

Master of Philosophy
In
Comparative and International Education

**Mechanism of entry into the “golden
rice-bowl” position: a comparative analysis of
school-to-work transition under the civil servant
recruitment systems in mainland China and Hong
Kong**

By

Shelley Yuting Zhang



Institute for Educational Research

Faculty of Education

University of Oslo

August 2014

Mechanism of entry into the “golden rice-bowl” position

A comparative analysis of school-to-work transition under the civil servant recruitment systems in mainland China and Hong Kong

Shelley Yuting Zhang



Mastergradsavhandling ved det Utdanningsvitenskapelige

Fakultet

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Høsten 2014

© Shelley Yuting Zhang

2014

Mechanism of entry into the “golden rice-bowl” position: a comparative analysis of school-to-work transition under the civil servant recruitment systems in mainland China and Hong Kong

Shelley Yuting Zhang

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

Making the best use or taking the best advantage from knowledge and skills gained through education at the work place is one of the most important measures of the success of school-to-work transition process, particularly in the fast growing emerging countries like China, where education has been paid greater attention year by year both economically and politically. In China, students begin a long-term battle from the day they step into the school gate (or even way before that as the current tendency shows) until they finally get an “ideal” job, which in Chinese is called as a “golden rice-bowl position”, ensuring the stability of one’s career. And working as civil servant, as being such a position has gained dramatically more popularity these years, causing the so-called “civil servant fever”, not only in mainland China, but also in Hong Kong. Looking at what kind of people with what kind of education and experience can successfully transform themselves into this gold rush is extremely meaningful and of public interest. After all, the global goal of education is to make individuals suitable to live in society and equipped with the survival skills to the most possible extent.

Using the human capital theory, conflict theory and modernisation theory of education, this study analysed the major characteristics of successful candidates in the national civil servant examinations in both mainland China and Hong Kong, namely China under two different educational systems. In further steps we can find out what kind of people are capable to hold this golden rice bowl and how his/her educational background has played a role in this career determination. Problems continue to exist in both the educational systems and school-to-work transition process in Chinese society and these are also indicated during the study when the effectiveness of the exam is evaluated. The study applies a comparative design using a mixed method where the qualitative method takes a major position. The exam content of each region is quantitatively evaluated and individual interviews are held respectively among successful candidates. Nine individuals from each region who have taken and succeeded in the national civil servant examination were involved in the study. Furthermore, one representative of the officials in education from each region was also chosen as interviewee to express ideas from a different perspective. Data collection was based on the quantitative analysis and interview results.

The findings and results in this study indicate that the interview groups in the two regions reveal society-specific factors that demonstrate their motivations in applying for a civil service position. The comparative analysis found out that Hong Kong, with a better established apprenticeship system has a significantly longer transition time (namely, from school to the civil service position) than mainland China, but the whole school-to-work transition process in Hong Kong is much smoother than that in mainland China, with regard to the fact that university students in Hong Kong can usually find a full-time job quickly after leaving school. In both mainland China and Hong Kong candidates need to go through at least two exam stages including both written part and the job interview. And in both regions the rise of wage of civil servants is comparatively slow compared to other careers, showing the stability and inflexibility of this career. The research results indicate that the quality of higher education, especially in terms of how well a university is ranked, is highly valued in

mainland China. Whilst in Hong Kong, civil service employers tend to favour candidates with good social and communication abilities. Mainland China emphasises greatly on the written test result while Hong Kong only requires solid and basic competence in the content of written part. The differences of examination content show a range of different social values and national context in these two regions. A series of factors also indicate that the economic performance as a result of educational investment is stronger in Stage 4 country (mainland China) than Stage 5 country (Hong Kong) based on the modernisation theory.

Acknowledgements

I really appreciate all the help and support I have received from my family in China who were willing to participate as assistants in this study and helped me arrange the time of interviews so that I could most of the time, just began the interview without being bothered of having to go through the headachy process of contacting and negotiating with the interviewees. At the same time, I owe of course many thanks to all participants in this study including interviewees, friends, information providers and some relatives, for the completion of this study. Also, most importantly, I appreciate so much of the patient guidance of my supervisor, Mrs. Lihong HUANG who has acted as a helpful and rigorous standard in my thesis writing. She has been a source of support, encouragement, motivation and driving force when I came across adversity in writing and thinking. My gratitude also goes to our senior executive officer in the CIE programme, Camilla Bakke, who was always there giving us handy guidance and support when we were unsure about something in the final stage of this programme.

As mentioned, I am really grateful to my family especially my mother, Mrs. Hongying Chen, for her involvement and help as a contact person and her company and encouragement throughout the data collection process especially when I travelled back to China in December 2013, and she even travelled with me during the Chinese New Year's period to Yunnan Province in Southern China, a place which is more than 1000 miles from our hometown. There she helped me a lot in my daily life and offered me economic support. My sincere gratitude also goes to Miss Lorraine Cheung who really offered me lots of useful information and introduced to me many valuable contacts in Hong Kong. It really took her a lot of time as well and she even helped me get in touch with Patrick Kan Moon Ho who used to work in the education section of the Hong Kong government and has extensive knowledge of the educational system in Hong Kong, who I also owe much gratefulness to. Anyway, I must thank everyone who either participated, helped out or replied to my email in this study. Without them I could never have made any single step in this study.

Special thanks to my old friend in Hong Kong, Dilefy Chung, who was the first person after my mother to say yes to my request of being my helper to search for “interviewable individuals” and also found a suitable contact for me within just three days. I really thank her for her kindness and sweet friendship. Thanks to my faculty, my teachers and everyone who have been involved including those who were also writing their thesis during the period, for their passionate support and company.

Shelley Yuting Zhang

Autumn 2014

Oslo

Contents

Abstract	V
Acknowledgments.....	VIII
Contents	XI
List of Figures	XIII
List of Tables	XIII
List of Map	XIII
List of Acronyms.....	XIV
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.1.1 Theme and Initiation.....	1
1.1.2 Autonomy of System.....	5
1.2 Purpose of Study	6
1.3 Research Questions	7
1.4 Issues and Limitations of the Study	7
Chapter Two: Theories and Literature Review	9
2.1 Theories	9
2.1.1 The Human Capital Theory.....	9
2.1.2 The Modernisation Theory	10
2.1.3 The Conflict Theory.....	10
2.2 Analytical Framework	11
2.2.1 Term “School-to-Work” Transition	11
2.2.2 The Origin of Framework/Previous Application.....	12
2.2.3 Structure and Dimensions	14
2.2.4 Explanations of Each Dimension of the Framework	15
2.2.4.1 The National Context Dimension.....	15
2.2.4.2 The Nature of Examination System’s Dimension.....	16
2.2.4.3 The Structure of School-to-Work Transition Dimension.....	16
2.2.4.4 The Outcome of Transition Dimension.....	17
2.3 Literature Review.....	17
2.3.1 Issues in School-to-Work Transition.....	17
2.3.1.1 General Capabilities Students Gain From University.....	17
2.3.1.2 Major Challenges/Problems Faced by Higher Education Systems in Mainland China and Hong Kong.....	20
2.3.2 Other Literatures about Systems.....	22
2.3.2.1 Systems and Societies.....	22
2.3.2.2 Career Development Literature in Mainland and Hong Kong.....	22
2.3.3 Some School-to-Work Transition Patterns in Shanghai and Hong Kong.....	23
2.3.3.1 Shanghai.....	23
2.3.3.2 Hong Kong.....	24
2.4 Summary	25
Chapter Three: Methodology and Data	26
3.1 Mixed Research Strategy	26
3.1.1 Quantitative Method.....	27
3.1.2 Qualitative Method.....	28
3.2 Research Site	28
3.3 Semi-Structured Individual Interviews.....	30

3.4 Participants	32
3.5 Method of Data Analysis	33
3.6 Summary	35
Chapter Four: Data Analysis (Quantitative): Civil Servant Recruiting System	36
4.1 Part I	36
4.1.1 Written Test in Mainland China	37
4.1.2 Written Test in Hong Kong	40
4.2 Part II.....	42
4.2.1 Top 10 Positions in Mainland China.....	43
4.2.2 Top 10 Positions in Hong Kong.....	43
4.3 Summary	44
Chapter Five: Interview.....	46
5.1 Individual Interview in Mainland China	46
5.2 Individual Interview in Hong Kong	51
5.3 Comparative Analysis.....	55
Chapter Six: Discussion.....	57
6.1 National Context in mainland China and Hong Kong: One Country, Two Systems....	57
6.1.1 Labour Market Structure.....	57
6.1.2 Wage-Setting Mechanism.....	59
6.1.3 Policy-Making Framework.....	59
6.1.4 A Productive Population.....	60
6.2 Nature of Examination System: A Selective Mechanism.....	61
6.2.1 Social Dimension.....	62
6.2.2 Cultural Dimension.....	62
6.2.3 Political Dimension.....	64
6.2.4 The Society as a Competition Entity.....	65
6.3 Structure of School-Work Transition: A Process of Modernisation.....	66
6.3.1 Apprentice System.....	66
6.3.2 Job Searching Procedure.....	68
6.3.3 School-to-Work Transition Process as Modernisation Process.....	69
6.4 Outcome of Transition: Educational Output.....	70
6.4.1 Outcome at Macro Level.....	70
6.4.2 Outcome at Micro Level.....	70
6.5 Summary of Discussion.....	71
Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....	74
References.....	77
Appendices.....	82
Appendix 1: Quantitative Analysing Tables.....	82
Appendix 2: Interview Guide (Semi-Structural).....	92
Appendix 3: Participant Profiles.....	95
Appendix 4: Letter of Consent: NSD.....	98

List of Figures

Figure 1: Elements and Dimensions of Analytical Framework	15
Figure 2: Analysis Figure of Exam Paper in Mainland China.....	38
Figure 3: Analysis Figure of Exam Paper in Hong Kong.....	41

List of Tables

Table 1: Elements and Purposes of Each Interview Question.....	31
Table 2: Quantitative Analysis Table.....	34
Table A1: Participant Profile of Mainland China	95
Table A2: Participant Profile of Hong Kong.....	96
Table A3: Examination Paper Analysis: Mainland China.....	82
Table A4: Examination Paper Analysis: Hong Kong.....	86
Table A5: Assisting Table (Mainland China).....	87
Table A6: Assisting Table (Hong Kong).....	87
Table A7: Top 10 Popular Civil Service Positions in Mainland China (2009~2013).....	89
Table A8: Top 10 Popular Civil Service Positions in Hong Kong (2009~2013).....	90

List of Maps

Map 1: Research Sites on the Map of China.....	29
------------------------------------------------	----

List of Acronyms

BLT.....	Basic Law Test
CRE.....	Common Recruitment Examination
CUHK.....	Chinese University of Hong Kong
Dali.....	Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture (full name)
EDB.....	Education Bureau
Gaokao.....	The National College Entrance Examination
Gongwuyuan.....	Civil Servant
HKEAA.....	Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
HKFYG.....	Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups
HKSAR.....	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Keju.....	The Imperial Civil Service Examination System
San Gai.....	New Territories
SAR.....	Special Administrative Region
<i>Sheng</i>	Provinces
STW.....	School-to-Work
<i>Zhixiashi</i>	Direct-Controlled Municipalities
<i>Zizhiqu</i>	Autonomous Regions

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Theme and Initiation

This research looks into the integration and transition of young people from higher education into the labour market of public service (also known as civil service) in mainland China and Hong Kong. China and Hong Kong, which are heavily influenced by the traditional Confucian value, share a lot of similarities in culture, but somehow differ significantly in terms of social systems and policies. As a consequence, they have their own unique education systems and laws, and different admission systems concerning how to recruit young people to the labour market. In both mainland China and Hong Kong, when recruiting people in the public sector, for example, a government department or government agency, they use an examination system to test the candidates' qualities and abilities. And this is the so-called public servant (or civil servant) examination system. The ultimate goal of education should be to equip students with the right skills for employability, and thus to boost growth and competitiveness, which can determine productivity for a country (COM, 2012). When students graduate from university with a degree, they would check out whether they are qualified for their ideal job. If they still lack the skills they need, they would choose to either gain them through further education, relevant work experience, or professional training. Or some may get their ideal job immediately in job seeking. This school to work transition is what this study's focus is on.

For thousands of years Chinese society has been focusing quite much on examinations and has been relying significantly much on the examination systems in almost all areas of society including school entrance, employment and even kindergarten admission. The reason is due to that it is the general public's belief that examination is the fairest way for a complicated society like China where people from different ethnic, cultural, religious, social and economic backgrounds need to compete with each other and that the number is usually extremely huge. Examination does to some extent offer better opportunities to people from poor families and

remote areas as they are set in a comparably equal position with others who are “better off”, but it on the other hand contains some obvious drawbacks. For example, there is a saying always quoted in China, “People are alive, and examination is dead”. Lacking flexibility and involving great contingency are always criticised about on placing examination as an assessing tool both in school and at workplace.

Everyone knows the importance of Gaokao (the National College Entrance Examination) in China, which not only determines the level and quality of the university a student will be going, but to a large extent determines the future job of him/her as higher education is highly valued among employers. This is traditionally how the general public think. In recent years however, there is a tendency that employers would like to test the students on paper before they face their potential employees in person, yet the formal qualification is still considered as a precondition in the process. These positions are usually considered as distinguished positions that many people chase after, among which the civil service area is an outstanding one, bringing about the “Gongwuyuan (civil servant) Heat” in the last decade. Many say that this examination system shows some reflection of the traditional Keju (the Imperial Civil Service Examination) system from feudal China, and just like the latter, in order to achieve success in it, education is the key (Lagasse, 2012). So this paper will focus on how higher education will help one to enter a really good career by analysing how people succeed in the selection process of the national civil servant examination in China (mainland and Hong Kong as comparison).

The current civil service system was put into use in 1993, and has since then attracted drastically increasing attention year by year. Yet the motivations behind this heat are rarely reported in China. But how different they are compared to motivations of people who search jobs in the private sectors is really thought-provoking as there are obvious weaknesses associated with civil service positions including lower average salaries (than many private companies). A recent survey shows that the reasons why people choose to compete in the civil servant examination can include one’s special willingness to contribute to community, strong desire to help others (public service spirit), better job stability, better job security and welfare system, higher prestige and social status, etc. (Ko & Lu, 2013).

As said, in China, the civil servant profession is considered as a “golden rice-bowl”, and tens of thousands of young people from all over the country attend the public servant examination

every year to make an attempt to touch its edge (*The Economist*, 2012). One major reason why I became interested in this topic is that the current civil service examination system seems in fact like a descendant of the ancient imperial examination system which has influenced the traditional education of China for thousands of years. To recruit people into a stable government job, China still follows its tradition and adopts an examination system as a measure tool, which sheds light on the Chinese education system and the judgment of individual merit in the Chinese context. Another reason of interest is due to the overheated participation of young people, mostly young university graduates in the civil service examination, which has made huge social and economic impact on the country. For example, the number of people sitting in the exam has created a thriving training industry where test-takers take extra training before they sit in the exam. In 2013, more than 1.5 million people (mostly university graduates) entered in the exam to compete for 20,000 job positions, which has seized my attention (*South China Morning Post*, 2013). And I became very keen to know what kind of people with what kind of education or training background can win over in this white-hot battle, and I believe it is also of public interest and one of the most catching topics talked about in today's Chinese society.

According to previous research (van der Velden & Wolders, 2003; Breen, 2005), employment opportunities of labour market entrants have a lot to do with employment protection legislation that protects employment position and vocational specificity. Provided that the profession as civil servant in China is stable and well protected by regulation, it is not surprising that such positions attract much attention and trigger competition. Who wins the competition depends on the demand of society in terms of what specific skills of candidates are desired, namely, vocational specificity (Kogan & Unt, 2008). I would then focus on the vocational specificity of education system into more detail in order to find out the school-to-work transition process in the civil service career in China.

On the other hand, Hong Kong, as a completely different society in terms of political system and legislation, has also experienced a heat in participation of the Hong Kong civil service examination. This examination has been exclusively reserved for Hong Kong residents and

held annually since 1997 according to the Basic Law. In addition, in order to fulfil the greater needs of Hong Kong citizens who are more globally mobile, the Hong Kong CRE (Common Recruitment Examination) and BLT (Basic Law Test) tests are the first hurdle of the process and are also held overseas in selected locations for Hong Kong citizens who reside overseas. The emphasis on testing civil servant candidates' knowledge of the Basic Law indicates the local government's effort in making sure that citizens are well aware of the legal status and function of Hong Kong as a special administrative region of the People's Republic China. So this is an interesting point to explore further, by looking into how this is implemented in Hong Kong's education system and everyday teaching.

But how different are mainland China and Hong Kong on the big picture? The important differences that are relevant to my study here lie in the autonomy of educational systems (for example, how centralised curricula are) and education content.

The initial interest was to see through the civil servant heat in two different Chinese societies. I was keen to know the key elements leading to the differences. They could be due to the degree of flexibility of exam system, the degree of society liberty, or something else that is largely influencing this type of school-to-work transition process. Later on a lot of interesting differences were found in the interviews about how the school-to-work transition works for the civil service in the two distinctive "Chinese" political and social economic systems. Interviews about personal experiences are very important because they describe the detailed process of entering the career.

One argument which is often heard about in China today is that those who successfully beat hundreds or even thousands of competitors and got civil servant jobs are not actually so "smart" and well educated at all as people think, and that they are just exam machines (Erie, 2009). Some even say that it does not make a big difference whether you graduated from a prestigious university or not as higher education does not help much in the civil service examination system, and that all one needs to do is to go through exhaustive exam training and get used to the question patterns. This study which targets on connecting the educational

backgrounds and some personal characteristics with successful Gongwuyuan exam candidates can thus clarify the reality behind such statements.

1.1.2 Autonomy of System

Both mainland China and Hong Kong have gone through a series of educational reforms (mainly curriculum reforms) during the last two decades. And under the “One country, two policies” principle, Hong Kong has remained a lot of its original systems whilst emerging with mainland in many ways since unification in 1997 when the two sides reached an agreement of “Hong Kong self-rule”.

Under this arrangement, China resumed its sovereignty over Hong Kong, but Hong Kong remained a separate jurisdiction, governed by a “Basic law” and enjoying autonomy in all areas except military defence and diplomatic relations. As a Special administrative region of china (SAR), Hong Kong maintains an independent legislature, with a distinct currency and policies of its own, independent from the national government in Beijing. In the realm of education, for example, Hong Kong maintains its own system of education under an education Bureau (EDB) which reports only to the Hong Kong government and Hong Kong taxpayers, without direct relations with the ministry of education in Beijing. Meanwhile, Hong Kong is free to engage in bilateral relations with other jurisdictions and assume membership in other international organisations for finance, commercial, education, culture and so forth. Hong Kong’s education system has been and remains quite distinct from that of the rest of china, with a unique history, structure and reform trajectory. (OECD, 2010, p. 98)

Neither mainland China nor Hong Kong has a national curriculum used in the higher education stage. But the education content in Hong Kong’s higher education is comparatively more autonomous whilst the education content in China is more uniformly governed, either provincially, regionally, or centrally governed. Universities in Hong Kong have high degree of autonomy, and they pay large attention to academic freedom. Every university has status as legal person based on Hong Kong law. The university ordinance basically establishes the fundamental framework of the university and empowers the university to set up detailed administrative rules (Liang, 2008). The same thing is identified in the civil service examination. The recruiting system of civil servants is more flexible as candidates can apply for a position the government has announced all the year round after passing the CRE and BLT examinations (which are held twice a year), as long as there are available positions (Li, 2013). On the other hand, in mainland China, the recruitment of civil servants is usually held only once a year, and candidates usually cannot apply for a position out of the predetermined recruiting period of the year. But besides the national civil servant examination, there are also provincial civil servant examinations which are held independently of each region during the year with regard to provincial positions for the local government (Bensen, 2013).

The job in the public service field is considered as a high-quality job as a result of its well established welfare and legal systems and employment protection legislation. As well, the civil service examination in mainland China covers a much broader areas including mathematics, statistics, laws, and culture and gives the part of current politics great value, indicating that the Chinese government seeks employees that have better general skills and are politically dynamic. While in the Hong Kong exam, the inclusion of English test indicates the higher degree of globalisation of Hong Kong society, matching its bilingual education goal and Hong Kong's continual motivation of being a fusion point of the Western and Eastern values.

1.2 Purpose of Study

First of all, by analysing the civil servant exam content and comparing it to the content of higher education, the research is trying to find out how the examination system of civil servants in both mainland China and Hong Kong serves as a selection tool for the government positions. China and Hong Kong have different education systems, so the content of exam differs as well, which reflects eventually the requirements of the qualification of a potential government employee under a certain social-economic context.

Secondly, the purpose of this study is to find out the influence of higher education, and study will try to find out people with what kind of higher education are most likely to become civil servants so as to encourage future candidates to become like them. Specifically speaking, it is to find out how the learning content and quality of higher education affects young people's chances to get a position in the public service area in mainland China and Hong Kong.

