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RISK CULTURE OF LATE MODERNITY?
MASS TUTORING ENROLMENT OF
HONG KONG'S SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

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MPHIL

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2009

RISK CULTURE OF LATE MODERNITY?
MASS TUTORING ENROLMENT OF
HONG KONG'S SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

by
CHEUNG Cheuk-wai Jeffrey

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Social Sciences
(Sociology and Social Policy)

Lingnan University

2009

ABSTRACT

Risk Culture of Late Modernity? Mass Tutoring Enrolment of Hong Kong's Senior Secondary Students

by

CHEUNG Cheuk-wai Jeffrey
Master of Philosophy

Mass tutoring on senior secondary curricula, with specific focus on examination syllabi and techniques, has expanded rapidly in Hong Kong in the recent decade. Through semi-structured in-depth interviews, conducted in summer 2007, with 20 certificate level (Secondary 4 and 5) and 21 advanced level (Secondary 6 and 7) students with various level of involvement in mass tutoring, this study discovered:

(1) Risk awareness and future-oriented mentality: Students expected that mass tutoring could help improve their performance in public examinations, and could secure good grades. To them, better grades mean higher chance to get a recognized qualification, fulfil their career aspiration, and secure a better life in the uncertain future.

(2) Individualization of decisions and choices: Students thought that they should be responsible and accountable for their own life-choices. The decision to enrol in mass tutoring was made on their own. When they needed advice on choices of tutors, they referred to the opinions from the schoolmates with similar learning experience and academic performance as themselves. In order to locate the most suitable tutors, some students even collected various tutors' lecture notes or recordings for comparison, or attended free-of-charge trial lessons before finalizing their choices.

(3) Individual reflexivity and conditional trust on authority: In terms of enhancement of academic performance, a number of students trusted cram school

tutors more than daytime school teachers, as they thought the former more familiar with the examination requirement than the latter. Nevertheless, they did not completely trust their tutors. They evaluated from time to time the effectiveness and suitability of the tutorials they were attending, and discontinued and made changes if necessary.

(4) Detraditionalization of schooling values: Students viewed senior secondary education different from more idealistic lifelong learning. In their eyes, getting good grades and preparing for good prospect in further studies and career are of utmost importance in senior secondary schooling. Some of them even preferred daytime school teachers to adopt cram school tutors' approach.

With the above findings, the study argues that the microscopic phenomenon of blossoming mass tutoring enrolment is a reflection of the macroscopic risk culture of late modernity, which has been addressed by Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck.

The study unfolds several specific qualities of individual life and social environment in the post-industrial era. To deal with the uncertain social environment, individuals prefer adapting to the existing social order rather than imposing changes to the external social environment. Appreciated traditional values not conforming to the modern social order will only be practised only after an individual has achieved ontological security in the highly modernized social environment. Individuals are locked in a cage where they had to endlessly appeal to uncertain measures to deal with the uncertainties embedded in daily life.

This study also reveals the unbalanced power between individuals and social structure in the structuration process, and the disparity in power of risk negotiation due to wealth difference in the highly modernized environment, which were under-examined by the proponents of the late modernity paradigm.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

SIGNED

CHEUNG Cheuk-wai Jeffrey

31st August 2009

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

RISK CULTURE OF LATE MODERNITY? MASS TUTORING ENROLMENT
OF HONG KONG'S SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CL&C	Chinese Language & Culture
CIT	Computer & Information Technology
CUHK	The Chinese University of Hong Kong
EAS	Early Admission Scheme
HKALE	Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKEAA	Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
HKU	The University of Hong Kong
HKUST	Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
IVE	Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education
JUPAS	Joint Universities Programmes Admission Scheme
M&S	Mathematics & Statistics
PA	Principles of Accounts
UE	Use of English

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

In the recent decade, private mass tutoring on secondary school curricula, especially those focusing on public examination syllabi and techniques, has proliferated rapidly in Hong Kong. For an individual student, enrolling in mass tutoring on more than half of the school subjects is no longer exceptional. Private mass tutoring is not only welcome by low-scorers. Even for the elite students who always excel in their schoolwork, their enthusiasm in private tuition is not less than those who perform worse (Tseng 1998). Cram schools running mass tutoring classes for secondary students have expanded very quickly. The industry is believed as one of the highest profitable businesses in Hong Kong¹.

