed in the mainland because they are shocking and can stimulate students' interest, and this forced them to reflect and stay vigilant."

The following quote from a post-class interview with students explained how the strategy of Teacher Y worked out. “Our teacher showed us cases about the abuse of human rights in China and this reminded us that if under the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ arrangement we won’t become like China in terms of human rights, we need to stay alert.

Both teacher X and Y encouraged students to use multiple perspectives and critical thinking skills to analyze the cases involved, including how improvement could be made in controversial cases. The problems relating to the status-quo and unjustified practices were also highlighted. However, in the case of X, such discussion he led was largely from the perspective of an observer/analyst who examined things happening around, on a third person perspective. So questions like “What can be done to improve the situation?” would not be further extended to “If you choose to act, you should...”.

On the other hand Y would, after analyzing the cases with the students, urged the students to think of what action they could personally take in the case. Socially responsible behavior and actions beyond the classroom were encouraged. He would even analyze the implication of the course of action the students said they would take. For instance, in one of the classroom observations, Y talked about the eviction of residents by the government to build a rail depot. For students who said they would join the rally then being organized by the NGOs, Y shared with them the tricks he learned from own experience, like how to cross a cordoned off area, how to determine whether the rally is a legal one, what one should do if approached by the police...etc.

### Common and yet different learning activities

Common teaching and learning activities could be found in both schools and these comprised: case inquiry, dialogic inquiry and the use of video clips analysis. However, subtle difference in actual implementation could be found.

Students in School A are more attuned to regular classroom learning which in Hong Kong’s context is more structured, literal, teacher-directed, and to use the words of Watkins & Biggs (2001), ‘tightly orchestrated teacher-centred teaching’. In showing video clips about how people left to live in a barren land finally worked out rule of law, Teachers X designed worksheets in the form of learning handbook to facilitate students to reflect. Students were asked to write down their own analysis and



judgment. In short, focused thinking and learning activities based on teacher's prescription, alongside with training of report writing, were the aim. This was not seen in School B where students are less academic, much less fond of writing, and much encouraged by the school to be original. Teacher Y, after playing a clip, would normally ask the students to point out what in the clip was worth discussing. Often students could steer the course with their questions which were picked up by the whole class. It was a form of divergent learning and thinking.

Case studies (Hakim, 2000) and dialogic enquiry (Alexander, 2005) were learning activities to allow students to analyze, reflect, and develop their informed judgment over issues. In fact, both teachers were encouraging, acceptive, and open-minded when their students spoke out their views. On the other hand, such judgments could have action implication and in our case whether the teacher would extend students' learning process to beyond the classroom and into real participation seemed to mark the major differences between the 2 teachers. Teacher X trained mainly the thinking capacity of the students and the learning process ended with the lesson. Civic participation and actions were largely not touched upon. However Teacher Y would add an action dimension to the learning process. He took his students (on a voluntary basis) out to join the June Fourth Vigil in memory of those who died in the Tiananmen crackdown. Again, he led some of his students out to join the rally on behalf of residents in Choi Yuen Village against the government's decision to evict the villagers in order to recover the land for rail development.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Factors affecting the teachers' pedagogical choice

Based on the researchers' observation, the following factors have been identified.

#### Teacher style

Teacher X in school A could best be described as a teacher of civic education. He worked assiduously to enhance the civic qualities of the students comprising civic awareness and understanding of political issues etc. On the other hand, the flavor of a traditional teacher (being theoretical and enlightening rather than action-based) could be discerned. What the teacher emphasized was encouraging students to acquire knowledge. He also emphasized good class order, calm discussion, rational

deliberations, and teacher's leadership role.

The way X conducted his class actually mirrored his style as a teacher. The emphasis on knowledge favored an academic approach and rendered the use of issue inquiry and other methods of instruction a vehicle, or simply a means, to convey knowledge. Teacher X in an interview admitted: "Students lack the basic knowledge about the concepts, and a teacher's role becomes important in getting them ready for study". Since knowledge can be acquired in a disinterested and objective manner, then the action implication arising from the examination of issues became less relevant. Social actions often are based on the sense of commitment which by itself is a form of subjectivity. The academic approach also supported the leadership role of the teacher as his rich conceptual knowledge made him hard to challenge.

On the other hand, Teacher Y, a man in the mid 20s, took up a first-among-the-equals style in front of the students. His students addressed him as "Big Brother" in class and authority was not emphasized. Y deliberately played down position and authority by being friendly and by allowing students to express themselves, as far as the points are relevant, even in emotional ways.

