

Mass Education in China under Mao

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ABSTRACT

Mass Education in China under Mao

Frank Crooks

The purpose of this research paper is to examine the development of mass education and literacy training in the People's Republic of China (PRC) from its inception in 1949 until the end of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1977. Due to the vast size of the nation and the widely dispersed and varied make-up of the Chinese population, a diversity of educational programs and tools would be implemented by the educational policy makers in order to offer both formal and non-formal schooling to the population.

Education under the leadership of Mao Zedong (Mao) in the PRC would be driven by two different, and often conflicting, policy objectives: the first objective of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was to equip the population with the academic skills necessary to create productive workers, and the second objective was to indoctrinate the population with correct political thought.

While the PRC was able to effectively achieve universal primary school attendance by 1978, secondary and tertiary education was at that time generally only available in the urban and suburban areas. As over 80% of the population still lived in rural areas, access to secondary and tertiary education remained out of reach for the vast majority of Chinese people.

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List of Tables

Table 1.....	100
Student enrollment in formal education in the PRC, 1949-1978	
Table 2.....	102
Participants and graduates of anti-illiteracy classes in the PRC, 1949-65 and 1974-87	

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I	Pre-Modern China.....5
	Confucianism: Foundations of the Imperial Examination System...6
	Development of the Chinese Imperial Examination System.....10
	Social Consequences of the Imperial Examination System.....15
	Chapter Summary.....20
Chapter II	The Republic of China, 1911-1949.....22
	May Fourth Movement.....23
	Nationalist Educational Policies.....25
	Education for the People.....25
	The Eight Years of Resistance against Japan, 1937-1945.....29
	The Civil War, 1946-1949.....30
	Chapter Summary.....30
Chapter III	The People's Republic of China.....32
	Mao and Marxism.....33
	The Chinese Communist Party (CCP).....34
	Education in the Early Years, 1949-1952.....36
	School system.....37
	Secularization of education.....41
	Land redistribution.....42
	Politics and education.....43

Shortfalls during the early years.....	45
First Five Year Plan, 1953-1957.....	45
The Soviet model.....	45
Reform of industry.....	48
The role of intellectuals.....	48
Double hundred movement.....	49
Literacy issues.....	50
The Chinese definition of literacy.....	52
Shortfalls of the First Five Year Plan.....	53
Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960.....	53
The commune system.....	54
Combining education and labour.....	56
Failure of the commune system.....	58
Collapse of Sino-Soviet relations.....	60
Two Conflicting Views, 1961-1965.....	60
The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.....	65
Red guards.....	67
Educational policies during the Cultural Revolution.....	69
Primary and middle schools.....	70
Teachers.....	74
Higher education.....	76
Non-formal education.....	78

	Criticisms of the Cultural Revolution.....	80
	The collapse of the Cultural Revolution.....	83
	Post Cultural Revolution.....	84
	Chapter Summary.....	86
Chapter IV	Education of National Minorities in China under Mao.....	89
	Chinese Minority Education Policies, 1949-1957.....	90
	Chinese Minority Education Policies, 1958-1965.....	94
	The Cultural Revolution.....	95
	Integration.....	96
	Chapter Summary.....	98
Chapter V	Conclusion.....	99
	Formal Education.....	99
	Non- Formal Education.....	102
	Knowledge of Chinese characters.....	104
	Curriculum.....	106
	The Need for Teachers.....	108
	The Value of Education.....	110
	References.....	112
	Appendix 1: Chronology of Chinese Dynasties.....	121
	Appendix 2: Abbreviated chronology of important events in China 1893-1977.....	123
	Appendix 3: 1975 Rongcheng County Literacy Primer Cover.....	125
	Appendix 4: 1982 census data on Chinese nationalities and population.....	126
	Appendix 5: Distribution of China's ethnic minorities.....	128

Introduction

According to the Marxist philosophy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the People's Republic of China (PRC), created in 1949, was to be led by the people's democratic dictatorship, which Mao described in the following manner:

The people's democratic dictatorship is based on the alliance of the working class, the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and mainly on the alliance of the workers and peasants, because these two classes comprise 80 to 90 per cent of China's population. (*Selected readings*, 1971, p. 383)

While the nation was supposed to be led by the members of the workers and peasant classes, the dilemma faced by the CCP was that almost 80% of the population was illiterate, and the vast majority of these illiterates were workers and peasants. The seemingly overwhelming task of training illiterates so that they could lead a nation was a priority that would have to be addressed (Chi, 1968).

In discussing traditional educational issues faced by developing nations, Coleman (1965) identified three areas where important changes will generally occur. The state will embark on a program of rapid expansion of educational facilities, a secularization of the school system will occur by which the state takes over administrative control of the teaching institutions and the educational curriculum will be revised in order to promote a curriculum that the new government views as necessary to advance both economic development and instill correct political ideology.

In a country which recognized only one legitimate political party, the state was the educational policy maker and educational policy was likely to fluctuate greatly as a result of the changing priorities of the party, changes in party leadership and changes in

party policies. Educational policy would be the conduit used by the state to provide information to the public that the state deemed useful and necessary.

The basic aims of the educational policies adopted by the CCP under Mao's leadership would be twofold. Education was recognized by the party as an effective vehicle to both stimulate economic development through the teaching of work related skills and as an effective vehicle to indoctrinate the population with the correct Marxist ideology (Lucas, 1976).

Objectives of this Research Paper

It is this writer's intention to examine the educational ideologies and the educational policies employed by the historically dominant power groups in China prior to and during the period of Mao and to outline, in a chronological fashion, the development of both formal and non-formal forms of basic education in China. This paper will trace educational development in both urban and rural settings and will examine how access to and quality of education was affected by the changes in power structure and /or educational ideologies of the Chinese policy makers. This writer will draw on a number of theories from the sociology of education and from the work of the New Literacy Study group in order to critique the development of mass education in China under the leadership of Mao.

For over 2,500 years, education has been viewed by the Chinese people as a means of bettering their own lives both socially and economically. The power of education, not only to advance a nation economically, but to help pacify and control a population was not lost on those who ruled China. From ancient times, astute Chinese rulers recognized the value and the power of education to help control and administer

populations spread out over enormous geographical areas. An examination of the development of education in ancient China reveals that issues addressed by modern conflict theorists regarding Status Groups, Social Capital, the Correspondence Principle and Hegemony were not only present but were being actively employed in ancient China by those groups who controlled educational policy.

This paper will begin by providing a comprehensive overview of the development of educational policies in ancient China followed by a review of the educational policies and programs adopted in modern China during the Republic of China (Kuomintang) era from 1911 to 1949. In this paper the terms ancient China or pre-modern China will refer to the period in history prior to 1911. The expression modern China will refer to the period commencing in 1911 when the monarchy was abolished and China became a republic.

Having provided the reader with the relevant historical facts in order to familiarize them with the state of the educational system in China in 1949, this writer will then address the principle topic of this paper which will be the analysis of the educational policies and practices adopted by the government of the PRC from 1949 until the end of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1977. As the social, economic and educational policies adopted under the PRC were tied directly to the political ideology of the CCP, swings in political ideology would lead to rapid and divergent changes in social, economic and educational policies. Chinese educational policies under the PRC did not develop in one consistent direction, and for this reason this writer has divided this analysis of PRC educational policies into five distinct time periods: the early years (1949-1952), the First Five Year Plan (1953-1957), the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960), Two

Conflicting Views (1961-1965) and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1977). A chronology of Chinese dynasties is attached hereto as Appendix 1, and an abbreviated chronology of important events that occurred in China between 1893, the birth of Mao Zedong, and 1977, the end of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, is attached hereto as Appendix 2.

Chapter I

Pre-Modern China

In this chapter we will trace the development of education in China from ancient times until the end of imperial rule in 1911. From its historical roots based around oral teachings of wandering scholars, a rigid and formalistic system of education known as the imperial examination system would develop in China. Successful completion of the imperial examinations would take on a significance far greater than that of merely acquiring a good education, and would be viewed by the population as the most important avenue in obtaining social, economic and political advancement within Chinese society.

The history of ancient China has often been viewed as a cycle of dynasties each of which would rise, develop and then decay, to be replaced by a new dynasty. Some rulers were able to unite the whole of the vast land that was China, while others were ineffective in installing loyal regional governments to protect the interests of the central ruler. The question of how best to enforce central rule was one of the most perplexing problems faced by Chinese rulers from antiquity to modern times.

The inability of a weak ruler to hold his empire together would lead to war over territory, to the emergence of many small competing states and eventually to a collapse of any form of central government. By the sixth century B.C., at the beginning of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, the era known as the Spring and Autumn period (770 - 476 B.C.), China was divided into numerous independent states fighting among themselves for territory and power (Creel, 1965). As these states tried to strengthen their individual positions, the need for skilled and literate officials and teachers to assist the various local

rulers also arose. The deterioration of the existing political system led officials to question existing ideas and to look for new solutions to bring about social stability. This chaotic period became a breeding ground in which new intellectual ideas flourished. The Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period which followed (770 – 221 B.C.) is often referred to as the era of the Hundred Schools of Thought (Federal Research Division, 1988). While the ideas of several important philosophers have survived from this period, the teachings of Confucius have had the most profound impact on the development of Chinese culture and education.

Confucianism: Foundations of the Imperial Examination System

As discussed by Cooper (1996), the Chinese believe that their most famous educator in antiquity was Kong Fu Zi, known to the West as Confucius (551 – 479 B.C.), who was born in the state of Lu to a poor aristocratic family during the Spring and Autumn period. At the age of 16, it is said that Confucius witnessed the ruler of a small state trying unsuccessfully to replace the ruler's relatives who held official offices with competent young men, impoverished but well educated aristocrats from other states. We are told that the relatives were so angered that they revolted and killed the ruler. Confucius himself belonged to this nomadic impoverished elite group who, unable to obtain official posts in their own states, traveled the country looking for functionary or teaching positions (Creel, 1965).

Confucianism, a social philosophy that developed out of the oral teachings of Confucius, stressed the importance of developing a harmonious and orderly society and dealt with issues of morality, self perfection, social and political thought. Those who followed the teachings of Confucius were known as the *literati*. It is important to note

that Confucius never portrayed himself as a religious leader and that Confucianism should not be regarded as a religion (Hooker, 1996).

In discussing the nature of Confucianism, Weber (1951/1968), in his famous text *The Religion of China*, made an interesting comparison between Confucianism and Protestantism / Puritanism. He described Confucian learning as a means of self-perfection, a person's quest for peace and harmony, to help one adjust to the world as it exists, unlike the Puritans who strove not to accept the world as it was, but to change it in their interpretation of God's image.

Cooper (1996) pointed out that Confucius never produced any written works himself and that the teachings attributed to Confucius were interpreted, written and reproduced by his disciples and later scholars over a period of several hundred years following Confucius' death. We therefore find ourselves in an ambiguous situation where it is not possible to identify with certainty what Confucius actually said. The works attributed to Confucius are identified by Reagan (2005) in his book *Non-Western Educational Traditions*, as *The Four Books: The Analects of Confucius* (Lun Yu), *The Mencius* (Meng Zi), *The Great Learning* (Da Xue) and *The Just Means* (Zhong Yong) (p. 144).

Since Confucius lived in a period of social disorder and chaos, his teachings reflected the need to recognize and to respect a social hierarchy in order to create stability. Confucius prescribed five essential hierarchical relationships, discussed by Graham and Lam (2003) in their very informative article "The Chinese Negotiation", relationships which were to be respected in order to maintain peace and social harmony. These relationships were between: ruler and ruled, husband and wife, parents (father) and

children (son), older and younger brother, and friend (male) and friend (male) and were intended to create mutual responsibility where each party would owe duties to the other, for example the ruled would serve the ruler, who in turn would take care of the ruled. These hierarchical relationships were not however intended to create equality between the parties.

While Confucius championed the need for a hierarchical society, he did not believe that education was only for the rich. In ancient China, education was available only to those who could pay for it. An interesting fact raised by Creel (1965) is that Confucius was recognized as being a teacher who welcomed poor men as well as nobles to be his students. Contrary to the generally accepted beliefs at that time that a gentlemen's status was based on noble birth, Confucius taught that any man could become a gentleman through education and that no man could call himself a gentleman based solely on birth. A man must earn the status of gentleman through good conduct and good character.

Confucius believed that education should be made available to all men and that men should be educated so that they can use this education for enlightened purposes such as participating in good government. He also envisioned that in the proper state of society men should not take advantage of each other but should cooperate to promote the common welfare of all. A successful ruler, according to Confucius, should be judged on his ability to protect the welfare and happiness of his subjects (Creel, 1960).

Defining and understanding the Confucian view of education is not a clear straightforward process. Zurcher (1989), a Buddhist scholar, in explaining that the

Confucian concept of education was more than simply the act of teaching and of study, stated the following:

In the Confucian perspective, education has always meant much more than purely intellectual training and the transfer of certain skills. True education, as defined by Confucian thinkers, cannot be separated from the moral improvement of the individual as a social being... (p. 19)

Martin (1912), recounted that in approximately 240 B.C., Yin Zhen, the ruler of the state of Qin, known as Qin Shi Huang, the First Emperor of China (Qin dynasty), who built the famous terracotta army in Xi'An and who started the construction of the Great Wall, in an attempt to impose censorship and totalitarian rule, burned all of the Confucius writings that he could lay his hands on. Creel (1965) informed us that Emperor Qin also killed all Confucius scholars who criticized his rule, however following the collapse of the Qin dynasty, a new interest arose during the early part of the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.-9 A.D.) in reviving the teachings of Confucius. As discussed by Martin (1912), while great efforts were undertaken to reconstruct ancient Confucian ideas and writings, certain Han scholars might have submitted their own writings as being those of the Great Master Confucius. Martin (1912) offered the following analogy to illustrate this point: "The Arabs of Egypt are not more expert in manufacturing antique mummies than were the students of Han in the construction of ancient classics" (p. 92).

Confucius' teachings promoting a social hierarchy based on merit would appeal to the Han rulers and their successors who recognized the need for competent administrators in an increasingly complex society. Confucius' formula for the operation of a meritocratic based government consisted of four elements as stated by Lee (1985):

1. The government should educate everyone without class or racial distinction; all men are born with equal potential for goodness.
2. The emphasis of education should be on ethical rectitude. It is possible to achieve moral perfection through education.
3. Morally superior people should be selected for service in the government; they are the leaders of society.
4. Chinese society should remain hierarchical, with the ruling class composed mainly of the selected few who meet the moral qualifications. (p. 5)

The mechanism that would be used by the Chinese emperors to implement a system of appointment based on merit would become known as the Chinese imperial examination system.

Development of the Chinese Imperial Examination System

The Chinese civil service was historically dominated by an entrenched aristocratic class that held sufficient political and social power to be recognized as an ongoing potential threat to the ruler. The ideas put forward by Confucius that government appointment should be based on merit, instead of preexisting family connections, were recognized by clever rulers as an effective tool to surround themselves with competent administrators who owed their loyalty directly to the ruler, and not to the competing interests of the aristocratic families (Elman, 1991).

The first initiatives to appoint administrators based on merit were developed during the Han dynasties (206 B.C-220 A.D.) with the adoptions of oral examinations for some government positions. During the Sui dynasty (581-617 A.D.) and the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.) the use of a system of meritocratic appointment would be

expanded. This system did not fully develop until the Song dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), after China had been reunited following the fall of the Tang dynasty and five decades of war. The system of meritocratic appointment used during the Tang dynasty was revived by the Song emperors and expanded to cover all civil service appointments. This examination system would be known as the imperial examination system and would remain as an important government and social institution until it collapsed along with the empire in the early years of the 20th century.

The Song rulers, having reunited the empire, were very conscious that the survival of a central government required the strict control and limitation of the powers of the aristocratic families and military leaders in the various regions of the empire. The development of regional economic and political power centers, especially in the distant and prosperous southern areas, had to be prevented, and a method of attracting talented and affluent men from all corners of the empire to actively and willingly join the central government's civil service was needed. The Song rulers believed that if men focused their attention on competing for government jobs instead of trying to undermine the central government, the emperor would remain powerful (Elman, 1991).

In his book *The Schooling of China*, Cleverley (1991) discusses the makeup of the imperial examination system. Prior to the Song dynasty, examinations for the civil service tested candidates on a broad range of knowledge and skills including singing, writing, composition, horsemanship and archery. During the Song dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) there was a great resurgence of interest in the teachings of Confucius, known as Neo-Confucianism, which resulted in a major change in the curriculum for the imperial examinations, so that the testing of practical skills was no longer included. The new

curriculum adopted a very rigid approach to learning, where memorization and strict reproduction of ancient texts, without discussion or personal interpretation by the student, became the norm. The texts that had to be memorized consisted of the *Four Books* along with the *Five Classics*. The *Five Classics* were books which existed from pre-Confucian China and which were said to contain all of the ancient ethics and wisdom of China. They are: *I Ching* (The Book of Changes), dealing with the metaphysical structure and dynamics of the universe; *Shu Ching* (The Book of History), discussing ideas of politics and government; *Shi Ching* (The Book of Odes), containing poems from the Zhou dynasty (1027 -771 B.C.); *Li Chi* (The Book of Rites), describing ancient Chinese rituals; and *Chun Chiu* (The Spring and Autumn Annals), a recorded history of the state of Lu from approximately 700 - 500 B.C. (Hooker, 1996).

According to Elman (1991), as early as the 11th century A.D., the Chinese government began to organize and to finance the creation of state run schools throughout the empire, however these institutions did not provide any teaching services but served principally as places for candidates to group together to study for the imperial examination. Living expenses and the cost of tutors remained the responsibility of the students.

While women were excluded from writing the imperial examinations, these examinations were open to men from most social groups except for executioners, torturers, barbers, scavengers, priests, brothel owners, men in mourning, actors and merchants. During the 14th century, the laws were changed to allow merchants to write these examinations. The clerks who worked for government officials were also excluded

from writing the imperial examinations until late in the Chinese empire (Cleverley, 1991; Elman, 1989; Sterba, 1978).

A boy's preparation to write the imperial examinations, as documented by Cleverley (1991), started before he was even born. Pregnant women were encouraged to perform various rituals and activities that were believed to be beneficial for the learning abilities of her unborn child, if that child was a boy. Starting at the age of about three, a boy would begin his formal schooling and would begin copying and learning Chinese characters. Young boys were required to memorize *The Thousand Character Essay* which contained one thousand different Chinese characters and to memorize the book of *The Hundred Family Names* containing approximately four hundred different Chinese family names. It would take a boy several years to memorize the characters in these books. At the age of seven or eight, a tutor would be hired to teach the boy. By the age of fifteen, a very good student would have memorized the 400,000 character text of the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics*. Once a boy reached this stage, he was then required to memorize the long written commentaries on the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics*; and required to learn the complicated and rigid writing technique known as the "eight-legged essay" that had to be adhered to when writing the imperial examinations (Reagan, 2005).