The research focuses on senior secondary (i.e. Secondary 4 to 7) students' enrolment in mass tutoring offered by cram schools in Hong Kong. Through individual in-depth interviews with students who had enrolled in mass tutoring, this study tries to locate the major concerns of the students when making their decisions and choices, and the relationship between their behaviour and the social environment they were situated. By this study, I also try to argue that the phenomenon can be viewed as a reflection of late modernity, in which individuals show risk-awareness, independence from traditional values and authority, individual reflexivity, and conditional trust on experts, through their choices and behaviour.

There are 9 chapters, including this Introduction, in this thesis.

¹ According to some reportage in newspapers and magazines, a popular cram school tutor can earn over 10 million Hong Kong dollars annually. See:
“補習社名師年薪逾千萬 [Annual Income of a Popular Cram School Tutor Exceed 10 Million]” (2006, Jul 12). *星島日報* [Singtao Daily], F01.
“4 大補習天王賺錢秘笈 [Secrets to Make Money of 4 Most Popular Tutor Kings and Queens]” (2006, May 10). *東周刊* [East Weekly]. A36.

Chapter 2 is a literature review. It first reviews the past studies on private tutoring, especially those about the situation of mass tutoring at senior secondary level in Hong Kong. The second section is a review on late modernity theories and concepts, with special focus on the late modern social conditions, environment with uncertainties, future-oriented vision, detraditionalization, individual reflexivity, and trust on experts. The third section reviews the past studies on the significance of late modernity argument to youngsters' life experiences in the contemporary world

Chapter 3 describes the framework of this research. The first section explains the rationale of this research, including the justification of applicability of late modernity to the social context under study, research questions, orientation of the study, and significance of the study. The second part lists the methodological details of this study, including data collection, sampling, execution details, and concerns on reliability and validity.

Chapters 4 to 8 are five chapters on data analysis and discussion. Each chapter refers to one of the 5 research questions of this study. The first of these 5 chapters, Chapter 4, discusses students' outlook on their educational and career future. It examines students' awareness of potential risks and uncertainties, which is the fundamental block for further discussion on their values and behaviour. It reveals that, although students viewed career opportunities open to every youngster with suitable personal qualities, they were aware of uncertainties along their future prospects on higher education and career development, so they did not have very firm long-term goal, and had to set their short-term goals, mainly achievement of good public examination results and a university degree, to maximize their future

opportunities and to minimize potential risks to their future development.

Chapter 5 discusses students' values and beliefs on the meaning of senior secondary education to them. It highlights their ultimate concern on senior secondary schooling, the linkage of their values to their future perception, and its deviation from traditional values. It argues that "detraditionalization" happened on students' educational values. Traditional educational ideals and the value of daytime schooling were undergoing students' questions and challenges. Modern abstract systems, which emphasize instrumental reasoning and impersonal principles, and modern mechanisms, including competition and consumerism, have become the bases of educational values among the students today.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are about students' enrolment in mass tutoring. Chapter 6 discusses students' aim and expectation of enrolment in mass tutoring. The meaning of mass tutoring, and the relationship between their enrolment and the situation they were facing are investigated. It argues that students considered mass tutoring as an effective measure to equip them with the necessary answering skills, to provide them a sense of security, to avoid them from disadvantage in public examinations, and consequently to minimize the risks in attaining satisfactory public examination results, which were crucial to achieving ontological security in the uncertain competitive environment for further studies and career development..

Chapter 7 discusses how students' make their decisions and choices. Criteria for choosing tutors, and the levels of independence and accountability for their decisions and choices, are discussed. It argues that students' decision and choice patterns corresponded to "individualization", for which personal factors became

more crucial in determining their decisions and choices, individual has become the institutional unit for students' worldview, mentality and behaviour, and every actor has raised their awareness of self-responsibility for their decisions and choices.