Finally, by comparing and analysing both civil servant examinations and the higher education systems in two distinctive "Chinese" political-economic systems I am trying to find out the school-to-work transition path for this special type of profession. The study will focus on the link between the education system (in this paper, mainly on higher education) and civil servant admission system, which finally reflects how a country's institutional arrangement

(market regulation, education and training systems) enables a student (or young worker) to enter the civil service labour market.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the general purpose stated above, there are three research questions embedded in this study. And these three questions will be realised by using a mixed research method consisting of quantitative and qualitative parts, and the detailed approach targeting each research question will be explained in Chapter 3: Methodology and Data.

- First, how do the civil service recruiting systems differ in mainland China and Hong Kong?
- Second, how does higher education contributes to a person's success in entry into the civil service profession?
- Third, how does the school-to-work transition process which transfers students into stable jobs differs in mainland China and Hong Kong?

1.4 Issues and Limitations of the Study

In this study, one precondition is that mainland China and Hong Kong are comparable despite some outstanding discrepancies (e.g. population). This precondition is assumed to be tenable.

This biggest limitation in this study lies in the qualitative research part. Due to the shortage of finance, time and covered research aspects, the number of interviewees taken is really limited, which may to some extent, affect the accuracy and stringency of the result even though the

research process tries to cover various groups of people standing in different situations. Yet people are way more various than the classification and subjective categorisation can cover. Contacts chosen are random and can be of unique situations which make them unable to represent their belonging groups. Also, how people treat the exam and connect their own experiences with the result are very personal and can be somehow very subjective.

On the other hand, China is a vast country, both in terms of the geographical size and the total population, as well as diversity of ethnic groups. This study only chose three cities in Yunnan Province (southern province with 46 million population, representing remote and ethnically diverse rural regions) and three cities in Zhejiang Province (south-eastern coastal province with 55 million's population, representing economically developed urban areas) as research sites based in mainland China. Yet in mainland China there are 23 *sheng* (provinces), 5 *zizhiqu* (autonomous regions) and *zhixiashi* (direct-controlled municipalities). Given the limited time span, the study was unable to be expanded further to wider areas.

This chapter has talked about the background, initiation and basic information about the different education and civil servant examination systems in mainland China and Hong Kong. Finally it has pointed out some limitations of this study. Chapter Two will mainly introduce the relevant theories and an analytical framework to be used throughout the study. It is thus divided into three main sections, namely, theories, introduction of analytical framework based upon theories, and literature reviews.

Chapter Two: Theories and Literature Review

This chapter introduces relevant theories and an analytical framework to be used to help the analysis of the study. Theories will firstly be discussed, and then an analytical framework will be introduced based upon theories. Finally, some previous literatures will be reviewed to help support the structure of the research.

2.1 Theories

2.1.1 The Human Capital Theory

The human capital theory, which also reflects "direct and functional relationship" between education and development as the modernisation theory does (Kubow & Fossum, 2007, p. 41), holds the view that an educated population is a productive population, which can be achieved through investments in education that enhances skills and productive abilities of workers (Agbo, 2005). It "focuses on the productive capacity of humans in the development process, treating improvement of the workforce as a form of capital investment", and thus claims that "education contributes to economic development by increasing the productive capacity of human beings" (Kubow & Fossum, 2007, p. 44).

In 1776, Adam Smith (1952) opened up the field of human capital theory by claiming that the useful and productive labour determines the wealth of a nation. A successful application of the human capital theory has been witnessed in East Asia where countries and regions such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea have achieved significant economic growth while making large investments in education (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008). An expansion in higher education and rapid enrolment growth in China have greatly increased labour supply in the market, and the human capital theory can help explain the qualifications needed for a defined occupation in the labour market (Levin & Xu, 2006). Critiques on this theory

are mainly about the difficulty to measure development and the fact that raising education levels leads to disparate income levels (Kubow & Fossum, 2007).

2.1.2 The Modernisation Theory

Modernisation is "a social-psychological process through which a country becomes modern only after its population has adopted modern attitudes, values and beliefs" (Kubow & Fossum, 2007, p. 44), and this theory originated in the 1960s mainly from David McClelland (1961) who, in an attempt to address the differences between societies in social and technological advancement, observed the link between advancement and the need for achievement, stressing on the importance of acquisition of modern values. It suggests that "education contributes to economic development through socialisation promoting student acceptance of the existing economic system. Work-related attitudes, values, behaviours, and beliefs are necessary elements for the participation in that system" (Kubow & Fossum, 2007, p. 44).

Historically, modernisation theory is always used to address the social, economic and political progress of Western Europe and North American societies from the 17th century to the 19th (Armer & Katsillis, 2000). As it serves as a theoretical basis to describe processes of transformation from underdeveloped societies to modern societies, it can be a very good benchmark to explain the social changes in China which has experienced tremendous economic progress within decades. According to Rostow (1960), there are five stages of development, namely, traditional society stage (Stage 1), economic growth (Stage 2), Take off (Stage 3), drive to maturity (Stage 4), and high mass consumption (Stage 5). Based upon the industrial development status, China is entering stage 4 while Hong Kong is in stage 5 (Li & Hung, 2013). There are nonetheless limitations associated with this theory in terms of its Western heritage and inadequacy to explain how modern attitudes alone can sow the seeds for change (Kubow & Fossum, 2007).

2.1.3 The Conflict Theory

The conflict theory is in most cases, standing from the macro-sociological theoretical perspective, used to illustrate how power acts as the core in all kinds of social relationships. It sees society as a competition entity where people negotiate at the distribution of power, resources and inequality in their daily life. It focuses on competition over scarce resources in society, and claims that stratification is harmful when the powerful are better off at the expense of the poor.

Such theory was initially derived from Karl Marx, further developed by C. Wright Mills who tried to use conflict between differing interests to illustrate social structures as he believed that society is a dynamic entity constantly undergoing change driven by class conflict (Anderson & Taylor, 2009). Conflicts exist in any kind of relationship as long as inequality exists. The conflict theory can thus well answer questions like “who benefits from the current civil service examination system in mainland China/Hong Kong?”, or “who are considered as elites in this kind of competition?” in this study. One weakness usually associated with the conflict theory is that it is said being good at explaining social change, but bad at explaining social stability.

2.2 Analytical Framework

2.2.1 Term “School-to-Work Transition”

In defining “school-to-work transition” which is associated with a lot of change, waiting and uncertainty, this study follows the approach adopted by Ryan (2000), which referred to “school-to-work transaction” (the route from schooling to employment) as long and perilous instead of being short and direct as typical in previous generations, considering that the waiting time between graduation (usually of compulsory schooling or sometimes of higher education) and employment which has become many times longer than it was one or two decades ago. According to Ryan, the school-to-work agenda embraces many long-standing

issues such as schooling and vocational training. And these transition-oriented activities are elements that will be taken into consideration in this study. For example, work-based learning in college education will be analysed. However, despite the variety of transition categories recognised and provided in Ryan's research, the definition of "school-to-work transition" in this paper will be constructed more narrowly considering the limitation of length and focus.

2.2.2 The Origin of Framework / Previous Application

The analytical framework for this paper is initiated from and based on Hannan, Raffe and Smyth (1996) in their cross-national research on school to work transitions, where they used four general dimensions as their conceptual framework, namely, the national context; the nature of examination system in each country/region and its interconnection with the civil service labour market; the state policies influencing these processes; the structure of the school to work transition process itself; and the outcomes of the transition process – "success" and "failure" in transitions, and variations among groups of young people in the outcomes achieved. Their research used numerous reviews of previous similar studies and finally has set up a well-established conceptual framework for analysing cross-national variations in school to work transitions.

In their research, an attempt in analysing the school-to-work transition in numerous countries was made by listing out factors that may affect this process and putting them into four major categories, namely, the four major dimensions mentioned above. They also divided each dimension into very fractional and very detailed aspects. For example, the main dimensions of national context are considered in perspectives of demographic factors, the production system, labour market structures, the economic cycle, policy-making framework, and wage-setting mechanisms. In this way, the focus of studying the school-to-work transition is extended from a relatively narrow range of countries (namely some core developed countries) to a wider range of countries in the world including some so-called "peripheral" countries without making generalised conclusions on them as a result of excessive emphasis upon and influence from the "core" countries. And based on such categorisation which covers various

differences in “national logics”, they could thus “best illustrate the utility of the conceptual framework by systematically combining a number of these dimensions to create a typology of education/training (ET) and labour market (LM) systems” (p. 13). In a word, this conceptual framework sets a good example and systematic guidance in my cross-national comparison trying to illustrate one type of school-to-work transition.

In my research, an analytical framework containing four dimensions will be used for this cross-national (SAR Hong Kong and mainland China) research, namely, the national context; the nature of examination system in each country/region and its interconnection with the labour market; the structure of school-to-work transition; and the outcomes of such transition.

Such framework was formulated because in any cross-national analysis, the national context and issues at the policy level are crucial to look into. The same applies to the nature of examination system in that certain national context. Human capital theory explains to what extent the wealth of nation is contributed by labour qualities. Next, the structure of school-to-work transition is important to answer the third research question. Here modernisation theory can help as it looks at issues from the perspective of advancement, and the school-to-work transition can be viewed as a progress.

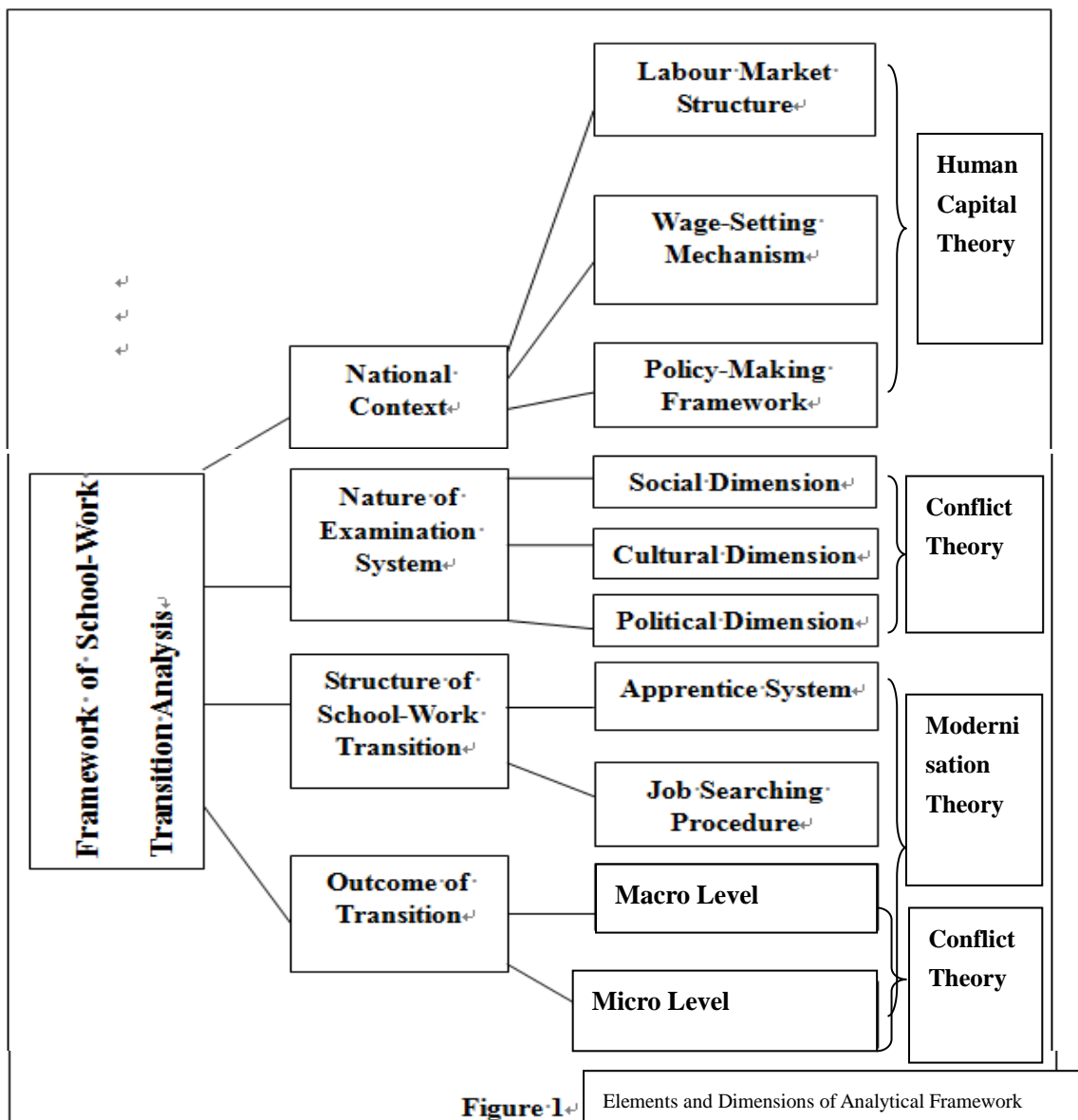
Finally, the dimension “outcome of transition” is put here because it can serve as a good measure (e.g. how students learn in university and enter workforce successfully) in comparison of different systems, and it is a key element to answering research question No.2 and No.3. Researches regarding the theme of school-to-work (STW) transition usually see this problem from six major perspectives, namely, formation of self-efficacy and outcome beliefs, interest development, interest-goal linkages, translation of goals into actions, performance skills, negotiation of transition supports and barriers (Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 1999). However, all these perspectives, both relating to the students’ ability, students’ psychological status, and the political and economic environment, are related to their academic achievement, i.e. what they have learnt in college.

Conflict theory helps to explain as students are from different social origins and “any nationally set up equalising programmes cannot remedy the prevailing inequalities of the society as a whole” (Coleman Report, 1966, as cited in Gouvias, 1998). Also, modernisation theory is helpful in analysing this dimension because it will see this outcome as a result of adopting modern attitudes, i.e. what the gain is throughout the transition process and the how beneficial (modern) the “fruit” is. Figure 1 presents each element of the analytical framework stated above.

2.2.3 Structure and Dimensions

Figure 1 shows the analytical framework developed and explained above, which was structured and influenced by Hannan, Ratte & Smyth (1996). The analytical framework is very crucial to and plays a theoretical guidance for the study because this study is majorly deductive and the process of analysis follows each step indicated in the framework. Based on the general framework, each conception is thereafter divided into smaller elements. Detailed explanation of each element of each dimension is made as follows.

The national context dimension is divided into three factors: labour market structures, wage-setting mechanisms, and policy-making framework. The nature of examination system is divided into social, cultural and political factors (Dave & Hill 1974). The structure of school-to-work transition dimension is divided into apprentice system and job searching procedure aspects. The outcome of transition will be explored through two aspects, namely academics-driven and experience driven outcomes. The first two dimensions were developed based on Ratte, Hannan and Smyth (1996)’s literature which discusses on similar issues, while the last two dimensions were majorly developed into details based on insights gained through the field work. For example, with regard to the fourth dimension “outcome of school-to-work transition”, as the interviewees were divided into three groups based on how many times they tried to sit in the examination and their work experience.



So here the water-shed is the factor which (university education or work experience, or some extra factors) has played a more important role and how important it is to help the person to achieve good outcomes in job searching.

2.2.4 Explanations of Each Dimension of the Framework

2.2.4.1 The National Context Dimension

According to Hannan, Raffe, and Smyth (1996), the impact of national context on the success of transition outcome is significant. National context refers to the specific situations, policies, cultures, environment, etc. of a certain country/region (here applying as two regions to mainland China and Hong Kong). In some studies, “differences in the national context are effectively ‘bracketed off’ in assessing youth transition outcomes” (p. 9). The three elements

listed above, namely, labour market structures, wage-setting mechanisms, and policy-making frameworks are considered very likely to lead to the education/training system according to their study conclusion.

2.2.4.2 The Nature of Examination System's Dimension

The nature of an examination system can be to measure the ability of people and put them into different levels (e.g. the College Entrance Examination System as a university selection tool), or to set a passing line to determine if a certain groups of people hold basic capabilities as required (e.g. the Driving Licence Examination System), or to figure out qualities and abilities of people in a more or less quantitative way so that the most suitable ones are selected (e.g. the Civil Service Examination System as both a qualification measure and elite selection tool). In word, different examination systems have different natures which suite their purposes covering social, cultural and political dimensions as this paper intends to discuss on.

2.2.4.3 The Structure of School-To-Work Transition Dimension

The structure of school-to-work transition refers to the process of the whole transition covering “the length of transition; the number and type of stages involved; the range and nature of options available on leaving school; the extent to which the education/training system facilitates flexibility in movement between statuses; the degree of demarcation between different statuses” depending on the different “regulations” in different areas (Hannan, Raffe, & Smyth, 1996, p. 5). This structure can also relate to many other transitions in one's life including leaving home, starting a loan, marriage, etc., which can affect the outcome of the transition. A certain type of apprentice system or something similar of a society and the complexity of job searching procedures can greatly influence the process of transition. This process can be extremely individualised or highly structured, and mainland China and Hong Kong will be set for comparison at this touchstone.

2.2.4.4 The Outcome of Transition Dimension

The outcome of transition can be examined at both the macro and the micro levels. And this research will thus explore the transition outcomes at both the macro level and at the micro level. The outcome at the macro level concentrates on the relationship between educational output and aggregate economic performance, especially how higher education/training promotes economic growth and meets skill needs. Whilst at the micro level, outcome can be viewed in many economic terms, such as "employment versus unemployment", "occupational status", "job satisfaction", "wages and wage growth", "matching between ET characteristics and occupational status", etc. (Hannan, Smyth & Raffe, 1996, p. 6)

2.3 Literature Review

2.3.1 Issues in School-To-Work Transition

This part will start with discussing about the general capabilities students gain from higher education in the two regions, followed by literatures talking about major challenges/problems faced by higher education in these two systems. And then, it will explore the career development literature to link the two stages (school and work).

2.3.1.1 General Capabilities Students Gain From University

In general, the goal of Chinese higher education is really to cultivate talents featuring an all-round development in morality, intelligence, physique and art and transfer them into society.

As mentioned above, in order to find out what students can learn at university, an extensive reading on the two higher educational systems is necessary. Regarding the mainland part, in the article of Guo (2002) he talked about the general educational ideas and goals in the

Chinese higher educational system based on his analysis of the content of higher education courses and the Chinese tradition embodied in the comprehensive education.

There are four major categories of courses at centrally-governed Chinese universities. The first category is public foundation courses which are compulsory for all college students regardless of their majors and specifications, including for example university computer fundamentals, Marxist Leninist principles, and military training, aiming at equipping students with the basic skills and abilities that are required to enter Chinese society. The second category is professional basic courses which are set as the most fundamental basic courses for professional learning of certain subjects. For instance, the professional basic courses of the history major include theory of history, Chinese history, and world history. The third category is specialised courses which are designed exclusively for a certain major or specification, aimed at professional training. For example, in order to be a history teacher, a student needs to take courses in pedagogic theory and pedagogic training in history from this category. The fourth category is called public elective courses, which means courses that every student is welcome to choose according to their interest. They cover a wide range of areas including for example, literature, language, etiquette, professional self-image, cosmetology, etc. These courses are designed to satisfy students' various demand of self-development as well as to enrich their academic life in a humanistic way.

China has been putting a lot of financial, technological and human resources in education reforms during the last two decades. And the result is remarkable. According to Times university ranking, in 2013, two Chinese universities stood among the top 20 in Asia. And China takes two places in the world top 50 universities (*Times Higher Education*, 2013). It is already a huge progress, as ten years ago, no Chinese universities could be found among the world's top 100.

In Hong Kong, the situation is however, somewhat different. There are eleven universities/colleges in Hong Kong, among which eight are comprehensive centrally governed universities. Higher education in Hong Kong carries on the British education

systems and has been growing rapidly in the past few years. Many universities in Hong Kong have become among world's top levels. A ranking made by *Times (Times Higher Education 2013)* shows that among the top 20 universities in Asia, 4 are from Hong Kong, and that two of them are among world's best 100. This is just a proof of how powerful higher education is functioning in a geographically tiny region Hong Kong. And it is thus not surprising to find how big the variety and richness is in the courses that are offered in every single university in Hong Kong.