One method used to encourage young boys to labor diligently at their learning tasks was to inspire them by highlighting the rewards that learning would bring to them through the use of poetry:

To enrich your family, no need to buy good land:

Books hold a thousand measures of grain.

For any easy life, no need to build a mansion:

In books are found houses of gold.

Going out, be not vexed at absence of followers:

In books, carriages and horses form a crowd.

Marrying, be not vexed by lack of a good go-between:

In books there are girls with faces of jade.

A boy who wants to become a somebody

Devotes himself to the classics, faces the window, and reads (Miyazaki, 1976, p. 17).

Cressey (1929) examined the formal structure under which the imperial examination system was organized. This system was composed of three distinct levels of examinations. The first level was called the *Hsiu-tsai* (budding genius) and was held approximately twice every three years. This exam would be written in numerous local cities all over the country and would last for about one week. No restrictions were placed on the number of times that a man could write this examination and instances have been noted where a son, a father and a grandfather from the same family all wrote the same exam together. The success rate for this first level exam was very low and estimated at being between one percent (1%) and one and one-half percent (1.5%). Only candidates who successfully passed this exam could advance to the second level examination known as the *Chu-jen* (promoted man) which was held once every three years in the capital city of each province. Candidates taking the second level examinations would be physically required to spend nine days and nights in a tiny room, known as an examination cell, in which they would eat, sleep and write exams, totally isolated from other people (Reagan, 2005). About one percent (1%) of candidates would pass the second level examinations. The successful candidates at this level could then go to Beijing and write the third level

of imperial examinations known as the *Tsin-shi* (advance scholar) which was held in the spring of the year immediately following the writing of the second level examinations. Very few candidates ever passed this third level examination and men who did successfully pass were often of middle age or older. Once a scholar had successfully passed the *Tsin-shi*, his name would be added to the government registry qualifying him for an official position; however if no jobs were available the scholar might never receive an official position without resorting to bribery.

An additional examination was sometimes given by the emperor, at his discretion, to the scholars who had passed the *Tsin-shi*. As many as 50% of those taking this exam would be deemed successful and would receive the honorable title of *Han-lin* (the forest of pencils) which would entitle them to receive a special salary directly from the emperor (Cressey, 1929). This imperial examination system remained in place with little or no change from the 13th century until it was officially abolished in 1905.

Social Consequences of the Imperial Examination System

According to Cressey (1929), the imperial examinations system was viewed as a mutually beneficial system by both the ruler and the Confucian scholars, the literati, in imperial China. The granting of official positions based exclusively on the results of a standardized examination system provided the emperor with candidates who had all been indoctrinated with the same ideas and cultural values. No matter where the candidates came from within the empire, they had all been educated and tested on the same body of knowledge, namely the Four Books and the Five Classics. In an empire where people spoke many diverse regional dialects, the requirement that all candidates for the imperial examinations must speak and write Mandarin, the language of the northern emperor,

helped to create a unifying language among all officials and scholars throughout the empire.

In Moore's (1993) book *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, he devoted an entire chapter to discussing the decay of imperial China. Moore explained that success on the imperial examinations that led to an official government position would provide immense status to one's family and would provide the means of acquiring wealth. The power to tax lay in the hands of the officials and it was an accepted practice to greatly supplement one's income by withholding a large portion of the tax collected from the peasants.

The Confucian scholars spent much of their useful lives studying ancient books and their success was measured by their ability to blindly memorize and reproduce huge volumes of ancient Mandarin texts. When choosing government officers traditional leadership skills such as the ability to lead men were not taken into consideration. The imperial examination system rewarded memorization and discouraged innovative and creative problem solving skills. Since there can be no progress without creativity and inventive thought, the rigid imperial examination system was unable to propagate meaningful social, political or educational change in imperial China (Cressey, 1929).

Since schools were dependant on the tuition received from their students to survive, schools concentrated on teaching what students demanded, namely the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics* along with the specific rigid and formal writing techniques required for the imperial examinations. There was little interest or incentive to study, or to teach, any subject or field of knowledge that was not expressly necessary to prepare a student to write the imperial examinations. The study of subjects that did not directly

relate to the imperial examinations such as law, medicine, astronomy and fiscal matters were shunned by the literati as unworthy, and were left to lesser people such as the clerks, underlings and even foreigners to perform (Creese, 1929; Elman, 1991).

Why generations of Chinese men spent their lives memorizing information that was both archaic and devoid of practical application can, to some degree, be explained by examining a number of modern theories from the sociology of education. Probing the concept of knowledge, we note that knowledge is information and that the educational curriculum will be the central source of determining what information is transmitted to the learner as knowledge. Freire (1972) raised concerns over how knowledge is developed. According to him, knowledge should develop through a process of inquiry, through invention and reinvention and through discourse between human beings. The banking concept of education was the name that Freire coined to describe the system where educators fill students with knowledge that students have been conditioned to accept as truthful, and he highlighted the danger in accepting information as truthful without inquiry. This banking system empowered a small dominant group in society to select what information would be presented as knowledge in the educational curriculum. This information, while presented as reflecting the issues, concerns, and beliefs of society as a whole, reflected merely the beliefs and values that the dominant group wished to have society accept as legitimate knowledge.

The Chinese emperors, recognizing the need to promote loyalty and obedience within the civil service, chose a standardized and difficult text as the curriculum that had to be learned by all who wished to gain access to a government position. The fact that the Four Books and the Five Classics were chosen as the mandatory curriculum for the

imperial examinations may have resulted from the fact that in 13th century China these were the most scholarly works available. As to why 19th century Chinese scholars continued to blindly memorize these ancient texts which had no practical use in training administrators, can in part be explained by examining Collins' (1971) discussion of Status Groups.

According to Collins (1971), Status Groups as developed by Max Weber can be defined as groups sharing a common culture, language, manners, tastes, dress, rituals and preferences in recreational, sporting and social activities. Weber described three criteria that could be used to establish the membership in a Status Group: 1) power position, 2) economic situation or 3) cultural, geographic, ethnic or religious factors. Collins (1971) claimed that different Status Groups struggled with each other to gain control of wealth, power and prestige in society. The dominant (high) Status Group controlled the education system, which led to their dominant Status Culture being taught as the standard acceptable behaviour in schools. The dominant (high) Status Group that developed from the 11th century onwards in imperial China was comprised of the literati, those scholars who had passed one or more levels of the imperial examinations. These scholars became the loyal allies of the emperor in perpetuating this system of appointment based on scholarly merit that would ensure that little or no power could be passed down by the aristocracy through heredity. Looking at the system through the eyes of the scholars, they viewed success in the imperial examination as a measure of their own moral and social worth. As highlighted by Elman (1989), "...a classical education became the *sine qua non* for social and political prestige in national and local affairs" (p. 382).

As discussed by Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2003), the process of legitimizing certain knowledge as valuable and important as a tool for social control is referred to as hegemony. This hegemonic knowledge takes on an aspect of truthfulness and educators have historically been encouraged not to question its accuracy or validity. It would appear that the Status Culture that rewarded success on the Chinese imperial examinations, promoted by the dominant Status Group, the literati, was embraced without question by the population as a whole. Rich men and poor men alike blindly accepted the notion that the avenue to social prestige and authority in imperial China was to successfully pass the imperial examinations. Although the imperial examination system appeared to be very democratic in nature and open to all, in reality only the rich families could afford to pay for the lengthy and intensive education necessary in order to prepare a man for the imperial examinations (Creeseey, 1929).

While one cannot in good conscience blame the shortfalls of the imperial examination system for the collapse of the imperial empire, the social and political consequences of following this system led to the perpetuation of an elitist and ultra-conservative mentality among Chinese government administrators, who strove to resist change and to maintain at all costs the status quo (Elman, 1991).

By the middle of the 19th century, Britain and other European and Asian powers had, through armed conflict, forced their way into China and established trading rights and territorial concessions therein. China, in spite of its size and population, found that it was unable to defend itself against the Occidental powers, and with every battle lost to a foreign nation, China's obligations to pay punitive monetary reparations grew (Han, 1972).

Following the disastrous attempt to drive foreigners out of China in the spring and summer of 1900, known as the Boxer Uprising, the imperial government recognized the need to educate its officials regarding western culture and ideas. Chinese students studying in western countries were actively sought out and encouraged to return to China to take up official government positions. Commencing in 1902 examinations for government positions would place less emphasis on the Confucian classics and would require knowledge of Chinese history and government along with western politics (Ichiko, 1980).

In 1905, the empress Dowager officially abolished the imperial examination system and with the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 the last vestiges of the imperial examination system would finally disappear. China would now enter into the modern age.

Chapter Summary

Prior to 1911 there was virtually no recognition by the state of any need for mass literacy in China. With the exception of select schools run by western religious orders and rudimentary self financed village schools, education was generally not available to the ordinary Chinese. The education that was available for girls, outside of the western mission schools, was limited to the teaching of the basic knowledge necessary for women to become capable wives ((Ichiko, 1980). Seeberg (2000) pointed out that traditionally Chinese families were concerned with the education of boys, as girls were viewed as persons who would leave the parental family unit at a young age and would spend their productive lives working for the benefit of their husbands' families. Boys, on the other hand, would stay with the parental family and would take care of their parents.

Rawski (1979) reminded us that during the late imperial period a wealth of potential teachers, consisting of those men who had failed to pass the lowest level of the imperial examinations, were available nationwide to teach elementary education in return for payment. Starting with the premise, to be discussed later in this paper, that literacy can be looked at as a skill that varies in degree depending on the functional needs of the learner, Rawski (1979) concluded that in late 19th century China as much as 30-45% of the male population and 2-10% of the female population could arguably be considered literate because they were able to understand between several hundred and several thousand Chinese characters (p. 140).

China's historical obsession with Confucian ideology and teachings had undoubtedly helped China preserve its ancient culture and language; however the Confucian emphasis on scholarship as a profession had greatly hindered the development of science and technology. China found itself in the early 20th century in the unenviable position of having to rapidly westernize and industrialize in order to defend itself from foreign domination.

Chapter II

The Republic of China, 1911-1949

In this chapter we will examine the development of educational policies and programs adopted in the Republic of China. Advances in education during this period would reflect the clear class division that existed under the Republican government. While democratic on the surface, Republican China was controlled by a small elite group made up of business, financial and military leaders who did not hesitate in using force to keep order and remain in power. Educational policies adopted during this period were geared towards promoting a western based educational curriculum from primary through university level for the benefit of the urban elite.

While October 10, 1911 has historically been celebrated as the birth of the new Republic, it was not until February 12, 1912 that the Chinese emperor formally abdicated placing full authority for the provisional government into the hands of Yuan Shi-Kai (Yuan), a former imperial military leader and political strongman. Sun Yat-Sen (Sun), while recognized as the father of modern China, did not have the political support of the landed gentry, the military or the foreign commercial interests, and had to concede the Presidency of the new Republic to Yuan. For all intents and purposes Yuan's new government was controlled by the same powerful groups that had controlled the imperial court, and China became a Republic in name only.

Hostilities between the supporters of Sun, who called for real democratic change, and those of Yuan, who supported the status quo, would escalate and preoccupy the Chinese leadership over the next several years. Yuan, with the full support of his foreign backers, would wage a murderous elimination campaign against Sun's reformers, and

Sun would flee to Japan in 1913 for his safety. The outbreak of the First World War would distract the attention of the foreign powers from their financial investments in China, greatly reducing the funds available to Yuan to wage war on the reformers. Yuan's failed attempt in 1915 to declare himself emperor of China resulted in most provinces seceding from the Republic and setting up their own independent governments under regional leaders known as warlords. While Yuan would die in 1916, Chinese politics for the remainder of the First World War would focus on China's delicate relationships with the warring powers in Europe, on the threat of aggression from the new Russian Bolshevik government to the north, on curtailing the expansionist policies of the Japanese empire and on trying to reconsolidate the power of the central government over the renegade provinces (Clubb, 1972; Han, 1972).

May Fourth Movement

On May 4, 1919, angry students in Beijing protested against the Chinese government's capitulation and agreement, at Versailles, France, to give control over the former German territories in China to the Japanese (Hunter & Keehn, 1985). This protest was to be the beginning of a new intellectual movement throughout China, known both as the New Culture Movement and as the May Fourth Movement, that set about trying to build a new nation by rejecting the old imperial culture and beliefs and embracing new intellectual ideas that they believed would lead to the scientific, social and democratic modernization of China. Foremost in the minds of this group was the recognition that mass education was needed to build a strong nation (Hayford, 1987).

Educational reform in early 20th century China would address three specific issues: reforming language, expanding formal schooling; and creating new non-formal

educational tools. Reforming the Chinese language was identified as a major priority by the intellectuals and scholars who founded the May Fourth Movement. These scholars argued that the excessively complicated Chinese writing style used since antiquity needed to be replaced by a modern vernacular form of writing based grammatically on the Mandarin dialect spoken in northern China, and which would utilize a modern vocabulary (Hayford, 1987).

As discussed by Xu (1992), while the central government of the Republic of China recognized the need to implement a new educational system, it was not until 1922 that the National Education Plan was adopted. This plan was heavily influenced by the teachings of John Dewey, who spent two years in China from 1919 to 1921, and set out seven objectives for Chinese education:

1. To meet the needs of the social development.
2. To be oriented towards democratic education.
3. To promote the development of individualism.
4. To take national economic power into consideration.
5. To heed the educational value of real life.
6. To promote basic/popular education.
7. To allow flexibility and adjust education to local needs. (p. 14)

Cleverley (1991) pointed out that during the 1920s foreign controlled Christian religious orders operated private schools offering basic education to over 500,000 Chinese, and certain warlords offered extensive basic education to large numbers of young boys and girls in their regions. These teaching facilities operated outside of the control of the relatively weak central Nationalist government based in Nanjing.

Nationalist Educational Policies

With the death of Sun in 1925, the control of the Republic passed to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Nationalist / Kuomintang party, and a member and staunch supporter of the conservative land owning industrial gentry. Nationalist educational policy thereafter would reflect the views of this dominant group and would promote the interests of the middle class urban population. By 1928 the Nationalist government had succeeded in defeating many regional warlords and expanded its authority over most areas of China. The opening of new industrial and vocational schools was promoted in recognition that school graduates needed employable skills to join the workforce.

As stated by Becker, Falski, Langevin and Tawney (1932), the League of Nations criticized Nationalist educational policy by pointing out that this system favoured the promotion of higher education at the expense of offering essential basic education to the general population. "This creates an enormous abyss between the masses of the Chinese people, plunged in illiteracy, and not understanding the needs of their country, and the intelligentsia educated in luxurious schools and indifferent to the wants of the masses" (Becker et al., 1932, p. 21).

Education for the People

Referring to a survey undertaken in the 1930s, Rawski (1979) pointed out that peasants did in fact believe that there was a practical need to understand basic Chinese characters: 27% of the respondents indicated that literacy was important for keeping accounts; 26% said that literacy was important in order to read and write letters; 10% felt

that literacy would help them avoid being cheated when dealing with others and 6% stated that literacy would help them read newspapers and books (p. 21).

One of the great pioneers of mass literacy in 20th century China was Dr. James Yen (Yangchu Yen), a Yale University graduate who returned to China in 1920 and worked with the Chinese YMCA to set up a privately funded national literacy campaign. Yen (1975) would write in 1934 about his philosophy for mass education stating that:

The Mass Education Movement, organized as a National Association in 1923, arose in recognition of the problems inherent in a vast, neglected population. Its purpose is to explore that potentialities of the masses, and find a way of educating them, not merely *for life*, but to *remake life*. (p. 77)

Lacking pedagogical tools, Yen would develop his own literacy primer entitled the *Peoples Thousand Character Primer (Pingmin qianzi ko)*. This new primer was made up of four individual booklets and unlike many previous teaching tools that had chosen specific Chinese characters to teach based on their simplicity and ease in writing, the authors of this new primer based their choice on relevancy, and chose the 1200 Chinese characters most commonly used in newspapers, on signs, on forms and in basic documents (Hayford, 1987; Hunter & Keehn, 1985). Yen's literacy campaign also attracted Tao Xingzhi, a former student of John Dewey's in America. Tao is recognized for having introduced a novel and creative teaching technique known as the "little teacher", whereby young students would teach what they had learned in school to the other members of their household after school (Hayford, 1987).

In developing a curriculum to be taught in rural villages, Yen argued that neither the old Confucius style of Chinese education nor the modern western style of education

had any relevance for the peasants, and stated that: “The general pattern of primary education in the rural districts today is borrowed from the West, and is designed for urban schools. The result is ill adapted to the needs of children in the rural districts of China” (Yen, 1975, p. 19).

In his discussions with Pearl S. Buck in the early 1940s, Yen highlighted the danger of teaching inappropriate information to the rural farmers:

I say sometimes that non-education is better than mis-education. Now when these people want a better living and a better life, that is wholesome. But, if you only instill into them a lot of new ideas and new desires and don't equip them with real knowledge or real skills to satisfy their new desires then all you have done is to make a disturbance in the community of a very undesirable kind. (Buck, 1945, p. 41-42)

Yen also noted the negative effects that could occur to a rural community when students are not taught in their local region but are taken away, often to urban areas, to be schooled. “So many well-being philanthropists take boys and girls away and put them into luxurious buildings and teach them and then wonder why they don't want to go back (to the farm)” (Buck, 1945, p. 42).

The legitimacy of Yen's beliefs developed in the 1920s that basic education was a tool that could empower not only the individual farmers but their communities as a whole, is reflected in the modern day writings of the New Literacy Studies group, which look at literacy as being a social practice and not simply as the acquisition of skills. According to Street (2001) and other members of the New Literacy Studies group only an ethnographic approach can provide understanding of the uses (and abuses) of literacy in a particular situation. Literacy should not be seen as one dimensional since there may be

multiple literacies occurring in any one community. One must be prepared to question the dominant view as to what constitutes “illiteracy” as the so called “illiterates” may already have a functional system of communication at a local level. It is important to understand and accept the validity of local customs and practices when one introduces literacy practices to a community, since the best intentions of an outside group of educators might fail if the local community being taught feels marginalized or alienated by the process.

Fagan (1992) highlighted the difficulty in creating a simple universal definition for literacy since literacy means different things to different groups of people. The situational context in which a particular person found himself/herself lacking specific reading or writing skills would greatly influence what that person perceived as being the skills necessary to make him/her literate.

Street (2001) identified that the traditional “autonomous model” of literacy, which consisted of the delivery of a “neutral” generic package of basic reading and writing skills, was based on beliefs and rules created and perpetuated by the dominant power group in society. These beliefs and rules were imposed on weaker groups for the purposes of maintaining the power of the dominant group. An alternate model of literacy was that of the “ideological model”, which embraced and recognized the value of local beliefs, language and culture. Street (2001) contended that successful local literacy practices had to address the practical concerns and needs of the particular community along with ways to empower the members of the community.