Y said in an interview after class: "They take me as a big brother... The good point of having such close relationship is that they are willing to speak up in my class."

In his teaching, Y drew a lot from his own experience as a social activist, sharing stories he himself encountered instead of just content from the text or articles, and often with a first-person perspective with an emotional flavor. Neutrality of the teachers has long been a contentious issue in the teaching of political issues (Yuen & Leung, 2009). When asked whether he contradicted the neutrality a teacher normally takes up, he said: "I have a clear stance. I think that pretending to be neutral when you are not is actually a conservative move. You only need to present both sides of the argument to the students."

A match existed between the style of Y and the way he taught. Y admitted that he is a social activist trying to fight for social justice. His teaching was geared towards awakening students to injustice and preparing students to improve the society, not just by being knowledgeable, but also by resorting to social participation. Hence his teaching, as pointed out earlier, transcended the knowledge/analysis dimension into the action preparation/practical dimension. He was willing to lead the students to join various social activities and learn from the process of participation.

### School ethos

School A exhibits a school ethos which emphasizes intellectual, academic, and personal developments, as well as achievements in extra-curricular activities. As for the students' performances in subjects, it emphasizes academic pursuit, language competencies, public examination results and critical thinking abilities. Learning in subject is mostly 'content-driven' in School A, and in this project, core knowledge and understandings about rule of law and human rights are seen as passed on from teacher to the students. An authoritative teacher fits well with the school ethos. With such an emphasis on knowledge, the study mode prevalent in School A is direct learning from teachers rather than learning through peers. Worksheets and learning handbooks were actually means by which the teacher, a "fountain of knowledge" in the case, directed student learning.

In fact, School B actually supports a right-respecting ethos with vocal and participating students. An authoritative teacher is a misfit in such an environment. A more conventional approach towards case study, say with worksheet to focus student attention to certain pre-conceived points may not dovetail with the encouragement the school gives to the students to practice creative and divergent thinking. It is actually atypical for a grammar school like School X to employ someone like Teacher Y who is a young and critical social activist without much teaching experience to teach at senior level. Trying to promote participatory citizenship is actually a brave attempt for a Hong Kong school as Hong Kong education is characterized by utilitarianism and concern for public examination preparations. The Principal of School B explained: "Students should have knowledge and passion for the society, and they should be well informed and actively participating. They should know their rights, responsibilities, and how to make things better."

What in fact we need to emphasize is that the vision of the school leaders may affect school ethos and subsequently the choice of teacher, which is what finally matters in terms of pedagogical decisions.

### Student expectation

Student expectation definitely needs to be catered for. A principal can't run the school and a teacher can't teach just considering their own preference. That Hong Kong's

students are attuned to teacher-centered class and that the preparation for public examination requires conceptual training are well reported in the literature (Education Commission, 2000: 2.5). Teacher X talked about his teaching philosophy as “concept clarification”, and that his style of teaching as “informative and enlightening”, and that his lesson worked because of “a habit of guiding his students to think in-depth and systematically enable them to think thoroughly”.

This relatively teacher-directed learning mode was appreciated by the students. The following excerpts are relevant:

“We have learnt about rule of law for a certain period, and I am happy to learn more about rule of law, democracy and human rights in Hong Kong.”

“When we cannot think of any definition in the examination, we can recall the classroom discussion about issues and then we can come up with the definitions. So, his teaching benefits us in examinations.”

The last excerpt reported above has also vividly illustrated the importance of public examination in the mind of the students.

It remains to be answered why students in school B can be atypical and this is where we now turn.

School B aims at producing cultural activists. It is an unconventional school which empowers students by giving them freedom and rights of participation. Against this the participation approach Teacher Y adopted made sense. Teacher Y explained: “Some of the students are by nature very active and they came here mainly because they couldn’t put up with the conservative ethos of the mainstream schools.”

In a post-class interview with students of School B, it was found that the students are interested only if they can see the relevance of the issue to their lives and they are ready to act out when it is required. This can be seen in the following quotes:

“I think the discussion of universal suffrage and functional constituencies etc may be useful because I can see it in the newspaper and I know the discussion is on-going in the society.”

“I think action counts more and we should not just sit in the classroom and listen.”

“When I perceive human rights in Hong Kong to be declining and we are more and more like the mainland, I shall act out; say by taking to the street.”

## 5.2 Difficulties confronting the teachers

Table 1 below captured the problems the 2 teachers recalled when interviewed after teaching human rights and rule of law curriculum.