Take the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) as an example (CUHK, 2011), except for the courses in the medical science and nursing majors, all courses at the undergraduate level adopt a flexible credit system like the mainland nowadays does. A student needs to fulfil at least 99 credits in order to graduate, including a compulsory 2 credits for physical education, 15 credits for liberal education, and some hard-and-fast rules for Chinese language education, elective courses and supplementary courses. And of course, students also need to complete all required major courses (can be compared to the third category courses of the mainland), and the credits for major courses can vary from 59 to 72. Besides these obligations, students can make advantage of this credit system flexibly to make their own study plans. As stated as the Educational General Purpose of CUHK, the goal of setting liberal courses is to offer balanced education, focusing on the deepness and richness of courses. The major courses help students get a deeper and thorough understanding of the major area so as to reach a certain academic level, while the liberal courses aim at helping them broaden their horizons and developing their abilities of abstract thought and integrative thinking, and at the same time letting them have a wider understanding of subjects that fall outside of major areas. The focus of physical education is to actually develop students' idea of group work and team spirit, and to illustrate the meaning of fair competition. Besides, Hong Kong is known as a place that emphasises on bilingual education (Chinese and English), as well as information technology capability. Since the 1999-2000 academic year, every student has to pass the IT Proficiency Test in their first year. And in order to help students become equipped with such ability, CUHK offers extensive training, advanced equipment and updated information for all students. And CUHK is especially paying attention to that students can master Chinese well

(both Mandarin and Cantonese). In summary, higher education in Hong Kong emphasises not only on academic development, but also largely on teamwork development, social adaption development, language ability and cultivation of social consciousness. (CUHK, 2008)

2.3.1.2 Major Challenges/Problems Faced by Higher Education Systems in Mainland China and Hong Kong

The above literatures have given us some characteristics of higher education content in the two educational systems. Throughout my reading, I have also found out the following literatures which uncover some challenges in the educational systems in these two regions, which are important to keep in mind.

Guo (2002) points out that through his research, a series of drawbacks of the courses offered in Chinese universities are found. First, all most all courses in the four categories tend to be talking broadly and academically in generalities. For example, among the courses offered by humanities and social science studies there are few courses that have the content of leading the guide reading of Chinese and foreign classical literature; whilst in liberal arts courses in many Western top-ranking universities, they usually go through and read over and over again the best-known classical masterpieces and ruminate the connotation of originality. So the remarkable difference is that courses offered in Chinese universities usually stop at a shallower level, making the final cultivation discounted.

The second shortage, as mentioned by Guo (2002) is that the educational ideas of modern universities tend to be overstressing utilitarian utility. Based on the Chinese national conditions, this is nothing abnormal as the whole country is keen on economic development. So is the university. With the catchword of serving the national economy, universities can certainly do a good job in terms of bearing a certain part of social responsibility, but on the other hand, the Chinese higher education has wasted a lot of originally not-so-rich educational resources by over relating education to political and economic purposes and treating education as an industry.

Also, an infection of “cult of gold-worship” in the campus culture has led to degeneration of ethical values in Chinese universities. A lack of humanistic quality is becoming more and more obvious in the Chinese higher education. Education should however, not be limited to this extent. The German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte said that education is first of all to nurture people, not to first look at its practicability, or to spread knowledge and skills, but indeed should start at awakening students’ strength, developing their initiative, inductive learning ability and understanding, so that they are able to make meaningful self-decisions in unforeseen future situations. It still takes some time for the Chinese higher education to reach this depth.

Besides, in the case of Hong Kong, a niche targeting material will be used as important reference, which is written by Choi (1999) who points out that the education system in Hong Kong is also exam-driven despite its seemingly flexible and colourful content. He has included OECD review and interviews of parents and students in Hong Kong talking about the public examination system, and how situation has changed year by year. This can then serve as reference when discussing the rationale of the current Hong Kong civil service examination. OECD has pointed out that in a Hong Kong child’s lifetime, he or she has to go through as many as eight significant sets of examinations beyond the diagnostic classroom assessment. Since the day he or she enters kindergarten, he or she begins the first examination, and they have to be challenged in coming from the previous stage to the next.

A fear in this examination-oriented education is that what is examined becomes what is taught (Choi, 1999). Same thing has also stayed unsolved in mainland China for years. And it is also reported that in Hong Kong, students sometimes even stop the teachers from teaching content which is not included in the syllabus (i.e. which shall not be tested). And this kind of academic culture continues after the handover of Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) to China in 1997 as the HKEAA (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority) is remained. This phenomenon is especially dangerous in higher education level where the original goal of Hong Kong higher education is actually made to focus on flexibility and creativity (Choi, 1999).

2.3.2 Other Literatures about Systems

2.3.2.1 Systems and Societies

Another major source to use is the paper written by Bray & Qin (2001), which explores education in the Greater China area by comparing similarities and differences in the four societies (including Macau) in this area. Different values and cultural characteristics are also discussed in this article, which can help lay a solid foundation in my paper. Also, in order to understand the relationship between the education system and civil service examination well, I need to understand how the concept of exam is rooted in the Chinese culture. The Book “*the Chinese Imperial Examination System*” written by Wang (2013) will be referred to as it talks a lot about the inner relationship between civil examination and social mobility & stratification in Chinese society.

2.3.2.2 Career Development Literature in Mainland and Hong Kong

From the extant literature, there are some that are highly related to this topic and the research process. The article of Quintini, Martin & Martin (2007) studying the school-to-work transition process in OECD countries is a good guiding literature. In this article, they indicate that initial education is often not adequate enough to access good careers, and young people usually have to take temporary jobs to well adapt to labour market requirements. Difficulty faced by youth and extra training they sometimes have to take are all discussed in this paper, which will be relevant in my discussion.

Similarly, the article of Wolbers (2007) talking about the integration of young people into the labour market is an important reference. In Wolbers’ study, he adopted a quantitative method to analyse and compare the young people’s speed of entering a first significant job and labour market entry patterns in 11 European countries where level of education turned out to be the major influencing variable. Many other cross-national differences were also considered and embedded in his model, to compare one country with another. In his research, the graphical

result shows that in countries with highly regulated labour markets, people's entry of their first significant job is relatively delayed, because there employers are restricted to dismissed redundant workers. And its central idea about the relationship between national institutional differences and labour market entry patterns serves as the initial enlightenment of my study.

2.3.3 Some School-to-Work Transition Patterns in Shanghai and Hong Kong

2.3.3.1 Shanghai

Taking Shanghai as an example, as the biggest and most modern city in China, Shanghai acts as a mirror of the latest trend of educational reform and social change in China. There has also been extensive research in this city regarding educational, political and economic development. An article talking about the current school-to-work transition in Shanghai (NCEE, 2010) sheds light on some parts of the transition process and pattern, and is worth considering.

In China, students can choose to go for vocational education around the age of 15 after graduating from junior secondary school. The system was developed and has become more and more standardised in order to support China's economy. After a series of reforms, it has become very popular among secondary school students. With the increasing access to university, the proportion of secondary vocational students out of junior secondary school graduates has also at the same time, increased from 19% to 45.3% between 1980 and 2001. And the most remarkable thing is that the statistics shows that more than 95% graduates from vocational schools could find jobs whilst the number of university graduates falls somewhere between 70% and 94% (NCEE, 2010). An extensive focus on pre-employment training involved in vocational education can be a major reason behind this result, indicating potential directions for university education to reach a smoother school-to-work transition.

In the Chinese education system, universities actually also offer many formal and informal pathways for lifelong learning. And of course there are also other organisations that are

engaged in this but lifelong learning is actually the general overall goal of education in China, which aims at increasing its engagement in adult education so as to cover as many groups of people as possible. Due to this kind of activity, China's illiteracy rate has fallen from 80% to about 8% between 1949 and 2000 (NCEE, 2010). In Shanghai, adult education is especially various and extensive, and usually it has venues in universities and colleges and also cooperation with them. And such programs provided for all ages of students coming from a variety of social-economic backgrounds get subsidies from the government. Students can even earn associate degrees from such institutions where job-focused training is targeted. The rise of vocational and lifelong learning matches the Chinese tradition where there is a saying, "It is never too old to learn".

2.3.3.2 Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, however, a recent research shows that more than 59.1% students and 45.4% employees think that in order to get an ideal job in Hong Kong, one has to at least get a bachelor's degree, reflecting high expectation of pursuing education among young people in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (HKFYG) has suggested the government to take the problem of insufficient provision of university degrees seriously (2006).

In the same survey conducted by HKFYG, they found out that among all interviewed students, 32.1% expressed their interest in finding a job in government sectors. The conditions of considering applying for a job lies in high salary (61.0%), interest in the career (38.6%), and chance of promotion (19.4%). In addition, 33.4% of interviewed students expressed their consideration of seeking a career in the mainland.

Still, the education level is closely related to the transition process as the result shows in HKFYG (2006)'s survey. More than half of the interviewees holding a high school leaving certificate said that they did not have confidence to find a significant job. Also, more than 70% of them claimed that they had never thought about how to make preparation for their future

career. This indicates that although many high school graduates have some expectation about jobs, they are weak in ambitions to put their career dreams into practice.

In Hong Kong, society of knowledge economy, when youths transit themselves from school to work, it is very probable that after working for a period of time, they will return to study, and then again transit back to work. It is therefore very important for Hong Kong society to provide young people with a good school-to-work transition mechanism and chances of continuing education, so that they can gain qualifications and experiences during transitions. And this is what the SAR government is already doing and improving (HKFYG, 2006).

2.4 Summary

This chapter has illustrated the main theories (human capital theory, modernisation theory and conflict theory) that act as the theoretical structure of this research, built up an analytical framework based on previous researches (see Figure 1), and listed some of the important literatures on educational systems and career development in mainland China and Hong Kong, including the analysis of school-to-work transition pattern without higher education degrees in mainland China and Hong Kong. The result shows that vocational training builds up confidence for high school leavers in China, but needs improving to transit more high school leavers to significant jobs in Hong Kong. These literatures also act as supporting material for this research. In the next chapter I will introduce the methods (methodology) and data collecting procedures of this research.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Data

This study adopts a mixed research method combining quantitative and qualitative parts through the research in order to analyse the school-to-work transition process in mainland China and Hong Kong in the area of civil service. The quantitative part is utilised to analyse the content of the examination system, whilst the qualitative part aims at exploring personal experiences of taking the civil service examination. The detailed research design, data collection method, research site and participants will be introduced and discussed in this chapter.

3.1 Mixed Research Strategy

A mixed research strategy combines both a quantitative approach and a qualitative approach, though the time of mixing them usually varies according to different needs. A mixed research strategy is favoured in my study because “in applied social sciences, evaluators and researchers are often confronted by complex and multiplex social phenomena that are not easily amenable to single frame probing” (Lisle, 2011, p. 89). On the other hand, there are some doubts associated with this strategy, which are stated as difficulty of representing lived experiences through text and numbers, problem of “integration to the multiplicative and additive threats that result from combining methods”, and problem of trustworthiness of inferences (p. 109).

This study uses a mixed research method combining both quantitative and qualitative aspects because it adds to the richness and completeness of the study. And the adoption of such methodology was decided during the field work. The mixing of the quantitative and qualitative aspects was made at the interpretation stage. As referred to Bryman (2012) as “Concurrent QUAN+qual”, both the quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted almost concurrently because they do not interfere with each other. But in reality, the

quantitative process was actually finished earlier because it took longer time to find the right time to complete all the interviews and transcriptions for the qualitative data analysis. Initially the plan was to prioritise the quantitative method because a huge amount of information could actually be gathered through analysing examination papers and examination results that can easily be transferred into numbers. However, through the field work experience, it was found that personal experiences that can hardly be accessed by solely using quantitative method are so inspiring and really contribute to the answering of the research questions especially the second one. So the results are mixed.

3.1.1 Quantitative Method

The quantitative research method is a strategy entailing the collection of numerical data, adopting deductive procedure, starting from a theory and ending up with numerous findings. It is also described as an objectivist conception of social reality (Bryman, 2012). This approach collects numerical data and transfers them into meaningful indicators. This is a very straightforward strategy and many researchers believe that it can yield an unbiased result that can be generalised to some larger populations, and is very often used to verify if hypotheses are true. In this research which is conducted in limited locations but at the same time aims at promoting conclusions to a larger area (situations in mainland China and Hong Kong), the quantitative strategy is a very helpful and objective tool. In the quantitative part of this paper, exam papers issued from the civil service examination systems of mainland China and Hong Kong will be analysed quantitatively, which contains a large amount of data which cannot express their voices directly, but need to be transferred to some understandable terms. The detailed design will be introduced in section 4.2.

Nevertheless, there are also obvious drawbacks associated with quantitative strategy. For instance, many qualitative researchers would argue that the quantitative method fails to distinguish people and the social world from the world of nature, that it lacks humanity (Bryman, 2012). Also, the accuracy and precision of the measurement process is doubt as only key terms of a question can be answered in a quantitative questionnaire. Also the connection of

such research with people's everyday life is unclear. Therefore, a qualitative part is added to enrich the reliability of this research in this paper.

3.1.2 Qualitative Method

Qualitative strategy is on the contrary, an inductive portrayal of the relationship between theory and the research, starting from general research questions, all the way leading to the final highly specific findings. In this study, qualitative method will also be used because personal experience is highly valued. Then such adoption would help researchers to "see through the eyes of the people being studied" (Bryman, 2012, p. 399). In this way, a comparative in-depth understanding of personal experiences and a higher degree of research flexibility can be reached which can hardly be grasped in any quantitative researches. After all, the main purpose is to analyse the link between school and work which is partly based on personal stories and feedback. Qualitative strategy is very important in help with language-based approaches like discourse analysis and conversation analysis which this paper will be using. The focus is on the detailed context and process, and massive description will be made.

Without exception, there are also some major drawbacks associated with qualitative method. It is claimed to be too subjective and impressionistic because the judgement of what is significant and what is less significant is up to researchers' unsystematic view, and the relationship between researchers and people getting interviewed can play an influential role on the result. In addition, because of its unstructured nature, qualitative findings are almost impossible to replicate. The problem of generalisation and lack of transparency which make the conclusions not directly visible also exist.

3.2 Research Site

The research sites are based in mainland China and Hong Kong on the big image (detailed cities as described below with the map). Mandarin (mainland China), Cantonese (Hong Kong)

and English (Hong Kong) are used as communicating and written languages during the process. In Hong Kong, the location is most of the time restricted in the University Library of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) located in the New Territories (San Gai) in Hong Kong. Participants were invited to sit down in the open area on the ground floor to go through the semi-structured interviews, beginning from a casual chat. The time of interview was between 17 o'clock and 19 o'clock when participants have finished their daily work. The process lasted for about half an hour.

The following picture (Map 1) shows the geographical locations of the chosen research sites on the map of the People's Republic of China.



In mainland China, Hangzhou and Wenzhou in Zhejiang Province along south-eastern coast and Kunming and Dali in Yunnan Province of inland China are chosen as research sites. Hangzhou is a city with six million urban residents and is economically and socially developed with high life standards, representing the wealthy and socially stable coastal cities. Wenzhou is

also an important business city in Zhejiang Province, 300 kilometres to the south of capital city Hangzhou, on the boarder of Fujian Province. This originally mountainous city is now well known as the cradle of businessmen and has developed drastically in the last few decades. It is meanwhile a multinational region where the gap between the rich and poor is huge. Kunming is the capital city of Yunnan Province. It was chosen because it is the only megacity in Yunnan Province which is one of the largest provinces in China with inhabitants of more than 25 ethnic groups. It is an area which is relatively underdeveloped but the Kunming city presents somehow a modern picture of this vast area with fascinating natural wonders. In contrast, Dali (full name: Dali Bai Autonomous prefecture) is just a small city which is much less modern, where the dominant ethnic group is Bai, representing underdeveloped areas in South China in this research. The interviews were conducted at the houses of participants based on appointments. Interview time was around 18 o'clock after they came back home from work. The interview duration lasted for about 30 minutes for each.

3.3 Semi-structured Individual Interviews

Interview guide is attached in Appendix 2. The first research question cannot be easily answered only by adopting the result of the quantitative approach because university education is not only about curricula. Individual interviews will thus also be added as supplementary. Data will be collected through interview transcriptions. Interviewees will be asked about their review of their own experience through higher education which they think has helped them through civil servant admission. Several contacts that live in China and Hong Kong will be used as gatekeepers to gain interview possibility from contacts they offer. The participants for interviews will be based on the condition that they experienced and passed the Civil Service Examination (those who finally got the job) in their country/region.

Data from the qualitative method, usually include massive unstructured textual materials, and need comprehensive coding which grasps the key points of answers from the interviewees and groups them into a series of pre-set categories which are relevant to the interview questions stated in Appendix 2. The interview guide consists of 9 to 11 questions where each question

can be grouped into a certain category concerning different factors listed as follows (**Table 1**):

Table 1: Elements and Purposes of Each Interview Question

Factor Interview Question Interviewee Group	Motivation of Taking Exam	Academic Function of University Education	Other aid for examination	Other Functions of University Education	Interview Strategy	Role of Work Experience
a	1 & 2	3 & 4	5 & 9	6 & 7	8	
b	1 & 2	3 & 4	6 & 10	7 & 8	9	5
c	1 & 2 & 3	4 & 5	7 & 11	8 & 9	10	6

In this way, answers from interviewees will be analysed, summarised and grouped to fit into each of the above factors so that correspond interview questions which are closely related to the research questions will be answered.

In a word, the key point of a mixed method is to integrate two types of data. “One means by which qualitative and quantitative data can be integrated during analysis is to transform one data type into the other to allow for statistical or thematic analysis of both data types together” (Caracelli & Greene, 2010, p. 197). This research aims at discovering something narrative and phenomenal so it is a bit difficult to transform all qualitative data into numerical data. Hence, the decision is made on to transfer quantitative data into more or less narrative qualitative data ready for pattern analysis.

The interview questions were listed trying to answer the big research questions. Take Group A as example, Questions 3, 4, 6 and 7 focus on finding answers for the second research question, while Questions 5, 8 and 9 are related to the entry process of the career, aiming at finding answers for the third research question.

3.4 Participants

The contacts of interviewees were generally gained through snowball sampling, by reference of one interviewee to another. The process follows that for each country/region, there are nine interviewees. And it is a purposive sampling and such nine interviewees are divided into three categories, each consisting of three people. The first category represents students who have got the civil servant position immediately after graduation through exam. The second category represents people who have got the civil servant position after several years of professional work. And the third category represents people who got the job but have taken the exam multiple times (they can tell about the difference between each trial).

And in this process, I got a contact who used to work in the Department of Education in Hong Kong and is professional and authority on the examination and education systems of Hong Kong. I decided to interview him and included his opinions and experiences into the study although he has already retired and did not qualify as a “former candidate” of the Hong Kong CRE (Common Recruitment Exam). But a lot of valuable information was gathered as a result and it was really a bonus for my research. Further contacts were introduced by him as well. As a result, in addition, one representative of the officials in education from each region was also chosen as to express ideas from a different perspective. Therefore that is, ten participants representing each region in this individual interview session. Also, in my plan, after transcribing, all the conversations need to be translated into English as Chinese (Mandarin in mainland and Cantonese in Hong Kong) was set as the interview language. However, there were some interviews in Hong Kong that were conducted in English (it is not an uncommon thing for Hong Kong people to use both languages in daily life in today’s Hong Kong), with some mixture of Chinese words, so the process of translation has been eased a lot. The profiles of participants in the two regions are presented in Table A1 (mainland China) and Table A2 (Hong Kong) in Appendix 3 (real names not shown).

Category 1: students who have got the civil servant position immediately after graduation through exam

Category 2: people who have got the civil servant position after several years of professional work (but have only taken the exam once)

Category 3: people who got the job but have taken the exam multiple times

Category 4: representative of the officials in the local educational section

As mentioned earlier, sampling in mainland China is also snowball sampling. The sampling process began with a civil servant who works in Zhejiang Provincial Family Planning Commission where my mother also works. Through this participant, two other qualified participants were introduced to me. The participant in Wenzhou was obtained through a casual visit to a local church. I have a relative whose family has lived in Dali, Yunnan for more than 20 years, and he himself used to be a local policeman in Dali Public Security Bureau before retiring. He introduced several qualified civil servants who work for the security bureau and a local police academy to me and I selected 3 of them. Through further snowball sampling, two contacts in Kunming, Yunnan were obtained. My father used to be a civil servant and has frequent contacts with people from educational departments and hospitals because of the special nature of his job. The contact with the education expert speaking on behalf of the authority was gained through him. Among 9 participants of mainland China (excluding the representative of official) (see Table A1), 8 are males and only 1 is female. It seems that among all participants, males are more motivated than females in applying for a civil service job, at least in areas mentioned in this research (security bureau, railways bureau, health department, etc.). The average age of participants is 27.2.

From Table A2 (Participant Profile of Hong Kong), we can see that among the 9 interviewees, there are 5 males and 4 females. The motivation of males and females to apply for a civil service job seems almost equal here in Hong Kong's case. And the average age of interviewed participants is 26.3, slightly younger than that of mainland China.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

The data from the quantitative method is analysed statistically. First, the questions and problems in the civil service examination papers during the last 10 years are analysed and classified into correspondent skills that are gained through higher education by reading the general curriculum goals set in the university syllabus. This part will be quantitative and can end up with some data categorisations as follows in Table 2 (detailed statistics for every year is attached in Appendix 1).