Due to lack of funding and the impoverished nature of rural villages, Yen’s Mass Education Movement would set up very basic facilities known as People’s Schools,

which would be self-financed and self-run by the individual villages. Yen would employ many creative techniques in order to provide villagers with access to learning material including portable libraries and the adoption of radio as an effective medium of education (Hayford, 1987). Dr. Yen would not remain in China after the defeat of the Nationalist government, but would continue promoting literacy programs in other parts of the world until his death in 1990 at the age of 96. His approach to promoting literacy in the context of a skill set that would be useful and empowering for a rural community would be implemented by the communist government of the PRC.

In 1935 the Nationalist government proposed the adoption of one year of compulsory schooling for every person, to be implemented by 1940; however the Japanese invasion of China in 1937 disrupted the implementation of this policy. From a political standpoint we are reminded by Cleverley (1991) that the Nationalist government's policies supported and benefited the affluent middle class gentry both in the urban and rural areas. Peasants and urban workers were viewed with suspicion and were considered potential radical, communist troublemakers. The government's fear that literacy might empower the poor to rise up against the Nationalist regime greatly hindered its willingness to offer literacy training to the people.

The Eight Years of Resistance against Japan, 1937-1945

In 1937 Japan renewed its aggression against China, which has commenced in 1931 with the occupation of Manchuria, and within 18 months Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing and Guangzhou had fallen to the invaders. As pointed out by Freyn (1940), the Japanese invasion spelled disaster for the Chinese educational system since the majority of Chinese schools were located in the coastal regions now occupied by Japan. Chinese

schools, from primary level to university, moved their resources, teachers and students inland to areas such as Sichuan province that the Japanese were never able to occupy. While educational matters would pale in priority to matters of war, the Nationalist government recognized the need to teach the population political ideology, resistance to the aggressors and vocational and agriculture skills useful to the war effort. Xu (1992) highlighted that the Nationalist educational programs focused primarily on teaching within the urban areas and that the CCP was the principle group providing education within the rural regions. Education within the occupied regions was controlled by the Japanese invaders.

The Civil War, 1946-1949

The peace agreement, coerced from the Nationalist government through the kidnapping of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in 1936, to stop fighting the communists and to organize a united front to fight the Japanese, became moot in 1945 with the surrender of Japan (Eastman, 1986). The Nationalist government with the backing of western nations proclaimed themselves to be the legitimate government of China. The CCP asserted its own claim to govern and civil war ensued.

Chapter Summary

Official government educational policies in Republican China did not recognize a need to promote education for the rural masses. The government of Chiang Kai-shek's power base was in urban areas, and consisted of the landed gentry, the military, the financiers and the foreign investors. Knowledge was recognized as a powerful tool which the government actively tried to keep out of the hands of the rural population. Chiang Kai-shek had declared war on the CCP in 1927, which resulted in the communists fleeing

to the countryside where they actively engaged in the recruitment of peasants to their cause. As the access to education would enable peasants to become aware of their own oppression and would open inroads for communist subversion, any attempt to educate the rural peasants was viewed with suspicion by the central government.

While James Yen promoted an innovative program to help educate and better the situation of the ordinary peasants, both his and Tao Xingzhi's activities were monitored by the Republican government and Tao's rural teaching facilities located near Nanjing would be shut down by the central government in 1930 (Hayford, 1987). Even though Yen's school in Tianjin was located over 1,000 kilometers from the central government's capital in Nanjing, Yen was aware of the government's watchful eye and he confided to Buck that "Yes, if you want to have freedom to experiment, you must keep out of politics" (Buck, 1945, p. 67-68). Yen's educational activities in Tianjin would however be shut down in 1937 as a result of the Japanese invasion of China.

Chapter III

The People's Republic of China

In this chapter we will examine the educational policies that were adopted by the government of the PRC from its inception in 1949 until the end of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1977. The shift in the Chinese power structure in 1949 from supporting the urban elite to promoting an egalitarian society would result in a total reorganization of the Chinese system of education. Education under the PRC would be used as a tool not only to promote the academic skills and knowledge needed to build a strong national economic base, but would also be used as a tool to indoctrinate the population on the political principles of Marxism on which the new society was to be based. This chapter will begin by introducing the reader to Chairman Mao and to the principles of Marxism that he believed in. As the CCP had already been in existence for 28 years when it took over the leadership of China in 1949, the discussion of Marxism will be followed by a brief description of the educational work that the CCP had been involved in from its creation in 1921 up to 1949.

The principle topic to be discussed in this chapter, the development of educational policies and practices in the PRC under Mao's leadership, will be divided into five time periods that reflect the distinctive shifts in the social, economic and political ideology that occurred within the CCP. The time periods which will be examined are set up in the following fashion: the early years (1949-1952), the First Five Year Plan (1953-1957), the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960), Two Conflicting Views (1961-1965) and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1977). This chapter will conclude with a brief

discussion of educational changes adopted in post Cultural Revolution China in the late 1970s.

Mao and Marxism

Born on December 26, 1893 in Hunan province to an affluent peasant family, Mao studied the Confucian classics prior to receiving a teaching degree from the Hunan Provincial First Normal School in 1918 (Snow, 1968). An avid reader of newspapers and interested in politics and the struggle of the peasant class, Mao stated to Edgar Snow in 1936 that “By the summer of 1920, I had become in theory and to some extent in action, a Marxist, and from this time on, I considered myself a Marxist” (Snow, 1968, p. 155). Mao’s only professional career, with the exception of revolutionary politics, was that of a primary school teacher from 1919 to 1922 (Xu, 1992).

The development of a proletarian state required the abolition of the old class system with its unequally distributed rights and privileges and required a total social restructuring of the population. The school as seen by Mao was one of the tools that could be effectively used to bring about the social transformation of this new proletarian state (Xu, 1992). From a Marxist’s perspective, education, in and of itself, was not a goal, but a means to hasten the revolution and to help in creating the new socialist man. Social change was in fact a product of class struggle and revolution, not a product of schooling (Cleverley, 1991). Central to this Marxist philosophy was the need to “rescue education from the influence of the ruling class” (*Karl Marx*, 1970, p. 50). According to Marx and Engels, education was seen as a tool of the state or of the dominant class to produce skills needed for production and to perpetuate the existing class structure (Seeberg, 2000).

Seeberg (2000) pointed out that while the Confucian view of education saw education as a means of transforming man into a better person by instilling in him a higher moral conscience, the Maoists saw education as a means to raise the political consciousness of the working class who would then be able to build and maintain the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

The CCP could not be considered inexperienced in matters of education when it established the PRC on October 1st, 1949. The lessons learned during the 20 years spent training peasants and soldiers in rural China would be adapted on a national level.

Ever since its creation in 1921, the CCP had taken a very active role in providing free basic literacy programs to its members. Mao himself joined the YMCA's literacy campaign as a volunteer teacher in 1923 in his hometown of Changsha, Hunan province, and was familiar with Dr. Yen's teaching methods (Hayford, 1987). After 1927 when aggression from the Nationalist government forced the CCP to move its operations outside of the urban areas, the CCP embarked on offering informal basic literacy education courses to peasants in the rural regions occupied by the CCP. The military wing of the CCP, known as the Red Army prior to the creation of the PRC and known as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) thereafter, developed specific literacy programs for officers and ordinary soldiers during the 1930s and 1940s which included the teaching of military strategy and political affairs (Hunter & Keehn, 1985; Snow, 1968; Xu, 1992).

We are informed by Cleverley (1991) that the ten teaching points developed by Mao in 1929 to train soldiers would be adopted by all CCP teaching programs. These points were as follows:

- 1) A stimulating style (abolish the “pouring-in style”)
- 2) From the near to the distant.
- 3) From the shallow to the deep.
- 4) Speak in a colloquial style (new terms should be explained simply).
- 5) Speech should be understandable.
- 6) Speaking should be interesting.
- 7) Use gestures to aid speaking.
- 8) Later sessions should repeat concepts from earlier sessions.
- 9) Prepare outlines.
- 10) The cadre classes should use the discussion method. (p. 98)

During the late 1930s at the Red Army’s headquarters in Yan’an, Shaanxi province, Mao viewed adult education as more important than the education of children. Adults could be rapidly taught the skills necessary to both fight an armed resistance and to perform productive labour, which were priorities over the long term education of children. The CCP developed spare-time teaching techniques effective in addressing the learning needs of adults: schooling was to be for short periods of time; the curriculum should focus on the needs at hand and be devoid of non-essential information; and group discussion and collective study were to be used as the principal methods of learning (Lucas, 1976).

According to Hayford (1987), the mass education programs implemented by Mao during the Yan’an period (1936-1947) focused more on teaching political awareness to the rural population than on providing them with basic reading and writing skills. Theatrical plays, songs, and lectures were the primary techniques used by the communists

to spread their political beliefs. The CCP realized that it was unable, both from a financial and personnel position, to set up formal schools in the rural areas controlled by the party. Mao would therefore adopt a policy similar to that of James Yen by which locally supported and run part-time People's Schools (minban xuexiao) would be set up in rural communities.

Education in the Early Years, 1949-1952

Notwithstanding China's long historic Confucian tradition of valuing education, in 1949 it was estimated that between 70% and 80% of China's population of approximately 540 million was illiterate, and that only 25% of school aged children were actually studying in primary school (Pepper, 1978). In addition to the population being largely illiterate the vast majority of Chinese were living principally in rural areas at a subsistence level (Waller, 1973). Statistical data available for 1949 demonstrated that the urban/rural population ratio was 10.6/89.4 (Mackerras & Yorke, 1991, p. 171). Of the children who were enrolled in school it was estimated that less than 10% of those who completed primary school would go on to commence middle (secondary) school. Modern education in rural areas consisted generally of four to six years of primary education. Middle school and college education, while available in urban regions, was not a realistic option for rural students (Pepper, 1978).

One of the principle issues faced by the new Chinese government in 1949 was the pressing need to introduce a system of mass education that would offer at least basic education to the general population. The implementation of this mass educational system would require an enormous commitment of resources to construct new school facilities,

along with the creation of government organizations that would be capable of overseeing the secularization and administration of the education system (Pepper, 1978).

Experiencing peace for the first time in twelve years (war had raged since 1937 first against the Japanese, followed by a civil war against the Nationalists) the immediate economic aims of the government in 1949 was to mobilize the workforce in order to restore agricultural and industrial productions to pre-war (1937) levels, curb inflation and create financial stability within the country (Waller, 1973).

School system.

According to Chi (1968) the formal full-time school system of the People's Republic of China in 1951 consisted of the following institutions:

1. Kindergartens from ages three to seven;
2. Primary school from ages seven to twelve (five years of classes);
3. Junior middle school from ages twelve to fifteen (three years of classes);
4. Senior middle school from ages fifteen to eighteen (three years of classes);
5. Universities and independent colleges (five years of classes). (p. 19)

In addition to the formal system referred to above, a Proletarian short course primary school consisting of two to three years of full-time study and a Proletarian short course middle school consisting of three to four years of full-time study were created in order to allow those whose schooling had been interrupted while they participated in the revolution to rapidly complete their basic education. Admission to the short course programs required the recommendation of one's peers and was therefore effectively reserved for a small privileged group of model workers and labour heroes (Chi, 1968).

While the Proletarian short course programs required students to attend school on a full-time basis, the need to offer basic education to the masses resulted in the creation of spare-time middle schools and spare-time primary schools. The intention of the spare-time middle school was to offer a curriculum that corresponded as best as possible to the curriculum offered in regular middle schools. Completion of spare-time junior middle school was supposed to take between three to four years and completion of senior spare-time middle school would take an additional three to four years. The establishment of spare-time middle schools rarely occurred outside of urban areas, because the overwhelming majority of rural peasants did not even have a basic primary education. Spare-time primary schools, which was the name given to cover a wide variety of worker spare-time factory classes and peasant spare-time and winter classes, offered a basic curriculum of Chinese characters, simple calculations and political discussion. While there was no fixed time frame in which a student would complete spare-time primary school, Chi (1968) referred to examples of completing the curriculum over a period of two to three years by attending four to six hours of classes per week (p. 23).

In 1950 the Central Committee of the CCP adopted directives regarding the development of spare-time schools for workers and cadre whereby factories and businesses were required to set up spare-time classes with the objective of teaching illiterate workers approximately 1,000 Chinese characters which would allow them to read newspapers and simple documents within three to five years. Similar directives were adopted later that year to create spare-time classes for peasants with the stated objectives of teaching village cadre, political organizers and young people approximately

1,000 Chinese characters along with basic reading, writing and calculation skills within three to five years (Chi, 1968).

The successful spare-time education techniques used at Yan'an would be applied as a means of bringing basic education to the peasants and industrial workers. Spare-time classes would be opened up not only in fixed locations such as factories and government offices, but a broad range of informal and mobile educational programs would be introduced. Mobile schools were created to bring educational services to nomadic herdsman and to isolated communities, and floating schools were developed on boats to service river and coastal populations inaccessible by road. Programs developed for rural farming communities consisted of night school and winter classes which corresponded to the slower periods in the farming cycles (Lucas, 1976).

The serious shortage of qualified teachers in the regular school system made it even more difficult to find teachers to teach in the spare-time schools. Not only would regular middle school and primary school students be recruited to teach spare-time classes but teachers would also be chosen from the masses so that literate workers, cadre and peasants would be recruited to teach what they knew to those who knew less. Chi (1968) pointed out that since only those who possessed the correct political views of the party would be allowed to teach, a teacher's actual degree of literacy was not a factor in teacher selection. The shortage of qualified teachers would often lead in rural areas to the implementation of "circuit teaching". A circuit teacher after teaching a class of several hours in one community would immediately move on to the next community, teaching in two or more communities each day, and would continue in such a fashion so as to return to the first community once every three to five days (p. 49).

The technique of the “little teacher”, first adopted in the 1920s as part of Yen’s Mass Education Movement, would be actively employed as a teaching tool. Young students after finishing their daily lessons would return to their homes to teach adult family members, during meal breaks and after work, what they had learned in school. The use of literacy billboards, large signs set up at road junctions, on which Chinese characters would be displayed was employed to encourage passers by to stop and learn the characters. “Little teachers” would stand next to these billboards and would explain the characters and help with pronunciation (Chi, 1968). Due to a shortage in teaching material, many spare-time classes would use commonly available written material such as newspapers and current publications as teaching tools (Chi, 1968).

In 1952 a new method of learning Chinese characters referred to as the “accelerated literacy method” was implemented in spare-time literacy classes. The supporters of the “accelerated literacy method” argued that this method had been successfully used by the Red Army to teach soldiers during the Yan’an period. They claimed that a student could learn 1,500 Chinese characters in 150 hours of classes by memorizing phonetic symbols (Peterson, 1997). While actual data regarding the success rate of this program does not appear to be available, Chi (1968) criticized these programs for trying to teach too many characters too quickly. The high number of characters that peasants were required to learn in a short period of time coupled with the lack of opportunities to practice using these characters resulted in many peasants forgetting what they had learned in the previous year’s winter school and having to start from zero the next year. Chi (1968) concluded that these programs stressed speed in teaching and not retention by the learner, and that political indoctrination would form the central theme of

all spare-time education classes at the expense of teaching actual literacy skills. Chi (1968) informed us that while official government records stated that over 22 million peasants attended winter schools in 1950 and that over 42 million attended winter schools in 1951, official records could not be considered accurate due to both the falsification of numbers and due to coercive techniques used to encourage attendance.

Secularization of education.

While it was the declared intention of the new Chinese government to create a unified secular education system for all, the government was faced with an existing private education system run by foreign religious and secular organizations. According to Cleverley (1991) at the inception of the PRC, Christian missions operated 24 universities and a large number of lower schools, and Moslem religious groups were also involved in offering private education. The CCP had adopted Mao's views on religion that everybody would be free to believe or not to believe and this philosophy of religious tolerance would be written into the PRC's first Constitution of 1954 as Article 88:

“Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief”

(Constitution of, 1961, p. 39).

Notwithstanding the central government's recognition that foreign run schools would be permitted to continue on the condition that they did not contradict the state policy, hostility and suspicion would remain as these foreign religious and secular institutions were historically associated with colonialism and the oppression of China. In 1951, in an attempt to restrict the presence of outside influence in the foreign run schools, overseas funding was banned by the CCP and foreign run schools were required to become locally self-financing (Cleverley, 1991).

One of the effects of China's entering the Korean War in 1950 on the side of North Korea and the Soviets to battle against its former western allies from WWII, was a massive withdrawal of western religious and secular groups from the PRC, and by 1952 practically all foreign mission run schools had closed. A major effect of this war was to isolate China from the West and to sever its ties with western educational philosophies which had been prevalently taught in the pre-1949 Nationalist schools (Cleverley, 1991).

Land redistribution.

In an attempt to stimulate agricultural production, to solidify the CCP's strength in the rural areas, and to effectively break the historical political and economical power that was wielded by the rural landlords, a nationwide policy of rural land redistribution was implemented in 1949. The CCP viewed the rural population as being divided into five classes: landlord (an owner of land who did not perform labour himself), rich peasant (a land owner who both hired labour and worked the land himself), middle peasant (generally owned his own land and relied on his own labour), poor peasant (rented land on which to farm and rented out his labour) and farm labourer (income generated from the sale of his labour). The redistribution of rural land was implemented by confiscating the land and property of the landlords and of the rich peasants and distributing same among the landless poor peasants and farm labourers. The property of middle peasants was generally not affected by this redistribution. Article 8 of the 1954 Constitution would recognize the rights of peasants to own land. Land redistribution in and of itself did not lead to increased productivity, which would lead to the implementation of the collectivization of resources where peasants would still own their land, but would operate as cooperative units of forty or so households (Waller, 1973). The recognition of the

need to educate peasants to help them become better farmers was not lost on the government.

Politics and education.

The educational policies adopted by the CCP would promote both academic instruction and political awareness. The party recognized that the population would have to be educated from an academic point of view in order to equip them with the skills necessary to work productively towards the modernization and industrialization of the state. Furthermore, as the CCP represented a new political philosophy and had the intention of building a new classless society, it was essential that they educate the population on the principles of Marxism. The goal of political education was not merely to achieve a passive acceptance by the population of Marxist principles, but rather the goal of the CCP was to foster both the active understanding and willing participation of the population in forwarding the goals of the party. The role of education in the new communist state was to serve the dual purpose of creating citizens who were both “red and expert”. The expression “red” refers to a person’s correct political consciousness and “expert” denotes professional skills and competency (Waller, 1973; Chen, 1981).

As noted by Cleverley (1991) education in the PRC did not develop in a vacuum and the new educational policies introduced after 1949 formed part of the wide swiping social policies designed to better the lives of the ordinary people. Arranged marriages, child brides, slavery and feet binding were officially abolished, and equal rights and equal pay for women were introduced and enforced.

