

# Examination-Oriented Knowledge and Value Transformation in East Asian Cram Schools

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Based on field studies in five East Asian societies, the paper has three research agendas of portraying mass tutorial schools. The first is to depict those similarities and differences between functioning, infrastructure and popularity of East Asian tutorial schools by means of a 3-layered cultural model and six descriptive indicators. The second is to articulate some distinctive socio-cultural features of tutorial schools in an East Asian comparative perspective. The final aim is to pinpoint examination-oriented knowledge and value transformation in mass tutoring throughout three processes of cultural change, all of which pose challenges to East Asian educational reforms in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Key Words: private tutoring, examination, East Asia

Despite the fact that private supplementary tutoring (or cramming, in the negative value sense in that it is related to rote learning) is a huge enterprise in many countries, with far-reaching economic, social and educational implications, it has received little attention in the research literature. Past researchers such as Dore (1976, 1997), Hargreaves (1997), Little (1994, 1997) and Noah and Eckstein (1993) did not treat supplementary tutoring as the main theme of their analyses. Instead, their research indirectly touched upon it, when investigating primary and secondary education systems and related socio-cultural issues in single-country or cross-societal studies. Many national educators and policymakers (Asiaweek, 1997; de Silva, 1994; Foondun, 1992, 1998) have commented negatively on the apparently uncontrollable and vigorous growth of private tutoring, which is parasitic on daytime schooling. These research or policymaking reports

generally have not drawn significant implications for effective censorship on such shadowy educational phenomena. To social theorists, there have hardly been any conceptual linkages between tutoring and their grand theories, or any need to revitalise their theories. In fact, the subtlety of the subject matter lies in the intangible nature of the tutoring services offered, the hidden scale of household financing (Bray, 1996, 1998) and the complexity of the multi-faceted relationships between demand or supply patterns, and possible social and educational determinants for tutoring demand (Kwok, 2001). One big challenge imposed by private supplementary tutoring is the persistence of teacher-centered pedagogy and examination-oriented learning cultures (Bray, 2003; Little, 1997; Zeng, 1999), which will act as school or policy reform barriers in most East Asian societies. This paper<sup>1</sup> endeavours to elicit similarities and differences in pedagogical functioning, organizational structure and mass media popularity of mass tutorial schools in five East Asian societies, in terms of a cultural model and descriptive indicators. Attention will be drawn to some distinctive socio-cultural features of those schools. Such features will be depicted from both cross-cultural and cross-societal perspectives. Examination-orientation knowledge and value transformation are articulated in three processes of cultural change within mass tutoring cultures. The paper

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finally addresses some educational reform and policymaking problems, which are aggravated by mass tutoring.

## Research Design

Private tutoring is defined here as extra, fee-paying academic teaching or drilling for full-time students studying in regular school instruction programs or syllabuses at primary (Grades 1 to 6) and secondary (Grades 7-12 or 7-13) school levels<sup>2</sup>. It is academically-oriented, with monetary transfer from tutees or their elder family members to tutors. The tutoring content and assistance with mastery of cognitive or technical skills are related to the tutees' daytime schooling. Mass tutoring refers to part-time tutorial lessons involving at least 10 tutees in each class. It is noted that the paper does not make any reference to *yobiko* (full time mass tutorial schools) in Japan. Such schools mostly cater for *ronin*, who are full-time repeaters re-sitting for university entrance examinations.

The study is based on a qualitative research method (using documentary analysis, participatory observation, and semi-structured interviews with cross-data, cross-perspective triangulation, suggested by Fetterman, 1998), which was carried out during several field trips to five East Asian societies, namely, Hong Kong, Macao, Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo, from 1998 to 2000. Strictly speaking, the field studies only focused on the main types of mass tutorial schools without any intention to make generalisations at regional and national levels. Details of the field studies are summarized in Table 1:

Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders such as mass tutees, tutorial school heads, and tutors, daytime school teachers and principals, parents, academic scholars and policymakers were conducted using sound tape recorders in Cantonese (in Hong Kong and Macao), English (in Seoul and Tokyo) or Putonghua (in Taipei). Repetition of ambiguous questions and unclear feedback was undertaken until the consensus of meanings between the interviewees' answers and those answers interpreted by the researcher was reached successfully (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Pictures were taken in mass tutorial schools with the permission of school heads and tutees for cross-data triangulation with documentary and interview data. Without any proficiency in Japanese and Korean languages, the researcher was greatly assisted by some local translators (such as university professors with proficiency in English or postgraduates with major in English translations) when raising interview questions to local stakeholders and understanding their answers in Seoul and Tokyo. Field notes during school visits and confidential interviews with some local policymakers were taken by pens, during or after the visits (or interviews) without any tape recording. Relevant documentation works were greatly assisted by local residents, school practitioners and policymakers in Ministries of Education, academic scholars and school practitioners in the five East Asian societies. Despite the brevity of research trips in Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo, continuous documentary and interview data was collected through mail delivery or long distance calls for follow-up and triangulation purposes.