Table 2: Quantitative Analysis Table

Exam paper Year 2004								
Questions	The Administrative Aptitude Part							The Essay Test
	1-20	21-35	36-50	51-60	61-85	86-105	106-125	
Correspondent Skills gained through HE	Language Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	Logical Analysis: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Fundamental Math: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	Graphic Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Logical Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language/Politics)	General Knowledge and Current Affairs: Irrelevant to Normal Education	University Fundamental Course (Statistics)	Economics : University Level Specialised Course (for economics students)

The vocational specificity of education system is to be explored through this way.

The next part under the quantitative approach is to rank the top 10 most competitive positions during the last 5 years in mainland China and Hong Kong. Data are collected through the official publication based on the rate of (the number of employees needed) / (the number of candidates) for each position. The smaller the rate is, the more competitive it indicates. Then comparison between the most popular jobs is made between China and Hong Kong in order to find out how system has influenced the whole process of civil servant admission.

Data from the quantitative method are numbers and are to be used to “discover and describe patterns” in my data (Chambliss & Schutt, 2012, p. 154). Statistical method will be used to help the analysis. Variation of each variable of interest (University Compulsory/Fundamental

Course, University Level Specialised Course, Pre-Uni Education, and Irrelevant to Normal Education) will be presented (for quantitative Part 1). For quantitative Part 2, calculations of total numbers (the number of employees needed & the number of candidates) of each sub-sample (namely selected popular positions) will be made. Here the data analysis tool is Microsoft Excel. The detailed forms of variables, patterns and diagrams will be presented in the next chapter (Chapter 4). This part using quantitative method aims at answering the first research question, namely, “how do the civil servant recruiting systems differ in mainland China and Hong Kong?” in a more comprehensive way.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has talked about the methodology and data collecting process of the research. Method is mixed and consists of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data are collected based upon statistical analysis and individual interviews which target on three groups of participants in both two regions. Chapter 4 will then focus on data analysis of the quantitative part, so as to answer the first research question on civil servant recruiting systems.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis (Quantitative): Civil Servant Recruiting System

4.1 Part I

This chapter will analyse the data collected from field work. First, data from the quantitative method, namely, statistical analysis of examination papers and most popular jobs (top 10) every year will be analysed.

The exam questions and problems in the national civil service examination papers (referring to Written Test in mainland China, and CRE Common Recruitment Test in Hong Kong) from Year 2004 to Year 2013 are analysed and classified to fit in the classifying method presented in Table 2 (see Chapter 3). The written examination in mainland China is held once a year in November/December, whilst CRE and BLT (Basic Law Test) are held twice a year in Hong Kong in May and October. To make the comparison of the two regions more equivalent, only the CRE/BLT test held in October will be analysed. The Written Test in mainland China has Type A and Type B, made of candidates choosing comprehensive administration positions and candidates of technology application positions respectively. Type A is applicable to more general positions. To make the comparison clearer, only Type A exam papers are analysed. The detailed analysis of each year is shown in Appendix 1.

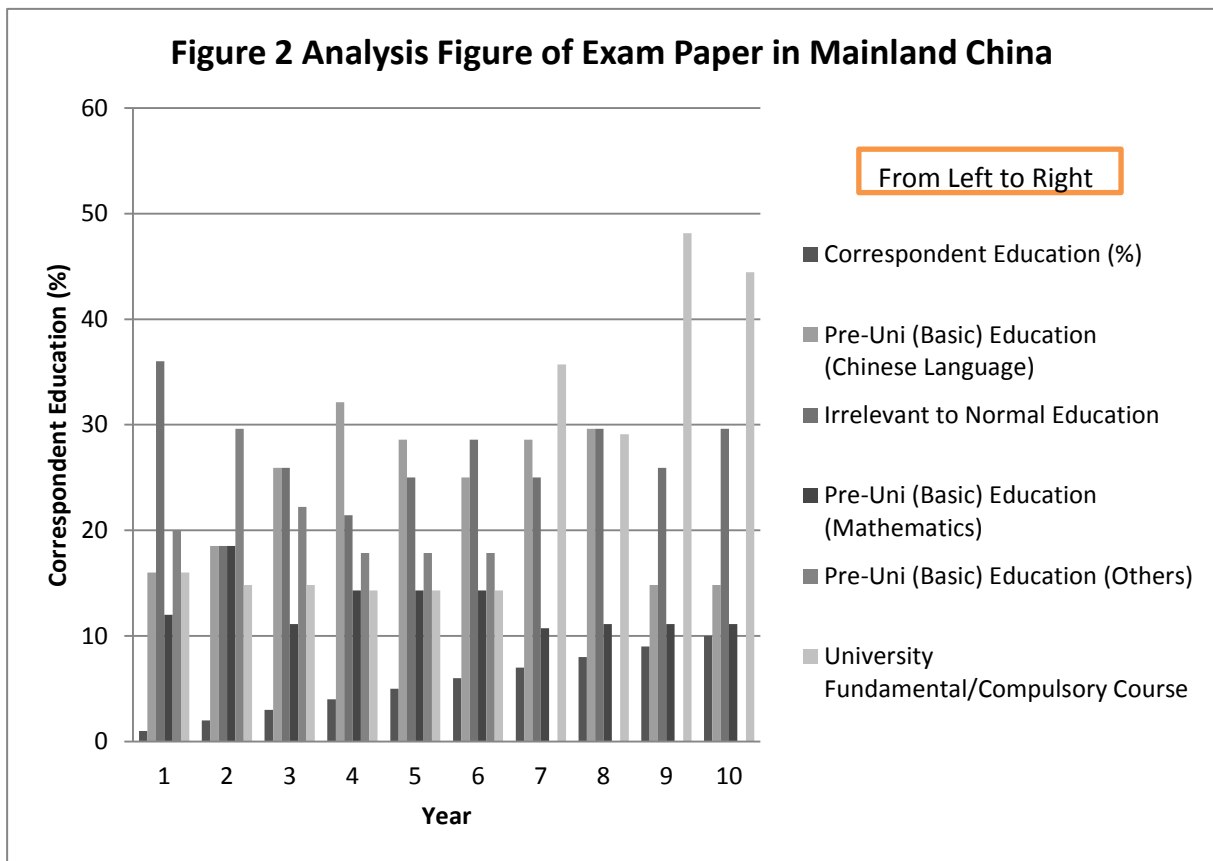
Table A3 shows the analysis of exam papers of mainland China, and Table A4 shows that of Hong Kong. The format of the mainland's written test varies every year so the statistics of every year's content is listed separately in Table A3. On the other hand, the types and amounts of questions in Hong Kong's CRE/BLT examination are the same every year (see Table A4). Based on the content of Table A3 and Table A4, two statistical graphs are generated using Microsoft Excel based on assisting tables (Table A5 and Table A6) to show the result in a more directly perceivable way (see Figure 2 and Figure 3 below).

4.1.1 Written Test in Mainland China

The written test consists of two parts every year, namely the Administrative Aptitude part (examination duration: 120 minutes) and the Essay Test part (examination duration: 150 minutes). The content of the Administrative Aptitude part tests majorly test the candidates' mathematical, logical, analytical, understanding, commonsense reasoning, and expression abilities, whilst the Essay Test mainly requires exam takers to give out personal opinions and provide their knowledge on a selected political topic. The statistics of the Essay Test of the written test in mainland China is not shown in Table A5 because it is a big question consisting 50% of the whole result. It should thus not be counted as ONE question and is analysed separately.

As introduced in Chapter 3, variables University Compulsory/Fundamental Course, University Level Specialised Course, Pre-Uni Education, Irrelevant to Normal Education are used to indicate the relevance of exam content to higher education. Here variable “Irrelevant to Normal Education” means that the tested content shows no direct link with what is being taught at school/university. In other words, it is something man can gain through life experience, media, common sense, etc. without having to take a course or receive training. Here the term “Irrelevant to Normal Education” is only used as an indicator, and does not mean that the stuff tested has nothing to do with education at all. It only suggests that the content has less clear and less direct linkage with the content syllabuses of a school/university course.

Figure 2 indicates that in 2004, the biggest percentage of tested content comes to “Irrelevant to Normal Education”, followed by “Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Others)”, “Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese language)”, “University Compulsory/Fundamental Course”, and “Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)”. This shows that in 2004, the biggest portion of the exam paper relates to content not taught at school, followed by content received from pre-university education (except from math), lower level university education, and basic math education.



The percentage of the Chinese language content (pre-university) increased continuously from 2004 to 2007, but has been continuously decreasing since 2011. Content not gained from school (Irrelevant to Normal Education) has slight fluctuations in its portion during the ten years' period, but remained almost at the same level each year. The similar phenomenon applies to the content of pre-university math education which always remained at a low level between 10% and 15% except for 2005 when it reached 18.52%. Pre-university education content except Chinese language and mathematics was tested from 2004 to 2009, and its percentage has been decreasing since 2005. Since 2010, no obvious trail of it could be observed from the exam paper. The missing percentage of this pre-university education portion has been gradually replaced by university fundamental/compulsory courses such as statistics, history and law, etc. The percentage of university fundamental/compulsory courses has been greatly increasing since 2009. In 2013, its percentage has almost tripled that in 2004 when only some content from university statistics courses were tested.

In 2013, the biggest percentage of tested content comes to “University Fundamental/Compulsory Courses”, followed by “Irrelevant to Normal Education”, “Pre-Uni

(Basic) Education (Chinese language)”, “Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)”, and “Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Others)” (not tested). This shows that in 2013, the biggest portion of the exam paper relates to content from university fundamental education, followed by content not taught at school, Chinese language education and basic mathematics education.

Therefore, as the data and figure suggested, the focus of testing knowledge obtained from higher education has been rising drastically during the last decade. In 2013, 44.44% of the exam content was related to what is being taught in university classrooms, which means that university graduates benefited from nearly half of the questions they saw in the Administrative Aptitude Test paper because of their learning process from higher education, whilst those who have not received higher education will need to gain relevant knowledge from extra training and sources in order to answer such questions in the exam.

Next, the examination focus of the Essay Test part was on the area of economics, political administration and urban planning almost every year. Political awareness and administrative abilities are emphasised greatly. Such abilities are usually gained through taking university level specialised courses such as economics, politics, management, etc. as the questions require advanced analysing ability and leadership skills to tackle with. Those who have not received such education will need to undergo extensive and tough training to get high score in this area. But since 2012 the questions have become friendlier to the general public who have less specific knowledge in economics, politics, administration, etc. The focus has shifted to be on candidates’ reading comprehension of long paragraphs combined with strong analysing and inductive learning abilities. An in-depth understanding of given literature has become more and more valued. In many cases, the comprehension of the Chinese language (at the level of university fundamental course) is key focus. Questions begin with many pages of information on a topic and ask candidates to give out their own understanding of the literature.

For example, the Essay Test in 2013 asked candidates to answer four questions based on 10 reading materials. The first three questions required candidates to conclude and summarise the main opinions of some of the given readings, and the last question asked candidates to give out

some personal suggestions based on one of the readings with the topic “socialist construction in villages”. In the Essay Test in 2012 and 2013, a lot of valuable information can be found in the given articles. Since 2012, the test tended to seek students inspiration from given reading materials combined with their general awareness and attention on current affairs. The content of the test began to become accessible and require less specialised knowledge (Civil Service Network, 2014).

The overall analysis of past written exam papers suggest that university education has been taken more and more value on, especially the content of compulsory and fundamental university courses.

4.1.2 Written Test in Hong Kong

The written test (CRE/BLT) of the Hong Kong civil service examination consists of four parts, namely, English Test, Chinese Test, Aptitude Test, and Basic Law Test. The English Test, the Chinese Test and the Aptitude Test last for 45 minutes each, and the Basic Law Test lasts for 20 minutes (Civil Service Bureau, 2014).

The English Test basically tests candidates’ reading comprehension, vocabulary, sentence structure and grammatical skills in English. The content is mostly taught at school before students enter universities and is not highly demanding. The Chinese Test basically tests candidates’ reading comprehension, correct application of Chinese characters, words and phrases in Chinese. The Aptitude Test includes content of verbal and numerical reasoning, data analysis and graphical analysis, and it is related to both pre-university education and higher education.

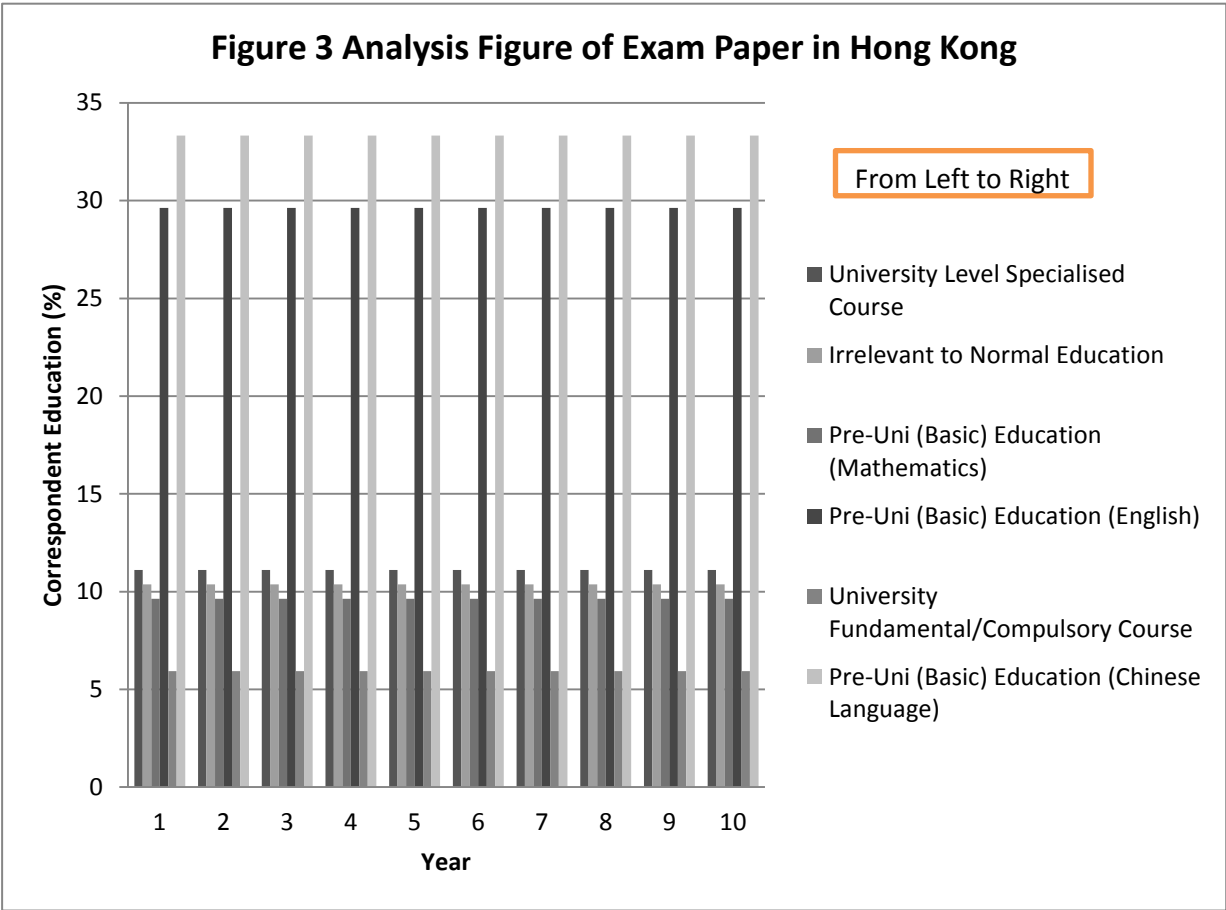


Figure 3 shows that the highest percentage in the content CRE/BLT exam paper is related to pre-university Chinese language (basic) education, followed by content related to pre-university English (basic) education, content linked to university level specialised courses, content that is not directly relevant to normal education (what is taught at school), content of pre-university math education, and at last content of university compulsory/fundamental courses. There is no shift of value in percentage during the last decade as the types and amounts of questions in the exam paper are fixed every year. It also indicates that most of the tested content is quite fundamental and basic and the exam’s demand on higher education is not high. This provides many chances to candidates who do not have a higher education degree, and matches the requirement of the civil servant recruitment system of Hong Kong, as in Hong Kong, the education level requirement of applicants is from Year 11 (equivalent to high school graduates in Hong Kong) (Civil Service Bureau, 2014).

Besides, basic law is a university course provided for students with a major in law or other relevant areas, or as an elective course for those who are interested. Yet for those who have not

ever entered universities or colleges, it is still well accessible for them to self-study the Basic Law and get themselves prepared for the exam because the exam questions are very basic and superficial. And candidates need more of memorising than professional training. For example, they would ask: What is the highest court in the HKSAR?

- A. The Court of Appeal of the HKSAR
- B. The Court of Final Appeal of the HKSAR
- C. The Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China
- D. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China

This is a question tested on the knowledge of Article 81 of the Basic Law and the answer is very straightforward (Civil Service Bureau, 2014).

In a word, according to the content of the written CRE/BLT paper, its aim seems to test candidates' basic competence as a school leaver, and it is functioning as a basic precondition instead of a screening mechanism. It is basic and fundamental. So the more important stage of selecting people lies in the next stage where employers call in candidates to interviews. And in cases where there are many applicants who have reached the required CRE/BLT score for a position (different positions have different cut-off scores which are set by the Civil Service Bureau), a second written test is usually organised by employers (Li, 2013).

4.2 Part II

This part lists out the top 10 most popular civil service positions from 2009 to 2013 based on the statistics published by the State Administration of Civil Service of China and the Civil Service Bureau of Hong Kong respectively. The results of mainland China are listed in Table A7, and the results of Hong Kong are listed in Table A8. The results are shown both as the position name and its degree of competitiveness ((the number of employees needed) / (the number of applicants)).

4.2.1 Top 10 Positions in Mainland China

In Table A7 in Appendix 1, most of the positions listed have a degree of competitiveness that lies between 1:5000 and 1:2000 except for all positions of Year 2012 and the top two positions in 2013 (Research Staff at National Statistical Bureau (Hechuan, Chongqing Branch) (1:9411) and Research Staff at National Statistical Bureau (Nanchuan, Chongqing Branch) (1:9175)). That means that in these most popular positions, candidates often need to stand out among thousands of other competitors in order to get the job. They cover various areas of work, and the most popular positions are related to workplaces in executive and judicial systems: e.g. customs (7 times), tax bureau (5 times), ethnic affairs bureau (4 times), and public security (3 times), etc. National industries like forestry, railway and marine systems are also among the most popular positions.

There was however, a fall in the intensity of competition in 2012. The most competitive job that year, Junior Staff at National Ethnic Affairs Commission (Scientific Research) provided one position and received 1476 available applications. Even the least competitive job among the top 10 in 2011 (degree of competitiveness: 2/5151) is fiercer than the top competitive in 2012. The drop of heat in applying for civil service positions in 2012 thought-provoking and will be discussed in Chapter 6.

4.2.2 Top 10 Positions in Hong Kong

There is a lack of data in Hong Kong's case as the Civil Service Bureau of Hong Kong did not provide complete data for numbers of applicants and number of available positions of every year's examination to the general public. And sometimes they just provide an approximate number. In addition, the bureau's website did not publish the information of all kinds of civil servant positions, but only listed some of them. The ranking is therefore not sufficient. It only ranked positions that have information published to the public, and does not mean that the top 10 listed in the table is absolutely the top competitive ones. So Table A8 looks very incomplete in data and it is hard to compare the result from year to year. Only the data of Year 2010 are

comparatively complete. In Table A8 in Appendix 1, we can see that the most popular workplaces include central government office, customs, immigration, police, etc. Most of them are within the Hong Kong administrative system.

In Year 2010, the most popular job (Administrative Officer at Central Government Office) had 27 available positions and received 16848 applications, which means that only one would be chosen from every 624 applicants. Similarly, the tenth most popular job (Police Officer at the Hong Kong Police) from the list has a degree of competitiveness of 920:14700, meaning that one would be chosen from every 16 applicants. Competitiveness in Hong Kong civil service jobs look much milder than that in mainland China but still fierce. How competitive these jobs are in practice will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

4.3 Summary

This chapter has analysed the quantitative data of this research and completed the quantitative method approach through two parts. Part one was done through analysing written exam papers of the two regions (from 2004 to 2013) and relating their content to correspondent education content (from school or university). The result shows that in mainland China, both pre-university education content and higher education take up a certain value in the written test, and higher education content has a tendency to take up higher value year by year. Besides, basic mathematics and Chinese language ability obtained from pre-university education are emphasised in the test. In Hong Kong's case, higher education seems to be less important than basic education content as shown in the CRE/BLE test. Most of the content is "friendly" to high school graduates. English, mathematics and Chinese abilities are considered as necessary and important in the exam. Part two analysed and ranked the top 10 most competitive positions in these two regions during the past five years using the information published by the government. As suggested from the types of jobs, applicants in both regions are keen about working in the government's administrative system and the police. In mainland China's case, positions in national industries like forestry and railway have also attracted great interest. The

degree of competitiveness data show that the general competition in mainland China is fiercer than that in Hong Kong.