The government’s recognition of the need to educate the population was demonstrated by the inclusion of Article 94 of the 1954 Constitution which stated:

Citizens of the People's Republic of China have the right to education. To ensure that citizens can enjoy this right, the state establishes and gradually expands schools of various types and other cultural and educational institutions. The state pays special attention to the physical and mental development of young people. (*Constitution of*, 1961, p. 41)

With the revolution of 1949 came a major change in the makeup of the dominant Status Group that controlled both the educational system and the workplace in China. The landed gentry and educated urban elite, who had been in de facto power in China for centuries, were replaced overnight by the dictatorship of the proletariat, which in reality meant that the leaders of the CCP now held absolute power. The determination of what knowledge was to be taught in Chinese schools would now rest in the hands of the CCP.

In discussing the phenomenon of how society decides what knowledge is valuable, Bernstein (1971) stated "How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control" (p. 47). Seeberg (2000), discussing the relationship between power and access to knowledge, concluded that the higher one is placed in a society's power structure, the greater is one's access to higher levels of knowledge.

The pursuit of knowledge under the leadership of the CCP would not however develop through a process of inquiry and discussion. The selection process for choosing teachers relied heavily on whether a candidate possessed the correct political viewpoint, and curricula would be designed in such a fashion as to teach only the information that those in power felt should be made available to the people. The concerns raised by Freire

(1972) that the educational curriculum could be used to promote only the viewpoint of the dominant group, and could be used to impose those views as knowledge on the rest of the population, are issues that must be addressed when one examines the educational system developed under the CCP.

Shortfalls during the early years.

The initial push for mass literacy programs within the PRC during the early years of the nation ran into many hurdles. As it was not realistically possible to implement follow up programs to ensure that the newly literate adults were able to practice their new skills on an ongoing basis, it was noted that many of the newly literate were losing their new found skills of reading and writing due to lack of use (DeFrancis, 1986). The introduction of public broadcasting systems and the expansion of access to radios had the negative effect on many adults who felt that they could now receive abundant information without learning to read and write (Cleverley, 1991).

First Five Year Plan, 1953-1957

Having effectively broken its ties with the West and with western educational ideologies through its involvement in the Korean War, China would turn to its new ally, the Soviet Union, for assistance in developing its educational system. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge, a Confucian belief from antiquity that still held credence in the PRC was to be challenged by the Soviet view that higher education should turn out skilled practical specialists to meet the demand of industry.

The Soviet model.

Chinese educational policy during the First Five Year Plan would focus on the need to produce specialists in science, technology, industry, farming and on the need to

train the large number of new teachers that would be required at all levels of schooling. Recognizing the need to rebuild its industry, the Chinese saw the Soviet model of education which consisted of a central government controlled, technically oriented curriculum, as a viable approach to promoting economic development (Cleverley, 1991). China would enter into a treaty with the Soviet Union in 1954 promoting scientific and technical co-operation, and thousands of Russian experts would be sent to the P.R.C to provide support for industrial development (Orleans, 1961).

Admission criteria for Chinese institutions of higher learning (colleges and universities), while still requiring the successful completion of entrance examinations, were modified in line with the Soviet policy whereby the political beliefs of candidates would be taken into consideration in the selection process. Successful candidates would be assigned places in whichever faculty the central government deemed appropriate. In order to encourage children of workers and peasants to continue with post-secondary education, as of 1952 free tuition, lodging and health care would be made available to them. Recognizing the urgent need to produce new teachers, students who entered teacher training programs would be paid a stipend. Graduates from institutes of higher education would be assigned jobs by the state based both on their actual training and the perceived needs of the state (Cleverley, 1991).

In an attempt to better prepare students for higher education, the CCP revamped both its primary and middle school curriculum based on the Soviet curriculum that emphasized science, math and technology. A Soviet code of conduct was introduced into the schools whereby students would be taught to respect the Chinese flag, the nation, its leaders, the law, to study hard and to respect their school and teachers (Cleverley, 1991).

As history is written by the winning side, a major educational task identified by the government of PRC was the need to produce new textbooks to not only do away with the western influenced ideas of the Nationalists, but also to introduce Marxist principles of communism and correct behaviour. By 1954 millions of copies of translated Soviet textbooks had been introduced into the Chinese curriculum. A Chinese version of the Soviet Young Pioneer program was introduced into Chinese schools and specially prepared teachers would instruct students aged 9-15 on correct political policy and principles which stressed the “five loves”: love your country; love your people; love labour; love scientific knowledge and love public property. Membership in the Young Pioneers would be compulsory for all students, and when students reached the age of 15, politically correct students would be invited to join the Communist Youth League, which was seen as the first step towards possible membership in the CCP (Cleverley, 1991).

The school under the PRC was developing into an institution that would play a far greater role in the lives of students than simply serving as a place where students learned useful academic skills. The new Chinese model of education, tailored after the Soviet model, would actively promote proper political behaviour and subordination of the individual to the institution of the state. Examining this phenomenon of how capital forces in society may be reproduced in the classroom setting, Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that the education system can in fact mirror the economic system in a society. They referred to this principle as the Correspondence Principle, and pointed out that both schools and the workplace had developed systems of formal hierarchical control and that both promoted competition for rewards among the participants. Schools reproduced and legitimized social inequalities and turned out subordinate and docile workers who would

accept their place in society, by rewarding those students who conformed and followed school rules. This facet of the Chinese educational system which actively promoted conformity and obedience in its students would remain a central educational objective under the leadership of Mao.

Reform of industry.

Implementing effective government controls over industry posed a very different set of problems for the CCP than had the redistribution of agricultural land. Industries traditionally operated in and around urban areas, and the CCP recognized that it had never had a strong political base in urban centres. The party realized that it would therefore need the cooperation of industry owners, managers and personnel at all levels to ensure that industries not only remained open but that industrial output continued. Through the adoption of a decidedly non-Marxist policy, private ownership of industry was allowed to continue under the CCP and Article 10 of the 1954 Constitution protected the right of capitalists to own the means of production; however the process of state acquisition of industry would gradually be implemented during the First Five Year Plan (Waller, 1973).

The role of intellectuals.

While the CCP emphasized and followed the Marxist concept of leadership by the working class, China possessed a significant group of people who would better be referred to as intellectuals and not as workers or peasants. The expression “intellectual” (zhi shi fen zi) used in China after 1949 did not refer to a university graduate or a literati scholar, but simply referred to a person who had completed upper middle school. As the Chinese educational system prior to the victory of the CCP had been predominantly

urban based, most intellectuals in China in 1949 were from urban, middle class, bourgeois backgrounds and had been exposed to western educational philosophies taught in the Nationalist (1911-1949) school system. While the skills and knowledge of these intellectuals, many of whom were government bureaucrats, would be needed to help rebuild the new Chinese economy, their decidedly non-Marxist background would lead to distrust from the CCP. During the period from 1949 to 1951, the CCP had introduced programs to actively re-educate these intellectuals in institutions known as “revolutionary colleges” so that intellectuals could rid themselves of bourgeois beliefs and develop more politically reliable ideas. Throughout the First Five Year Plan which focused on industrial development, the program of re-educating intellectuals was relaxed because the state recognized the fact that the skills and support of the intellectuals were needed to help advance the economy (Waller, 1973).

Double hundred movement.

In early 1956 Zhou Enlai, the future Premier of the PRC, publicly stated that the Chinese intellectuals were contributing positively to the advancement of the communist state. Believing that the intellectuals had been successfully re-educated and would support the CCP and focus their criticism on the failings of the government bureaucracy to which many intellectuals belonged, Mao delivered a speech in February 1957, entitled *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People*, commonly referred to as the “Double Hundred”. In this speech Mao employed the famous phrase “let a hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred schools contend” (*Selected Readings*, 1971, p. 462) to encourage intellectuals and others to freely criticize any shortcomings of the CCP, believing that this forum for free discussion would in fact demonstrate that the people

universally accepted and supported the policies of the party. Contrary to Mao's expectation the Double Hundred Movement resulted in a strong public outcry and criticism of both party policies and administrators. So great was this criticism that in June of 1957 the party would clamp down hard on all forms of free discussion and would brand those intellectuals who had spoken out against the CCP as "rightists" and enemies of the state (Goldman, 1981).

Mao subsequently would claim that the Double Hundred Movement had merely been a tool employed by the CCP to uncover potential enemies of the party. Approximately 300,000 teachers, writers and journalists would be jailed as a result of the Double Hundred Movement and large numbers of these "rightists" would be forcibly sent to perform manual labour in remote rural areas. The CCP would thereafter aggressively assert a stronger influence within the school system. Politics as a classroom subject would be given greater emphasis and school graduates would have to undergo a political assessment before being allocated a job (Cleverley, 1991). In 1958, with the implementation of the new development plan known as the Great Leap Forward, the skills and professional expertise of the intellectuals that had been greatly valued during the First Five Year Plan would no longer be seen as beneficial for the improvement of the nation (Waller, 1973).

Literacy issues.

According to Orleans (1961) illiteracy was one of the principle impediments to the Chinese economic drive for modernization in the 1950s as approximately 50% of factory workers and between 60-70% of coal miners and construction workers were still

illiterate in 1956. It was estimated at that time by the state that it would take at least 60 years to irradiate illiteracy at the current rate that literacy was being achieved (p. 49).

By the mid 1950s Chinese policy makers would identify three concrete steps that they believed would be invaluable in combating illiteracy. The first step involved the simplification of the written Chinese characters by reducing the number of lines used and simplifying the form of certain characters; the second step called for the adoption of pinyin as a tool to assist in learning pronunciation; and the third step mandated that one dialect (putonghua, the northern Mandarin dialect) be adopted as the official national language of the PRC, and which must be taught in all schools and classes (Hayford, 1987). The existence of a very large number of regional dialects in China, many of which could not be understood by people from neighboring regions greatly hindered the adoption of standardized educational tools.

As a result of a 1956 proclamation on education, Mandarin (putonghua) became the official language of education, and this document called for the nationwide radiation of illiteracy within a period of five to seven years. The express goals stated in this proclamation were threefold:

1. Factory, industrial and mine workers were targeted to obtain a 95% literacy level within three to five years;
2. Peasants and urban dwellers should obtain a 70% literacy level within five to seven years; and
3. In regions populated by non-Han minorities and other regions with special problems, literacy education should be provided as circumstances dictated (*Zhongguo Jiaoyu*, 1983, p. 896).

In order to help facilitate the teaching of putonghua, a phonetic version of the sounds of the Chinese characters, written in the Roman alphabet, called pinyin was adopted in 1958 as a teaching aid (DeFrancis, 1986).

The ability to learn to read and write Chinese characters was not a simple task easily mastered by the ordinary person. Fairbank (1974) reminded us that:

The Chinese writing system was not a convenient device lying ready at hand for every schoolboy to pick up and use as he prepared to meet life's problems. It was itself one of life's problems. If little Lao-san could not find time for long-continued study of it, he was forever barred from social advancement. Thus the Chinese written language, rather than an open door through which China's peasantry could find truth and light, was a heavy barrier pressing against any upward advance and requiring real effort to overcome - a hindrance, not a help, to learning. (p. 33)

Since one of the most daunting tasks in learning to read and write Chinese was the need to memorize the design of, and how to draw, each Chinese character, the central government decreed in 1956 that the Chinese characters would be simplified in design and construction in order to facilitate their learning by the ordinary population (DeFrancis, 1986). It is worth noting that the exiled Nationalist government in Taiwan never adopted this simplified Chinese script, and Taiwan continues to this day to use the traditional, more elaborate, Chinese script.

The Chinese definition of literacy.

Multiple scholars (Colletta, 1982; Peterson, 1994; Ross, 2005; Zhao 1988) documented that the Chinese government developed, in 1956, its own definition of what constitutes a literate person in China, for the purposes of assessing the success rate of

their literacy programs. The curricular goal that a person must achieve in order to be considered literate consisted of memorizing a fixed number of Chinese characters. A rural person who was able to recognize 1,500 basic Chinese characters, to perform simple accounting, to read basic notes and articles and to perform simple calculations on an abacus was deemed to be literate. For a rural leader or an urban dweller this requirement was raised to 2,000 Chinese characters. The issue as to whether the knowledge of 1,500 to 2,000 Chinese characters would qualify a learner as being literate will be addressed in the conclusions of this paper.

Shortfalls of the First Five Year Plan.

The First Five Year Plan adopted the development model of the USSR that focused on the growth of heavy industry with little emphasis on light industry (consumer goods) or agriculture. Focusing on heavy industry and ignoring the agricultural sector led to the realization by 1957 that China's agricultural output was not keeping pace with the demands of a growing population for food, and the demands of a growing industrial sector for raw materials (Waller, 1973).

Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960

The First Five Year Plan had concentrated on expanding China's industrial output, and less attention had been placed on implementing advancements in the agricultural sector. Industrial production had been concentrated in and around urban areas, which was a major factor in the growth of the urban population from 12.5% of the total population of China in 1952 to 17.5% in 1960 (Löfstedt, 1980). This urban growth resulted in an ever increasing demand for agricultural products, that was often difficult to meet, for both human consumption and industrial usage, and by 1957 the central

government recognized that new policies must be implemented to improve agricultural production.

Mao, who had not been satisfied with the pace of economic development, argued for the implementation of an alternative strategy to rapidly advance the economy through the mass mobilization of workers and peasants, to be led not by technical experts but by political organizers mandated to inspire both loyalty and compliance from the workers and peasants (Lieberthal, 1993). According to Mao, the successful advancement of the nation could only be achieved through arousing the revolutionary consciousness of the masses (Goldman, 1981). In an attempt to improve agricultural production the government implemented in 1957-1958 massive infrastructure projects to construct nationwide irrigation systems which would employ up to one hundred million workers mainly from the rural areas. The magnitude of these projects and the rapidity by which they were instituted resulted in a major depletion of the rural population available to work in the production of agriculture. This serious shortage of farm laborers would be compensated for through the total reorganization of the rural farming communities. The policy of private ownership of land and the sharing of equipment through small cooperatives introduced in the early 1950s was by 1958 viewed as an inefficient use of resources (Waller, 1973).

The commune system.

Starting in the spring of 1958 rural farms nationwide would be reorganized into approximately 24,000 communes, each comprising between 4,000 to 5,000 households. Within the commune, all domestic tasks including cooking and child caring would be carried out on a communal basis allowing women to be free to perform agricultural

labour. All private land ownership was abolished and peasants were required to work the communal land for the communal benefit. Industrial production which had previously been concentrated in urban areas would be expanded into the rural regions and many communes would operate small local industrial production facilities with the aim of not only becoming self sufficient but in producing material for the larger urban factories (Waller, 1973). The slogan of “walking on two legs” was adopted to promote the importance of both sectors, or “legs”, of the Chinese economy, being industry and agriculture (Hunter & Keehn, 1985, p. 115).

The focus of the Great Leap Forward in creating thousands of small independently operated communes necessitated a reorganization of bureaucratic authority whereby many of the powers held by the central government bureaucrats would be transferred to the local and provincial bureaucracies (Lieberthal, 1993). As a result of this administrative power shift, each commune would be responsible for implementing its own educational programs (Waller, 1973)

Placing the onus on the local authorities and communes to set up and locally fund schools resulted in an enormous statistical increase in the number of school aged children listed as enrolled in all levels of school. Primary school enrollment increased from 64 million students in 1957 to 86 million in 1958, which would indicate that 80% of elementary aged children nationwide were then registered in primary school. Enrollment in middle school increased from 7 million students in 1957 to 12 million in 1958 and enrollment in higher education increased from 441,000 in 1957 to 660,000 in 1958. Cleverley (1991) warned the reader that these official statistics have probably been inflated by the Chinese authorities.

In addition to offering full-time schooling, the local communes were responsible for offering spare-time classes. In the period from 1958 to 1959 enrollment in spare-time primary school increased four fold to 26 million and the enrollment in spare-time secondary school doubled and reached 5 million. Enrollment in part-time higher education was said to have reached 150,000, double that from the previous year. Locally operated literacy classes claimed that 40 million people received basic training in 1958 and 1959 (Cleverley, 1991).

Combining education and labour.

Since the central government's rationale for promoting the Great Leap Forward was to encourage the population to work harder for the collective advancement of industry and agriculture, the need to promote correct behaviour and obedience was viewed as a very important component of this program. As had been demonstrated by the recent failure of the Double Hundred Movement, not all Chinese people supported the policies and actions of the CCP. The teaching of politics as an important subject to promote politically correct thought and behaviour would gain prominence during the Great Leap Forward.

In 1958 education in the PRC would undergo a radical overhaul. The legitimacy of the traditional model of schooling that promoted institutions offering full-time academic based learning would be challenged by Mao and his supporters. Mao would argue that the correct Marxist view on education promoted a combination of academic study and productive labour. This alternative approach to learning was in Mao's view justified through the writings of Karl Marx who, when discussing the British Factory Acts of the mid 1860s that regulated child labour, stated that "in the case of every child

over a given age, combine productive labour with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only method of producing fully developed human beings” (Marx, 1954, p. 484).

The Directive on Educational Work adopted by the central government in September 1958 criticized the existing educational system that was controlled by professionals and academics, and proposed that mental and physical labour should no longer be separated. The political and ideological qualification of both teachers and students was to be given greater weight than pure academic credentials, and their advancement should be judged according to the correctness of their political stance. This directive proposed that a complete education system consisting of three types of institutions be maintained: full-time regular school, work-study schools and spare-time schools (Chen, 1981).

New agricultural middle schools were set up in rural areas to teach practical skills. Their aim was to encourage local students to stay in the rural regions and not to migrate to cities. Institutions known as “red and expert” colleges offering part-time general technical training would also be opened in rural areas to train workers (Lucas, 1976).

The creation of numerous commune-run small factories in rural areas created a need for better skilled workers, resulting in millions of unemployed urban secondary school graduates being relocated to the countryside during the Great Leap Forward. The relocation of urban students was presented by the authorities as a policy that would be beneficial to the students by providing them with jobs, and would be beneficial to the rural areas by providing rural communities with skilled workers. This forced relocation also ensured that the undesirable urban unemployed would be dispersed and that less

pressure for admission would be put on the already crowded urban universities (Cleverley, 1991).

Failure of the commune system.

The Chinese experiment with communes would be short lived and by 1959 it was recognized that small communal agricultural and industrial production units were inefficient and unable to meet the demands of the nation. Ironically, nature itself would play an important part in the demise of the communes. The Great Leap Forward had started off on a very positive note, as good climatic conditions produced bountiful crops in 1958. As tens of millions of peasants were engaged in government organized mega infrastructure construction projects, much of the 1958 crops would unfortunately rot in the fields due to the shortage of farm laborers available to harvest them (Waller, 1973).