Table 1. A Summary of Field trips Paid to Five East Asian societies

Societies	Tokyo	Seoul	Taipei	Hong Kong	Macao
Duration	2 months	2 months	3 months	Almost 3 years	Almost 3 years
Traveling dates	Jul. 1999, Jul. 2000	Dec. 1998-Jan. 1999	May 1999, Nov.-Dec. 2000	1998-2000	1998-2000
State of participant observation	School visitor, temporary living tenant	School visitor, temporary living tenant	Tutor, school visitor, temporary living tenant	Tutor, school visitor, local living resident	Tutor, school visitor, local living resident
Stakeholders for cross-data, cross-perspective triangulation	Local residents, tutors, tutees, school teachers, policymakers and relevant documents	Local residents, tutors, tutees, school teachers, policymakers and relevant documents	Local residents, tutors, tutees, school teachers, policymakers and relevant documents	Local residents, tutors, tutees, school teachers, policymakers and relevant documents	Local residents, tutors, tutees, school teachers, policymakers and relevant documents

## Literature Review

There have been more cross- or single-societal (or country) studies on the demand side than on the supply side of tutoring. Past research agendas were often confined to the socio-economic scale of household financing (Falzon & Busuttil, 1988; George, 1992; Lee, 1996) and socio-cultural patterns of demand (Chew & Leong, 1995; Harnisch, 1994; Hussein, 1987; Ukai Russell, 1997), and their possible determinants in some Asian, central European and African societies or countries. The supply mechanism of tutoring has only been investigated in a comparative perspective by Bray (1999, 2003). Policymakers and educators (Bray, 1998, 1999; de Silva, 1994; Mauritius, 1994, 1997; Nanayakkara & Ranaweera, 1994) have reported that most countries face intractable difficulties in banning or censoring various types of tutoring and even in controlling its growth. Past cross-societal or cross-country studies on tutoring demand were mere quantitative studies (with measurement parameters such as attendance rates, test marks after receiving tutoring or not) on some subjects without contextual considerations (Baker, Akiba, LeTendre, & Wiseman, 2001; Wolf, 2002). Only a few cultural studies on mass tutorial schools have been undertaken (Rohlen, 1980; Zeng, 1999).

Rohlen (1980) carried out a case study of tutorial or *juku* schools in Japan at the individual, family and societal system levels. He observed the institutionalised and franchised market of *juku* with their heavy promotional advertising through the mass media. He speculated that an intersection of social and educational factors help to account for the growing popularity of *juku* since the late 1960s. The poor quality of daytime schools, and their inability to meet parental demand for higher educational achievement (especially for tertiary entrance), also contributed to the growth of the *juku*. The *juku* therefore became a key to higher social status, especially when tutoring fees became more affordable after the great economic growth of the 1960s and 1970s. Most of the common tutorial schools (called *gakushu juku*) offered pedagogical guidelines for examination preparation or university entrance examinations. Top *juku* were successful because they attracted the best students via competitive entrance examinations and other selection mechanisms. Most *juku* stressed strict discipline and promoted academic diligence for motivating tutees to sit for examinations. Under peer group pressure, parents were willing to pay tutoring fees as they also realised that obtaining higher levels of education could help their children climb up the social ladder after graduation. More importantly, *juku* differentiation increasingly

became a kind of educational stratification. The higher the household income, the greater would be the participation rates in *juku*.

Zeng (1999) conducted a penetrating, ethnographic, cross-societal study of mass tutorial schools in three East Asian societies (namely, *juku* in Tokyo; *hakwon* in Seoul; *buxiban* in Taipei). Based on three tutee case studies, he highlighted commonalities and differences in their organisational structures and regional disparities in their growth. With higher demand for mass tutorial schools, geographical distribution was more intense in urban areas than in rural. He also noted that some crucial socio-cultural and socio-economic characteristics of formal school curricula and features of university entrance examinations were related to the high demand for tutoring in the three societies. They included credential drives in university entrance examinations for upward social mobility, cultural and institutional structures of credentialism, and economic affluence of families, leading to increasing educational expenditure on school age children. In particular, he observed that *juku* bridged the curriculum gaps between daytime textbooks and examination questions by providing repetitive drilling graded exercises in the 1990s in Japan.