Next chapter will go through the qualitative approach of the research, analysing and processing information and data gathered from individual interviews, trying to use the results to answer research question 2 and 3.

Chapter 5: Interview

This chapter begins with the interview process according to the interview guide attached in Appendix 2. As introduced in Chapter 3, in each region, 4 groups of participants are selected. The first group (group a) consists of three people represents students who have got the civil servant position immediately after graduation through exam. The second group (group b) consists of three people represents people who have got the position through exam (only taking once) after several years of professional work. The third group (group c) consists of three people represents people who got the job but have taken the exam multiple times. The fourth group consists of one person representing the education officer who has professional knowledge in school-to-work transition of the civil service career. Answers to interview questions have been transcribed and translated to English. Key terms are used to classify and group similar answers and main ideas. The analysing process is divided into two parts, one for mainland China, and the other for Hong Kong.

5.1 Individual Interview in Mainland China

In the interview group A, the three interviewees were candidates of the civil service examination as fresh graduates from university, and they took the examination in Year 2004, 2007, and 2011 (Question 1). When asked about motivation of taking the exam (Question 2), “a match between the job and my major taken in higher education” (most frequently heard), “civil service is an honourable job”, and “relatively stable” were the main explanations. The three interviewees graduated from Peking University, Zhejiang University and University of International Relations respectively (Question 3). And when asked how higher education has helped contribute to their success in getting the job, they gave out the following answers, “the accumulation of professional knowledge has helped me to succeed in the essential position”, “a master/bachelor degree”, “higher education helped improve my writing skills”, and “higher education developed my overall quality”. In preparation of the exam (Question 5 & Question

9), most of them think the peacetime accumulation of knowledge through years of education is the most important. Practice in some sample questions and intentional attention to the current political affairs were also claimed as important. The key strategies in the job interview (Question 8) are to review some professional knowledge of the applied job and to be confident, sincere, and calm as employers put high value on the attitude of the interviewees. When talking about some other functions and help of higher education (Question 6 & Question 7), they claimed that higher education is very important as it developed their learning ability and changed the direction of their life. Also, the higher education degree is beneficial for a lifetime. Here is part of the answers given by one interviewee.

What is taught in lectures is limited. The more important things we learnt through higher education are learning abilities, views and methods of observing and analysing problems, as well as problem solving abilities. These did not only help me to pass the exam, but also act as precious asset in my life. Higher education enriched the possibility of my life, and increased the numbers of choices of my future life path...In a word, higher education has really changed my life.

In interview group B where the three participants already had several years' work experience before taking the exam, their time of taking the exam was 2003, 2010 and 2012 (Question 1). One of them had worked in a small financial company for 1 year before becoming civil servants. And another one had worked part time in a private language training institute. The other participant worked as teller in a bank with long working hours every day on a contract basis. The main reason to sit the exam and change their previous jobs (Question 2) was because the civil service job is stable, and two claimed disfavour of their previous jobs. The three participants obtained a higher education degree from Zhejiang Gongshang University, Zhejiang Normal University Xingzhi College, and Zhejiang University (Question 3) respectively. They claimed that the academic function of higher education lies in that it can broaden their horizon and thoughts, and give them a degree (Question 4). In terms of preparation and aid for the exam (Question 6 and 10), all of them claimed that the peacetime accumulation of knowledge and practicing sample questions were important. Two of them received targeted training in interview skills and thought that it was very helpful. For these people who had some work experience before becoming civil servants, higher education helped them build up a basic social attitude and enhanced their all-around capabilities, but had little practical help in developing their practical job skills compared to their previous work experience. One even said

that higher education was nothing too special in achieving success, that it was just a process during which man became more mature (Question 7 & Question 8). The job interviews (Question 9) were mainly in the form of scenario simulation and focused on social and practical work problems. Full preparation makes perfect, claimed they. All of the three participants thought that their previous jobs had played an important role in their life and helped their becoming civil services, in the way that they through such experiences, fulfilled the transition from student to social man and could see society clearer (Question 5).

Interview group C consists of three participants who have taken the civil service examination for multiple times. The last time they took the exam was in 2008, 2012, and 2012 respectively (Question 1). Two of them had temporary jobs before becoming civil servants, whilst the other one was jobless. The motivations (Question 2 & Question 3) of taking the exam lie in longer holiday, better welfare and childhood dream (which applies to the one who has dreaming of being a police officer since little). Two of them were working in a bank before taking the exam, and they showed great unsatisfactory about their previous jobs, “I was so busy in the bank that I even did not have time to go to the toilet...The right of taking holidays was hardly ensured”. The other one was doing nothing but preparing for the exam months after months, again and again because being a police officer was his only dream. They graduated from Kunming University of Science and Technology, Shanghai University of Electric Power, and Jiaying University (Question 4). When asked how higher education has helped them to get the job (Question 5), they said that they actually had difficulty to progress with the current degree they had. “In today’s Chinese society, how people position you still depends largely on which university you graduated from. And it is hard to change this phenomenon within a short time”, said one of them. All of them have gone through interview training before taking the exam, and one of them even took a course in improve written test ability. All of the three have gone through extensive simulation trainings and think they were extremely helpful. Continuous revision is claimed to be the key factor that made the difference (Question 7 & Question 11). For this group of people, higher education helped mainly in developing their social skills and problem-solving abilities; whilst previous work experience helped them know better about society, employment process and transit from one stage to another in the whole school-to-work

transition process. One interviewee said that the unbearable stress from previous work aroused his motivation to change (Question 6, Question 8, & Question 9). When asked what happened in the job interview (Question 10), apart from saying that the focus was mainly on political and economic issues, one claimed that it was a topic he had gone through in his preparation and revision for the exam. And they agreed on that confidence and ability to express personal opinions were highly valued.

The education expert in group D (the fourth category) currently works at and has worked for Zhejiang Provincial Education Bureau for ten years. The interview questions on the interview guide were shown to her and she expressed her opinions about how higher education and personal experience would help a candidate to achieve success in the National Civil Service Examination. According to her, the demission rate in many medium-sized and small enterprises where fresh university graduates would usually begin their first job is very high. And this is largely due to the instability, low wage, and comparatively poor job welfare in those companies. Society has not a well-established system to guarantee young workers' welfare and working conditions in all areas. That is the major reason why young people seek more stability and better employment protection regulations in the civil service industry. Once admitted, more than 80% of people would remain as civil servants for more than 10 years.

She thinks that the written test is very crucial and students' results in written have great potential to be improved if they go through extensive practice. The written test is the hurdle which knocks out most of the competitors as the interview rate (available position/number of people to be called in to interview) is pre-settled and is usually between 1/3 and 1/5. Therefore, if a job with only one available position has 5000 applicants, and has an interview rate of 1:3, and it means that only three candidates with the highest written test scores will have the possibility for the interview, i.e. 4997 applicants will be kicked out after the written test. In other words, the higher your written test score is, the better chance you have to be interviewed and so as to finally get the job. According to her, a solid foundation in higher education learning is very helpful in getting high score in the written test. Although many training courses also can help improve candidates' test-taking skills, the most important thing is

accumulation of knowledge, especially in mathematics and Chinese language. Work experience can satisfy the requirements of some higher level positions where they usually want experienced employees. Yet the civil service market is still widely open to many fresh university graduates. The interview process is like an impromptu speech on the topic of social systems, social phenomena, policies, specific situations, etc. If a student is a graduate from a good-quality university where he/she has got enough practices in presentation, he/she actually does not need too much preparation for the interview. What the interviewers value highly on is candidates' comprehensive quality, especially leadership, organising and logical capabilities, said she.

Through the interviews with individuals of the above four groups, the following summary can be made. The common motivations to take the exam lie in the stability and comfort of the civil service jobs. The fresh graduates stressed more on the perfect match between what they have learnt and the field they are going to work in. Participants who have only taken the exam once (group A and group B) on average graduated from universities which are of much higher rankings than group C (where participants have taken the exam multiple times) do. This shows that the prominence of university plays an important role in this process. Most participants claimed that higher education has helped develop their academic skills and overall quality, and group A think highly of it and claimed it to be the guiding star of their life path. On the other hand, group B and group C think that higher education is more helpful in its function as a certificate (a degree) and that previous work experiences function as impetus in their successful transition from school to the civil service career. In the exam preparation stage, group A went through less intensive training/practice than group B, and group C made the most intensive preparation. There was even one participant who took the whole year off and prepared for exams in four different locations. The written test is very crucial and a good result in it is very essential. Interviews test on candidates' potential and comprehensive capabilities and can hardly be fully prepared through trainings. A positive attitude and clear mind is the key to success in the interview.

5.2 Individual Interview in Hong Kong

In group A where students went straight to take the exam after graduation from university, the three participants took the exam in 2008, 2010, and 2011 respectively. The most attractive qualities of civil service profession (Question 2) are high wage and good welfare system. One participant, graduate from Chinese University of Hong Kong with a bachelor's degree applied for a position in the SAR government office as administrative officer. He said,

Many of my classmates have applied for the exam, and some were actually not that interested in being civil servants. But the high wage and well established welfare of this career are really attractive to students who just stepped out from university campus. You know, the average monthly salary of fresh university graduates in Hong Kong is below 20 thousand HK dollars, but the position as administrative officer has a starting salary of 41 thousand HK dollars.

The three participants graduated from Chinese University of Hong Kong, Chinese University of Hong Kong and City University of Hong Kong (Question 3). According to them, higher education has helped them to open up their mind and enrich social connection and greatly strengthen their language abilities and communication skills (Question 4). Most of them did not make very special preparation for the exam. They just reviewed sample questions and relevant knowledge points. They claimed that the experience gained through higher education was the most important factor that led them through as higher education not only strengthened their academic capabilities but also made them well prepared for entering society. "The learning process at university was such an important experience for me as it shaped my outlook on life, and transferred myself from student to a social being, and I began to think independently, make important decisions, and become mature." (Question 5, Question 6, Question 7 & Question 9). Before taking the interview, they also needed to sit in a second round written test where speech ability and policy analysis were tested. During the interview (Question 8), candidates needed to answer sharp questions about policies, current affairs, personal opinions, administration, etc. The interview is very intense and candidates needed to make very thorough preparation for the interview in order to gain enough confidence which is the key factor to help them win out.

In interview group B where candidates already had some work experiences before sitting in the examination, the three interviewees took exam in 2007, 2010, and 2011 (Question 1). Two

participants had worked as teachers for two years, and they claimed that the position as teacher did not quite match their competence. The other participant had worked full time in a local company for six years. Their motivation of applying for a civil service job is associated with its good pay, stability, and function to help the community (Question 2). The three candidates graduated from Wah Yan College, Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Hong Kong Baptist University respectively (Question 3). For them, higher education (Question 4) helped them to improve their language proficiency, both in English and Chinese, and tackle with academic problems skilfully. Also, it helped them “to know how to deal with people and be brave to face any challenges”, “to think out of the box”, “to be creative and be resilience when facing adversity”, and is in general, very helpful in laying a solid foundation in life (Question 7 & Question 8). The three participants all in some way, claimed unsatisfactory, pressure, and poor working conditions from previous work, and did not show much gratefulness to their previous work. “There was nothing help for me to apply for government job through my previous work. And most positions in the HKSAR government do not have a high requirement on work experiences. They are open and friendly to fresh graduates”, said one of them (Question 5). Two of them made some simple preparation by going through past years’ exam questions, while the other one did not make any special exam preparation at all (Question 6 and Question 10). And they all claimed that well-organised speech and clear logic are very important during the stressful and intense interview (Question 9). And two of them even needed to go through a second round interview after passing the first round.

The Extended Interview last for a whole day, it composed of self-introduction, impromptu talk, group discussion, presentation, management task and leadership exercise. After passing that, there will be the Final Interview Board where the penal was composed with a senior superintendent and 2 superintendents. The questions would like to be some current affairs and scenario questions....For the key for passing that should be speaking out the meaningful and logical answer with confidence, and to show your leadership.

In interview group C where participants consist of three people who have taken the exam twice, the last time they took it was in 2011, 2012, and 2012 respectively (Question 1), and graduated from Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Financial Services Institute, and Chinese University of Hong Kong/University of Sydney respectively (Question 4). They all had worked full time in other companies for several years. They applied for the job because they thought the civil service job is an “iron bowl”, a secure job which can never be dropped, and is very

well paid (Question 2). And it is the high wage and unsatisfactory about the previous jobs (long working hours and comparatively low wages) that motivated them to take the civil service examination for a second time after unsuccessful result from the first time (Question 3). They highly valued higher education but devalued their previous work experience. They claimed higher education to be a cornerstone in their academic establishment through which they learnt to research and think independently and present their opinions confidently (Question 5). They also claimed that the experience of being a student at university helped build up their social network and helped them develop self-awareness well (Question 8 & Question 9).

Higher education has really made a big difference in my life. Apart from the specialised knowledge I obtained from lectures and seminars, higher education has greatly improved my learning ability and analysing ability when I am faced with a challenge. And I think such experience is the most important factor that made me well capable for the job. It is a winning key... The written test did not ask too much about the academic content from higher education, but knowledge gained from university was definitely a benefit to the exam.

When talking about the help from previous experience (Question 6), one of them said, “it was of course an asset to some extent as some employers would prefer that employees had some work experience so that they are mature and familiar with the general working environment.” All of the three participants did go through some kinds of systematic trainings and courses as exam preparation after unsatisfactory from their first-time exam-taking. And they did take time to read through the Basic Law, and reviewed mathematics (Question 7 & Question 11). According to them, the interview was mainly conducted in English (only a few questions in Chinese), so the English oral and understanding ability is very crucial (Question 10). There is one participant in this group who studied at the University of Sydney for one year as exchange student. She thinks that her English proficiency obtained from overseas learning has helped her greatly to win out in the interview. An open-minded attitude is also important, said she.

The education expert who used to work for the education bureau for fifteen years from group D (the fourth category) expressed his ideas on the issues listed in my interview guide. He thinks that the Hong Kong Civil Service Examination is a complicated but systematic process which consists of three stages, CRE/BLT test, second round written test (provided by employers), and the interview (can be several rounds). One has to go through all of these stages in order to get the job. And some certain positions are even more demanding. For example, in order to

become an Officer at the Immigration Department, the applicant has to conquer five “hurdles”, namely, the CRE/BLT exam, physical fitness test, interview, writing test (English and Chinese essay writing), and final selection interview. As the application requirements of many civil servant positions are not high, especially in terms of education levels, there are many high school graduates among the applicants every year. But as the average wage of civil servants are much higher than the common jobs students can get right after graduation, many more university students are attracted to apply. And those who have received higher education are on average more mature and better at communicating and can therefore in many cases win out in the interview, because what the employers value highly of are students’ communication skills, knowledge about the position they are applying for, attitude towards life, and opinions about current affairs. However, there is one problem associated with the civil service industry these years, which is the problem of outflow of talents. According to him, many employees have chosen to quit their civil servant career after serving for several years. And this has become more and more extensive along with the application heat in this career. The major reasons behind it is first of all, that despite its comparatively higher starting wage, the rise of wage is super slow. Therefore, many young people would choose somewhere that offers them better promotion possibilities after several years’ work experience. Also, the stress in working as civil servants is also big. Civil servants in Hong Kong have great responsibilities but do not have special welfare allowances for holidays, which can be offered in some other non-government jobs. In a word, he concludes,

The civil servant heat in Hong Kong society is warming up, but people’s attitudes are still rational. On the one hand, although the benefits and pay of Hong Kong civil servants are good, in the big environment of Hong Kong where economy is well established, social welfare system is sound, orientation of employment is diversified, getting employed in some other kinds of jobs can also reach a similar or even better level of living standard. On the other hand, civil servants in Hong Kong do not have too much particularity. That is probably why the “iron bowl” is greatly favoured but not burning.

Through the interviews with individuals of the above four groups, the following summary can be made. The most attractive quality of the civil service profession lies in its high starting wage, and this is especially attractive to those fresh university graduates without any relevant work experiences. The qualities of universities they graduated from are not so much in difference in these three groups. This indicates that degree is not the key issue in the transition process.

Group A have made least exam preparation whilst group C have made most extensive exam preparation through taking courses and interview trainings. Most of them think that the experience rather than the degree they gained from higher education is far more important in their life and acts as a key factor in their successfully getting the job. To them, higher education especially improved their language skills, broadened their horizons, and strengthened their social networks, and above all, taught them social skills which smooth their transition from school to workplace. Previous work experience does not show a strong function in people's successful transition from school to their ideal jobs. Many claimed previous work experience to be only a natural transition process. The interview of the Hong Kong civil service examination is highly demanding and tests on candidates' all-round capabilities, and puts specific focus on communication, logical abilities as well as maturity.

5.3 Comparative Analysis

From the above interview data analysis we can see that both young people in main land China and in Hong Kong are keen on entering the civil service industry because of its stability. But young people in China pay more attention to the stability and social status of the civil service jobs, while young people in Hong Kong pay more attention to high wages (at least the high starting wage). And the fresh university graduates in mainland China think more of the match between what they have learnt and the job nature. Most of the interviewees graduated from prominent universities. Only those from group B and group C in mainland China, namely those who have taken the civil service examination multiple times and those who already had some work experiences before taking the exam, come from comparatively lower ranked universities. In terms of how higher education has helped one to successfully transit him/her from school to the civil servant job, most participants of mainland China mentioned the importance of a university degree, while most participants of Hong Kong valued more its function of developing their language skills and developing their social networks. Both people from mainland China and Hong Kong think highly of higher education as an important experience which has set an initial direction of their life. Participants in Hong Kong talked more about the

free academic atmosphere in university which made them learn to think independently and greatly stimulated their creativity. In a word, it is the degree of higher education that the young civil servants in mainland China think they benefit most from, whilst it is the experience of higher education that the young civil servants in Hong Kong think they benefit most from. Almost everyone with some previous experiences interviewed in this research complained about either the stress, low wage, or the poorly established welfare system in their previous jobs. Most of the participants who have taken the exam more than once have gone through extensive training or some have even taken systematic courses after fail from their first-time exam trials. The written test in mainland China is very crucial and if a candidate gets the chance to sit in the interview, he or she will have on average about 30% possibility to get the job. And the interview is about scenario simulation and focuses on current affairs, job-related issues and political issues. Confidence, logics and speech skills are the winning key. The interview part is comparatively more complicated and far more challengeable than the written part. The written part is relatively fundamental while the interview value highly the candidates' communication skills, logics and social skills through various testing forms including impromptu speech, group debate, presentation, management task, etc. The emphases on the whole exam process in mainland China and Hong Kong are different, with the former setting the written test more challengeable than the interview part, whilst the latter focusing greatly on interview but requiring only the most fundamentals from the written test. In the next chapter the findings will be discussed.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter will comparatively discuss the findings based on the analytical framework, and will thus be divided into four dimensions, namely, national context, nature of examination system, structure of school-to-work transition, and outcome of transition (see Figure 1 in Chapter 2). After that, based on the discussion of findings, conclusion will be drawn to answer the three research questions.

6.1 National Context in mainland China and Hong Kong: One Country, Two Systems

The national context dimension will be discussed through three elements, namely, labour market structure, wage-setting mechanism, and policy-making framework.

6.1.1 Labour Market Structure

Wolber (2007) has described a country's labour market entry structure in terms of speed, quality and stability. The average time it takes for participants in mainland China to transit themselves from school to the civil service job (Table A1) is 0.78 year, while the average time it takes for participants in Hong Kong to transit themselves from school to the civil service job (Table A2) is 2.11 years. The speed of this transition in mainland China is about twice faster than that of Hong Kong. According to Wolber, in countries where the labour market is highly regulated by strict employment regulations, the entry of school-leavers to their significant jobs is delayed. This shows that the labour market in Hong Kong is much more regulated than that of China, and this matches the interview with the education expert of Hong Kong who claims that the civil service job is just a normal job among all other kinds of jobs in Hong Kong where the employment market is highly established under consistent systems.

Here the word quality mainly refers to the level of education. The higher your education level is, the better the quality of your education is. That is to say, the education quality of a master's degree is higher than that of bachelor's degree. Under this definition, the delay of entry into the labour market in Hong Kong as the data show is mostly due to the high education quality of school-leavers (as suggested among the participants). This is because of Wolber (2007)'s research which indicates that the negative impact of a strictly regulated labour market is slightly bigger upon highly educated school-leavers. Although the average education level of participants in Hong Kong is only modestly higher than that of participants in mainland China (Table A1 & Table A2), the height of doorsill to enter into the civil service career is different in these two regions. In mainland China, the lowest requirement for application is higher education whilst in Hong Kong, many positions only require graduation from high schools (the requirement for application). So in this sense, participants from mainland China just fulfilled the education requirement whilst participants from Hong Kong are equipped with education competence that is much higher than demanded. And their entry to the labour market (the civil service career) is thus comparatively delayed.

