Preface

This volume is in three parts. The first part describes the education and assessment systems of the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong. Part I describes the contributions of authors in Part I of the book who focus on innovations and recent developments in English language education in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the Chinese mainland. Part II describes chapters that focus on issues in testing and assessment in Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland in Part II of the book. The book contains 16 chapters. Part I consists of nine chapters. Part II contains seven chapters.

To avoid unnecessary repetition, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) will henceforth be referred to as "Hong Kong". In the same vein, the Chinese mainland (mainland China) will be referred to as "China".

The initiative for creating and developing the book was to expose readers both in the South East Asian region and elsewhere in the world to important issues relevant to curriculum change and implementation along with different forms of assessment currently being practiced in Hong Kong and China. These two integral parts of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, differ in many ways but recurring themes in the chapters in the book illustrate the need, in both areas, for changes to teacher beliefs and practices through well-developed and regular staff development. A number of contributors discuss how once-and-for-all solutions are unlikely to work, with three specifically commenting on the need to take account of societal, school and sociological factors in staff training and development.

The book is intended for professional educators, graduate students and interested parties who wish to read about the innovations and changes that have been taking place in these two closely-linked, although separate, regions. The book provides an opportunity to see not only what the two regions have in common but also where they may differ.

The Hong Kong Education and Examination System

Before 2009 – when the education system underwent major curriculum and examination reform – Hong Kong's education system was modelled on the British system. Primary schools enrolled students for 6 years. Secondary schools operated on a 5 + 2 model with students being streamed ('banded') into three broad bands of ability, each band covering approximately 33 % of the student ability range. The system therefore consisted of 6 + 5 + 2 years.

Standard English language provision in Hong Kong primary and secondary schools is approximately 4–5 h per week for the duration of the academic year.

Public examinations in Hong Kong are conducted by the Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). Prior to 2012, there were two major public examinations. The Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) was administered at the end of 11 years of education – Secondary 5 (Year 11). The total candidature for the HKCEE was in the region of 100,000, of whom approximately 80,000 were school candidates.

At the end of Secondary 5 (Year 11) students could continue in full time education for 2 more years – although there were only places for approximately 38 % of the Year 11 cohort to continue on to Year 12 and 13 studies. At the end of Secondary 7 (Year 13), students sat the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), which was also used for university entrance purposes. In 2007, the total candidature for the HKALE was about 36,000.

The Hong Kong secondary school curriculum underwent significant restructuring in 2009. Secondary education now lasts 6 years with a single public examination, the Hong Kong Diploma in Secondary Education (HKDSE) administered at the end of Year 12 (age 18), the annual candidature in 2013 being approximately 82,000. The corollary is that many more students now go on to Year 12 than went on to Year 13 previously – before the changes, the annual HKALE candidature was in the region of 40,000.

The Chinese Education and Examination System

The broad framework of Hong Kong's education system now reflects that of China, with the latter having 9 years of compulsory education (usually 6 years of primary and 3 years of junior secondary).

While schools in China are not streamed as they are in Hong Kong, there are 'key' schools at both provincial and national level. Such schools are recognized as prestigious and receive a high level of support from either the Ministry of Education or the Educational Bureau of the province.

At the end of junior high (the 9 years of compulsory education) – on the basis of performance in municipal-level high-school entrance examinations – students may

continue on to 3 years of senior secondary (high school) education. Students who enter senior secondary education are streamed into either general senior secondary education or vocational senior secondary education.

Standard English language provision in China's primary and secondary schools is similar to Hong Kong, in that children receive approximately 5 hours of tuition per week.

Unlike Hong Kong, China does not have a public examinations body for school examinations. Examinations at the end of junior high (the *zhongkao*) and at the end of senior high (the *gaokao*, the National Matriculation English Test [NMET]) are set and administered by municipal-level Education Bureaux. The candidature for the NMET in 2012 was approximately nine million.

At tertiary level, undergraduates whose major is not English must pass the College English Test. Similar to the NMET, the candidature for the CET in 2012 was in the region of nine million.

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