On evaluation, without doing field studies in other East Asian societies, Rohlen (1980) merely speculated that some social determinants for tutorial schools were possibly under the influence of Confucian heritage culture. Meantime, Zeng (1999) did not scrutinize direct relationships between socio-cultural features of those tutorial schools and educational, social systems in the three East Asian contexts under investigation, except from historical and comparative perspectives for the formation and changes in their examination systems. In short, both failed to conceptualise a socio-cultural model of East Asian tutorial schools when investigating the relationships between examination-oriented knowledge and transmission of heritage culture.

Based on the above literature review, three research agendas are raised. The first is to depict those similarities and differences between functioning, infrastructure and popularity of East Asian tutorial schools by means of a cultural model and some descriptive indicators. The second is to pinpoint those socio-cultural features of tutorial schools that reveal distinctive patterns of learning in East Asia from cross-cultural and cross-societal perspectives. Based on the research findings, the last is to articulate the processes of shaping examination-oriented knowledge and value transformation, induced by mass tutoring. Finally, it is concluded that mass tutoring poses a number of future challenges to East Asian

educational reforms in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when examination-oriented knowledge and value transformation are found in mass tutorial schools.

## Results

### *A Three-layered Cultural Model*

During the process of collecting and analysing field study data, a cultural model, derived from some past cultural studies (Neville, 1995; Owen & Steinhoff, 1989; Schein, 1985), was generated to holistically capture piecemeal data. Mass tutoring culture can be thoroughly depicted in terms of a three-layered cultural model (c.f. Appendix). The three layers are *behavioural*, *conceptual* and *cultural (or ideological)* in nature respectively. Various sorts of field study data were systematically categorized, and classified into each of the three layers. Categories of the elements (see the square box contents in Appendix) placed into each layer of the model were constantly modified and updated when capturing ongoing qualitative data. Interactions between categories inside or across layers were interpreted, whenever relationships between the categorized data were detected.

In the *outer detectable* behaviour layer, several categories were found. They were crests/songs/mottoes; rites/rituals/ceremonies; rewards/sanctions; human relationships; family/social interactions; leadership or marketing style; geographical locations and functions/roles. The *middle conceptual* layer contained stories/myths; symbols/ metaphors/ analogues; values/mission/ beliefs; traditions/ legends and heroes/heroines. At the *inner, intangible* level, basic hidden cultural or ideological assumptions were implicitly embedded. External social forces continually acted upon and sometimes modified the content structure of the model, as suggested by some anthropologists (Benedict, 1935; Shweder & LeVine, 1984; Spindler, 1997). Dialectical interactions between categories within and across layers resulted from other internal forces acting upon layers. Such categories might also be subject to change under some outward social forces from time to time. It was hypothesised that this model can be utilized to illuminate the organic structure of mass tutorial schools after the filling-up of some ethnographic 'thick' descriptions (Geertz, 1973) in each category and their possible inter-and intra-layer interactions during the field studies.

In the outer observable layer, mass tutorial schools in East Asia played a *supplementary* role of repeating daytime lesson content while also helping tutees master related

learning skills that school teachers did not teach in daytime lessons. These data were based on participant observations and semi-structured interviews with tutorial school heads and tutors, daytime school principals and teachers, students, tutees and parents during the research period. Other relevant past literature also revealed such pedagogical role (Harnish, 1994; Kato, 1992; Kim, 2000; Sorensen, 1994; Tseng, 1998; Ukai Russell, 1997). Concerning school accessibility, geographical locations were usually in public areas with a convenient transportation system; e.g. near railway, bus or subway stations. There were individual tutorial schools and chains of franchised large-scale tutorial schools. The number of simultaneous tutorial classes ranged from 2 to 30. Most tutees' families were nuclear in size, with an average of 1 or 2 school age children. A direct reason for seeking tutoring was insufficient free academic guidance from daytime schooling or from elder family members. School peers or elder family members recommended tutees to seek mass tutoring or the tutees knew the promotion of mass tutorial schools through the mass media (e.g. catchy advertisements in open public areas, daily newspapers, Internet e-commerce, popular magazines, subway stations and crowded streets).

