

HONG KONG'S NATIONAL EDUCATION CONTROVERSY

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Executive Summary

1. On 29 July 2012, around 90,000 Hong Kong people took to streets to protest against the the implementation of the national education curriculum in September 2012. The largest teachers' union in the territory joined the rank and threatened to boycott classes.
2. The opposition to national education can be attributed to the curriculum design, the uncompromising manner it was implemented, and Hong Kong people's alienation from China.
3. The curriculum may be considered a continuation of other far less controversial national educational programmes since the handover. It expects the students to accept the national identity unquestionably without assessing critically the various misdeeds of the Communist regime, as well as the downsides of China's success in political stabilization, economic development, and social modernization.
4. Teaching manuals prepared by pro-Beijing organizations are in favour of the Chinese government. The curriculum of national education was condemned as brainwashing and therefore opposed.
5. The uncompromising attitude of the Hong Kong government on the implementation of national education fuelled public discontent. The Chinese government's insistence was speculated behind the firm stance of the Hong Kong government.
6. The opposition to national education reflected the hindrance to cultivating a national identity on the part of the Hong Kong people who were more willing to accept the national identity of China until 2008. The British colonial legacy is less important than the post-1997 factors in explaining the problem.

7. The Hong Kong people are unhappy with the Chinese government's increasing political control of Hong Kong, such as meddling with electoral politics, slowing down Hong Kong's democratization, and grooming pro-Beijing political forces.
8. The economic and social integrative measures after 2003 have spilled over to burden working class disproportionately. More and more mainland Chinese visitors go to Hong Kong for various purposes. Many Hong Kong people were enraged by their competition for social services, driving up living costs, and their lack of civility.
9. The strained relations are deterring the Hong Kong people from identifying with China, or accepting any measures seeking to integrate the Hong Kong people with China ideologically.
10. The 2012 Legislative Council election had been a difficult one for the Hong Kong government to amass support from its political allies as any sign of supporting the curriculum of national education would lead to vote loss and eventual defeat in the election.