Chapter 8 examines students' trust on daytime school teachers and cram school tutors, from their comments on their daytime school teachers and tutors, and from their patterns of enrolment in mass tutoring. It argues that, it was not uncommon for students to trust their cram school tutors more than their daytime school teachers for enhancing their academic performance, but conditional trust on their chosen tutors was also demonstrated by their ongoing evaluation on tutors' performance, acquisition of multiple sources of aids, switching of tutors, and termination of receiving mass tutoring.

Finally, the thesis ends up with a concluding chapter, i.e. Chapter 9. It sums up the analysis in the previous 5 chapters, and discusses the correspondence of the late modernity thesis to the behaviour and thoughts of the students. It argues that students' mass tutoring enrolment reflected the elements of the risk culture of late modernity, including risk-awareness on their future, detraditionalization of values, intention to negotiate with uncertainties, individualization of decisions and choices, individual reflexivity, and conditional trust on authority and professionals, and the case of this study can be understood as a late modern phenomenon. It also discusses the implication of this study to the late modernity thesis and the social environment in which youngsters are situated nowadays, describes the limitation of this study, and provides some directions for further investigation on the issue of mass tutoring.

2.1 Past Studies on Private Supplementary Tuition

Overview of Private Tutoring

Private tutoring is a widespread phenomenon in East Asia, especially in the regions with better economic development. In Japan, private tutoring is run by *juku* (学習塾, cram schools) which provides remedial education, homework guidance and examination preparation. A survey found that 71.8% of public middle school students and 54.9% of private middle school students attended cram schools in 1999 (Monobushô 2001). In South Korea, a 1997 survey discovered that 66% of middle school students and 59% of academic high school students received private tutoring in Seoul, while the proportions in urban and rural areas were 46% and 12% respectively (Yim 1997). In Taiwan, private tutoring is popular among students preparing for university or graduate entrance examinations. An array of cram schools is located along Nanyang Street in Taipei (Fung 2003). A statistical report on private tutoring conducted by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan indicated that the number of students enrolled in tutorial centres has exceeded 1,800,000 (40% of school-aged population) in 1998, and has been increasing every year by 10% (Ministry of Education Taiwan 1999). Similarly, private tutoring is also popular among secondary and high school students in China, Malaysia and Singapore (Kwan-Terry 1991; Marimuthu et al. 1991; Fung 2003).

A number of previous studies considered private tutoring as “shadow education” (Baker & LeTendre 2005; Bray 1999; Stevenson & Baker 1992) to

emphasize its affiliated relationship to mainstream education: it only exists as the mainstream education system exists; as a supplement to academic training of mainstream education, its curriculum changes with the mainstream education accordingly. Nevertheless, different from mainstream education, private tutoring is operated as a customer service for financial gain by private bodies without any connection to the daytime schools, and is provided outside normal school hours (such as evenings, weekends and vacations) (Bray & Silova 2006). With the above clarified natures, Bray & Silova defined “private tutoring” as the following:

“[P]rivate tutoring is defined as tutoring in an academic school subject (e.g., mathematics, history or English), which is taught in addition to mainstream schooling for financial gain. The definition of private tutoring includes private tutoring lessons (offered by individuals) and preparatory courses (offered by institutions).” (2006: 29)

In terms of class size, Ireson (2004) classified private tutoring into three types: “individual tutoring”, which refers to the tutoring with one tutor and one tutee; “small group tutoring”, which refers to the tutoring groups with small class size so that teachers are enabled to devote significant amount of time to individual students; and “large classes in private institutions”, which refers to the tutorials with large class size, usually for examination preparation. In studies on Hong Kong’s private tutoring, Kwok (2001, 2004) adopted a similar three-class categorization, with the last type referred as “mass tutoring”. To maintain the agreement with the terminology in the previous studies, “mass tutoring” is also used throughout my study.