Tutorial class size varied from 10 to 50. Class pedagogy was teacher-centred and therefore remained no difference from traditional daytime lessons. Yet tutees had the opportunity for free questioning time and more thematic, intensive learning than in daytime schooling as tutors liked to offer frequent lesson pre-review or revision and to offer graded drilling exercises, suitable to tutees' learning needs. At upper secondary levels, tutees were trained to develop appropriate examination skills such as good mastery of examination time, effective lesson revision and techniques of choosing, and answering the right examination questions. Rewards were given to those tutees with brilliant open examination results or good levels of academic improvements across or within school years. Awards could be book trophies, monetary scholarships, back-payment of tutoring fees and other materialistic goods such as free sightseeing trips abroad. Some mass tutorial schools in Hong Kong liked to use such bonuses or awarding ceremonies to advertise their tutoring services in daily newspapers and popular magazines. Most mass tutorial schools in Hong Kong, Macao, Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo had distinctive school names or images, related to diligent learning, wisdom and knowledge, academic excellence and glory. In order to nurture an ardent learning culture, some tutorial schools had their weekly pamphlets, monthly or yearly bulletins (e.g. Kawajuku tutorial school, 2000; Science Education Groups, 1994). The main contents

covered prestigious universities' entrance requirements, brilliant students' personal information, bonuses (e.g. discounts to buy daily necessities) given to tutees when taking courses, updated contact information about new courses with telephone hotlines, fax numbers or Internet web addresses.

In the middle conceptual layer, thick qualitative data were finely categorised and analysed. There were two types of heroes or heroines. *Everlasting (or born) heroes or heroines* (derived from Deal & Kennedy, 1982, pp. 43-48) referred to idol tutors (named *ming shi* - meaning famous teachers in some Chinese societies- in Putonghua pronunciation) who had high tutee participation rates or high reputations. They were either dressed in formal style, imitating daytime school teachers, or in casual trendy wear, following tutees' fashions in popular culture. They were either the bosses (or shareholders) or the 'spirits' of the tutorial schools. Without their presence, tutees would have changed their tutoring venues. Idol tutors often earned higher monthly salaries than daytime school teachers. Such heroes or heroines played multi-faceted roles. They were good friends, soothing examination pressure when providing open examination skills, playing jokes to make lessons more interesting or citing tutees' jargon to draw their attention. They were also academic scholars who earned masters or doctoral degrees and acted like school teachers, partially reinforcing or complementing daytime lessons. To some extent, they provided more care when offering academic guidance or spent a longer time with tutees than tutees' parents. *Situational heroes or heroines* (derived from Deal & Kennedy, 1982, pp. 43-48) were those tutees with brilliant

open examination results at upper secondary levels. As Macao is a small territory with a low student population, some *nomadic* heroes or heroines would 'migrate' their large-scale tutorial lectures from Hong Kong to Macao by paying short visits there during the research period. Apart from large-scale tutorials held in some commercial halls or buildings, some local school teachers in their spare time or fulltime tutors would still work as *stabilized heroes or heroines* to help school students with lesson revision and provide guidance in some registered tutorial schools or living areas in Macao.

In Chinese societies like Hong Kong, Macao and Taipei, the special name of *zhuang yuan* (in Putonghua pronunciation) was used, referring to those successful candidates who sat for open examinations for the recruitment of civil servants in ancient China. Noteworthy was the common term 'ascending the Dragon Gate' found in imperial China (*Deng-longmen* in Chinese), Japan (*Deung-yongmun* in Japanese) and Korea (*Tô-ryûmon* in Korean), meaning 'an elevation into the doorway of the civil service examination hall', as historically speaking, past examination systems in Japan and Korea adopted from or modelled on the Chinese civil service systems (Zeng, 1999).

In the inner intangible layer, mass tutees or their parents often held common value beliefs that tutorial lessons were useful and that tutors were helpful to supplement daytime school lessons. Reviews of past examination papers (or even release of some open examination tips) drew tutees' attention. Tutoring was perceived to offer a 'shortcut' to daytime lessons, besides facilitating self-learning. Most tutees, their parents, tutors and tutoring school heads believed that getting

Table 2. *Symbiotic Analysis of the Confucian Phrase: Wen gu zhi xin*

Layers	Socio-cultural Ingredients
Outward detectable layer	i. Pedagogical functions of tutorial lessons Tutors devised strategies to repetitively review past lessons (such as past examination papers) through lecture notes and drilling exercises ii. Human interactions Tutees revised past tutorials or even daytime lessons to make future examination preparations
Middle conceptual layer	Symbols/metaphors/analogues: Meaning of the Confucian phrase: revising past lessons to obtain future knowledge
Inner intangible layer	Basic ideological assumptions held by tutors, tutees and their family members that repetitive learning could enhance deep understanding through memory recall and that diligence was more important than inborn abilities in academic studies (in line with Watkins & Biggs, 1996)

higher education was the most potent means for upward social mobility. Repetitive learning and memory recall could, to some extent, enhance tutees' understanding of learning tutoring contents. Chinese stakeholders deliberately or indirectly liked to cite some Confucian proverbs to depict their learning habits or modes, explain their study motivations, or describe societal viewpoints about diligence being more important than inborn abilities.