Table 1: Problems reported in teaching human rights and rule of law by Teachers X & Y

<u>Teacher X of School A</u>	<u>Teacher Y of School B</u>
<p>1. Students lacked the conceptualization skills needed to respond quickly to the real-life examples and the inherent issues to be discussed.</p> <p>2. Student lacked knowledge of remote rule of law related events in Hong Kong, thus making it difficult to guide them to go over the concepts whilst such latest events were hard to find.</p> <p>3. There were not much suitable teaching materials around about rule of law.</p>	<p>1. Time allowed for the teaching was too short for meaningful discussion and learning.</p> <p>2. Students held their beliefs often without good reasons behind and their beliefs could be shaken easily.</p> <p>3. Students were exposed to biased views of mass media and politicians and became one-sided in their judgment. They also lacked the habit of thinking from multiple perspectives.</p>

A comparison of the problems the 2 teachers expressed once again revealed the differential concerns of the 2 teachers. Teacher X, being more academically oriented, was concerned predominantly with whether there were suitable teaching materials and whether students had the conceptual skills and knowledge base to perform their

analytical tasks. Issues were not studied for their own sake and even less for social actions but as vehicle to convey knowledge. This helps explain why the use of past issues (which could be of little relevance for immediate social action) was emphasized. Teacher Y of School B, on the other hand, was more concerned about whether the students could arrive at a well-informed view point from multiple-perspectives that they can stay firm with. These of course are qualities required of a social activist.

### 5.3 Impact of teaching

Based on our observation and post-teaching interviews with students, we understand that teaching of human rights and rule of law had brought about differential impacts in the 2 schools.

After going through the learning process, students in School A expressed that they:

- gained in terms of knowledge about rule of law and human rights; and understood the institutions and arrangement in support of them
- developed critical thinking skills for inquiry, evaluation and communication purposes
- were able to apply their critical thinking on media reports and perform information and perspectives analyses
- were able to put forward their arguments, form their judgments, and elaborate on the issues discussed

After going through the learning process, students in School B expressed that they:

- became more alert to current issues
- became more critical to possible bias in pro-government media reporting
- developed a sense of crisis and felt a need to follow issues relating to human rights and rule of law in Hong Kong
- became more aware of human rights problems in the mainland and developed concern about the “One Country, Two Systems” as a way to protect existing way of life, including freedom.
- started to participate in different social movement activities

Teacher Y used a lot of examples of human right violation etc. to illustrate human

rights and rule of law concepts. Does it necessarily lead to a feeling of alienation of the students toward China, their mother country? This was not necessarily the case. Most students could make a difference between the country and the government/ruling party and understand that drawback should be attributed to the latter. For example, a student gave the following account: “We should know China is not the same as The Communist Party of China”. What resulted instead was an increased willingness to stay vigil against the possible erosion of human rights and rule of law in Hong Kong. This is a learning outcome of applying critical thinking and participatory pedagogies.

## 6. Conclusion

Our study has shown teachers can take grossly different approaches in teaching human rights and rule of law. One of the schools (School A) in our study emphasizes knowledge deepening and conceptual understanding whilst another school (School B) has developed students’ participatory attitudes and inclination. Different factors, comprising at least teacher style, school ethos, and student expectation as found in this study, are at work in determining the teachers’ final pedagogical choice. The factors, as discussed earlier, are captured in diagram 1 below.

The three factors, namely teacher style, school ethos, and student expectation, should not be taken as totally independent of one another. Though more researches are needed to ascertain the actual relationship, it can be observed from our study that the three factors can reinforce one another to generate a greater impact on pedagogical choice. A liberal school ethos for example can attract students who aspire after freedom to study in the school and allows a social activist teacher to take up the teaching job. At the end, the style of the teacher matches well with the inclination of the students and things work out.