With regard to the stability of the entry to the labour market, Wolber (2007) claims that the regulation of the labour market has a positive impact on job stability and a negative impact on inactivity or unemployment. The interview results show that both young people in mainland China and Hong Kong value highly on the stability of the civil service job which is mainly due to the well regulated employment condition in this particular market. Once getting the job, it is highly likely that a person would stay in that position for a long period of time and it is unlikely that he/she would quit the civil servant position or lose it, despite that there has been a recent trend of quitting the civil service job after serving several years in Hong Kong. According to Wolber, the stability is higher for highly educated school-leavers. This is not obvious in my research as relevant data are not collected regarding how education level affects stability in the civil service job. And civil service is a special market where there are special regulations that ensure the positions of employees regardless of education degree, both in mainland China and in Hong Kong (Wang, 2013).

6.1.2 Wage-Setting Mechanism

Wage bargaining can take places at different levels, for example, it can be highly decentralised and takes place at the firm level (e.g. UK), or can be highly centralised and takes place at the national level (e.g. Slovenia), or can be intermediate and takes place at for example the sector level (e.g. Italy), or can be of some other categories (European Commission, 2014). Wage setting in China is a dual system. Wages in private firms are self-administered and unskilled workers are easily fired. Wages in major government-owned firms use a sophisticated and strict professional qualification system, according to which the wage is given out based on the person's title in this system (Holz, 2014). And the latter applies to the civil service market. Wage setting in Hong Kong is similar to that in UK, whilst the civil service industry has its own standardised and regulated wage-setting system and the wage level is determined by the person's seniority. In a word, both the wage-setting system in mainland China and in Hong Kong in the market of civil service is highly regulated and the pay rise is slow and inflexible compared to that of private sectors.

During the interview, most participants of Hong Kong mentioned the high starting wage of Hong Kong's civil servants, but no one from mainland China mentioned about wages (whether the wage is high or not). The fact that more and more young people in Hong Kong choose to jump to some private firms after serving for the government for several years indicates that they at that stage, benefit more from the flexible wage-setting mechanism in private sectors which provide wages based on abilities of the employee instead of his/her seniority. On the other hand, same thing has not happened in mainland China (quitting as being civil servants), which indicates that most young people are still comparatively better off under the highly regulated and inflexible wage-setting mechanism in the civil service sector within China's national context. Stability in wage setting can therefore, sometimes function as a drawback (in Hong Kong's case), but sometimes function as a benefit and guarantee (in mainland China's case).

6.1.3 Policy-Making Framework

The national context is also about policy making. With regard to policy making,

a number of aspects of the policy-making process vary widely between countries: whether the State is unitary or federal; the role of employers and trade unions in national policy-making; the degree of autonomy and the relative power of the State in intervening in education, training and labour market institutions. (Hannan, Smyth & Raffe, 1996, p. 4)

The policy-making mechanisms in the education sector differ in the two regions. As presented in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1.2), the education sector of Hong Kong has a higher degree of autonomy than that of mainland China. Universities in Hong Kong have the autonomy of making own policies with respect to their own particular situations and report to the government of Hong Kong, while universities in China normally need to follow the centralised policies assigned by the government.

6.1.4 A Productive Population

According to the human capital theory, education helps to improve the productive capacity of a population, and an educated population is a productive population. Based on this, the research of Hannan, Smyth and Raffe (1996) has found out that the successful entry into the labour market is highly dependent upon the level of education achieved and the “portability of qualification” into the certain national context (p. 20). Both interview participants of mainland China and Hong Kong in this research have at least a bachelor’s degree and some have a master’s degree. This shows the fundamental importance of higher education in the civil service labour market. Individuals competing freely within the freely competitive market (the civil service examination as selective mechanism) indicate that individuals themselves are regarded as investment and assets to the labour market. Quality of education contributes to human capital and a nation’s economic success, and this is also embedded into the civil service exam system where employers favour people from better education quality. But how people judge the quality of education differs in these two regions. The interview result shows that people with higher education degrees from prominent universities (highly ranked universities) are more favoured as it took less time for them to get employed in this job area, and they are advantaged especially in the written test part which is a crucial part of the exam system in order to get through to the final and less competitive part (i.e. the interview). Hong Kong, on

the other hand, which takes more value on the interview part, values highly on the communication, logic and speech skills of the candidates instead of what kind of university degrees they hold. In the interview, students from the most prominent universities in Hong Kong do not show any special advantage to get through in the examination.

With regard to the wage-setting mechanism, both the professional qualification system of mainland China and the seniority system of Hong Kong basically function in the similar way. They both set the length of work experience in the civil service sector as the measure of work competence. This is because that on-job training is a big investment that employers provide to their employees so that they contribute to the economy in a wanted way (Almendarez, 2010). As the seniority goes on, the cost of training (investment) decreases but the contribution of the employee goes on.

In addition, OECD has found that internationalism of the education content is a means to improve the quality of education, so as to contribute to the productivity of the population. It even asserts that the internationalism of higher education is a component of globalisation (Almendarez, 2010). Hong Kong has emphasised more on English education and seeks a greater degree of internationalism. In the CRE/BLT exam, 30% of the exam context is on the English language. In mainland China, however, English is not tested in the exam. It can thus indicate that the Hong Kong government is more international than that of mainland China. The quality of education in Hong Kong is greatly enhanced by its focus on internationalism. As better education quality leads to more productive economy. In this sense, higher education of Hong Kong leads to larger capital than that of mainland China does, under the context of globalisation.

6.2 Nature of Examination System: A Selective Mechanism

The nature of examination system's dimension will be discussed in aspects of social, cultural, and political dimensions in order to get a better understanding of the national standardisation of

curricula, assessment and certification within the educational system that leads to the transition.

6.2.1 Social Dimension

From the social dimension of the civil service examination system, we will see how the exam functions as a social tool for students to transit into society and such selective mechanism leads to social stratification (Wang, 2013). The literal analysis of examination papers during the last ten years in mainland China does not show a strong connection between the content of higher education and the content of exam questions, although its portion is increasing recently. However, it does not mean that higher education has not in some ways, strengthened students' logical or analysis abilities and their prior knowledge, or raised students' test-taking speed. The same applies to the situation of Hong Kong even though the content of higher education only takes a small percentage in Hong Kong's written test. In fact, many participants nevertheless claim that higher education helps them more in non-academic ways, especially in social ways, for example, by building up their confidence and social networks (Hong Kong), and by giving them degree as a socially recognisable certificate (mainland China). Yet it at least shows that those who have not received higher education are not significantly disadvantaged compared to those who have a university degree in taking the written test. But the social skills and transiting function the higher education environment can provide to students is irreplaceable by other kinds of speed-up training or in-class teaching. With regard to the social function of the examination system, the focus in mainland China is to select people with the best academic, essay writing abilities and the capability to correctly express personal ideas to fit the need of the Chinese government, whilst the focus of Hong Kong is to select people with the best communication and teamwork skills (the interview always involves extensive group work and debates) with above average academic competence and language skills to serve the Hong Kong community.

6.2.2 Cultural Dimension

From the cultural dimension of the civil service examination system, we are to compare the

cultural differences in the content of the examination. The most obvious difference lies in the weight of language in the exam. Mainland China emphasises the importance of application of Chinese language to a certain extent and its portion weighs between 14% and 35% in the written test during the last ten years. And the questions are not at a shallow level but indeed, about an in-depth understanding of the accurate application of phrases, idiomatic phrases, and Chinese idioms with similar meanings, and about traditional Chinese literatures and classics. And in the interview test, the whole process is conducted in Chinese and requires candidates to have good ability to organise their words and express out clearly. Yet the English language is not tested in the general civil service examination system in mainland China. Hong Kong, on the other hand, sets focus on both the Chinese language (33.33%) and English language (29.63%) abilities in the written CRE/BLT test. And in the interview test, as the participants have reported, the whole process is almost completely in English, giving room to only a few questions in Chinese. This requires that candidates can skilfully use the English as a communication tool in an academic way both orally and in writing. And such skills can be hardly gained through speed-up training because the development of language skills needs continuous practice, good language environment and time to accumulate. In this way, the higher education stands out as being important, because all the eight public universities in Hong Kong use English as the main medium of instruction, which will influence the students' English language proficiency in a very positive way, and thus upon their language competence during the interview test (QS, 2013). The content of the written part is, however, as mentioned, at a fundamental level with regard to both the Chinese language content and the English language content. Those who have not received higher education are therefore, not so disadvantaged in this part.

All in all, the traditional culture influences both Chinese society and Hong Kong society today. Traditionally China is a country that valued extensively on the Chinese literatures, poem composition, academic writing and lingual art, and candidates competed in such abilities in the imperial civil examination. Today such extensive focus is much lessened but is still culturally embedded in the civil service exam. The massive focus on the in-depth understanding on the nuance of the Chinese language usage shows China's substantive attention on the native

language culture. On the other hand, although the Chinese language also takes a large portion in Hong Kong's written test, the content remains at the basic language application level and basic understanding of sentences. Rather, Hong Kong focuses largely on candidates' proficient application of the English language as a working language, in a way showing Hong Kong's special cultural position. The blending and mixture of Chinese and Western cultures in Hong Kong make it a cultural bridge of the two sides. Internationalism in Hong Kong is highly valued and such characteristic is quite obvious in the interview test part, indicating that the employers expect their future employees to think and argue in English, and to use English in their workplaces.

6.2.3 Political Dimension

As mentioned, China as a whole has a history of several thousand years. Since foundation in 1949, the People's Republic of China has gone through the substantial influence of the Soviet Union, softening of communist approach, and the "open door policy". Today the civil service examination system serves for the "socialist market economy", aimed at realising the socialist modernisation. Hong Kong, a former colony of the European power, is far more international than mainland China and has the world's busiest port and airport. It retains its own education and examination systems. So the civil service examination in Hong Kong is more outward looking and serves for the economic prosperity and capitalism of Hong Kong (Bray & Qin, 2001).

There was a fall of competitiveness in Year 2012 among the top 10 competitive positions in mainland China (see Table A7). This was due to the change of policies. In 2012, many positions put "base-level experience" as the application requirement, which became an obstacle for many young fresh university graduates. A new requirement came out that year saying that in all positions within central government agencies and provincial-level organisations, candidates must fulfil the two-year base-level experience in order to qualify the application requirement. This does not mean that from then on fresh university graduates could no longer apply for civil service positions, but they just could not apply for positions in the central

government agencies and provincial government agencies (Chinanews, 2012).

Another noticeable thing is that the content of law is tested both in mainland China and in Hong Kong in the written part. In mainland China, the tested law content involves various law areas of the People's Republic of China including Consumer Protection Law, Constitution, Criminal Law, Inheritance Law, etc. And the law portion remains below 18% every year. In Hong Kong, however, the tested law content is exclusively about the Basic Law which serves as the constitutional document for HKSAR, and its portion was 11.11% every year during the last decade. This shows the political focus of the exam system which makes sure that potential Hong Kong civil servants are well aware of Hong Kong's special legal status as an autonomous region and at the same time, its being as an inseparable sub-region of the People's Republic of China.

6.2.4 The Society as a Competition Entity

The human capital theory already illustrated education's function as investment to the capital of society. On the other hand, based on the conflict theory, society is a competition entity and is always in conflict. Such conflict can be seen from the fiercer competition in getting a civil service job year by year in mainland China and Hong Kong. The examination itself is a competition mechanism. And competition leads to social stratification and inequality in society because the competition result always benefits those with better resources and power (Anderson & Taylor, 2009). The word "power" mentioned here in the examination system can be viewed as better education quality and more effective training. Such social phenomenon is relatively obvious in mainland China's case. As in the interview of this research, the average ranking of universities group A participants graduated from is higher than which group B participants graduated from; and the average ranking of universities group B participants graduated from is higher than which group C participants graduated from. This shows that a good and socially recognisable higher education degree is functioning as the "power" which distinguishes different candidates (candidates with degrees from top ranked universities, candidates with degrees from general universities, candidates with degrees from little-known

universities, etc.). Such phenomenon is not obvious in Hong Kong's case. The interview participants who graduated from different universities with different social positions in Hong Kong society had almost equal chances to get through. Rather, individual learning experience seems to be crucial to win out.

Some conflict theory researchers also claim that individuals do not always act out of self-economic interest, and that success in competition can always be gained through personal effort and hard work (Anderson & Taylor, 2009). This can be indicated from Hong Kong's case where every participant is quite individual, representing mostly just their own individuality, rather than a certain class with a certain level of advantages. Because the research interview result shows that most participants in Hong Kong feel that higher education, throughout the competition, benefits them better in a non-academic way, by building up their social, communication and logic skills, rather than labelling them with any kinds of marks (prominence of university, academic achievement, etc.). How and how well people develop such skills really depend on their own comprehension, experiences and some other rational factors, and cannot be judged upon papers.

6.3 Structure of School-Work Transition: A Process of Modernisation

The school-to-work transition process is what the whole study's focus is on. Such process can involve back and forth among the school, training, temporary job, before one finally gets to the stage of his/her significant job (here it refers to the civil service job). This section will discuss the structure of school-to work transition dimension through two aspects, namely the apprentice system and the job searching procedure in each region.

6.3.1 Apprentice System

This system was not discussed in the above text as the research focuses on the school-to-work transition but the apprenticeship system is involved in the final stage of higher education. Yet it

is still worth noticing because previous research shows that a good apprenticeship system can smoothen the school-to-work transition process (Quintini, Martin & Martin, 2007). Some countries have special focus on the apprentice part, and they make the system as an obligatory part involved in formal educational institutions and offer abundant financial supports. In China, most university students are engaged in some types of apprenticeship in their final study year (Year 4 in China and Year 3 in Hong Kong). In China, apprenticeship usually involves both theory-based learning and work-based learning. But since the end of 1980s, the system was transformed into a more school-based and theory-based training system (Wang, 2014). But in fact, it is difficult for many university students to find a workplace to practice apprenticeship, and many training experiences are claimed to be a mere formality (Lian, 2013). There are three factors behind it. First, according to the Labour Law in mainland China, student's work registered within the study period is not recognised as employment, so student apprentices can hardly get any pay, benefits or protection. Second, there is a lack of incentives for industries/businesses to offer a student training as that often means high cost and low benefits for them. Third, there is a lack of linkage between education sectors and businesses and students often have to find an appropriate place on their own (Wang, 2014).

The Hong Kong apprenticeship system carries on the British system. Most students undertake certain types of internship (from several months up to one year) under job contracts according to which their nature of job, level of salary, and number of working hours are set. Some internships are mandatory and are endorsed by the educational institutions they are studying in. Some institutions even offer offshore internships for students to gain real-life work experience, enhance their global exposure, and make them better prepared to full-time jobs after graduation. Many students look for apprenticeship opportunities and negotiate with companies on their own. Companies in Hong Kong are often willing to provide university students internship opportunities and many big companies recruit university interns on a regular basis (Education Bureau, 2014). The research of Quintini, Martin and Martin (2007) shows that a good apprenticeship system has a positive effect to reduce unemployment after students leave schools. Countries with well-established apprenticeship systems like Germany, for example, enjoy better youth employment patterns.

6.3.2 Job Searching Procedure

The structuring of transition process can involve “the number and types of stages involved”, “the length of transition”, “the range and nature of options available on leaving schools”, etc. (Hannan, Smyth & Raffe, 1996, p. 5). In the transition process, young people often combine job search with part-time or low-paid jobs, as well as job training. And this process is often discontinuous, and is not smooth and quick (Quintini, Martin & Martin, 2007). As this research studies the transition process from school to the civil service position, any other types of employment within this transition are not counted as significant/permanent jobs.

The interview group A in both mainland China and Hong Kong went straight from university, through the civil service examination procedures, to the civil service positions. As suggested above, the average length of transition across the three interview groups in mainland China is 0.78 year, and it is 2.11 years in Hong Kong. It can be seen that there are big differences between the lengths of transition in the two regions, as the transition time in Hong Kong is twice longer than that in mainland China. Also, it indicates that it actually takes a long time for a student to transit himself/herself to the significant/permanent job (as civil servant). There is even one participant in group C of mainland China who, after leaving education, had remained unemployed for one year before getting the job. Among all the 6 participants in group B and group C who did not go directly to their wanted positions in China, one had worked part-time, three had worked temporarily/on contract basis, one had been unemployed, and only one had worked full time in an insignificant job (non-civil service job) despite that they all claimed that their jobs were of low wages or bad working conditions. In Hong Kong’s case, all of the six participants in group B and group C had worked full time before fulfilling their transition process and getting their permanent positions in civil service. The percentage of participants who worked full time (who got entry jobs) in the transition process is much bigger in Hong Kong’s case than in mainland China. And mainland China has a much higher incidence of temporary employment immediately after school ends. This proves again that a good apprenticeship system functions as good gateways to work for youths.

6.3.3 School-to-Work Transition Process as Modernisation Process

School-to-work transition can be seen as a development process. As mentioned earlier, according to Rostow's theory of modernisation, mainland China is in the fourth stage: drive to maturity. In the fourth stage when modern technology is extended to all sectors of economy or society and growth becomes self-sustaining, education helps the extension of the knowledge and skills of modern technology to all sectors of society through lectures, seminars, etc. and makes people aware of their social status, rights, opportunities, and equal positions in society (Kasanda, 2013). In mainland China's school-to-work transition process, what students have gained through university learning is transferred into their workplace (part-time, temporary and full-time positions before they became civil servants). And in this process, they realised that they were not treated equally (what they invested in was much more than what they got), and that they wanted to seek better social status, opportunities and better protected rights. Therefore, they performed the transition from previous jobs to their permanent jobs as civil servants.

Hong Kong is in the fifth stage: high mass consumption where durable consumers' goods and services have become the leading sectors in society. It is a stage when employment in the service sectors increases and when society can choose its concentration on military and security issues, equality and welfare issues, or developing luxuries for its upper class (Kasanda, 2013). Hong Kong has put in a lot of efforts in establishing a better welfare system in the working environment, through financially supporting the apprenticeship system in society, strengthening linkage between educational institutions and businesses, and enforcing the employment protection regulations for university students and young school leavers. It is thus not surprising that during the school-to-work transition towards being civil servants, many more participants in Hong Kong were able to get themselves engaged into full-time jobs than those in mainland China where most participants went more back and forth among temporary/part-time/low quality jobs, job training, and job seeking. In Hong Kong, although the average length of transition from higher education to civil service jobs is longer than that of mainland China, the process turns out to be much smoother and more stable than that in mainland China. In a word, Hong Kong is in a stage of benefiting from the consumption fruits

of a mature economy. Working force is further improved in this stage according to the modernisation theory.

6.4 Outcome of Transition: Educational Output

The outcome of transition dimension is explored into two aspects, namely, outcome at the macro level and outcome at the micro level as follows.

6.4.1 Outcome at Macro Level

During the last ten years, both mainland China and Hong Kong has gone through a series of higher educational reforms, especially in mainland China which is currently entering Stage 4 of Rostow's modernisation theory. Hong Kong is in Stage 5 which is a stage of maintaining sustainability, and the contribution of education in its economy cannot be obviously seen. We can also recognise it from the analysis of the written test content of the civil service examination in mainland China and Hong Kong. The content of the written test in China (percentage of a certain field of knowledge, portion of higher education content, genres of content, etc.) fluctuates every year (see Figure 2). While such variables have remained exactly the same in the CRE/BLT test of Hong Kong during the last ten years (see Figure 3). The growth rate of China's GDP has been above 7.5% during 2004 and 2012 (Sedghi, 2012). In Hong Kong, one of the "Four Tigers" in the East Asia region, its GDP growth is on average about 2.2% during the last ten years (HKTDC, 2014). That is showing that on the macro level, educational outputs make a bigger difference in economic performance in the Stage 4 country than the Stage 5 country.

6.4.2 Outcome at Micro Level

This level will be looked at in three elements based on the research results, namely, "job matching", "wages and wage growth", and "job satisfaction". The civil service examination is a

selective system which aims at selecting out the most suitable candidates for the civil servant positions. In mainland China, the application procedure is very strict, and applicants have to have fulfilled education in the required area to qualify themselves as candidates. So all the participants from mainland China involved in this research were already considered as qualified candidates with required specialised major knowledge in the transition process.

Hong Kong, on the other hand, usually only makes general education experience as application requirement without stressing on the match between candidates' higher education majors and working areas. Employers observe the overall social and working skills of the candidates and judge upon who are their wanted "social elites". Employers made their judgement on candidates' competence particularly in the interview test. Most of the participants did not express a match between learning and work as one of their motivations except for those who work for the security bureau.