To exemplify the symbolic interactions (Shweder & LeVine, 1984) between and across some components of the cultural model for mass tutorial schools in Hong Kong, Macao and Taipei, a symbiotic analysis of a Confucian phrase *wen gu zhi xin* (in Putonghua pronunciation) is presented in Table 2.

### *Six Descriptive Indicators*

Grounded field study data was schematically categorized into themes and sub-themes. Categorical revisions were continuously done until the consensus was gained between the researcher and two part-time research assistants (c.f. Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Fetterman, 1998). Subsequently, they were further simplified into key indicators under a lengthy list of transcribed interview transcripts and documentary data, and field notes. For conceptual depictions of organisational structure, pedagogical functioning and infrastructural innovations of mass tutorial schools, six descriptive indicators (AACIIS) have been devised as follows:

- *Accessibility* refers to tutees' levels of ease in consuming mass tutoring services
- *Affordability* concerns tutees' or their parents' ability to pay for tutoring fees
- *Connectivity* is related to the chained marketing business, or a network of franchised large-scale tutorial schools, in one particular city or within and across cities, counties, provinces of one particular country
- *Insufficiency* is directly correlated with unavailability of free academic guidance from daytime schooling or elder family members
- *Interactivity* depicts didactic interactions between tutees and tutors in tutorial lessons
- *Sustainability* involves the persistence or usefulness of tutorial services, supporting tutees' learning needs during or beyond tutorial lessons, facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICT).

The significance of the six indicators to the study lays in their precise depiction of mass tutorial schools, related to the research agendas concerning their organizational structure, pedagogical functioning and policy implications.

### *Socio-cultural Features in Comparison*

In East Asian societies, both daytime and tutorial schools provided a teaching and learning environment (mostly happening in classrooms) for students or tutees to acquire academic knowledge and related problem-solving skills and assess their learning outcomes through (mock) tests, quizzes and examinations. Both daytime and tutoring East Asian schools often adopted teacher-led pedagogy, affecting pedagogical interactivity. Students or tutees were accommodated into the unified school curricula at primary and secondary levels (Cheng, 1990). There was some 'learning space' for open discussion or students' free explorations in some East Asian classrooms concerning interactivity of tutorial schools (Kato, 1992; Kawaijuku, 2000; Kwok, 2001). Yet teacher-led instructions were often adopted to maximise effective time and exercise lesson management when facing more than 30 students or tutees per class (Bray, 1999; Science Education Groups, 1994; Tseng 1998). Norm-referenced summative assessments and bottleneck schooling systems with pressure or tension points at Grades 6, 12 (or 13) levels were prevalent in most East Asian societies (Bray, 1999; Yoon, 1997).

In order to reduce individual learning differences (concerning interactivity), some mass tutorial schools in Japan deliberately arranged tutorial classes, based on their (half-) yearly academic standards (Science Education Groups, 1994). Becoming increasingly popular in Asia and North America, Kumon schools carefully designed worksheets and self-learning packages, fully based on students' individual cognitive levels in individual subjects (Kato, 1992; Science Education Groups, 2004; Ukai Russell, 1997). Field trips revealed that there were cognitive gaps between examination requirements and what students learn in daytime lessons. Content analysis of some school textbooks and reference books or materials from tutorial schools in Chinese, English and Mathematics (published in Hong Kong, Macao, Taipei) showed remarkable differences. Tutorial schools provided more graded drilling exercises, easily understood lecture notes (often in bullet-point forms) and more examination skills than daytime lessons, to cope with open or school examinations and students' varying learning needs. Tutors' presentation skills were better than daytime school teachers',

at least in the perception of most mass tutees'. Some of them sought tutoring mainly because of insufficient learning guidance from daytime schools. To cope with current ICT global trends, idol tutors in Hong Kong, Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo liked to use power-point demonstrations with good printing effects in their lecture notes and drilling exercises. Some large-scale tutorial schools even used the Internet to answer tutees' questions on a web forum or let them download free soft copies of their reference materials.