Previous studies suggested that the rise of private tutoring is grounded on a

variety of factors, including cultural, economic and educational ones. In the educational aspect, a number of comparative and international researches on educational systems (Eckstein & Noah 1992; Little 1984, 1997) suggested that private tutoring is a by-product of examination-oriented learning or examination-driven school curricula. It is an extension of “diploma disease” (Dore 1976, 1997), which refers to the scenario that qualification-earning, instead of nurture of curiosity and imagination, becomes the core aim of education. The tight linkage between academic performance, especially the public examination results and later opportunities in higher education and labour market also contributes to the emergence of private tutoring (Baker & LeTendre 2005; Bray & Kwok 2003; Stevenson & Baker 1992; Tansel & Bircan 2006). In the economic aspect, previous studies suggested that the salary differential between those who are well educated and those who are not motivates students to receive private tutoring for higher educational achievement, which also means higher economic rewards (Bray 2003; Ireson 2004; Kwan-Terry 1991). In the cultural aspect, some researchers (Bray 2003, 2006; Rohlen & LeTendre 1996; Salili 2005; Zeng 1999) suggested Confucian cultural traditions, which stress the importance of learning and the value of effort, have contributed to the growth of private tutoring in East Asian regions.

However, although the above factors well explained the reasons for the heightened awareness on academic achievement, they had not fully addressed to the significant growth of private tutoring, especially mass tutoring. If mainstream schooling already provides comprehensive training for sitting public examinations, why do demands for private tutoring still exist? Some may argue that constraints in the workload of school teachers and the resources of schools pose difficulty in providing additional attention to the needy students, but private tutoring is not the

only kind of study aids available. Students can seek help from supplementary exercises, self-study guides and past examination analyses. Why private tutoring pervades more significantly than other kinds of study aids, and why the expansion of mass tutoring is more evident, have yet to be answered.

Also, the significance of traditional culture to private tutoring needs further examination. A number of Confucian traditional thoughts are not followed by East Asian students nowadays. For instance, *Zun Shi Zhong Dao* (尊師重道, esteeming teachers and their teaching), is an important Confucian value about relationship between teachers and students, but in Hong Kong, there are students who value private tutoring more than daytime schooling, and may even ignore what their daytime teachers teach and only concentrate on private tutorials (Fung 2003). Also, the Confucian educational ideal of balanced development in virtue, wisdom, health, sociality and aesthetics is not embodied in private tutoring. Therefore, Confucian tradition should not be a fundamental factor explaining the phenomenon.

Private Tutoring in Hong Kong

Among the studies on private tutoring in Hong Kong, Kwok (2001, 2004) conducted a comprehensive study on the emergence of demand for private supplementary tutoring in Hong Kong between 1997 and 2000. His study focused on all kinds of private tutoring (including individual, group [2 to 8 tutees per group] and mass [more than 8 tutees in a class]) at all levels of secondary schooling in Hong Kong.

Kwok depicted the following patterns of private tutoring in Hong Kong:

- Individual home tutoring is more common among junior secondary students, while examination-oriented mass tutoring is more popular among the senior secondary students.
- The more senior is the schooling level, the higher is the participation in private tutoring: 35% for S.1 to S.3 students, 47% for S.4 to S.5 students, 70% for S.6 to S.7 students.
- English and Mathematics are the most common tutoring subjects for Secondary 1 to 5 students, while UE is the most popular for Secondary 6 to 7 students.

According to his findings, the demand for mass tutoring is caused by the following factors:

- Education is the major screening device for upward social mobility. Credentials are used for elite selection and job allocation.
- Government's censorship or monitoring on cram schools is ineffective.
- Marketization of cram schools is prevalent through mass media.
- Cram schools are geographically located in urban areas with convenient transportation access.
- Tutoring fees are affordable by nuclear families.
- The examination-oriented curricula bring students with considerable pressure to cross over the hurdles at upper secondary and matriculation levels.
- Individual learning differences cannot be effectively catered in daytime school due to rigid school curricula, insufficient academic

guidance, questionable pedagogy and tight study schedules.

- Elder family members with heavy daily workloads and inadequate academic qualifications can offer very little guidance on the students' academic work.

Despite the comprehensiveness of Kwok's study, some of the arguments are disputable. There are also areas which need further clarification and inquiry:

Firstly, apart from mass tutoring, there are other accessible and affordable means to enhance students' academic performance, such as individual tutoring, printed references available in bookstores, and after-class consultation with school teachers or schoolmates. If so, accessibility, affordability and academic inadequacy are not sufficient arguments to explain the popularity and the dominant dependence on private mass tutoring. Also, these factors are still far from enough to explain the different choices for tutors by the students.