The implementation of communal living and working was not well accepted by the peasants who felt that communal activities had a negative impact on the value and strength of the traditional family unit. From a financial standpoint peasants resented the loss of the material benefits that they had experienced when exploiting their own personal tracks of land. Attempts by the local leaders to inspire the peasants to work towards the common ideological goal of creating self-sufficient communities did little to motivate the peasants or to increase their productivity (Waller, 1973).

By the summer of 1959 the central government had taken back control of large sectors of industrial production and small local commune factories were shut down. The rapid expansion of local schools that had occurred during the Great Leap Forward came to a halt in 1959 and while not all local schools closed down when the commune system was disbanded, three years of severe famine (1959-1961) refocused the priorities of rural

students and teachers alike, large numbers of whom stayed home to grow and forage for food (Cleverley, 1991, p. 149). The pre-Great Leap Forward policy of allowing farmers to occupy and exploit private land holdings was reintroduced with the collapse of the commune system in 1959 and the land that would be allocated for private use by the farmers would be increased from 5% to 20% of the total land under cultivation (Löfstedt, 1980, p. 111). This new policy of allocating larger plots of land for private cultivation would have a detrimental effect on rural education enrollment, as parents would again have an economic incentive to keep their children at home to work the family's land (Han, 1976, p. 184).

Arguments were raised throughout the Great Leap Forward by Deng Xiaoping (a future Chairman of the PRC) and by other senior party members that too much physical work could have a negative effect on academic standards. They also criticized the educational policy employed during the Great Leap Forward of delegating curriculum content decisions to local authorities. These critics argued that higher enrollment, in and of itself, were of little value if the quality of education suffered (Cleverley, 1991).

The industrial output from the local commune-run factories was often of very poor quality. Not only were these products unusable by industry but transportation resources were wasted shipping them around the country. The policies of the Great Leap Forward had in effect resulted in a "great leap backward" and by 1960 the rationale behind these policies was being questioned by liberal members of the CCP (Waller, 1973, p. 139).

Collapse of Sino-Soviet relations.

The influence of the Soviet Union over China extended far beyond the boundaries of education, as the USSR provided technical expertise and financial funding for Chinese industry, agriculture and defense. By the late 1950s concerns were being raised within the CCP that China's dependence on the Soviet Union could lead to a Soviet domination of China in a manner similar to the domination that the West had imposed on imperial and Nationalist China. The extensive use of Soviet textbooks and teaching methods was also viewed as detrimental since they encouraged students to mechanically memorize information without analysis. The Chinese government questioned the value of training specialists who blindly followed rigid rules and were unable to modify and adapt these rules to solve a wide range of real life problems (Cleverley, 1991).

The Soviet Union's withdrawal of all of its technical expertise and financial backing from China in 1960 had little to do with disagreements over educational policy. International politics, more particularly China's refusal to allow the Soviet Union to use Dalian as a naval base; the Soviet's refusal to provide China with atomic bomb technology and the Soviet's renewed interest in opening better relations with the United States, would be some of the major factors leading to this abrupt split (Cleverley, 1991, p. 135). The failure of the Great Leap Forward and the withdrawal from the PRC of all Soviet technical experts would require the party leaders to rethink development strategy.

Two Conflicting Views, 1961-1965

According to Orleans (1961), the school system of the People's Republic of China circa 1960 consisted of the following institutions:

1. Kindergartens from ages three to seven;

2. Primary school from ages seven to thirteen (six years of classes);
3. Junior middle school from ages thirteen to sixteen (three years of classes);
4. Senior middle school from ages sixteen to nineteen (three years of classes);
5. Universities and independent colleges (five years of classes). (p. 11)

Junior and Senior Normal middle schools (being teacher training schools) were operated in parallel to the regular Junior and Senior middle schools. In addition to the full-time school system, a system of spare-time literacy classes, spare-time primary school and spare-time junior and senior middle schools continued to operate.

As the Chinese economy grew from 1961 to 1963, a split would develop in party leadership. One group, referred to as liberals or moderates, consisted of the CCP bureaucrats led by Vice-chairman Liu Shaoqi, who viewed the role of the party as being a rational organization that would coordinate the economic and technical development of the country. This group acknowledged the value of academic knowledge and professional competence as tools for development. The other group, referred to as the radicals for which Mao was the leader, supported work-study programs and argued that the danger in relying on intellectuals was that their capitalist and revisionist ideas would spread throughout the population. The radicals believed that China could not successfully advance until such time as the country had developed ideologically into a classless state through revolutionary struggle. While the liberals blamed the failure of the Great Leap Forward on improper planning and implementation of economic policies, the radicals blamed this failure on the fact that the population had not been properly indoctrinated and motivated with the correct political views (Goldman, 1981, p. 11).

The differences between the policies of the liberal CCP group and the radical CCP group can be attributed to several factors. The members of the liberal group were generally older in age, had been raised in urban areas, had completed their western influenced education prior to the creation of the PRC, and had acquired important CCP positions in the very early years of the PRC. Notable members of this group were Deng Xiaoping, Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi. The members of the radical group, on the contrary, were by and large younger than the members of the liberal group. These radicals, although educated before 1949, had been less exposed to western influences and had only obtained important political positions within the CCP well after the PRC had been created (Goldman, 1981, p. 14).

By 1963 the length of the school year had been standardized nationally, the primary school year would run for 9.5 months and middle school would run for nine months. Curriculum would also be standardized and would, for primary schools, consist of the teaching of the Chinese language, arithmetic, nature study, history, geography, general knowledge of production, physical education, music, drawing, handicrafts, and manual labour. Middle schools were required to teach Chinese language, mathematics, foreign languages, politics, history, geography, biology, physics, chemistry, physical education and students were required to participate in physical labour. In order to help facilitate the implementation of a uniform curriculum, standardized textbooks were adopted nationwide. Guidelines were issued regarding the amount of time that teachers and students should spend in performing manual labour which set two weeks a year as the required quota for students in grades 4-6 and one month per year for older students. Teachers were instructed not to spend more than two weeks a year performing manual

labour and male teachers over 45 and female teachers over 40 were not required to perform manual labour (Cleverley, 1991, p. 151).

A new type of school, known as a key-point school, received official support and recognition in the early 1960s. These schools were set up with better facilities and the best teachers in order to offer a higher than average education for promising students at both the primary and the middle school levels (Cleverley, 1991).

Academics, heavily criticized during the Great Leap Forward, were now presented as “labouring intellectuals who serve socialism”, in recognition that their academic skills were seen as a valuable asset of the state. The works of Confucius, previously denounced for promoting the bourgeois view of learning for the sake of knowledge, would again be available for study, and the supporters of improved academic education would argue that the Confucian views on education that valued academic knowledge were not incompatible with the goals of socialism. By 1962 Chinese universities were actively teaching western scientific and economic theories, university applicants were required to have knowledge of foreign languages and the restrictions on access to higher education that had been imposed on the children of “intellectuals” were abolished (Cleverley, 1991).

Not all party leaders were comfortable with the shift in emphasis from labour to academic knowledge that had occurred in the educational policies in the early 1960s. In 1962 Mao would reassert himself as supreme party authority after a four-year voluntary hiatus. Mao set out to publicly attack what he felt was wrong with the Chinese school system. In 1964 Mao denounced the school system claiming that the school year was too long, that students were being given too much homework, that the curriculum did not

include enough physical exercise and that formal examinations were too harsh on students. According to Mao, these educational shortcomings resulted not from an incorrect socialist educational policy but from the use of incorrect teaching methods. Mao questioned the necessity of higher academic education in pointing out that very few senior CCP Central Committee members had attended university. In his opinion, the Chinese educational system was suffering through the teaching of too much academic knowledge and not enough practical labour skills (Cleverley, 1991).

On the eve of the Cultural Revolution in 1965 approximately 116 million students were enrolled in primary school which accounted for approximately 84.7% of all school age children (Mackerras & Yorke, 1991, p. 219; Pepper, 1978, p. 850). Students from rural areas however were still greatly disadvantaged in the mid 1960s as the regular full-time state supported school system was concentrated in the urban areas. All students were required to write universal entrance exams, however academic achievement was only one criteria and a student's political and class background were adopted in 1958 as important admission factors. While approximately 856,000 students were enrolled in higher education in 1965 (Mackerras & Yorke, 1991, p. 224, Table 10.10), according to Pepper (1978) the majority of students accepted to Chinese colleges and universities in the mid 1960s came through the key-point schools and were probably from middle class urban backgrounds.

The determination of a person's class background was not based on a formal set of guidelines. The Marxist view of class distinction was based upon the general division between the oppressors and the oppressed. According to Marx "Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly

facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat” (*Karl Marx*, 1970, p. 36). Kwong (1979) informed us that whether a person was considered to be a member of the bourgeoisie or a member of the proletariat by the CCP was determined based on a person’s family background prior to 1949 and upon the degree to which that person had adopted correct Maoist political ideology. Having owned property prior to 1949 was another relevant factor looked at by the CCP in determining whether a person was a bourgeois (p. 24).

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966-1977

An important concern held by Mao and his supporters in the early 1960s was that the younger generation would not follow the political views of the older generation and would be influenced negatively by capitalist ideals. This concern was expressed in 1964 as:

How to ensure the revolution, won by the older generation at the cost of such sacrifices, will be carried on victoriously to the end by generations to come; that the destiny of our country will continue to be held secure in the hands of true proletarian revolutionaries; that our sons and grandsons and their successors will continue to advance, generation after generation, along the Marxist-Leninist, and not the revisionist, path, that is , advance steadily towards the goal of communism, and not to retreat to make room for a capitalist restoration. (Waller, 1973, p. 142)

The term Cultural Revolution was used by Mao to refer to the need to revise cultural and educational policies to better reflect the overall socialist advancements achieved in industry and collectivization and to counteract revisionist and capitalist ideas. Mao criticized those in the CCP who would not listen to his ideas. He stated that he felt that he was being treated as a dead ancestor (Cleverley, 1991, p. 163). Ancestors are

revered and greatly respected, but since one can not speak with one's ancestor, this statement by Mao implied that Mao felt that nobody was listening to him.

Mao's call for an ideological class struggle developed rapidly into a struggle for political power. He would join forces with the radical party members, having lost faith in the liberal group. His principal allies consisted of a group of radicals led by his wife Jiang Qing, as well as the PLA under the leadership of Vice-chairman Lin Biao, hand picked by Mao to lead the military in 1959. Jiang Qing's radical group, having the support of Mao and of the PLA, would move to the center of political power in 1966 and would institute a harsh campaign designed at purging their opponents, who they identified as being intellectuals and liberal bureaucrats, from office. Professors, university presidents, editors, journalists, musicians, actors, film directors, writers and artists would be targeted in this campaign (Goldman, 1981, p. 133).

Mao's ideas on educational reform were set out in a guideline known as the Sixteen Points adopted on August 8th, 1966 by the party, which stated that education must serve political goals and must be combined with productive labour activities. Furthermore, curriculum was to be revised; the length of courses were to be reduced and schools were to be placed under the control of the revolutionary groups made up of workers, peasant, soldiers, teachers and students (Cleverley, 1991, p. 165). Mao's view on the proper role of students was reflected in the Sixteen Points guideline as being "while their main task is to study, they should not only learn book knowledge, they should also learn industrial production, agricultural production and military affairs" (Hawkins, 1973, p. 118). According to Mao, the general population, if properly

mobilized and inspired, could achieve the communist ideals and overcome all obstacles in the building of a classless society (Goldman, 1981, p. 2).

In June of 1966 the Central Committee of the CCP announced that school enrollment would be suspended for six months in order to reform the existing system to “root out the bourgeois domination” and ensure that more “revolutionary young people from the workers; peasants and soldiers would enter the higher educational institutions” (Waller, 1973, p. 143).

Red guards.

Since the CCP recognized and valued the opinions and contributions of young people, in a society that traditionally relied on the wisdom and knowledge of older senior members of society, Mao’s already established support among the young was enhanced by his public views on changing the Chinese educational policies (Cleverley, 1991).

Students embraced these new ideas with great enthusiasm and the term Red Guards, first used at Qinghua University Middle School, was adopted by student groups nationwide who supported Mao’s views of education through struggle and the elimination of all class distinctions. Lin Biao (Defense Minister and leader of the PLA) called on the population to actively strive towards the removal of the “Four Olds – old thoughts, old culture, old customs, old habits” (Kwong, 1988, p. 35). A special organization known as the Cultural Revolution Group was set up by the Central Committee to oversee and to deal with all revolutionary matters. The membership of this group included Mao’s wife, Jiang Qing.

The theme of breaking down the old was eagerly taken up by the Red Guard student groups. These students were given free access to the country’s transportation

system which allowed Red Guards from urban areas to spread into the countryside to disseminate these new ideas on class struggle. Traveling the country to experience revolutionary encounters with other young people proved a far more interesting and exciting activity for young people than sitting in classrooms, and this mass movement of students in 1966 grew so large that it had detrimental effects on the transportation of supplies and raw material throughout the country (Waller, 1973, p. 143).

School enrollment based on examinations was attacked as favouring the children of the bourgeoisie, and pamphlets circulated encouraging everybody to study the Quotations of Chairman Mao and to live their lives based on the spirit of these quotations. Universities and middle schools were actively purged of academics who were not seen as conforming to the revolutionary line, and even the country's own leaders, whose parents had not been poor peasants, were attacked as not being "red by blood" (Cleverley, 1991, p. 172). According to Lu (2004), during the Cultural Revolution the radicals viewed Chinese society as being divided into two distinct groups, known as the "five reds" and the "five blacks". "The five red categories included revolutionary cadres, revolutionary martyrs, revolutionary soldiers, workers, and poor and lower-middle peasants; the five black categories consisted of landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, criminals, and rightists" (p. 55).

While Mao had hoped that the Red Guard movement would provide a training ground for his successors, by 1967 Mao and other party leaders were greatly concerned that the anarchy created by the actions of the Red Guards could lead to internal civil war, as the various Red Guard groups had begun fighting armed combats against each other (Cleverley, 1991). The Red Guards viewed the use of pinyin as evidence of foreign

subversion and actively destroyed public signs and posters written in pinyin (DeFrancis, 1986, p. 270). When the Red Guards commenced destroying historical sites as part of their interpretation of what getting rid of the Four Olds meant, the CCP ordered the PLA to intervene and protect important historical sites including monuments, temples and the Summer Palace in Beijing (Han, 1994, p. 331).

The strongholds of the Red Guards were the university campuses, and in 1968 the PLA, in order to break up the Red Guard units and disburse the student members, was ordered to forcibly take back these campuses. Universities were then formally put under the control of factory worker teams known as Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Teams (Cleverley 1991). Now viewed as unwanted trouble makers, large numbers of Red Guard students were forcibly sent to the countryside as part of the resettlement program for the *zhi shi qin nian*, the “educated youth” (Waller, 1973). From 1966 to 1976 approximately 12 million urban junior middle and senior middle school graduates, who became known as the “sent down youth” or “educated youth”, were sent to work in the countryside, it being the central government’s intention that these students should stay in the countryside and not return to urban areas (Sheringham, 1984). We were informed by Cleverley (1991) that by the time that this relocation program was finally officially abolished in 1978, as many as 17 million students had undergone relocation to rural areas (p. 227).

Educational policies during the Cultural Revolution.

No clear educational policies were developed during the chaotic reign of the Red Guards from 1966 to 1968. While primary and secondary schools would begin to reopen between 1967 and 1969, most universities and colleges did not reopen until 1970/1972.

After having forcibly disbanded the Red Guard movement in 1968, the CCP leadership turned its attention to adopting new guidelines to reform the education system.

The need to offer universal primary education in the countryside was identified as a major priority. Inability to pay tuition, absenteeism and poor performance would no longer be considered reasons to refuse admission or to dismiss a student, and a student would generally be advanced to the next grade regardless of academic performance. The dependency of a rural family on the labour of its children was to be recognized. In order to encourage attendance, school instruction was to be coordinated around the local agricultural cycle, and school breaks were to coincide with the busiest farming periods.

The failure by the central government to issue formal standardized national education policies in support of these new Cultural Revolutionary guidelines led to uncertainty and confusion, which resulted in different interpretations of these guidelines being implemented in different regions and in different schools within the same region (Pepper, 1978).

Primary and middle schools.

The central government control over both industrial production and the administration of education would be shifted to the provinces, which in turn passed the responsibility for the operation of local primary schools on to the local production brigades. Schools were run by local Revolutionary Committees, set up by the production brigades, and these committees were required to raise funds, set policy, create curriculum and determine student manual work schedules (Cleverley, 1991).

The length of the rural primary school program, which had been six years, was to be reduced to five years in order to maximize the use of scarce local school facilities, and

middle school which was six years in length would be reduced to four years. The first two years of middle school, known as junior middle school, was to be taught in the local community which was intended to encourage primary school graduates to continue on to junior middle school, due to the school's proximity and the absence of travel expenses. Senior middle school, being the final two years of middle school, was not offered in villages and students who wished to attend would have to make their way, at their own expense, to the closest town. Promoting universal middle school attendance in rural areas was not a goal of these new reforms (Pepper, 1978).

All entrance examinations for primary and secondary schools were to be abolished and the course curriculum was to be condensed and simplified to deal with the shorter school programs. Political study was to be added to the curriculum and would take up approximately 30% to 40% of class time. An obligation for all students, both rural and urban, to perform manual labour, similar to the policy adopted during the Great Leap Forward, was ratified as a compulsory part of the school curriculum. In order to address the perceived inequalities that had existed between urban and rural schools, the two-track (full-time / part-time) system along with all key-point schools were eliminated and state funding for all schools was cut to a minimum (Pepper, 1978).

While it was the policy makers' intention to completely abolish all part-time primary schools and replace them with full-time schools, traditional resistance from peasants who needed their children to work their land, limited resources and geographical constraints necessitated the continuation of irregular part-time classes at both the rural primary and junior middle school levels. Educational reforms in the urban areas generally followed the same process as adopted in rural areas; however the focus in urban

centers was to advance the enrollment in middle schools, since primary education was by 1965 generally very widely offered in cities nationwide (Pepper, 1978).

Curriculum and textbook revisions were not centralized but were intended to be prepared on a province by province basis, and would take into consideration the concerns of local political leaders and the demands of the local community. This approval process could be very detrimental to the creation of a consistent and coherent curriculum from one year to the next, since any shift in the views and opinions of political leaders, could lead to rapid and radical alterations to the curriculum content (Pepper, 1996).

Central to the reform philosophy of the Cultural Revolution was a de-emphasis on academic achievement and a need to promote practical learning through action and manual labour among students. Not only were students required to perform manual labour as part of their studies, but once they graduated from middle school, Mao decreed in 1968 that students were required to perform manual labour for two to three years before applying for higher education (Lucas, 1976). While rural students could return to the farms to perform this task, urban student graduates, due to the lack of factory and commune work available in the cities, would be sent to the countryside to work. According to Pepper (1996) urban dwellers often viewed a rural work assignment with aversion and efforts would be made to either obtain an urban work slot or to minimize one's stay in a rural setting (p. 389).