The steep growth and popularity of mass tutorial schools was positively correlated with several socio-cultural and socio-economic factors: affordability of standardised mass tutoring fees in a large competitive market; economic affluence; and the nuclear nature of tutees' families (Kim, 2000; Kwok, 2001; Yoon, 1997). Tutoring accessibility was facilitated by heavy promotional advertising through the mass media or in popular culture, by the governments' ineffective censorship or monitoring policies towards tutorial schools, and through the convenient sitting of tutorial schools, close to convenient public transport systems. Insufficiency referred to bad-quality daytime pedagogy or low daytime school effectiveness (Bray, 1999; George, 1992; Kwok, 2001; Yoon, 1997).

Comparing tutorial schools across societies, geo-political differences were found. Mass tutorial schools were concentrated in some crowded areas in Taipei (e.g. in a 'cram schools street' near the railway station noted by Tseng, 1998) but more scattered in Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo (Harnisch, 1994; Kawaijuku, 2000; Kwok 2001; Yoon, 1997). Segmented markets (Kotler, 1987) on particular tutoring subjects were located in Seoul and Taipei whereas more 'comprehensive' tutorial schools (providing wide ranges of tutoring subjects or a variety of tutoring services such as lesson revision, examination preparation and homework guidance) were found in Hong Kong, Macao and Tokyo (Kawaijuku, 2000; Kwok, 2001; Science Education Groups, 1994).

'Kingdoms' of large-scale or franchised tutorial schools (connectivity) were common in Hong Kong and Tokyo because of high living standards, an increasing number of potential mass tutees and adoption of multi-level marketing techniques. To facilitate synchronous mass tutorial lessons in other key cities like Hiroshima and Osaka in Japan, the headquarters in Tokyo used satellites to transmit video mass tutorial lessons (Kawaijuku, 2000). In Hong Kong, to bypass legislative controls, some mass tutorial schools used tactics such as the use of video transmission of mass tutorial lessons to enlarge the number of tutees at any one time (Kwok, 2001).

In Seoul, free helpful academic guidance lessons were broadcasted through television channels at nights to replace mass tutorial schools and equalise educational opportunities, aggravated by tutoring demand (Yoon, 1997). To provide more client-based consultation services after tutorial time to aid their sustainability, some large-scale tutorial schools in Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan provided a 24-hour on-line web forum for tutees to raise study questions, do online drilling exercises or download required soft copies of past lecture notes or other reference materials (Kawaijuku, 2000; Kwok, 2001).

Currently, business-run mass tutorial schools at Grades 10-12 levels or Kumon schools are increasingly common in the United States and some provinces of Canada. Roughly speaking, the scale of demand for such schools in North America is believed to be smaller than in most East Asian societies. It is speculated that the probable reasons for such cross-continental differences to be less examination-oriented school curricula are the existence of alternative means for selecting university freshmen, multi-dimensional assessment involving group projects, smaller income differences between blue and white collar workers (with higher educational qualifications), high ratios of university undergraduate places to high school places, and better educational benefits (in terms of allowances) to every citizen under 18 in North America.

### ***Examination-oriented Knowledge and Value Transformation***

From a tutee perspective, the emergence of demand for tutoring were most likely originated from awareness of examinations pressure, societal stresses being internalised by individual tutees (Kwok, 2001), examination-driven school cultures, credential societies, credential inflation (Dore, 1976, 1997), and Confucian heritage culture in Hong Kong, Macao, Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo (Kwok, 2001; Sorensen, 1994; Zeng, 1999). Under the impact of peer group pressure, mass media and popular culture, some ideological features or socio-cultural conceptions of learning in mass tutoring were articulated in the processes<sup>3</sup> of *masking, fragmenting and reuniting* educational, self and societal values (Hall, 1977, 1981).

*Masking.* In the perceptions of mass tutees' themselves, mass tutorial schools provided shortcuts to learning, thorough past examination paper analysis, and even seemingly reliable open examination tips in Hong Kong, Taipei and Tokyo. In particular, they were persuaded by tutors that it was more

effective and efficient to learn in tutorial schools than in daytime schools. Such modes of learning and tutoring were generally different from those of teachers in daytime schools. Some school teachers and principals who were interviewed doubted the legitimacy of such pedagogy. To some extent, the reputation of school teachers was replaced by idol tutors in these Chinese societies, in which idol tutors were worshipped as *ming shi* (famous teachers).

*Fragmenting.* Idol tutors delineated piecemeal educational processes and outcomes, entirely determined by open examination results. Their marketing styles and pedagogical characteristics reinforced open examination pressure and encouraged students to value the importance of open examinations to their life/career. Interview data in field work indicated that some mass tutees even identified personal success through materialistic stimulation like monetary bonuses, tutoring fee exemption after academic improvements and good grades in open examinations in Hong Kong, Macao, Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo. Such kinds of learning and tutoring, to some extent, ran against the whole-person education or other educational aims, stressed in some daytime schools.