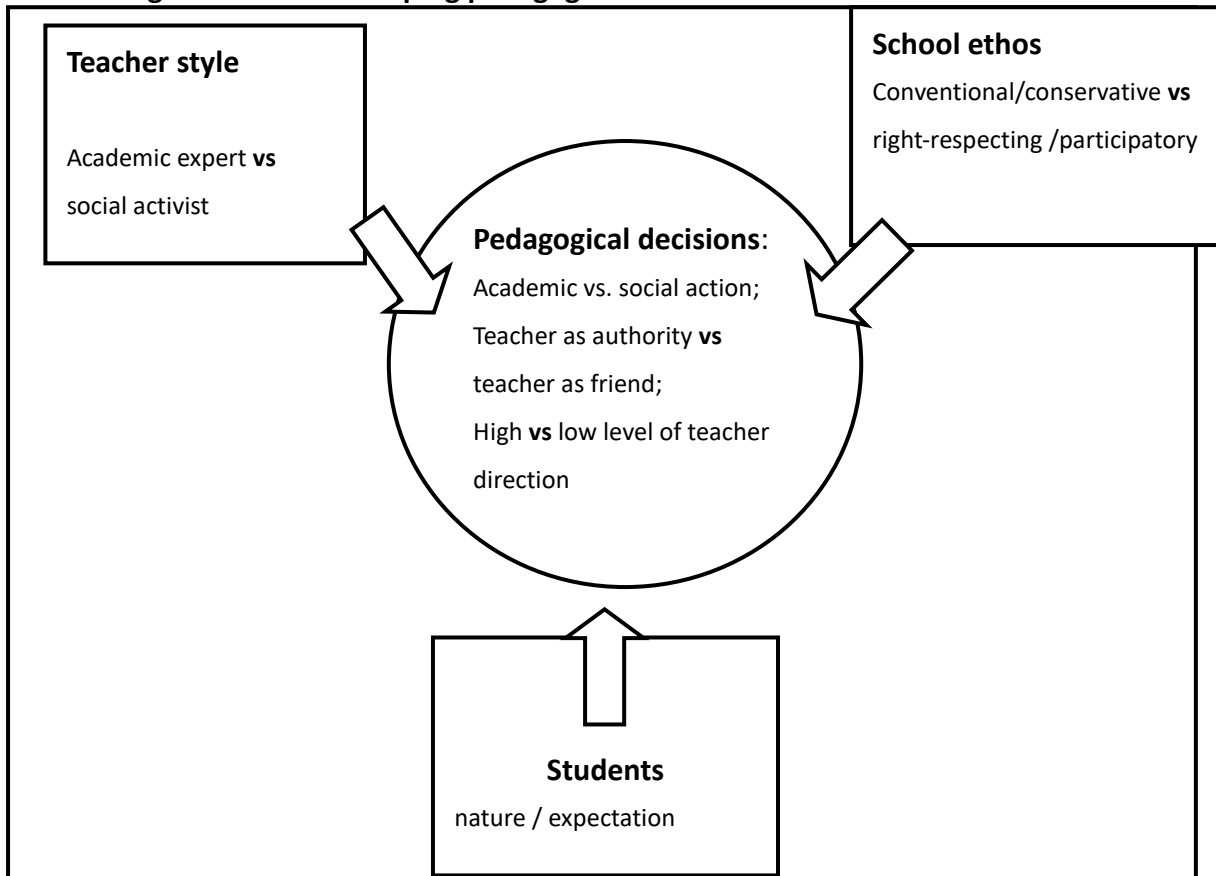
Different teaching approaches also lead to different impacts on the students. While students in school A exhibits orientation of knowledge and conceptualizations development about rule of law and human rights, and that they can contribute to group classroom discussions and even debates, students in School B exhibits orientation of social participation and responsible action in relation to rule of law and human rights. The different problems the teachers reported actually reflected the different student qualities their differential teaching approaches required of their students. Interestingly, in terms of teaching human rights and rule of law, our study

shows that a teaching approach aiming at knowledge and examination may not lead to active participation. On the other hand, teaching for the sake of participation may require a supporting school ethos, socially active teachers, as well as students who are participatory.

All in all, this study suggests that teaching of human rights and rule of law should not be understood in vacuum as the actual practices and impacts will be shaped by a number of mediating factors. Thus, whilst educators call for human rights to be included in the curriculum, they should also reflect on the aims of such teaching and whether such aims can be achieved when teaching is implemented. A clear study of the context and the mediating factors will be most needed before the curriculum reform is to be carried out.



**Diagram 1: Factors shaping pedagogical decision**



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<sup>i</sup> The Basic Law of Hong Kong was promulgated in 1990 by the President of the People's Republic of China. It spells out in its chapters and annexes arrangements with regard to: relations between Hong Kong and the central government; fundamental rights and duties of the residents; political structure; economy; education, science, culture, sports, religion, labor and social services; external affairs; interpretation and amendment of the Basic Law etc.

<sup>ii</sup> Direct Subsidy Scheme allows participating schools to receive government aids and tuition fees from students at the same time and promises greater flexibility in school management.