The curriculum for regular primary schools was to include Chinese language, arithmetic, politics, elementary science, physical education, productive labour and revolutionary arts and music including drawing, singing and drama. Political study was introduced as an important subject in kindergarten, and primary school students were

taught the importance of the five loves (which were very different from the five loves taught in the 1950s): love the country; love the Chinese people; love the CCP; love the PLA and love Chairman Mao. Entry to post primary education would now be based on a selection process in which class origin and political attitude would be important criteria. The regular middle school curriculum would cover politics, Chinese language, mathematics, foreign languages, geography, history, physical education, music and drawing for the lower grades, and physics, chemistry and physiology for the higher grades. Middle school students were required to study the important writing of Chairman Mao, and all middle school and university students of both sexes were required to undergo PLA military training (Cleverley, 1991).

No longer would school be a purely academic pursuit as all schools adopted the principle of *kai men ban xue*, “open door schooling”, which required academic study to be incorporated with the performance of a substantial amount of physical labour (Peterson, 1997). Both primary and middle schools would open production facilities on site and children would perform manufacturing tasks as part of their school program. Kindergarten students would perform one hour a week of productive labour; primary school students would spend one half day a week assembling small items, and middle school students were required to spend between 15% and 40% of their school day performing productive labour. Senior middle school students were also required to work in factories or on communes during the two-month annual school breaks. In rural regions, the students of primary and middle schools would carry out their productive labour requirements in agricultural production instead of factory work, which was the

norm in urban areas. Factories were also set up on university campuses to manufacture trucks, electronic items and pharmaceutical products (Cleverley, 1991, p. 192).

The traditional Chinese teaching method emphasizing lecture, rote memorization and examination was denounced as not only being bourgeois but as being designed to deny access for children of poor workers and peasants to higher education. Examinations were abolished and lectures were replaced with discussions and debates where teachers and students would be on the same level. No marks were given for school work performed; no student would fail a class and all students were automatically advanced to the next higher grade (Cleverley, 1991).

Traditional technical schools were abolished in 1970 due to their incompatibility with the cultural revolutionary philosophy that technical skills were to be learned on the job rather than through formal courses. These institutions were replaced with July 21 Workers' Universities, named to commemorate the date, July 21, 1968 when Mao issued a decree encouraging industry to set up technical training for workers. These new technical institutions were set up in factories to offer part time on-the-job technical training to workers. Factory workers with at least two years of work experience would be admissible to a July 21 Workers' University, and would receive a two to three year work/training program (Lucas, 1976).

Teachers.

Teachers would be required to undergo reeducation by the peasants in order to abolish bourgeois ideas and to instill a more egalitarian relationship with their students. This reeducation of teachers, academics and administrators was done under the supervision of the Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Teams in facilities known as May 7

Cadre Schools. These schools were so named to commemorate the date, May 7th, 1966, on which Mao declared that there was the need to set up special institutions to reeducate party and government cadres. Teachers, academics and administrators who were sent to the May 7 Cadre Schools were forced to live and work like peasants, grow their own food, build their own dwellings, study the Quotations of Chairman Mao and rid themselves of counter-revolutionary ideas (Hawkins, 1973).

As a result of the distrust of teachers by the government, little or no teaching occurred in those universities that remained open in the late 1960s, and teachers were encouraged to spy on each other and report any counter-revolutionary talk or activities. The stagnation of these teaching institutions would lead to a severe reduction in the number of skilled administrators and cadres entering the workplace (Cleverley, 1991).

Teachers had good reason to fear for their personal safety. During the Cultural Revolution, teachers were classified as *chou lao jiu* – the “stinking ninth category, a designation inferring the lowest of the nine reactionary social groups (Ogden, 2002, p. 319; Peterson, 1997, p. 147). We are informed by An (1983) that the other eight undesirable groups on this list were “landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad elements, Rightists, renegades, enemy agents and capitalist-roaders” (p. 4).

According to Cleverley (1991), although teachers and students were officially recognized as equals, as comrades, and each group was encouraged to criticize the activities of the other, teachers were very hesitant to either criticize students or introduce any form of discussion or testing into the classroom that could raise objections from the students. On the contrary, students were always eager, ready and willing to criticize the

smallest “failings” that they perceived in their teachers, and many instances of teachers being physically abused by their students have been noted:

I witnessed the degrading spectacle of the school principal being paraded publicly and denounced by other teachers and sixth graders. Her hair was cut into a *gui tou* (ghost hair) configuration that featured hair on one side of her head and a clean-shaven scalp on the other. In addition she was made to wear a pair of ragged shoes around her neck while students and some teachers cursed her, spit on her, and threw stones at her. Her alleged “crimes” were “promoting bourgeois curriculum” and “having an extramarital affair”. (Lu, 2004, p. 23)

At 7:30, when the students began to arrive, Xiao-yi Wu (a student) dragged Teacher Peng into the classroom where a few weeks earlier he had been master. The room was now only a place for students to read posters. Xiao-yi Wu found a broken chair. Discarding the wooden seat, he took the intact iron frame and shoved the makeshift stocks over Teacher Peng’s head, arms, and chest. Then he forced Teacher Peng to walk on his knees all around the room. Xiao-yi Wu’s peers were fascinated by the invention and proceeded to break the other chairs. The rest of the school poured in to see Teacher Peng’s humiliation. Taking off his heavy leather belt, Xiao-yi Wu beat the helpless man about his body and face. (Luo, 1990, pp. 25-26)

Higher education.

For the few colleges and universities that began to reopen in 1969/1970 their programs, which had been of a four to five year length prior to 1966, were reduced to a one to three year length. As with primary and secondary curriculums the new college curriculum was simplified and shortened, and a greater emphasis was placed on practical

work than on theoretical study. A need for college level teachers necessitated the return of former teachers banished to the countryside, whether their reeducation had been completed or not. In order to address the inequality of access to higher education the unified national entrance examinations in place prior to 1966, which had historically favoured the children of the bourgeoisie over those of the working and peasant classes, were abolished. A new admissions process was designed to facilitate access to higher education for workers and peasants, pursuant to which a student's request for admission would require the approval and recommendation of local party leaders. In order to be admissible for a three year college program, a student was only required to have completed junior middle school (Pepper, 1978).

The demand for admission to universities and specialized senior middle schools (technical training) exceeded supply, and a quota system was introduced by which the provinces would allocate available spaces among its urban and rural regions. The local education bureaus would then allocate the spaces that their region received among the various local work units, and young people from each work unit, generally between the ages of 20 and 25, unmarried and having completed two years of manual labour, could apply for admission. A successful candidate would require the approval of his/her fellow workers, the cadres of the work unit, the factory or commune's administrators and the local political leadership. The complex nature of this approval process made it ripe for abuse and the cadres and officials had little difficulty in securing admission for their own family members (Pepper, 1978).

Pepper (1978) highlighted an interesting point as to the accuracy of the number of rural peasants who were actually admitted to universities during this period. Urban

secondary school graduates who had been sent down to the countryside for at least two years were registered as being peasants by any university that accepted them. Since these better educated former urban students were apparently sought after by universities in an attempt to increase the academic caliber of their students, large numbers of these former urban students went on to universities, taking up spaces that were intended for real peasants. The rationale of providing higher education to rural peasants was that they could return to the countryside with important new skill sets that would benefit their local communities, and the practice of giving university places reserved for peasant to former urban students who had little intention of returning to the countryside defeated this purpose (Pepper, 1978).

Non-formal education.

As one of the principle focuses of the Cultural Revolution was the need to educate the whole population on correct political behaviour, innovative projects were introduced to help expand teaching services into remote regions. Mobile teaching centers were designed that could be moved from village to village in order to offer spare-time classes when agricultural schedules allowed peasants some idle time. Teams of teachers were sent to rural areas to provide basic literacy education in informal venues, classes would be given wherever and whenever feasible, often in peasants' homes and in the fields, and the "little teacher" concept would be actively employed. While the choice of Chinese characters taught to the peasants would take into consideration the specific occupations in each region, characters were expressly chosen in order to promote the ability to read political messages (Hawkins, 1973).

This writer was able to acquire an original “anti-illiteracy learning character textbook” from Rongcheng County (probably in either Hebei or Shangdong province), printed in November 1975. This paperback sized book of 118 pages is held together by two staples, and would, by western standards, be considered cheaply printed. While I was told that these books were very common in their time, those I spoke to in China had not seen copies in many years as these books not only deteriorated rapidly through use, but were also thrown away with the other vestiges of the Cultural Revolution. The cover of this literacy primer shows a “little teacher”, a young girl wearing a Young Pioneer scarf, sitting with an older man and teaching him how to read. A copy of the cover page of this textbook is reproduced in Appendix 3. On page 4 of this textbook, we are told that this county wished to become a county without illiterates and that this book contained 1,600 commonly used characters to help the commune people read the books of Marx and Lenin and the works of Chairman Mao and to help them serve the socialist revolution. The promotion of political ideology appears to be a very prevalent theme in this book.

Officially sanctioned information would also be disseminated to the local population through the use of commonly available tools such as radio broadcasts, films, theatrical productions, pamphlets and posters. It would be the responsibility of the revolutionary committees in the factories and the block or street committees in residential areas to use these media messages as educational tools and to organize local workers and residents into workplace and neighborhood study groups. These groups, led by politically correct facilitators, after being presented with the media messages, would be encouraged to learn about the CCP’s position on current issues through group discussion

(Lucas, 1976). We were reminded by Semali and Stites (1991) that as a result of the political chaos arising out of the Cultural Revolution, instead of promoting actual literacy training, the focus of government policy regarding spare-time peasant education was to teach political ideology and encourage criticism of revisionist ideas.

Criticisms of the Cultural Revolution.

Chinese foreign relations would take a major step forward in 1971 when Dr. Henry Kissinger secretly visited Premier Zhou Enlai in Beijing to discuss improving relations between China and the United States, and in October 1971 the PRC was officially admitted to the United Nations. Richard Nixon, in his official capacity as President of the United States, would visit the PRC in February 1972. The willingness of the CCP party leaders to adopt new directions in foreign policy would be accompanied by a readiness to review domestic policies.

As early as 1972, criticism surfaced within the CCP calling for higher academic standards for college courses and for the teaching of more theoretical content. These opponents argued that the quality of college education was inadequate since practical experience acquired through work could not substitute for academic knowledge obtained in the classroom. As a result of these criticisms, middle school and university entrance examinations were reintroduced in 1972 by the CCP. To avoid being accused of reintroducing Confucian bourgeois admission policies based on academic merit, assurances were given to the radical supporters of the Cultural Revolution that these examinations would not be the predominant factor in admissions, and that the political involvement and practical work experience of a candidate would remain as important criteria (Pepper, 1978). As a result of poor student performance, academic programs

were increased in length in 1972 with primary school being set at five years, middle school requiring four to five years and university programs were extended to three years (Cleverley, 1991).

In 1972, Premier Zhou Enlai suggested that the brightest middle school graduates should be permitted to go directly to university without having to perform several years of compulsory manual labour after middle school graduation, arguing that these students could still serve the Cultural Revolution while studying at the same time (Cleverley, 1991).

By the mid 1970s a growing dissatisfaction among officials and the public at large regarding the educational reforms introduced during the Cultural Revolution began to surface. The quality of teaching was one of the primary areas of discontent. Teaching positions left vacant by those teachers who had been sent to the countryside for reeducation were often filled by peasants who were untrained in the skills of teaching and administration. (Cleverley, 1991).

A new Ministry of Education was created in 1974 under the leadership of Zhou Rongxin, who argued for the need to establish higher standards of academic achievement, less work-study and more discipline within the schools. A common criticism was that universities that purported to offer university level instruction in fact taught a middle school curriculum to primary school graduates. Zhou Rongxin criticized the quality of university teachers arguing that workers and peasants were not equipped to train the scientists and specialists needed to advance the nation, and that Dewey's philosophy of learning by doing (learning through experience) that had been embraced literally by the

radical leaders of Cultural Revolution was in fact denying students access to quality education (Cleverley, 1991).

In 1975, Zhou Rongxin, would raise the following concerns:

- (1) The main problem in recent years is that students are not studying;
- (2) Academic standards at university level are the equivalent of the old technical secondary schools;
- (3) Universities are doing neither scientific nor theoretical research;
- (4) No one is planning for future needs, and people are only concerned with the present;
- (5) The objective in going to university must be to develop the economy and achieve the four modernizations (industry, agriculture, science and technology, national defense);
- (6) Politics has been set in opposition to professional competence; no one ever talks about the need to unify the two;
- (7) It is necessary to adopt the correct attitude toward intellectuals – we cannot at once use them and curse them as damned intellectuals. (Pepper, 1978, p. 872)

Paradoxically Zhou Rongxin would die, of natural causes, at a public rally in 1976 where he was preparing to speak in defense of his new policies on the merits of academic study.

With the mysterious death of former PLA leader Lin Biao in 1971 (his plane crashed in Mongolia), the appointment of Zhou Enlai (a liberal) as Premier in the early 1970s and the rehabilitation of the liberal minded Deng Xiaoping in 1973, the leadership of the CCP became less radical and more moderate. As a result of this change in political

dominance within the party, Jiang Qing's radical followers, referred to as the Shanghai group since their power base was in Shanghai, began to gradually lose economic and political power. Nevertheless Mao continued to openly support Jiang Qing's radical group which enabled them to maintain a political presence and to actively criticize the policies of the liberal party members (Goldman, 1981, p. 15).

The collapse of the Cultural Revolution.

Events that occurred in 1976 would bring about an end to the Cultural Revolution. On January 8th of that year Premier Zhou Enlai died. Zhou Enlai had been an open critic of the Cultural Revolution and had been involved in a power struggle with the radical party leaders, known as the Gang of Four, namely Jiang Qing (Mao's wife), Zhang Chunqiao (CCP propaganda chief), Yao Wenyuan (CCP cultural administrator) and Wang Hongwen (Vice-chairman of the CCP Central Committee). Premier Zhou Enlai had been viewed by the Chinese people as a great revolutionary leader, and on April 5th, 1976, a traditional day of mourning for ancestors and heroes, known as the Qing Ming Festival, hundreds of thousands of Chinese gathered in Tiananmen Square to pay their respect to the dead. Prominent in their thoughts was the memory of Premier Zhou Enlai and many memorial wreaths, poems and signs in his honor were publicly displayed in the square, along with signs and banners critical of the policies of the Cultural Revolution. The Gang of Four seeing this as a personal attack on their authority by counter-revolutionaries ordered the police to forcibly clear the square which resulted in violent confrontations. This unprovoked attack on the crowd would become known as the Tiananmen Incident, "Si Wu Tiananmen Shi Jian". Deng Xiaoping would be accused by

the Gang of Four of inciting these counter-revolutionary demonstrators and he would be arrested and sent for reeducation for the second time (Spence, 1982, p. 403).

Even before the death of Mao, which would occur on September 9, 1976, the Gang of Four was losing whatever influence they held in the CCP. This state of affairs was evidenced by the fact that the official vacancy left by the death of Premier Zhou Enlai was given, not to one of the Gang members, but to Hua Guofeng (a liberal), who would also be appointed Chairman upon Mao's death. Having no power base in either Beijing or within the PLA, the Gang of Four was overthrown and arrested on October 6, 1976 by the new Chairman with the support of the PLA (Han, 1994) and would be charged with engaging in "revisionism" and trying to "usurp Party and state power" (Chen, 1977, p. 3).

China would enter into a new stage of publicly punishing the alleged radical leaders of the Cultural Revolution while at the same time reversing the punishments of many men and women discredited as rightists during the Cultural Revolution. Unlike the wave of anti-Stalinist publicity that had developed in the USSR after Stalin's death, the Chinese did not vilify the memory of Mao but concentrated on reinterpreting Mao's policies to show Mao in a favorable light as being neither anti-intellectual nor against the idea that valuable knowledge could be learned from books (Cleverley, 1991, p. 222).

Post Cultural Revolution

In August of 1977 the CCP officially declared that the Cultural Revolution was over and that a new era had begun (Spence, 1982). In December of 1977 all candidates applying for university admission were required to write formal entrance examinations which by 1978 would be fully standardized, with all students nationwide writing the same

university entrance exams at the same time. Along with the introduction of compulsory entrance examinations, the length of university programs was extended from one year to four years. While a student's good political standing was still taken into consideration in university admissions, students of bourgeois class background were no longer prohibited from applying to university, and students of worker/peasant class background were no longer given any preference (Cleverley, 1991).

Since admissions based on examination results were viewed as the most objective method of selection and were seen as a means of raising academic standards, all levels of schooling from kindergarten upwards rapidly readopted this method of admissions. Readopting entrance examinations at all levels of schooling resulted in the implementation of improved curricula that offered a broader base of academic knowledge from which testing material could be drawn. Courses such as foreign languages, history and geography ignored by many schools during the Cultural Revolution were re-implemented. The introduction of new standardized textbooks was undertaken in 1978 in recognition of the fact that the teaching material used during the Cultural Revolution was both inadequate and inaccurate (Cleverley, 1991).

Teachers were formally readmitted into the honorable ranks of workers and academic pursuits were officially recognized as being as worthy as manual labour. The reeducation of teachers in the May 7 Cadre Schools ended and teachers were again placed in charge of operating academic institutions. The length of primary and middle school that had been reduced during the Cultural Revolution to as low as eight years would be gradually increased to twelve years comprising six years primary and six years middle

school (Cleverley, 1991). As of 1978 middle school graduates were no longer required to work in rural areas after graduation.

The late Premier Zhou Enlai's statement, which had fallen on deaf ears when made in 1971, "respect the teacher and love the student" would now be promoted as proper school conduct (Pepper, 1978, p. 874).

In 1978 the central government would again publicly recognize illiteracy as an important problem and a new policy to battle illiteracy was introduced. Illiteracy was at that time viewed as a predominantly rural and female problem and a three step program was called for. The first step was to ensure that all school aged children received at least five years of primary education; the second step called for the elimination of illiteracy among the 12 to 45 year old segment of the population through spare-time adult literacy classes; and the third step decreed that post literacy classes must be made available on an on-going basis to ensure that the newly literate did not lose their skills through non-use. The 1978 literacy competency goal for these adult learners was set at 1,500 characters for rural people and 2,000 characters for urban dwellers and industrial workers. In addition to learning those basic characters, literate adults were required to be able to read simple documents, keep basic accounts and write simple notes (*Zhongguo Jiaoyu*, 1983, p. 900).