Secondly, the existence of prevalent marketization does not necessarily imply the large demand from students. Advertising may merely mean a piece of information about tutorials to students. Even some students may enrol in corresponding classes after acknowledging the advertisement, they do not necessarily subscribe to every value-loaded message in the advertisement.

Thirdly, among the tutees, there are high scorers who certainly have no problem in securing places for further studies. A previous study even showed that taking private tutoring is more common among students from high-ranking schools than those from low-ranking ones (Tseng 1998). In addition, opportunities for further

studies have been expanding in recent years. Therefore, pressure to cross over the hurdles at upper secondary and matriculation levels cannot fully account for the popularity of mass tutoring among the talented students, and the increasing enrolment in mass tutoring.

Lastly, although a large number of students attend mass tutoring, students do not necessarily think their attendance as a meaningful practice with long-term value. They may think that to excel in examination is the core purpose of studying, or they may think that they are so helpless to escape from this examination-dominated competition. Therefore, the value beliefs behind students' behaviour and decision deserve further attention.

Fung (2003) conducted another significant exploratory research on the blooming of private tuition in Hong Kong, with particular focus on cram schooling at senior secondary level. Data were collected between 2000 and 2002 from interviews with tutees, cram school tutors and daytime school teachers, and also by non-participant observation in tutorial classes. From his research findings, Fung had the following arguments on the blooming of cram schooling.

Firstly, like many other places in East Asia, the blooming of cram schooling is a by-product of public examinations, which is critical for students to compete for higher study places and good career opportunities. In other words, the popularization of cram schooling is a reflection of contradiction between educational ideal and practice, with the former emphasizes whole-person development, while the latter just focus on excel in public examinations.

Secondly, tutees, embracing an instrumental mentality, merely look for key contents useful for sitting public examinations, such as bullet-point-form outline of knowledge required for examinations, and examination-relevant skills and tips, rather than real subject knowledge or thinking skills.

Thirdly, many tutees are more serious and attentive in tutorial classes than in daytime lessons. They view daytime lessons useless, and regard their cram school tutors as idols and heroes. Within their affordability, they have tutorials for as many subjects as possible.

Although Fung's analysis highlighted some important facades about cram schooling in Hong Kong, it oversimplified the scenario.

Firstly, Fung only discussed the cases of students who attended cram school classes regularly. However, regular courses are only one of the modes of cram schooling (or mass tutoring). Apart from regular courses, there are tutorial classes of short-term basis, such as intensive courses, pre-examination revision courses and tips classes. With this availability, not all students receiving mass tutoring are regular tutees.

Secondly, although Fung had interviews with 40 students, he only described in detail the most extreme cases (such as a tutee from an elite daytime school, a student who wished to enrol in mass tutoring for all subjects he studied), and the cases fulfilling the "instrumental mentality" which he wanted to emphasize. However, it is sceptical that these cases are sufficient to provide a representative account of these 40 interviewees, or the phenomenon of cram schooling.

Thirdly, if keen competition for further studies and good career opportunities contribute to the popularization of cram schooling, increased number of university places and availability of alternative further study paths in recent years should relieve the competition on public examination results among the youngsters, and the further blooming of mass tutoring. Nevertheless, this does not seem to be the actual case.

Finally, Fung's study did not discuss the process of decision and choice, which is crucial in digging out the values and mentality of the tutees. Although Fung mentioned some students who did not receive mass tutoring for all subjects due to financial constraints, he did not discuss the criteria for deciding which subjects had priority for cram schooling. Also, for most subjects, there is more than one choice of tutors, but Fung did not discuss how and why the tutees chose a particular tutor but not the others.

Kwok and Fung just gave a number of intermediate causes to the phenomenon, but they did not link them to the social theories on contemporary society, did not locate any fundamental social institution or mechanism which contributes to the intermediate causes and the phenomenon, or did not link their significance to adolescent life or social order of contemporary society. Therefore, further inquiry and discussion on these areas are needed. This is the gap which my research aims to fill in.