Wages of civil servants in mainland China are claimed as stable but slow in growth. And most of participants expressed their satisfaction as a result of working as civil servants because of the match between with their university learning, stability, high social status, etc. Wages of civil servants in Hong Kong are claimed as high but slow in growth. And most participants claimed satisfaction with the civil service work as a result of its high starting wage. But because of the slow wage rise, many civil servants today become unsatisfied and choose to switch job after serving as civil servants for several years.

6.5 Summary of Discussion

Discussion through four perspectives, the school-to-work transition modes in mainland China and Hong Kong are analysed and compared. The two regions have distinct national contexts, but also share something in common. The civil service job in both mainland China and Hong Kong is stable. Once one has entered this career, it is possible for him/her to keep the job for a lifetime. Hong Kong has however, a more regulated labour market than mainland China, and it

took longer time for young people in Hong Kong to transit from school to becoming civil servants than their counterparts in mainland China. Wage-setting mechanism in both mainland China and Hong Kong are title/seniority-based in the civil service market, despite that most industries in Hong Kong have a highly decentralised wage-setting mechanism. Pay rise in civil service in both two regions is slow, causing many civil servants in Hong Kong to leave their “golden rice-bowl” positions after working for several years (but not yet happening in mainland China). Both regions make effort in improving education quality so as to boost up economy. In mainland China, it is the competence from a university with great national prominence that contributes most to the civil service market and economy; whilst in Hong Kong, it is the emphasis on internationalism that leads to quality improvement of education under Hong Kong’s own political settings.

The examination system in mainland China sets more focus on the academic competence candidates show during the exam. Social ability is valued in both regions but Hong Kong obviously takes greater value on it. The bilingual society of Hong Kong makes the exam focus on testing candidates’ language competence in both Chinese and English. Mainland China, on the other hand, values most on its own tradition, classics and politics and puts them into the exam content. Hong Kong’s special political position is also an important point the Hong Kong government wants the general public to be aware of. The political aim of transiting students to the labour market is to contribute to capitalism in Hong Kong. The civil service market has triggered fierce competition in both regions, and the exam acts as a selection tool for competition. In mainland China, a good higher education degree can be a “power” to win out. And in Hong Kong, it is usually the higher education experience which helps contribute to forming and shaping personality the key element to win out.

The school-to-work transition process is viewed as a modernisation process. Mainland China is in the fourth stage of modernisation and often includes such a transition mode: education→awareness→unsatisfication with current status→job searching/training→civil servant. Hong Kong, on the other hand, is in the fifth stage and is mostly involved in welfare system building and law protection strengthening. It has a better established apprenticeship

system than mainland China and has thus a much smoother transition process without much back and forth in the job searching trap (temporary job/part-time job/low-wage job) which is very common in mainland China.

On the macro level, educational output (as a result of such STW transition) makes bigger difference in the economy of mainland China (Stage Four country) than that of Hong Kong (Stage Five Country). The transition outcome shows that civil servants in mainland China got a better match between their jobs and academic majors, whilst such match is unclear and minor in Hong Kong. Job satisfaction is high in both regions except for that civil servants in Hong Kong complain about the slow wage rise despite its high starting point. Based on these findings, the three main research questions will be discussed in the next chapter as a final conclusion.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This comparative study has adopted a mixed research method combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to find out how it works in the school-to-work transition process and the linkage between higher education and success in the civil service examination in mainland China and Hong Kong. Mainland China and Hong Kong are two important components in the Greater China region which has made drastic economic development during the last few decades. They originated from the same cultural and traditional root but have completely social, educational and political systems today. Through analysis of the exam content, top 10 most popular civil service positions, and individual interviews about personal experience as exam takers, the following conclusions can be drawn based on the three research questions.

1. The civil service recruiting systems differ in mainland China and Hong Kong in mainly three ways. First of all, the requirement to apply for a civil service position is much stricter in mainland China. One usually has to have at least a bachelor's degree to apply in mainland China whilst in Hong Kong many positions are open for high school graduates to apply. And a certain level of match or link between a person's academic major and his/her job area is often required in mainland China whilst such requirement is only stated in very few highly specialised positions in Hong Kong. Also, despite that the examination system in both regions is composed of the written part and the interview part and that candidates have to go through at least two stages in order to win out, the focus on the two major parts differs. In mainland China, a very good performance in the written exam showing one's academic proficiency is required and expected, and the competition in the later stage (job interview part) is in fact, much milder. In Hong Kong, however, it is usually the job interview the most challengeable stage and the written part only requires that candidates have an above-average academic and writing abilities. Employers in Hong Kong value highly on candidates' performance which indicates their social and communication abilities during the job interviews. Moreover, although the competition triggered by the system is fierce in both two regions, it is far more extreme in mainland China. In some positions, one has to compete with more than nine thousand competitors in order to win out. A huge surplus of applicants is also one reason

leading to an emphasis on the written test which blocks huge numbers of candidates out.

2. Higher education contributes to a person's success in entry into the civil service profession in somewhat different ways in these two regions. In both regions, the academic content from higher education does not have a substantive direct connection with the exam content, but the portion of higher education content in the written test is increasing in mainland China. That is to say, what one has learnt through higher education is playing a more and more important role in his/her job searching success in the civil service profession. Despite the still little relevance of higher education content in the two regions, exam takers claim that higher education strengthens and enriches their academic competence during the exam. Higher education also contributes to a person's success in non-academic ways. It broadens people's horizon and equip them with good learning abilities. In mainland China, the most outstanding benefit from higher education is seen from candidates who have a degree from prominent universities. Education background from prestigious universities is very advantageous and crucial in the job searching process in mainland China. On the contrary, it is the outstanding social skills Hong Kong values most. Most candidates claim that the higher education experience is extremely important in terms of building up their social network, strengthening their language skills, and getting them prepared for society. In other words, higher education functions mainly as a credible certificate for candidates in mainland China, whilst it mainly functions as a development tool of social skills in Hong Kong. In addition, apprentice experience included in the higher education stage turns out to be helpful in smoothing students' transition to workplace in Hong Kong where the apprenticeship system is well established.

3. The school-to-work transition process which transfers students into stable/permanent civil service jobs differs in mainland China and Hong Kong in mainly three ways. First, the length of transition is much shorter in mainland China. During the interview with the education expert in Hong Kong, it is discovered that such comparatively longer transition time is much due to that the civil service profession is just one normal type of job among many other sound jobs in Hong Kong's society despite its high starting wage. In Hong Kong, the labour market

is highly regulated and people have more choices when considering the relevance, stability and wage of a job. Mainland China, on the other hand, has a less well regulated labour market and young people value the stability of the civil service labour market which they can hardly find in other professions. In a word, a more goal-oriented job searching strategy (towards the civil service profession) leads to the shorter transition time in mainland China. Second, the transition process is much smoother in Hong Kong in terms of that before becoming civil servants, they do not get so much in the back-and-forth trap as their counterparts do in mainland China. In mainland China, those who did not go (or could not manage to go) straight to the civil service profession immediately after leaving school, have experienced temporary jobs, low-wage jobs, or even unemployment. And in Hong Kong, it is common that people had been engaged in some types of full-time jobs before becoming civil servants. They made the shift often because of the higher wage in the civil service profession. Third, the transition does not usually end when a person has become a civil servant. This is especially the case of Hong Kong where a certain portion of civil servants tend to quit their civil service positions to seek better opportunities after having possessed the “golden rice-bowl” for several years.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that it is never an easy and relaxing process to get an ideal job (refer to civil servant in this study) in any parts of the world. One has to get proficient, prepared and well-trained for the competition. Quality and experience of higher education play some roles in this transition under both two societies, but there are some other important elements that influence the result, for example, vocational training. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, vocational training is growing fast in both regions, particularly in mainland China. And the most exciting thing is that it has begun to influence the attitudes of society. Many young people claim that they gained confidence through vocational training and many have found jobs as a result. In a society where official degree is highly valued, it is thought provoking to find out that vocational education is generally becoming penetrated into the official education system. The function of vocational education in the school-to-work transition as well as in the development of the not-yet-well-established apprenticeship system in Chinese society are well to be the area to be looked into in future studies.

References

- Agbo, S. A. (2005). Myths and realities of higher education as a vehicle for nation building in developing countries: the culture of the university and the new African diaspora. In D.S. Preston (Eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Education* (pp.49-70). Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi.
- Almendarez, L. (2010). *Human capital theory: implications for educational development*. Conference Paper. The University of the West Indies. Retrieved from <http://www.open.uwi.edu/sites/default/files/bnccde/belize/conference/papers2010/almendarez.html>
- Anderson, M. L. & Taylor, H. F. (2009). *Sociology: The Essentials*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Armer, J. M. & Katsillis, J. (2000). Modernization theory. In E. Borgatta & R.J.V. Montgomery (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Sociology, Volume 3* (2nd Edition, pp. 1883-1888). USA: Gale Group.
- Bensen, N. E. (2013). The Chinese Examination Interregnum: Civil Service Testing in China Before and After “The Century of Humiliation”. New College of Florida. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/4441565/THE_CHINESE_EXAMINATION_INTERREGNUM_Civil_Service_Testing_in_China_Before_and_After_The_Century_of_Humiliation
- Bray, M. & Qin, G. (2001). Comparative Education in Greater China: context, characteristics, contrasts and contributions. *Comparative Education*, 37 (4), 451-473. Taylor & Francis, Ltd. doi: 10.1080/0305006012009125
- Breen, R. (2005). Explaining Cross-National Variation in Youth Unemployment. Market and Institutional Factors. *European Sociological Review* 21 (2), 125-134. doi: 10.1093/esr/jci008
- CUHK. (2011, March). Brief Introduction of Main Points in Bachelor Courses (本科課程要點簡介). Office of Teaching Affairs, Chinese University of Hong Kong. Retrieved from http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/aqs/rps/smf_c.pdf
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Caracelli, V. J. & Greene, J. C. (2010). *Data Analysis Strategies for Mix-Method Evaluation Designs*. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 15 (2), 195-207. American Educational Research Association. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1164421>
- Chambliss, D. F. & Schutt, R. K. (2012). *Making Sense of the Social World: Methods of Investigation Fourth Edition*. USA: SAGE Publications.
- Chinanews. (2012). The fever of civil service application goes down in 2012. Fresh graduates get stuck by basic-level experience. Retrieved from http://edu.163.com/11/1127/15/7JSIK0ED00294JA1_2.html
- Choi, C. (1999). Public Examinations in Hong Kong. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 6 (3), 405-417. doi: 10.1080/09695949992829

Civil Service Bureau. (2014). Common Recruitment Examination and Basic Law Test (Degree/Professional Grades) (CRE and BLT). Retrieved from <http://www.csb.gov.hk/english/recruit/cre/949.html>

Civil Service Network. (2014). Past Exam Papers. Retrieved from <http://www.gjgwy.org/gwykszt/>

COM, (2012, November). Rethinking Education: Investing in Skills for Better Socio-Economic Outcomes. *COM, 2012* (669). Strasbourg: European Commission. Retrieved from http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/com669_en.pdf

CUHK. (2008). General Regulations Governing Full-time Undergraduate Studies. Chinese University of Hong Kong. Retrieved from http://rgsntl.rgs.cuhk.edu.hk/aqs_prd_applx/Public/Handbook/document.aspx?id=845&tv=T&lang=en

Dave, R. H. & Hill, W. H. (1974). *Educational and Social Dynamics of the Examination System in India 18* (February 1974), 24-38.

The Economist . (2012, November 24). Civil-Service Exam: the Golden Rice-bowl. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/news/china/21567124-young-graduates-once-risk-takers-now-want-work-government-again-golden-rice-bowl>

Education Bureau. (2014). Internship and part-time work. Retrieved from <http://studyinhongkong.edu.hk/en/hong-kong-education/internship-and-part-time-work.php>

Erie, M. S. (2009). Legal education reform in China through U.S.-inspired transplants. *Journal of Legal Education*, 59 (1), 60-96.
From <http://www.swlaw.edu/pdfs/jle/jle1erie.pdf>

European Commission. (2014). *Country-Specific Recommendations 2014*. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/themes/26_wage_settings.pdf

Guo, Q. (2002). The educational ideas and goals of university. *China Academic Journal 2002* (10). Retrieved from <http://pdf.d.cnki.net>

Gouvais, D. (1998, September). *The national examination's system of Greece and its function as a mechanism of social selection*. Paper presented at the European Conference on Educational Research, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Hannan, D. F., Raffe, D., & Smyth, E. (1996). *Cross-national research on school to work transaction: an analytical framework*. OECD. Retrieved from <http://www1.oecd.org/edu/country-studies/1925587.pdf>
Retrieved 13 March, 2014

Hayhoe, R. (1996). *China's Universities, 1895-1995: A Century of Cultural Conflict*. New York : Garland Pub.

HKFYG. (2006). The transition from school to work. *Youth Study Series*, 35. Retrieved from <http://yrc.hkfyg.org.hk/news.aspx?id=b4490092-2d8c-437b-90ac-e13a21273aba&corpname=y>

rc&i=2527

Holz, C. A. (2014). Wage determination in China during the reform period. *BOFIT Discussion Paper No. 13/2014*. doi: 10.2139/ssrn.2451049

Kasanda, P. (2013). Rostow' theory of modernization development. Zambia University. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/3596310/Rostows_theory_of_modernization_development

Ko, K. & Lu, H. (2013). An Empirical Study on Public Service Motivation of the Next Generation Civil Servants in China. *Public Personnel Management XX (X)*, 1-32. Published 19 May, 2013. SAGE. doi: 10.1177/0091026013487122

Kogan, I. & Unt, M. (2008). The role of vocational specificity of educational credentials for labour market entry in Estonia and Slovenia. *International Sociology*, 23 (3), 389-416. doi: 10.1177/0268580908088898

Kubow, P. K. & Fossum, P. R. (2007). *Comparative Education: Exploring Issues in International Context*. New Jersey: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Lagasse, P. (2012). "Chinese examination system". *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopaedia*, 6th ed. Columbia: Columbia University Press. Web. 2 Apr. 2014

Lent, R. W., Hackett, G. & Brown, S. D. (1999), A Social Cognitive View of School-to-Work Transition. *The Career Development Quarterly* 47, 297–311. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-0045.1999.tb00739.x

Levin, H. M. & Xu, Z. (2006). Issues in the expansion of higher education in the People's Republic of China. In J. Lauder, P. Brown, J-A. Dillabough, & A.H. Halsey. (2006). *Education, Globalisation and Social Change* (pp. 909-925). Oxford University Press.

Li, Y. (April, 2013). Hong Kong civil servant examination is booming: 300 thousand applied during five years, the threshold level is as low as middle school qualification. *Xinhuanet*. Retrieved from http://news.xinhuanet.com/gaogao/2013-04/24/c_115512371.htm

Lian, C. (July 28, 2013). Do not make university apprenticeship as a mere formality. *Xinhuanet*. Retrieved from http://news.xinhuanet.com/2013-07/28/c_11671212017.htm

Liang, J. (2008). *Comparative Research on the Status of the University between Hong Kong and Chinese Mainland (master dissertation)*. Southwest University, Chongqing. Retrieved from http://www.docin.com/touch_new/preview_new.do?id=354952258

Li, R. Y. M. & Hung R. (2013). Rostow' stages of growth model, "urban bias" and sustainable development in India. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business Research* 2 (5), 170-188. Retrieved from <http://jcibr.webs.com/Archives/Volume%202013/Issue%205%20September/Article-V-2-N-5-032013JCIBR0026.pdf>

Lisle, J. D. (2011). The Benefits and Challenges of Mixing Methods and Methodologies:

Lessons Learnt from Implementing Qualitatively Led Mixed Methods Research Designs in Trinidad and Tobago. *Caribbean Curriculum*, 18 (2011), 87-120. The University of the West Indies. Retrieved from <http://www.uwispace.sta.uwi.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2139/11308/Mixing%20Methods%20and%20Methodologies%20De%20Lisle.pdf?sequence=1>

McClelland, D. C. (1961). *The Achieving Society*. New York: van Nostrand.

NCEE. (2010). School-to-work transition. Center on International Education Benchmarking. Retrieved from <http://www.ncee.org/programs-affiliates/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/shanghai-china/shanghai-china-school-to-work-transition>

OECD. (2010). Shanghai and Hong Kong: two distinct examples of education reform in China. *Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education: Lessons from PISA for the United States*, 83-115. From <http://www.oecd.org/countries/hongkongchina/46581016.pdf>

Olaniyan, D.A. & Okemakinde, T. (2008). Human capital theory: implications for educational development. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 24 (2). Retrieved from <http://www.eurojournals.com/ejsr.htm>

QS. (2013). *A Student's Guide to Hong Kong*. QS Topuniversities. Retrieved from <http://www.topuniversities.com/where-to-study/asia/hong-kong/hong-kong/student's-guide-hong-kong/>

Quintini, G., Martin, J. P., & Martin, S. (2007). The Changing Nature of the School-to-Work Transition Process in OECD Countries. *IZA Discussion Paper No. 2582*. Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit Institute for the Study of Labor: Germany. Retrieved from <ftp://ftp.iza.org/dps/dp2582.pdf>

Rostow, W. W. (1960). *The Process of Economic Growth*. London: Oxford University Press.

Sedghi, A. (2012). China GDP: how it was changed since 1980. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/mar/23/china-gdp-since-1980>

Smith, A. (1952). An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations. In R.M. Hutchins & M. J. Adler (Eds.), *Great Books of the Western World: Vol. 39. Adam Smith*. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica. (Original work published 1776)

South China Morning Post . (2013, August 30). Record Numbers Flock to Take Civil Service Exam. Retrieved from <http://m.scmp.com/news/china/article/1090811/record-numbers-flock-take-civil-service-exam>

Times Higher Education. (2013). *World University Rankings 2013-2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2013-14/world-ranking>
van der Velden, R. K. W. & Wolders, M. H. J. (2003). The Integration of Young People into the Labour Market: The Role of Training Systems and Labour Market Regulation, in Muller, W. & Gangl, M. (eds) *Transitions from Education to Work in Europe. The Integration of Youth into EU Labour Market*, pp. 186-211. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wang, C. Y. (2014). *Apprenticeships in China: experiences, lessons and challenges*. OECD.
Retrieved from
http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/C_WANG-Apprenticeships%20in%20China%20Update.pdf

Wang, R. (2013). *The Chinese Imperial Examination System*. UK: Scarecrow Press.