Chapter Summary

Advancements in education in the PRC from 1949 to 1977 are difficult to measure in an absolute fashion because the educational policy makers did not adopt uniform policies that were continuously implemented. As the PRC recognized only one legitimate political party, that party, the CCP, was the undisputed national policy maker. Educational policies adopted by the CCP fluctuated greatly as party leadership and party

priorities changed. While the PRC would initially focus its attention on promoting academic knowledge in order to teach basic work related skills to the population, by 1958 party leaders became concerned that the population had not sufficiently accepted the fundamental Marxist principles on which the new nation was based. This political preoccupation by party leaders would result in a reversal of previous educational policies and the promotion of academic learning would be replaced with a curriculum that promoted correct political behaviour and the belief that skills were better learned on the job than in an academic setting.

Not all senior members of the CCP supported the abandonment of academic education, and the conflict between the moderates (liberals) who supported academic education and the radicals who promoted political awareness and work-study programs would come to a climax in 1966. The radicals would take control of the CCP in 1966 and the PRC would enter into twelve years of educational chaos when academic knowledge and scholarly pursuits were actively suppressed and punished for being bourgeois and counter-revolutionary.

Colletta (1982) noted that while approximately one hundred million Chinese graduated from literacy programs during the period from 1949 to 1965, literacy programs ceased to be offered during the Cultural Revolution and “the result was that many new literates lapsed back into illiteracy and a generation of youth remained unschooled and illiterate” (p. 27). According to Colletta (1982), at the end of the Cultural Revolution “the Chinese were left in a state referred to as the ‘three lows and one lack,’ e.g. low cultural level, low technical standard, low ability of management, and a lack of engineers and technicians” (p. 9).

Seeberg (2000) raised an amusing fact that students of the Cultural Revolution period were sometimes derogatorily described as “walking on one leg” (p. 87), inferring that they were very unbalanced in their education. This expression was a play on words that referred to the famous pre-Cultural Revolution political slogan of “walking on two legs” to advance both industry and agriculture.

Chapter IV

Education of National Minorities in China under Mao

While the Chinese population appears homogeneous when seen through a western lens, this population is in fact made up of 56 different nationalities (Appendix 4). The largest Chinese ethnic group, which constitutes approximately 93% of the total population, is known as the Han, who are concentrated mostly in the coastal areas and fertile river banks and basins that make up 40% of the Chinese landmass (Hawkins, 1978; Kwong & Xiao, 1989). From a purely quantitative point of view, the other 55 ethnic groups appear to be of little importance since these small groups are scattered about in the thinly populated frontier regions of the country which cover 60% of the total area of the PRC. From a strategic and national security point of view however, the management and control of the land occupied by these non-Han minority groups has always been of the utmost importance to the Chinese central government since these lands border foreign nations (Hawkins, 1978). It is worthwhile to examine the policies adopted by the Han Chinese with regards to the education of the members of the non-Han minority groups, and to highlight how these policies differed from the educational policies applied in the Han dominated regions of the PRC.

We are informed by Hu (1970) that the first national flag of the Republic of China consisted of five horizontal stripes, being red, yellow, blue, white and black. Each stripe represented one of the five major ethnic groups in China, which were Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui and Tibetan (p. 1). Historically the Han Chinese had regarded non-Han minorities as culturally, not racially, inferior, and the largest minority groups such as the Manchu, Mongol and Tibetans had always been viewed by the Han as potential internal

threats to the stability of the Chinese empire (Hu, 1970). While the Han controlled the government of China for over 3,000 years, two noteworthy minority groups had in fact conquered and ruled the Chinese empire for significant periods: the Mongols (Yuan dynasty), led initially by Kublai Khan, the grandson of Chingis Khan (1279-1368); and the Manchu (Manchurians), the last emperors of China, known as the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) (Kwong & Xiao, 1989).

While it is possible to control populations by using physical force and coercion, this aggressive approach will seldom lead to long-term regional stability. Stability and relatively peaceful coexistence can best be achieved through negotiation with, or the assimilation of, a minority population into the dominant culture. According to Hu (1970) education played an important role for the Han Chinese in the process of strengthening central control and countering regional nationalism.

Chinese Minority Education Policies, 1949-1957

Neither the imperial government, prior to 1911, nor the government of Republic of China thereafter, had implemented any concrete educational programs for the non-Han minorities. In 1949, China's non-Han minority groups were still generally living, as they had for centuries, virtually autonomous existences principally in isolated frontier regions of China (Hu, 1970).

Education for both the Han and the non-Han Chinese would be a major preoccupation for the new communist government. While the educational policies for minority regions would be established by the central government, the individual regions were responsible for the administration of these policies (Hu, 1970). Between 1947 and 1965 five Autonomous Regions, which gave minority groups internal administrative

powers similar to those of a Chinese province, were set up in areas where large homogeneous concentrations of specific minority groups resided. These Autonomous Regions are: Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang-Uighur, Guangxi Zhuang, Ningxia Hui and Tibet (Appendix 5).

The central government initially adopted a bilingual educational policy whereby portions of the curriculum for both primary and secondary schooling in minority regions would be taught to students in their indigenous local languages. The implementation of this seemingly straightforward policy was hindered by several major obstacles: the absence of written forms for many minority languages; the lack of qualified teachers; and the lack of school facilities. In 1949, each of the 55 minority groups had its own indigenous native language(s) that was not similar to Mandarin (putonghua), the language of the dominant Han group, however only 11 of these minority groups had actually developed comprehensive written forms of their indigenous languages. The other groups only possessed oral forms of indigenous language which created enormous pedagogical problems for educators (Kwong & Xiao, 1989). The task of studying the indigenous languages was undertaken in the early 1950s by the central government's Institute of Linguistics and Philosophy; their mandate was to compile existing written texts, create language glossaries, record folklore and local poetry, and reform existing written scripts and create written languages where none existed. The written forms of these minority languages were to be developed based on the Latin alphabet, since Chinese characters were considered to be too complex. These minority languages were to be compiled in a manner similar to the pinyin version of Mandarin. This similarity of construction between the pinyin of Han Mandarin and the new non-Han written scripts was intended

to facilitate the learning of Mandarin and minority languages by both Han and non-Han Chinese (Hawkins, 1978).

While the stated principle goal of primary education was for minority students to become literate in their indigenous languages, offering education in indigenous languages, while ideologically sound from a socialist egalitarian point of view, proved to be quite difficult in practice. In the early 1950s there were very few qualified Chinese teachers who understood the languages, ethnic concerns, culture and history of the minority groups. It was well understood by the central government that minority groups historically were both suspicious and reluctant in their dealings with Han Chinese, and that in order to implement educational policies within the minority communities it was essential to provide them with teachers from their own communities. These minority teachers in training would be required to physically move to Han regions in order to attend training school, since little or no physical school infrastructure existed in most minority regions in the early 1950s. Because most of the existing teacher training material available in the PRC in the 1950s was written in Mandarin, teachers in training from the minority regions were first required to learn Mandarin in order to read the training material. Once these ethnic teachers returned to their local communities they were often met with suspicion and distrust since the locals felt that these teachers had been indoctrinated with Han ideology (Hawkins, 1978).

Another daunting impediment to offering education in the minority regions was the severe lack of physical resources, especially primary school buildings and accoutrements which necessitated massive construction programs in those regions where large concentrations of sedentary minority people resided. Since many minority groups

were nomadic in nature, innovative mobile schools and listening centers (where lessons were broadcasted by radio) were developed in order to bring basic schooling to these nomadic groups. The principle of spare-time schools that was also used in rural Han communities was adopted in minority regions to allow people to study during the seasons when agricultural crops and animal herds required less attention (Hawkins, 1978).

From a structural point of view, the educational system set up for Han and non-Han Chinese followed the same basic time frame which consisted of six years primary and six years secondary education; however the length of non-Han schooling suffered the same reductions and cut-backs as occurred at various times in the Han school system. Two different forms of educational pedagogy were offered to the minority students depending on the particular circumstances. The first type was referred to as the Maintenance Model which was used in the Autonomous Regions and in other areas of concentrated homogeneous minority populations where written minority languages existed. The philosophy behind the Maintenance Model was to enable the students to develop a good functional knowledge of both their local language and of Mandarin. Under this model the first two years of primary education was taught exclusively in the minority language and Mandarin would be introduced as a separate subject in the third or fourth year of schooling. From that time on, through secondary school, courses would be taught in both languages. The second type of pedagogy was referred to as the Transitional Model which was used in areas where minority populations were less dense, where they had some knowledge of Mandarin and/or did not have their own written language. The philosophy behind the Transitional Model was to facilitate the students' transition from using the local language into using predominantly Mandarin. Under this

model the first year of primary education was taught exclusively in the minority language and Mandarin was introduced in the second year. During years three and four the students would be taught in both the indigenous language as well as in Mandarin. Beginning in the fifth year of schooling Mandarin would become, and would remain thereafter, the principle language of instruction (Liu, 1996).

Secondary education in the early years of the PRC focused on the central government's preoccupation with irradiating the economic backwardness of the minority regions and concentrated on training middle and low ranking productive vocational workers and training teachers who would be able to teach in the minority regions. Access to post secondary higher education in the PRC was based on the criteria of political reliability and academic achievement. In order to encourage non-Han students to pursue higher education the government adopted an admission policy that give priority access to non-Han students who wished to attend higher educational institutions (Kwong & Xiao, 1989).

Chinese Minority Education Policies, 1958 – 1965

In 1958, along with the central government's change in ideology, from promoting economic development to promoting political conformity and nationalism, came a change in educational policy towards the non-Han groups, and the central government began adopting policies to prevent regional nationalism. International tensions arising in the late 1950s and early 1960s between the PRC and the USSR to the north, India and the Tibetan Autonomous Region to the west and caused by the United States' military presence in Vietnam to the southwest, resulted in tighter central control in these strategically important border regions. As a result of these conflicts the government of

the PRC decided that it was necessary to compel minority groups to integrate more rapidly into the mainstream Han cultural for national security reasons. The active promotion of Mandarin as the language of instruction in primary and secondary minority schools, on the pretext that minority groups wanted to learn Mandarin, was a principle tool adopted to implement this cultural assimilation. In order to solidify central government control, road, rail and communication infrastructures were constructed to physically link isolated minority regions with outside Han communities. A wide variety of mass media communication tools, including radio, films, plays and printed material, were aggressively employed to disseminate pro-Han cultural information and ideology within the minority regions (Hu, 1970).

The Cultural Revolution

With the advent of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 minority education ceased to be a government priority and would remain ignored until the late 1970s. The government, beginning in 1966, in an attempt to strengthen Han presence and control over the minorities, ordered tens of thousands of Han students, part of the large displaced student group who would become known as the “educated youth”, and special Han youth Red Guard units to move into and live in the various minority regions (Hu, 1970).

In 1954 the PRC had recognized the equality of all people regardless of economic, class or ethnic distinction in Article 3 of the first Constitution of the PRC which stated:

The People’s Republic of China is a unitary multinational state. All the nationalities are equal. Discrimination against or oppression of any nationality, and acts which undermine the unity of the nationalities, are prohibited. All the nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve

or reform their own customs and ways. Regional autonomy applies in areas where a minority nationality live in a compact community. All the national autonomous areas are inseparable parts of the People's Republic of China. (*Constitution of, 1961*, p. 9).

In the second Constitution of the PRC adopted during the Cultural Revolution in 1975, Article 3 of the 1954 Constitution was replaced with a new Article 4 which stated:

The People's Republic of China is a unitary multi-national state. The areas where regional national autonomy is exercised are all inalienable parts of the People's Republic of China. All the nationalities are equal. Big-nationality chauvinism and local-nationality chauvinism must be opposed. All the nationalities have the freedom to use their own spoken and written languages. (*The Constitution, 1975*, p. 14)

In comparing the 1954 text with the 1975 text, this writer noted that the 1975 text no longer referred to protections against discrimination or oppression of nationalities. Regarding the right to the protection of language and culture, references to the freedom to develop languages and to the preservations of minorities' customs and ways were conspicuously absent from the 1975 text. Article 4 of the 1975 Constitution of the PRC reflected a strong undertone of assimilation of minority cultures.

Integration

Liu (1996) reminded us that it is important to examine the integration strategies adopted by the minority groups themselves when faced with the assimilation policies of the central government. There were three integration strategies that minority groups could adopt: assimilation, creolization and alienation. Assimilation occurred where the minority group adopted the dominant group's culture to replace their own. Creolization referred to the process where the minority group's culture merged with the dominant

group's culture and resulted in a new blended culture. Alienation occurred where a minority group resisted assimilation by rejecting the dominant culture in order to protect its own culture. Although many minority groups in China have been assimilated to varying degrees into the dominant Han culture, some large minority populations living in Autonomous Regions have continued, to this day, to resist central government control and cultural domination. Recent events in both the Tibetan and Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Regions are clear demonstrations that certain minority groups in China are still actively resisting attempts of Han domination.

Bourdieu (1973) identified some of the difficulties that members of a cultural group, which is not the dominant group in a society, may experience in school. Building on Collins' ideas of Social Capital, Bourdieu (1973) developed the concept of Cultural Capital which he used to describe the knowledge, speech, mannerisms, values and tastes that children had "inherited" from their parents by the time that they had reached school age. Since schools taught the same Cultural Capital as possessed by the members of the dominant group in society, it was easier for children from the dominant group to understand what was required from them by the teachers because the language and mannerisms used by their teachers were very similar to what they were exposed to at home. Children from "lower" and "different" cultural groups often had weaker knowledge of the dominant group's language and mannerisms, and had difficulty understanding what the teachers required from them. These children were seen as "slow" or "remedial" by the school system.

Examining the concerns of minority groups in China, Stites (1999) highlighted the interesting phenomenon that members of minority groups often criticized the ideological

model of literacy discussed by Street (2001) that embraced and recognized the value of local beliefs, language and culture, on the grounds that this model provided minority groups with a “second class” education. These critics believed that it could only be through mastering the dominant group’s own literacy skills and language that minority groups would have the ability to contest the power position of the dominant group. As an example of this phenomenon, Stites (1999) discussed how some affluent members of the Zhuang minority, China’s largest non-Han minority group, had rejected the idea of being literate in their own language and had embraced the Han language and culture in order for them and their children to advance in Chinese society.

Chapter Summary

Educational policies for minority groups in China historically have had to address many complex issues. To simply decree that all Chinese must study in Mandarin would have denied monolingual minority students’ access to basic education, while a concentrated effort to promote all minority languages at the expense of Mandarin would have weakened the social and political control of the central state. China has struggled with trying to find the illusive perfect balance in teaching a bilingual curriculum that would produce students who were, as stated by Stites (1999) both “ethnic and expert”, students who not only retained knowledge of their local culture and language but who were also able to productively function in Mandarin as part of Chinese society.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Attempts to accurately measure and evaluate how successful Chinese educational policies were during the period from 1949 to 1977 in providing a basic education to its citizens are greatly hindered due to the fact that Chinese educational policy did not develop continuously in one direction during this period. It is important to note that the Chinese government's educational ideology and policies for both Han and non-Han groups underwent a radical change starting in 1958, at the beginning of the era known as the Great Leap Forward. Seeberg (2000) identified that two fundamentally different approaches to educational policy were adopted in the People's Republic of China under Mao. The first approach, referred to as the moderate approach, was used from 1949 up to 1957, and focused on economic growth and promoted the academic based knowledge and the literacy skills that workers needed for industrial and agricultural production. The second approach, referred to as the radical approach that commenced in 1958 and reached an extreme application during the Cultural Revolution, focused on teaching issues of political awareness, nationalism and class struggle, at the expense of academic knowledge and literacy skills.

Formal Education

One of the principle objectives identified by the new government of the PRC in 1949 was the need to provide an overwhelming illiterate population with basic educational skills. Not only was education recognized as a tool to enable the population to participate as productive workers in industry and agriculture, but it was also

recognized as the means to ensure that the population understood and accepted the new political ideology of the state.

When examining statistical data released by the government of the PRC we are warned by Mackerras and Yorke (1991) and by Seeberg (2000) that there may be issues with regards to the completeness and accuracy of data released by the Chinese government during the period from the 1950s through to the 1970s.

As evidenced by the official data set out in Table 1 below (Löfstedt, 1980, pp. 192-193), the number of students enrolled in primary school went from 24.4 million in 1949 to 146 million in 1978. In absolute percentages of school aged children enrolled in primary school, those numbers translate into 49.2% of school aged children in 1949 and 94% of school aged children in 1978 (Mackerras & Yorke, 1991, p. 220).

Table 1			
<i>Student enrollment in formal education in the PRC, 1949-1978</i>			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
1949			
# enrolled	24.4 million	1.04 million	117, 000
% of population	4.54 %	0.19 %	0.02 %
1953			
# enrolled	51.66 million	2.93 million	212, 000
% of population	8.77 %	0.51 %	0.04 %
1957			
# enrolled	64.28 million	6.28 million	441, 000
% of population	9.93 %	0.97 %	0.07 %

1960			
# enrolled	100 million	—	955, 000
% of population	14.58 %	—	0. 14 %
1965			
# enrolled	116 million	14.4 million	674, 000
% of population	15.32 %	1.9 %	0.09 %
1972			
# enrolled	127 million	36 million	200, 000
% of population	14.45 %	4.1 %	0.02 %
1978			
# enrolled	146 million	65 million	850, 000
% of population	15.27 %	6.78 %	0.09 %

According to Pepper (1978, p. 862), the Chinese government claimed by 1978 that it had achieved the difficult goal of universal primary school attendance in rural China. As indicated in Table 1, while enrollment in middle school greatly increased from 1949 to 1978, middle school attendance could not match the achievements for primary school, as senior middle school was generally only available in urban areas. Students in suburban areas or in larger towns might have had access to junior middle school; however in rural areas access to junior middle school remained by and large unavailable in 1978. Enrollment statistics alone do not however provide us with any data as to how many students actually graduated from the various levels of schooling nor any information as to how varied and useful was the curriculum that they learned.

Non-Formal Education

An examination of the Chinese government statistics set out as Table 2 below, compiled by Semali and Stites (1991, p. 52), with regards to the number of people who successfully completed anti-illiteracy courses, revealed that over one hundred million people graduated from these courses during the period from 1949 to 1965. Of those one hundred million people approximately two-thirds, sixty-six million people, apparently graduated during the years 1958 and 1959.

Year	Graduates	Year	Students	Graduates
1949	657,000	1974	33,044,800	...
1950	1,372,000	1975	29,230,700	5,203,100
1951	1,375,000	1976	30,521,300	7,455,600
1952	656,000	1977	23,925,700	6,666,600
1953	2,954,000	1978	18,067,000	4,799,000
1954	2,637,000	1979	16,363,000	5,676,000
1955	3,678,000	1980	12,209,300	5,388,100
1956	7,434,000	1981	6,212,700	3,538,700
1957	7,208,000	1982	3,960,000	...
1958	40,000,000	1983	5,287,000	...
1959	26,000,000	1984	6,088,000	...
1960	5,733,000	1985	5,190,000	...
1961	458,000	1986	3,533,000	...