2.2 Theories and Concepts on Late Modernity

Modernity versus Post-modernity

Since the late twentieth century, modernization has brought the world with social transition in various aspects. For example, the rise of communication technology and consumer culture has brought us new social orders which have not been experienced in the preceding eras. People in the contemporary world feel themselves incapable to control or understand the events happening around them (Giddens 1990: 2, 46-47).

In the contemporary post-industrial era, changes in socio-economic structure have induced a series of unprecedented social changes, such as the restructuring of labour markets, and an increased demand for educated workers. Consequently, people have to negotiate new forms of risks and uncertainties which were largely unknown during the industrial age. Heightened uncertainties in turn cause stress and vulnerability.

This transition has caught the attention of social scientists, many of whom argued that the transition has brought us a new stage of social development, and named this emerging form of society as “post-modernity”, “post-industrial society” or “post-capitalist society”. In the academy, these perspectives are generally understood as postmodernism.

Postmodernists argue that contemporary societies have reached the postmodern

epoch. In this epoch, patterns of behaviour, lifestyles and individual life chances are much more diverse among different people. This diversity is not based on the social structural parameters, such as class, gender and race. In this sense, grand theories and structural analysis cannot validly explain the contemporary social life. (Lyotard 1984; Baudrillard 1988)

On the other hand, some scholars are suspicious about the validity of postmodernist arguments. Furlong and Cartmel (2007), for example, by drawing the analysis of modern society by Durkheim (1947) and Berger et. al. (1974), argues that plurality of lifeworlds, weakening of collective tradition and sense of uncertainty do not conflict with the modernity era. Giddens commented that postmodernism overemphasizes disintegration, fragmentation and discontinuities of social experiences in the post-industrial era, and ignores universal tendencies and commonalities in such experiences, so does not offer a better model than modernist perspectives to reflect the context and dynamics of the contemporary world (Giddens 1991:2). Instead of defining the contemporary age as “postmodernity”, these scholars consider it as a radical outcome of the modern social development, and define it as “late modernity” (Giddens 1990, 1991) or “second modernity” (Beck 1992)².

Giddens agrees that modernization has brought dramatic transformations to our extensional and intensional modes of life. For the former, social interconnection is becoming globalised, while for the latter, most intimate and personal features of our day-to-day existence have been altered. (Giddens 1990: 4-6) Despite the fact that these transformations have brought us disparities from the past social orders, and

² “Late modernity” and “second modernity” are used interchangeably in this thesis.

uncertainties in the contemporary social life, it is still far from the postmodern notion that society develops in a discontinuous trend which cannot be systematically understood.

The fundamental logic of social development has not been changed. Instead, modern institutions still pervade in contemporary life. The transformations are just reflections of the intrinsic feature of modernity, and the above distinctions are just the radicalized and universalized consequences of modernity (Giddens 1990: 4-6, 46). Following this understanding, characterizing the contemporary social condition as “beyond modernity”, or “post-modernity”, is indeed an overstatement.

In short, “late modernity” arguments reaffirm the profound role of modernity in the contemporary life. They offer a link between the modernity and the postmodern social phenomena.

Structure and Agency

Structuration Theory, proposed by Giddens (1984), is the theoretical basis of modernization and “late modernity”. It challenges overly deterministic views on social life which overemphasize the social structure and undermine human agency. By structuration theory, neither social structure nor human action is completely predetermined. They are in a duality, or reflexive, relationship: social structure, constituted by “rules” governing human actions and “resources” making human actions possible, provides a constrained domain of human actions, while human actions, being an “agency”, create, reproduce and transform social structure. By interaction, which refers to “the activity instantiated by the agent acting within the

social system”, individual agents lead to the evolution of social structures.

In fact, Giddens’ view on the interrelationship between individual and society is concordant with Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice (1977, 1990). Giddens’ concepts of “rule”, “resources” are analogous to Bourdieu’s concepts of “field”, which refers to a set of roles and relationships in a social domain, and “capital”, which refers to prestige and financial resources held in the same social domain, respectively. “Field” and “capital” constitute the external structures of a social domain. An individual internalizes external structures into his/her “habitus”, which refers to acquired perceptions, thoughts and actions, at the same time an individual takes the role of an agent to externalize his “habitus” through interactions with other members in this social domain.