Wolbers, M. H. (2007). Patterns of Labour Market Entry: A Comparative Perspective on School-to-Work Transitions in 11 European Countries. *Acta Sociologica* 2007 (50), 189-210.
doi: 10.1177/0001699307080924

Appendices

Appendix 1

Quantitative Analysing Tables

Table A3: Examination Paper Analysis: Mainland China

Questions Year		The Administrative Aptitude Part							The Essay Test
		1-20	21-35	36-50	51-60	61-85	86-105	106-125	
2004	Correspondent Skills gained through HE	Language Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	Logical Analysis: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Fundamental Math: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	Graphic Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Logical Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language/Politics)	General Knowledge and Current Affairs: Irrelevant to Normal Education	University Fundamental Course (Statistics)	Economics : University Level Specialised Course (for economics students)
Questions Year		The Administrative Aptitude Part							The Essay Test
		1-25	26-50	51-60	61-80	81-95	96-115	116-135	
2005	Correspondent Skills gained through HE	Language Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	Fundamental Math: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	Graphic Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Logical Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language/Politics)	Logical Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education	General Knowledge and Current Affairs: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education	University Fundamental Course (Statistics)	Economics & Politics: University Level Specialised Course (for economics and political science students)
Questions Year		The Administrative Aptitude Part							The Essay Test
		1-35	36-50	51-60	61-70	71-95	96-115	116-135	
2006	Correspondent Skills gained through HE	Language Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	Fundamental Math: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	Graphic Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Logical Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language/Politics)	Logical Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education	General Knowledge and Current Affairs: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education	University Fundamental Course (Statistics)	Economics & Politics: University Level Specialised Course (for economics and political science students)

06	Skills gained through HE	Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	Irrelevant to Normal Education	Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language/Politics)	Irrelevant to Normal Education	and Current Affairs: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Politics/Science/History)	al Course (Statistics)	Level Specialised Course (for economics and political science students)
----	--------------------------	----------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------	--------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------

Questions Year		The Administrative Aptitude Part							The Essay Test
		1-40	41-60	61-65	66-70	71-95	96-120	121-140	
2007	Correspondent Skills gained through HE	Language Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	Fundamental Math: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	Graphic Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Logical Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	Logical Analysis: Irrelevant to Normal Education	General Knowledge and Current Affairs: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Politics/Law)	University Fundamental Course (Statistics)	Political Administration: University Level Specialised Course (for management and political science students)

Questions Year		The Administrative Aptitude Part							The Essay Test
		1-40	41-60	61-65	66-95	96-120	121-140	-----	
2008	Correspondent Skills gained through HE	Language Analysis: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	Fundamental Math: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	Graphic Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Logical Analysis: Irrelevant to Normal Education	General Knowledge and Current Affairs: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Politics/Law)	University Fundamental Course (Statistics)		Urban Planning & Politics: University Level Specialised Course (for urban planning and political science majored)

									students)
Questions Year	The Administrative Aptitude Part								The Essay Test
	1-25	26-60	61-65	66-70	71-100	101-120	121-140		
2019	Correspondent Skills gained through HE	General Knowledge and Current Affairs: Pre-Uni Education (Basic) (Chinese Language (Politics/Law/History/Geography)	Language Analysis: Pre-Uni Education (Basic) (Chinese Language)	Inductive Interpretation: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Graphic Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Logical Judgment and Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Fundamental Math: Pre-Uni Education (Mathematics)	University Fundamental Course (Statistics)	Economics & Politics: University Level Specialised Course (for economics and political science students)
Questions Year	The Administrative Aptitude Part								The Essay Test
	1-20	21-40	41-55	56-65	66-90	91-115	116-140		
2010	Correspondent Skills gained through HE	Language Analysis: Pre-Uni Education (Basic) (Chinese Language)	Inductive Interpretation: Pre-Uni Education (Basic) (Chinese Language)	Fundamental Math: Pre-Uni Education (Mathematics)	Graphic Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Logical Judgment and Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	University Fundamental Course (Statistics)	General Knowledge and Current Affairs: University Compulsory Course (Chinese History)	Urban Planning & Politics: University Level Specialised Course (for urban planning and political science majored students)
Questions Year	The Administrative Aptitude Part								The Essay Test
	1-25	26-45	46-65	66-80	81-90	91-120	121-135		
2011	Correspondent Skills	General Knowledge and Current Affairs: Pre-Uni Education (Basic) (Chinese Language)	Language Analysis: Pre-Uni Education (Basic) (Chinese Language)	Inductive Interpretation: Pre-Uni Education (Basic) (Chinese Language)	Fundamental Math: Pre-Uni Education (Basic)	Graphic Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Logical Judgment and Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	University Fundamental Course	Policy Making: University Level Specialised

1	gained through HE	Affairs: University Compulsory Course (Chinese History/Law)	(Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	University Fundamentals Course (Chinese Language)	Education (Mathematics)	Normal Education	Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	(Statistics)	Course (for public administration students)
---	-------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------	-------------------------	------------------	-------------------------------------------	--------------	---------------------------------------------

Questions Year		The Administrative Aptitude Part							The Essay Test
		1-25	26-45	46-65	66-80	81-90	91-115	116-135	
2012	Correspondent Skills gained through HE	General Knowledge and Current Affairs: University Compulsory Course (Chinese History/Law/Maxism-Leninism)	Language Analysis: Pre-University (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	Inductive Interpretation: University Fundamentals Course (Chinese Language)	Fundamental Math: Pre-University (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	Graphic Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Logical Judgment and Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	University Fundamentals Course (Statistics)	Policy Making: University Fundamentals Course (Chinese Language)

Questions Year		The Administrative Aptitude Part							The Essay Test
		1-20	21-40	41-60	61-75	76-85	86-115	116-135	
2013	Correspondent Skills gained through HE	General Knowledge and Current Affairs: University Compulsory Course (Chinese History/Law/Maxism-Leninism)	Language Analysis: Pre-University (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	Inductive Interpretation: University Fundamentals Course (Chinese Language)	Fundamental Math: Pre-University (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	Graphic Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Logical Judgment and Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	University Fundamentals Course (Statistics)	Policy Making: University Fundamentals Course (Chinese Language)

		Course (Chinese History/La w/ Marxism-L eninism)	Language)	(Chinese Language)			Education		
--	--	-----------------------------------------------------------------	-----------	-----------------------	--	--	-----------	--	--

Table A4: Examination Paper Analysis: Hong Kong

Year	Questions	English Test	Chinese Test	Aptitude Test					Basic Law Test
		1-40	41-85	86-93	94-99	100-107	108-112	113-120	121-135
2004	Correspondent Skills gained through HE	Language Ability: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (English Language)	Language Ability: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	Deductive Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Verbal Reasoning: Irrelevant to Normal Education	Data Sufficiency Test: Fundamental Math: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	Numerical Reasoning: Fundamental Math: Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	Interpretation of Tables and Graphs: University Fundamental Course (Statistics)	University Level Specialised Course (for law students)

Table A5: Assisting Table (Mainland China)

	Year (Year 2004=1, Year 2005=2....Year 2013=10)									
Correspondent Education (%)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	16,00	18,52	25,93	32,14	28,57	25,00	28,57	29,63	14,81	14,81
Irrelevant to Normal Education	36,00	18,52	25,93	21,43	25,00	28,57	25,00	29,63	25,93	29,63
Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	12,00	18,52	11,11	14,29	14,29	14,29	10,71	11,11	11,11	11,11
Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Others)	20,00	29,63	22,22	17,86	17,86	17,86				
University Fundamental/Compulsory Course	16,00	14,81	14,81	14,29	14,29	14,29	35,71	29,11	48,15	44,44

Table A6: Assisting Table (Hong Kong)

	Year (Year 2004=1, Year 2005=2....Year 2013=10)									
Correspondent Education (%)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
University Level Specialised Course	11,11	11,11	11,11	11,11	11,11	11,11	11,11	11,11	11,11	11,11
Irrelevant to Normal Education	10,37	10,37	10,37	10,37	10,37	10,37	10,37	10,37	10,37	10,37
Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Mathematics)	9,63	9,63	9,63	9,63	9,63	9,63	9,63	9,63	9,63	9,63
Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (English)	29,63	29,63	29,63	29,63	29,63	29,63	29,63	29,63	29,63	29,63
University Fundamental/Compulsory Course	5,93	5,93	5,93	5,93	5,93	5,93	5,93	5,93	5,93	5,93
Pre-Uni (Basic) Education (Chinese Language)	33,33	33,33	33,33	33,33	33,33	33,33	33,33	33,33	33,33	33,33
										3

Table A7: Top 10 Popular Civil Service Positions in Mainland China (2009~2013)

Year Rank	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1	Primary-Level Organiser at China's Federation of the Disabled (1:4723)	Junior Staff at Ministry of Science and Technology (1:4080)	Junior Staff at Bureau of Energy (1:4961)	Junior Staff at National Ethnic Affairs Commission (Scientific Research) (1:1476)	Research Staff at National Statistical Bureau (Hechuan, Chongqing Branch) (1:9411)
2	Supervisor at Nanjing Customs (1:4653)	Site Supervisor at Xiamen Customs (4:13548)	Junior Staff at Bureau of Culture (1:4033)	Junior Staff at National Ethnic Affairs Commission (General Affairs) (1:1151)	Research Staff at National Statistical Bureau (Nanchuan, Chongqing Branch) (1:9175)
3	Site Supervisor at Xiamen Customs (3:10471)	Junior Staff at China Association for Science and Technology (1:2929)	Police Officer at Shenyang Railway Police (1:4014)	Junior Staff at National Certification and Accreditation Administration (1:1135)	Junior Staff at Ministry of Railways (1:4400)
4	Junior HR Staff at National Development and Reform Commission (1:3408)	Office Assistant at Shandong Tax Bureau (1:2871)	Office Assistant at Shandong Tax Bureau (1:3605)	Staff at Anhui Tax Bureau (1:724)	Junior Staff at National Ethnic Affairs Commission 1 (Scientific Research) (3:11375)
5	Staff at Ministry of Public Security (1:3142)	Trademark Investigator at State Administration for Industry & Commerce (1:2683)	Clerical Staff at Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (3:10687)	Junior Staff at Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (1:677)	Junior Staff at National Ethnic Affairs Commission 2 (Scientific Research) (2:7567)
6	Junior Staff at National Family Planning Commission (1:2710)	Supervisor at Dalian Customs (1:2549)	Senior Staff at Central Institute of Socialism (1:3340)	Police Officer at Taiyuan Railway Police (1:659)	Staff at Guangdong Marine Bureau (1:3344)
7	Junior Staff at Seismological Bureau (1:2636)	Staff at Ministry of Public Security (1:2366)	Administrative Staff at Ministry of Public Security (1:2994)	Junior Staff at China Post System (1:627)	Police Officer at Hohhot Railway Police (1:3143)
8	Junior Staff (Discipline Inspecting) at Central United Front Work Department (1:2565)	Supervisor at Urumchi Customs (2:4524)	Staff at Sichuan Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau (1:2905)	Staff at Guangdong Tax Bureau (1:615)	Junior Staff at National Forestry Bureau (1:2961)
9	Staff at Fujian Tax Bureau (1:2031)	Junior Staff at Land Supervision Bureau (1:2253)	Junior Staff at Ministry of Land and Resources (1:2702)	Supervisor at Ningbo Customs (1:586)	Junior Staff at Ministry of Culture (1:2899)
10	Junior Staff (General	Supervisor at Tianjin	Immigration Control at	Investigator at Sichuan	Police Officer at

	Affairs) at Central United Front Work Department (1:2030)	Customs (7:15351)	Zhuhai Immigration Port (2:5151)	Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau (1:585)	Hohhot Railway Police (1:2245)
--	-----------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------	-------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

Table A8: Top 10 Popular Civil Service Positions in Hong Kong (2009~2013)

Year Rank	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1	Administrative Officer at Central Government Office (25:15600)	Administrative Officer at Central Government Office (27:16848)	Assistant Officer at Hong Kong Correctional Services Department (235:10000)	Police Officer at the Hong Kong Police (1070:16400)	Administrative Officer at Central Government Office (25:12125)
2	Assistant Against-Corruption Officer at Independent Commission Against Corruption (60:5000)	Customs Inspector at Hong Kong Customs (25:15600)	Police Officer at the Hong Kong Police (920:14700)	Assistant Officer at Hong Kong Correctional Services Department (--:7700)	Police Officer at the Hong Kong Police (1200:17964)
3	Fire Fighter and Ambulanceman at Fire Services Department (100:6778)	Officer at Hong Kong Correctional Services Department (40:11000)	Administrative Officer at Central Government Office (25:--)	Assistant Clerical Officer at Central Government Office (700:--)	Assistant Officer at Hong Kong Correctional Services Department (175:--)
4	Police Officer at the Hong Kong Police (1050:--)	Officer at Immigration Department (200:16000)	Officer at Hong Kong Correctional Services Department (45:--)	Assistant Officer at Hong Kong Correctional Services Department (25:--)	Officer at Immigration Department (--:--)
5	Officer at Hong Kong Correctional Services Department (--:--)	Fire Fighter and Ambulanceman at Fire Services Department (160:8535)	Fire Fighter and Ambulanceman at Fire Services Department (520:--)	Assistant Against-Corruption Officer at Independent Commission Against Corruption (55:--)	Customs Inspector at Hong Kong Customs (--:--)
6	Assistant Clerical Officer at Central Government Office (--:--)	Assistant Against-Corruption Officer at Independent Commission Against Corruption (50:2110)	Assistant Clerical Officer at Central Government Office (--:--)	Assistant Officer at Hong Kong Correctional Services Department (--:--)	Clerical Assistant at Central Government Office (--:--)
7	Assistant Officer at Hong Kong Correctional Services Department (--:--)	Clerical Assistant at Central Government Office (1150:44500)	Assistant Against-Corruption Officer at Independent Commission Against Corruption (--:--)	Clerical Assistant at Central Government Office (--:--)	Fire Fighter and Ambulanceman at Fire Services Department (--:--)
8	Officer at Immigration Department (--:--)	Assistant Clerical Officer at Central Government Office (700:24000)	Officer at Immigration Department (--:--)	Officer at Immigration Department (--:--)	Assistant Clerical Officer at Central Government Office (--:--)
9	Customs Inspector at	Assistant Officer at	Customs Inspector at	Customs Inspector at	Officer at Hong Kong

	Hong Kong Customs (--:--)	Hong Kong Correctional Services Department (330:10005)	Hong Kong Customs (--:--)	Hong Kong Customs (--:--)	Correctional Services Department (--:--)
10	Clerical Assistant at Central Government Office (--:--)	Police Officer at the Hong Kong Police (920:14700)	Clerical Assistant at Central Government Office (1070:16400)	Fire Fighter and Ambulanceman at Fire Services Department (--:--)	Assistant Against-Corruption Officer at Independent Commission Against Corruption (--:--)

Appendix 2

Interview Guide (semi-structural)

- a. For students who have got the civil servant position immediately after graduation through exam
 1. Which year did you take the Civil Service Examination?
 2. Why did you take the exam? What do you think are the most attractive qualities of the civil service profession?
 3. Which university did you graduate from and what is your occupation now?
 4. How do you think your university education has helped you to get the job?
 5. What kind of preparation have you made and what do you think is the most important factor that has led you through?
 6. Apart from knowledge gained in university lectures, what else about the university education do you think was helpful for you to succeed in the civil service examination?
 7. To what extent do you think higher education has changed your life or shaped your future?
 8. What happened in the job interview and how did you win over in the interview in your understanding?
 9. Have you been through other kinds of training in preparation of the exam, and if yes, how did it help?

- b. For people who have got the civil servant position after several years of professional work
 1. Which year did you take the Civil Service Examination?
 2. Why did you take the exam? Why did you change your job? What do you think are the most attractive qualities of the civil service profession?
 3. Which university did you graduate from and what is your occupation now?
 4. How do you think your university education has helped you to get the job?
 5. How do you think your work experience has helped you to get the job?

6. What kind of preparation have you made and what do you think is the most important factor that has led you through?
7. Apart from knowledge gained in university lectures, what else about the university education do you think was helpful for you to succeed in the civil service examination?
8. To what extent do you think higher education and several years of professional work have changed your life or shaped your future?
9. What happened in the job interview and how did you win over in the interview in your understanding?
10. Have you been through other kinds of training in preparation of the exam, and if yes, how did it help?

c. For people who got the job but have taken the exam multiple times

1. Which year did you take the Civil Service Examination?
2. Why did you take the exam? What do you think are the most attractive qualities of the civil service profession? What have you been doing before attending the exam?
3. What motivated you to take the civil service examination again?
4. Which university did you graduate from and what is your occupation now?
5. How do you think your university education has helped you to get the job?
6. How do you think your work experience (if any) has helped you to get the job?
7. What kind of preparation have you made before taking the exam again and what do you think is the most important factor that made the difference?
8. Apart from knowledge gained in university lectures, what else about the university education do you think was helpful for you to succeed in the civil service examination?
9. To what extent do you think higher education and several years of professional work have changed your life or shaped your future?
10. What happened in the job interview and how did you win over in the interview in your understanding?
11. Have you been through other kinds of training in preparation of the exam, and if yes,

how did it help?

The whole research process is inductive.

Appendix 3

Participant Profiles

Category 1: students who have got the civil servant position immediately after graduation through exam

Category 2: people who have got the civil servant position after several years of professional work (but have only taken the exam once)

Category 3: people who got the job but have taken the exam multiple times

Category 4: representative of the officials in the local educational section

Table A1 Participant Profile of Mainland China

Participant	Age	Gender	Education Level	Year of Work	Year in Civil Service	Category	Number of Trials	Current Employment
1	31	Female	Master	9	9	1	1	Zhejiang Provincial Family Planning Commission
2	26	Male	Bachelor	4	3	2	1	Wenzhou Public Security Bureau
3	33	Male	Bachelor	12	10	2	1	Yunnan Provincial Tax Bureau
4	28	Male	Bachelor	6	6	1	1	Zhejiang Provincial Health Department
5	27	Male	Bachelor	5	5	3	4	Zhejiang Provincial Bureau of Foreign Affairs
6	25	Male	Bachelor	2	1	2	1	Dali Public Security Bureau

7	25	Male	Bachelor	2	1	3	2	Kunming Railways Bureau
8	26	Male	Bachelor	3	1	3	2	Yunnan Police Academy
9	24	Male	Bachelor	2	2	1	1	Dali Public Security Bureau
10	33	Female	Master	10	10	4	1	Zhejiang Provincial Education Bureau

Table A2: Participant Profile of Hong Kong

Participant	Age	Gender	Education Level	Year of Work	Year in Civil Service	Category	Number of Trials	Current Employment
1	28	Male	Bachelor	8	6	2	1	Security Bureau of HKSAR
2	30	Male	Bachelor	9	3	2	1	Security Bureau of HKSAR
3	27	Female	Bachelor	5	5	1	1	Security Bureau of HKSAR
4	23	Male	Bachelor	2	2	1	1	Education Bureau of HKSAR
5	25	Female	Bachelor	4	2	3	2	Education Bureau of HKSAR
6	27	Female	Bachelor	5	1	3	2	Education

								Bureau of HKSAR
7	25	Male	Master	3	3	1	1	Financial Reporting Council
8	25	Female	Bachelor	4	1	3	2	Financial Reporting Council
9	27	Male	Master	4	2	2	1	Financial Reporting Council
10	69	Male	Master	25	15	4	1	Education Bureau of HKSAR (former)

Appendix 4: Letter of Consent NSD

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Harald Hårfagres gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org nr. 985 321 884

Fengshu Liu
Pedagogisk forskningsinstitutt Universitetet i Oslo
Postboks 1092 Blindern
0317 OSLO

Vår dato: 08.10.2013

Vår ref: 35132 / 2 / LB

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 15.08.2013. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

35132	<i>A Comparative Analysis of the College Entrance Examination System in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong: the Function of Examination as Selection Tool for the Labour Market</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Fengshu Liu
Student	Yuting Zhang

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.04.2014, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Lene Christine M. Brandt

Kontaktperson: Lene Christine M. Brandt tlf: 55 58 89 26

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no

TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no

TROMSØ: NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@sv.uit.no

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Yuting Zhang Olav M. Troviks vei 24, H0303 0864 OSLO



According to the notification form, verbal consent will be obtained based on verbal information about the project and the processing of personal data. The Data Protection Official for Research presupposes that verbal information is provided in accordance with the following:

- Which institution is responsible (the data controller) for the project (UiO)
- The purpose of the project and what the personal data will be used for
- Which methods will be used to collect the personal data and who will have access to identifying data
- That participation is voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time, without stating the reason
- The date the project ends, and that all personal data at this point will be anonymized or deleted
- Contact information of the supervisor and student

Data will be gathered through interviews, by the use of Skype, and will be videotaped. The information will be registered on a private computer. The Data Protection Official for Research presupposes that the use of a private computer, memory stick and mobile phone is in accordance with the routines for data security for the University of Oslo. We recall that mobile storage devices are less secure, and we therefore recommend the use of an encrypted memory stick.

When the project is completed, by 30.04.2014, the data material will be made anonymous by deleting directly and indirectly identifying variables and audio- and video-recordings will be deleted. In order for the data to be fully anonymized, all directly identifying data, such as names/reference numbers must be deleted, and indirectly identifying data (combination of background variables such as gender, age, education, occupation, place of work) in the remaining material must be deleted or changed.

[Print](#)[Close](#)

Prosjektnr: 35132. A Comparative Analysis of the College Entrance Examination System in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong: the Function of Examination as Selection Tool for the Labour Market

From: **Lene Brandt** (lene.brandt@nsd.uib.no)
Sent: Tuesday, October 01, 2013 2:11:55 PM
To: Shelly_woaini@hotmail.com; fengshu.liu@iped.uio.no

Thank you for the information. I can probably handle the original notification form, just as long as your project, otherwise, is to be conducted the same way you originally reported.

So, if I can sum up: The purpose of this study is to find out *how state of economy and quality of higher education affect young people's chances to get a position in public service in mainland China and Hong Kong*. And you will interview people who have *experienced and passed the Civil Service Examination (those who finally got the job) in their country/region*. And you will recruit them through *several contacts that live in China and Hong Kong who will be used as gatekeepers to gain interview possibilities from contacts they offer*. Is this correctly understood?

In addition, I do need some answers to the original questions I asked you:

- 1) In the original notification form, you have registered that you will use records and document analysis. What do you mean by this; will you collect *personal identifying data* through these methods, or do you mean official available material?
- 2) If you are to inform your sample in written, you will also need to send us a revised information letter, with information more specifically adapted to your project. For instance: you should not mix English and Norwegian in the letter. You should also adapt the consent part of the letter to what is the case in your project (probably: "I have received written information and I am willing to participate in the project").

Please send the revised letter of information and a response to all of these questions.

I am looking forward to hear from you. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us.

--

Vennlig hilsen / Best regards

Lene Chr. M. Brandt
Rådgiver / Adviser

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
(Norwegian Social Science Data Services)

Personvernombud for forskning
(Data Protection Official for Research)

Harald Hårfagres gate 29, 5007 BERGEN

Tlf. direkte: (+47) 55 58 89 26
Tlf. sentral: (+47) 55 58 81 80
Faks: (+47) 55 58 96 50
Epost: lene.brandt@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no/personvern