*Reuniting.* Integration of materialistic consumption, marketing techniques and technical skills and professional knowledge into a mass tutoring sub-culture reinforced an examination-oriented environment through the mass media in Hong Kong, Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo. As a result, vicious circles of students' misbehaviour or paying less attention to daytime lessons were found after seeking mass tutoring in some extreme cases. 'Moonlighting' daytime school teachers found difficulties in daytime teaching after doing mass tutoring beyond school hours, and in turn their daytime students received less care. In-depth case studies and interview data also revealed that interactions between family members were weakened when school children had heavy demands for tutoring. With advances in ICT, sources of knowledge not only came from daytime school teachers, mass tutors, but also from other diversified sources (e.g. some resourceful questions-and-answers web fora, online interactive drilling exercises, soft copies of resource materials or user-centred learning computer program tutors). They were provided by some large-scale tutorial schools in Hong Kong, Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo (Kawaijuku, 2000; Kwok, 2001; Tseng, 1998; Yoon, 1997).

## Conclusion

Since the last decade, there have been large-scale school and educational reforms initiated at primary and secondary levels in East Asia. National ministries of education (e.g., Education Commission of Hong Kong, 2000; Ministry of Education, People's Republic of China, 2003; Ministry of Education, Republic of China, 2001; Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea, 2003; Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2003; Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, Japan, 2003) and international policy documents (e.g., The United Nations Children's Fund, 1998) on education have shared common goals of:

- enlarging educational opportunities by reducing hurdles at Grades 6, 10 and 12 (or 13) levels and minimizing the backwash effects of open examinations
- fostering continuous life-long or life-wide learning covering whole-person education
- increasing quality school education
- promoting paradigmatic shifts from teacher-centred to student-centred learning

Yet examination-oriented pedagogy and value transformation emerged in mass tutorial schools will threaten the above educational ideals, based on the above research findings. Notably, the increasing growth of East Asian mass tutorial schools cannot easily be hindered, due to the persistence of several educational social phenomena, reflected from the aforementioned cultural model and six descriptive indicators:

- Convenient public transportation, multi-service marketing and prevalent mass media culture enhance the accessibility and affordability of mass tutoring.
- Emergence of nuclear families allows educational expenditure to be focused on 1 or 2 school age children per household, thereby leading to heavy demand for tutoring (affordability).
- Under great levels of socio-economic competition, demand for tutoring is necessary, due to elder family members' heavy daily works or inappropriate educational qualifications (insufficiency).
- Large daytime school class size is persistent in many East Asian societies, which may not easily be reduced (insufficiency), due to fiscal constraints.
- Quality school education (insufficiency) can be severely affected by increasingly heavy workloads of



daytime school practitioners, facing drastic reform changes

- Further ICT advances will increase the connectivity of mass tutoring in various geographical locations, thus facilitating its interactivity and sustainability by providing more interactive, user-friendly web services beyond tutorial lesson times.
- Facing peer group pressure and fearing a sense of loss in mass tutoring culture, students will demand for tutoring, in case of insufficient free academic guidance from elder family members and daytime teachers.

The continuing existence of mass tutorial schools poses great challenges to the daytime educational systems as they can easily change students' daytime learning attitudes and may alter values in daytime teaching and learning in East Asia, throughout the three processes of value transformation. Teacher-centered pedagogy and examination-oriented knowledge in mass tutorial schools have still been common, working against great reform missions. As a result, school education may not be effective, as students' fruitful learning outcomes may, to a considerable extent, result from private tutoring. Consequently, the distinction between formal and informal learning has been blurred after the emergence of mass tutorial schools. Notably, mass tutoring fees will still occupy a considerable proportion of household financing of education (Bray, 1996, 1998) in those East Asian societies with heavy demands for private tutoring. Meanwhile, legislation for or against mass tutoring will still be a continuing debatable topic, due to the aforementioned prevalent educational and social phenomena.