1962	167,000	1987	2,478,000	...
1963	225,000			
1964	747,000			
1965	1,422,000			

Semali and Stites (1991) informed us that the accuracy of the high numbers of graduates claimed by the government in 1958 and 1959 is very doubtful and that these statistical numbers presented for literacy graduates during the Great Leap Forward reflected a government policy that promoted participation at the expense of quality of learning. As noted by these authors, the demand for industrial output that resulted from the creation of small industrial factories in rural areas during the Great Leap Forward ironically led to the discontinuation of many spare-time literacy classes in rural areas, as workers and cadre were preoccupied with maximizing production.

Data with regards to anti-illiteracy classes offered during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1973 were conspicuously absent from Table 2. While anti-illiteracy courses were offered during this period, their goals were, according to Semali and Stites (1991), to promote political ideology and not basic reading and writing skills. We were informed by Zhao (1988) that with the advent of the Cultural Revolution mass literacy education would not become a government priority again until the late 1970s.

A serious shortfall in the Chinese attempt to promote anti-illiteracy programs identified by several authors, including Colletta (1982) and DeFrancis (1986), was the failure of the state to provide follow-up post-literacy courses that would allow the newly literate to use and not lose their new found skills.

Knowledge of Chinese characters.

The definition of literacy adopted by the PRC in 1956 set the learning standard at 1,500 Chinese characters for rural peasants and at 2,000 characters for urban residents and rural cadre. The question that needs to be answered is whether the knowledge of 1,500 to 2,000 characters equipped a person with the ability to effectively make use of the Chinese written language.

Determining how many Chinese characters a person must be able to write, or read for that matter, in order to function proficiently in Chinese society, will greatly depend on the actual context in which the question is asked. To complicate this matter further we must not forget that the Chinese language is not made up of only 26 letters. Learning 26 Chinese characters along with their sounds will not allow a person to construct and read other words as could be done once one has learned the 26 letter Roman alphabet.

As to the total number of different Chinese characters that actually exist, it strikes this writer that scholars agree to disagree. In a very informative discussion on 20th century literacy movements in China, Hayford (1987) concluded that there were at least 40,000 Chinese characters in existence at that time, while DeFrancis (1986) set the number at approximately 49,000. At the time of writing this paper, this writer noted a reference from the Chinese Ministry of Culture website ("Number of," 2003) that there are 49,888 Chinese characters recognized in the Great Dictionary of the Chinese Language. Incidentally, the number "888" is a very lucky number to the Chinese, so this writer suspects that the number "49,888" was not arrived at by chance.

Of greater significance than the total number of characters in existence, for literacy issues, is the determination of how many characters are commonly used by the

Chinese people. Hayford (1987) claimed that only about 7000 Chinese characters were in sufficiently common use as to appear in a newspaper. Cleverley (1991) concluded that a person who was able to read and write between 5,000 and 8,000 Chinese characters would possess a reasonable grasp of the Chinese language. The Chinese Ministry of Culture website ("Number of," 2003) claimed that the knowledge of approximate 4,000 Chinese characters would be sufficient to read newspapers and "for most other common purposes". Colletta (1982) raised the interesting fact that a Chinese primary school graduate would have mastered about 3,000 Chinese characters, which suggested that the state's 1956 definition of literacy set a standard well below the level reached by a 12 year old student.

From personal discussions with various Chinese educators and retired educators, this writer would accept the claims made by both Hayford (1987) and Cleverley (1991) and would conclude that the knowledge of between 6,000 and 8,000 Chinese characters would enable a person to function without undue difficulty in modern Chinese society. Clearly the command of 1,500 to 2,000 Chinese characters fell well short of this level. Accepting the premise that literacy should not be defined in an absolute fashion and that knowledge is situation specific, as discussed by Street (2001) in the context of the ideological model of literacy, there is no reason why a person who has the command of a written language to the degree necessary to function in his or her own community should not be recognized as literate.

This principle of functional literacy has been recognized by the United Nations since 1978. In its *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2005*, the United Nations

Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2006) defined functional literacy/illiteracy as:

a person is functionally literate/illiterate who can/cannot engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community's development.

The knowledge of 1,500 to 2,000 Chinese characters could in certain specific situations constitute functional literacy; however this writer feels that a person would need to possess the command of a larger number of characters to be able to function in the modern Chinese society.

An examination as to whether the 2,000 characters required for urban literacy, referred to in the 1956 Chinese definition of literacy, contained all or some of the 1,500 characters required for rural learners would be worthy of separate study. This writer has not been able to locate any documents listing which exact characters were included in these urban and rural literacy requirements.

Curriculum

The educational policies of the PRC developed with two specific goals in mind. Education would not only promote the economic development of the nation by providing academic training and skills to the population, but would also be an effective vehicle used by the government to promote conformity and to indoctrinate the population with correct political beliefs.

Applying the principle of Status Groups as discussed by Collins (1971) to the educational model in place within the PRC it became very clear that one dominant Status

Group, the CCP, controlled the nation's wealth, power and educational policy. Freire (1972) highlighted the injustice that might occur where one small dominant group is empowered to determine what information should be considered as knowledge. As this dominant group controls the channel through which knowledge is transmitted to the students, students would only be taught the information that the dominant group deems proper and appropriate for the students to learn. Educational curriculum was openly and actively used by the CCP policy makers as a vehicle to promote correct political belief and conformity. While a standardized national curriculum reflecting the social and cultural views of the Han majority was promoted nationwide, the issue as to whether or not one standardized skill set would be relevant to all Chinese, was ignored.

We are reminded by Pepper (1978) that in a rural setting all members of a family are historically seen as being indispensable workers whose labour is necessary to sustain the family as a whole. To send a child off to school, even if no tuition is charged to the family, may be seen by the family as a serious loss of labour that is not an improvement, but is detrimental, to the family. For this reason it is essential to design a curriculum that the learner and his/her family views as relevant and beneficial. Liu (1996) pointed out that in order for a curriculum to be seen as valuable and useful in a local community, it must teach skills that students can use to find gainful work in their own communities. A curriculum that prepares a student with skills that he/she must leave the community in order to use will not be viewed by the students or their parents as practical or attractive.

While 89.4% of the population of the PRC lived in rural areas in 1949, by 1978 the percentage of rural Chinese still made up 82.4% of the population (Mackerras & Yorke, 1991, pp. 171-172). Considering that the vast majority of its population was rural

based, the importance of offering a curriculum relevant to the needs and expectations of the rural population should have been better recognized by the PRC policy makers. Unfortunately as pointed out by Stites (2001) adult literacy work in rural China was historically linked to a broader effort to disseminate central ideology and control into the outlying regions. Central government goals for mass literacy were often poorly matched to the diversity of local literacy practices and needs, and government attempts to standardize and control the teaching of language and literacies were used as tools for the extension of state control.

The Need for Teachers

The population of the PRC which stood at approximately 541 million people in 1949 had increased to over 962 million people in 1978. The annual population growth rate averaged between 1.5 and 2% per year during this period with the exception of two anomalies. During the great famine years of 1960 and 1961 the total population showed an annual net decrease of between 0.5 and 1.5%. During the chaotic years of the Cultural Revolution from 1965 to 1971 the population growth rate climbed to between 2.4 and 2.8% per year (Mackerras & Yorke, 1991, p. 177), leading one to speculate that people stayed home where it was safe and procreated.

A simple mathematical equation reveals that a 2% annual increase on a population of 500 million people produces 10 million new citizens per year. Assuming that the immigration rate into the PRC was negligible, the birth of so many millions of babies annually created enormous pressure on the government to provide a sufficient number of new teachers to meet basic educational demands as these babies reached school age.

Data provided by Löfstedt (1980, p. 192) informed us that there were 24.4 million students enrolled in primary school in the PRC in 1949, and that this number increased almost six fold to 146 million by 1978. The data produced by Seeberg (2000) concerning the total number of primary teachers in the PRC indicated a total six fold increase from 836,000 in 1949 to 5,382,000 in 1979 (p. 251). Student / teacher ratios for primary, secondary and tertiary education compiled by Mackerras and Yorke (1991) demonstrated that during the period from 1949 to 1978 the primary school student / teacher ratios fluctuated between 28 and 35.6, the secondary school ratio fluctuated between 15.3 and 24.2 (p. 221) and the tertiary ratio fluctuated between 4.2 and 7.3 (p. 225).

From a purely quantitative point of view the above ratios indicated that the PRC was able to graduate a sufficient number of new teachers on an ongoing basis to keep up with the increasing educational enrollment. From a qualitative point of view Seeberg (2000) informed us that during the periods when moderate educational policy makers were in control, the quality of teacher training was superior as policy makers were concerned with instilling a strong academic skill set into students and workers. During the periods that radical educational policy makers were in power, the quality of teacher training suffered greatly as policy makers were preoccupied in promoting correct political beliefs at the expense of academic knowledge, and only those candidates who possessed a correct political viewpoint would be hired as teachers. As the quality of training received by teachers would have a serious and direct impact on the quality of education that they could offer to students, further study on the actual academic training that new teachers received under the PRC might be an interesting topic to pursue.

The Value of Education

The Chinese expression “li yu tiao long men”, translated into “the carp jumps over the dragon gate” is a famous Chinese legend from antiquity. The legend tells the story of carp that struggled up a river and attempted to jump over a waterfall known as the Dragon Gate. Any carp that successfully jumped over the Dragon Gate would be transformed into a winged dragon, a creature of immense power and status. This transformation from lowly fish to mighty creature through hard work and perseverance was adopted as a metaphor to describe the transformation of a humble peasant, who had successfully passed the highest level of the Chinese imperial examinations, into a man of status and prestige (McDaniel, 2001). This legend helps to explain the deeply entrenched belief held by Chinese people that obtaining a good education was the only sure way of improving one’s socioeconomic status. Peterson (1994), discussed this belief in the context of rural farmers, and referred to the expression “tiao chu nong men”, which translated to “jump over the village gate”, implying that education was seen as a way for the farmer to get out of the village for a better life elsewhere (p. 118).

The Confucian ideology which emphasized order, harmony, morality, self-perfection and the value of education was developed over 2,500 years ago in ancient China. Promoted by the emperors as the pathway to social position, this ideology would be vilified by the Maoists who felt that it was bourgeois and perpetuated class distinction. In spite of its historical use first as a tool to uphold the class structure and then as a tool to breakdown class boundaries and raise political consciousness, the importance of education has remained deeply engrained in the psyche of the Chinese people.

While education, through both formal and informal venues, has been seen as a tool for the betterment of society, it is important to objectively examine the motivations of those who are in charge of developing and implementing these programs. In the case of the PRC under the leadership of Mao, the educational programs made available in both rural and urban areas were developed and implemented in a top-down fashion. These programs were designed around knowledge that the central government deemed both proper and appropriate for the people, both Han and non-Han, to learn, in line with the government's overall nationalistic and political policies.

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Appendix 1: Chronology of Chinese Dynasties

<u>Dynasty</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Xia	21st-16th century B.C.
Shang	1700-1027 B.C.
Western Zhou	1027-771 B.C.
Eastern Zhou	770-221 B.C.
Spring and Autumn period	770-476 B.C.
Warring States period	475-221 B.C.
Qin	221-207 B.C.
Western Han	206 B.C.- A.D. 9
Xin (Wang Mang interregnum)	A.D. 9-24
Eastern Han	A.D. 25-220
Three Kingdoms (San Guo)	A.D. 220-280
Wei	A.D. 220-265
Shu	A.D. 221-263
Wu	A.D. 229-280
Western Jin	A.D. 265-316
Eastern Jin	A.D. 317-420
Southern and Northern Dynasties	A.D. 420-588
Southern Dynasties	A.D. 420-588
Song	A.D. 420-478
Qi	A.D. 479-501
Liang	A.D. 502-556

Chen	A.D. 557-588
Northern Dynasties	A.D. 386-588
Northern Wei	A.D. 386-533
Eastern Wei	A.D. 534-549
Western Wei	A.D. 535-557
Northern Qi	A.D. 550-577
Northern Zhou	A.D. 557-588
Sui	A.D. 581-617
Tang	A.D. 618-907
Five Dynasties	A.D. 907-960
Ten Kingdoms	A.D. 907-979
Liao	A.D. 916-1125
Song	A.D. 960-1279
Northern Song	A.D. 960-1127
Southern Song	A.D. 1127-1279
Western Xia	A.D. 1038-1227
Jin	A.D. 1115-1234
Yuan	A.D. 1279-1368
Ming	A.D. 1368-1644
Qing	A.D. 1644-1911

Source: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1988. China: A country study.
Retrieved on March 7, 2010, from
[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+cn0003\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+cn0003))

Appendix 2: Abbreviated chronology of important events in China 1893-1977

- 1893 Birth of Mao Zedong.
- 1900 Boxer Uprising.
- 1905 Imperial examinations abolished.
- 1911 Revolution: fall of Qing dynasty.
- 1912 Republic of China founded.
- 1916 Death of Yuan Shi-kai.
- 1919 Versaille Peace Conference.
May Fourth Movement.
- 1921 Chinese Communist Party formed.
- 1923 Dr. Yen's Mass Education Movement.
- 1925 Death of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen.
- 1927 Kuomintang declared war on the Chinese communists.
- 1931 Japan occupied Manchuria.
- 1936 CCP set up headquarters in Yan'an, Shaanxi province.
- 1937 Japan invaded China.
- 1945 WWII ended: Japan defeated.
- 1946 Chinese civil war began.
- 1949 People's Republic of China founded.
Kuomintang government fled to Taiwan.
- 1950 China entered Korean War.
- 1951 Secularization of education.

- 1953 First Five Year Plan.
- 1954 Treaties with USSR.
- 1956 Formal definition of literacy adopted.
- 1957 Double Hundred Movement.
- 1958 Great Leap Forward.
- 1960 The great famine.
Soviet aid withdrawn.
- 1961 Ideological division of CCP leadership: liberals vs. radicals.
- 1966 The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution began.
The rise of the Red Guards.
- 1968 Red Guards disbanded.
- 1971 PRC admitted to UN.
Former PLA leader Lin Biao died.
- 1972 Nixon visited PRC.
- 1976 Premier Zhou Enlai died.
Tiananmen Incident.
Chairman Mao died.
Gang of Four arrested.
- 1977 The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution officially ended.

Appendix 3: 1975 Rongcheng County Literacy Primer Cover

Actual size: 130 cm x 185 cm



Appendix 4: 1982 census data on Chinese nationalities and population

Nationality	Population	Nationality	Population
Han	936,703,824	Daur	94,126
Zhuang	13,383,086	Jingpo	92,976
Hui	7,228,398	Mulam	90,357
Uygurs	5,963,491	Sibe	83,683
Yi	5,453,564	Salar	69,135
Miao	5,021,175	Blang	58,473
Manchus	4,304,981	Gelo	54,164
Tibetans	3,847,875	Maonan	38,159
Mongolians	3,411,367	Tajiks	26,600
Tujia	2,836,814	Pumi	24,238
Bouyei	2,119,345	Nu	22,896
Koreans	1,765,204	Achang	20,433
Dong	1,426,400	Ewenki	19,398
Yao	1,411,967	Jing	13,108
Bai	1,132,224	Uzbeks	12,213
Hani	1,058,806	Benglong or Deang	12,297
Kazakhs	907,546	Juno	11,962
Dai	839,496	Yugurs	10,568
Li	887,107	Bonan	9,017
Lisu	481,884	Drung	4,633

She	371,965	Oroqen	4,103
Lahu	304,256	Tatars	4,122
Va	298,611	Russians	2,917
Shui	286,908	Gaoshan	1,650
Dongxiang	279,523	Hezhen	1,489
Naxi	251,592	Moinba	1,140
Tu	159,632	Lhoba	1,066
Kirghiz	113,386	Others	799,705
Qiang	102,815	Indeterminate	---

Source: Mackerras & Yorke, 1991, *The Cambridge Handbook of Contemporary China*, p. 206.

Appendix 5: Distribution of China's ethnic minorities

China's Minorities 231

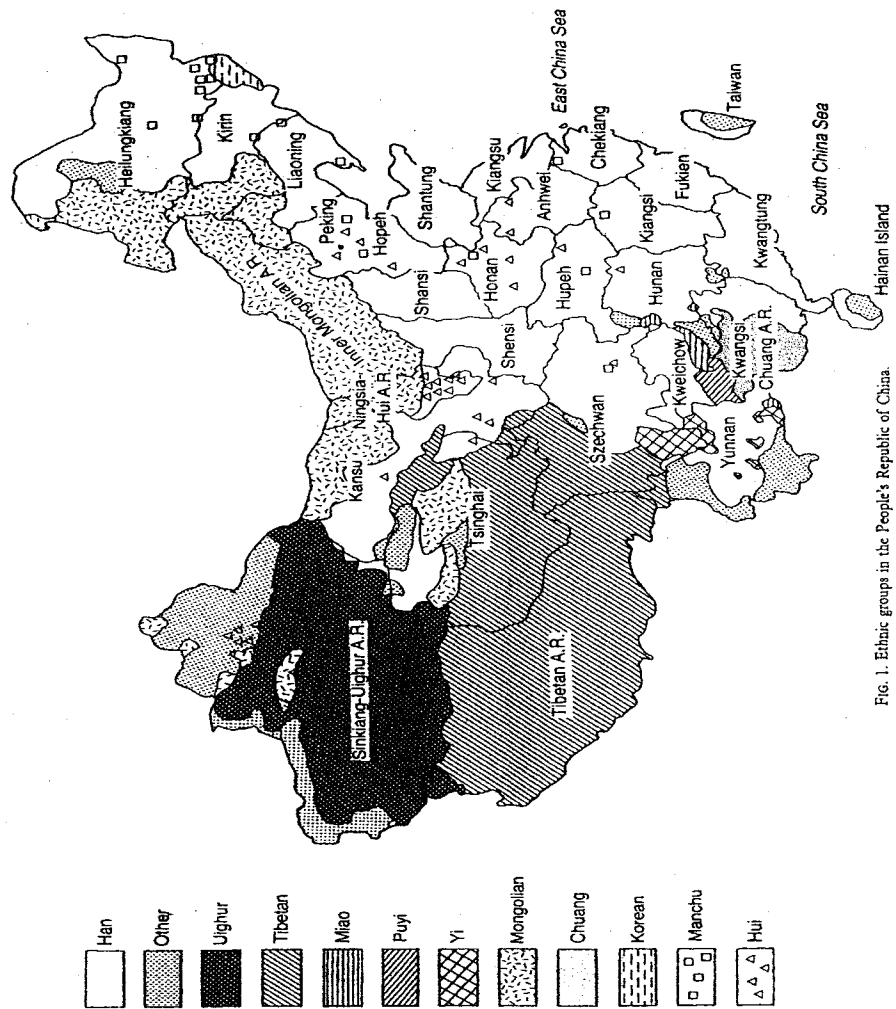


FIG. 1. Ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China.

Source: Kwong & Xiao, 1989, Comparative Education, 25 (2), p. 231.