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## Notes

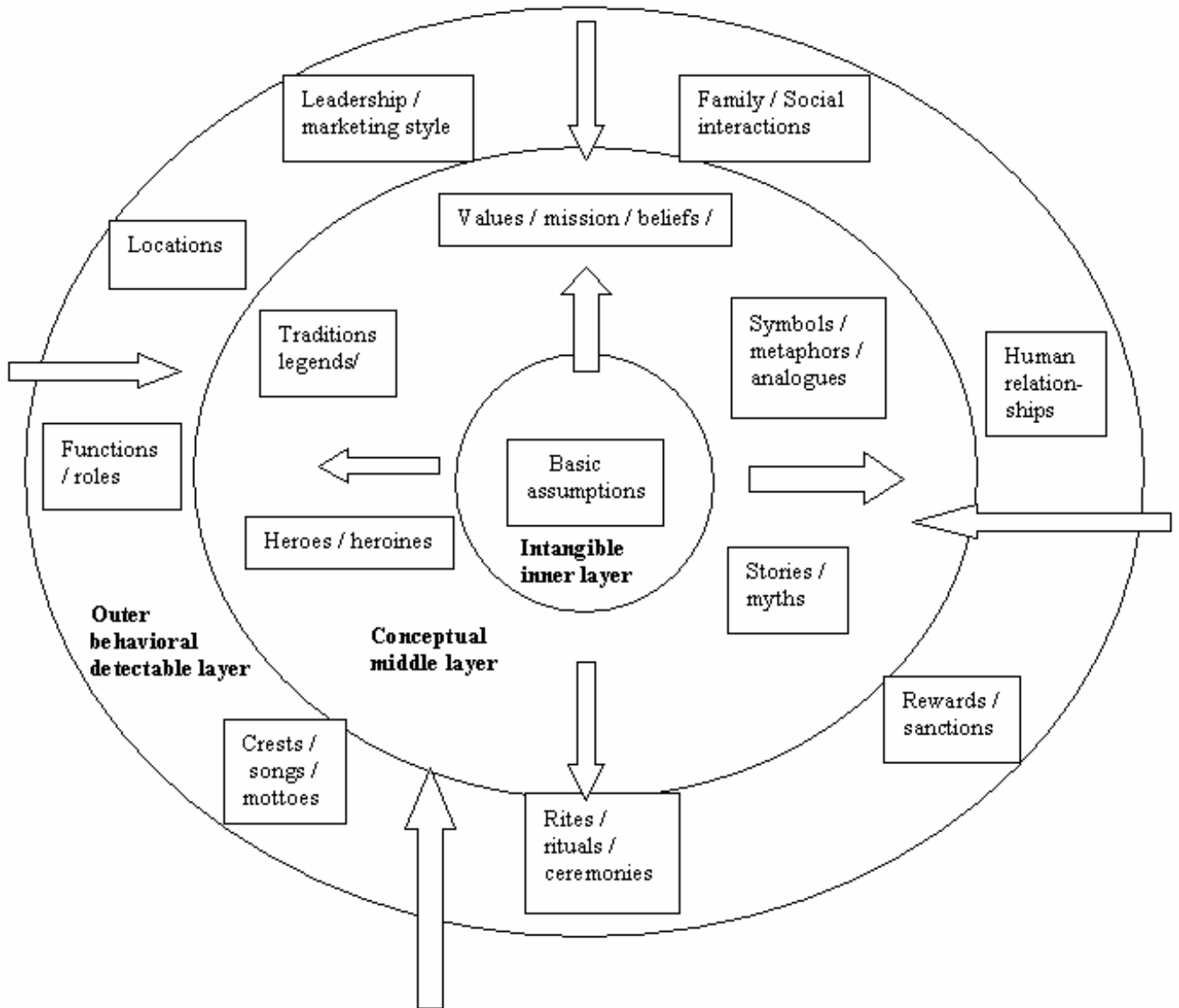
1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) Commission 6, held in Chungbuk, South Korea in 2001.
2. In most East Asian societies or countries, primary school curricula are uniformly 6-year (3-year lower primary + 3-year upper primary). But there are regional disparities in the structure of secondary school curricula. In Hong Kong, mainstream schools have 7-year (3-year lower secondary + 4-year upper secondary including 2-year matriculation studies) secondary curricula, following the British tradition. In comparison, mainstream secondary school curricula in other East Asian societies like Japan, Mainland China, South Korea and Taiwan, are mainly 6-year (3-year lower secondary + 3-year upper secondary) before tertiary education. In Singapore, students have the choice of three courses designed to match their learning abilities and interests in terms of 4 to 5 years of secondary education with different curricular emphases before applying for a 2-year pre-university (matriculation) course. In comparison, Macao has diversified school curricular development at primary and secondary levels, especially with 3-year or 4-year upper secondary curricula, besides Portuguese one (Bray & Koo, 2004).
3. The three processes are not so incompatible that cultural and value transformation may simultaneously involve two or three processes in some stakeholder cases.

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Appendix. A Cultural Model of East Asian Cram Schools



Note. The above arrows represent inter-and intra-layer interactions among categories.