In short, both Giddens and Bourdieu agreed that individual and society are in a dialectic relationship. Individual life is realized by appropriation of resources available in social structures, at the same time it is the source of changes of social structures.

Institutional Dimensions of Modernity

Giddens argued that there are four institutional dimensions of modernity, namely “capitalism”, “industrialism”, “surveillance” and “military power” (Giddens 1990: 55-63). The first two form the fundamental order of social life, while the latter two are the means of control which regulate the order of society. The first three dimensions, “capitalism”, “industrialism” and “surveillance”, which are significant

to the individual social life, are elaborated in the following³.

Capitalism

Capitalism refers to “a system of commodity production, centred upon the relation between private ownership of capital and propertyless wage labour” (Giddens 1990: 55-57). Competition and commodification are the two important elements in a capitalist society. Individuals and enterprises are confronted with the competitive capitalist ecology. Under capitalism, products and labour are commodified as “goods” valued by “prices”, which are the basis of exchange in the market.

Commodification and competition of capitalism provide the ground for the rise of “consumerism”, by which living standards, lifestyles and identities are transformed into various kinds of commoditized symbols. In order to achieve an aspired living standard, lifestyle or an aspired identity, individuals are encouraged to participate in competition for more financial resources, and to accumulate such resources, in order to enhance their capacity in consumption (Giddens 1991: 197-200).

Industrialism

Industrialism, as Giddens defined, is “the utilization of inanimate sources of material power in the production of goods, coupled to the central role of machinery

³ The fourth dimension, “military power”, which concerns with the control of the means of violence between nation-states, is beyond the scope of this study.

in the production process (Giddens 1990: 55-56). However, the impact of industrialism does not limit to the workshops and factories. In fact, the emphasis on machinery and regularity in achievement of goals, which is the core notion of industrialism, does not only affect the workplace, but also extends to the areas of everyday life, including transportation, communication and domestic life (Giddens 1990: 56).

Surveillance

Surveillance is the third institutional dimension of modernity. It refers to the supervision of activities of subject population based on administrative power. It can be realized by social supervision in various arenas, such as prisons, schools and open workplace, or by information control. It maintains the capitalist and industrial order of society. (Giddens 1990: 57-58).

Disembedding

“Disembedding” is one of the dominant sources of the dynamism of modernity.⁴ It refers to the “lifting out” of social relations from local contexts of interaction, and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space” (Giddens 1990: 21). It contributes to the rise of the modern institutions discussed in the previous section, and the reconfiguration of social relations, practices and modes of behaviour into an “unstopping juggernaut”. Two central mechanisms, namely “symbolic tokens” and “expert systems”, profoundly contribute to the disembedding

⁴ The other two sources of dynamism of modernity are “time-space distanciation” and “reflexivity” (Giddens 1990: 63). “Reflexivity” will be discussed in the subsection “Risk Culture and Reflexive Project of Self” in this chapter.

process.

Symbolic Tokens

“Symbolic tokens” are “the media of interchange which can be ‘passed around’ without regard to the specific characteristics of individuals or groups that handle them at any particular juncture” (Giddens: 1990: 22). An example of symbolic tokens is “money”.

As a symbolic token, money is more than a circulating medium which permits the exchange of commodity. In terms of temporal dimension, by subscribing to Keynes’ argument, Giddens regarded money as a spontaneous acknowledgment of debt, or a mode of deferral, which provides the means of connecting credit and liability in circumstances where immediate exchange of product is impossible (Giddens 1990: 23-24).

In terms of spatial dimension, Giddens endorses Simmel’s analysis in his *Philosophy of Money*, considering money as a means to bridge the spatial distance between an individual and his possession (Simmel 1978: 179; Giddens 1990: 24). In other words, money is a symbolic token representing an individual’s capability in purchasing a commodity which may be distant from him. Moreover, money and the symbolic value represented by it are independent of any tangible commodity or transaction. It can take form of pure information without occupying any spatial positions (Giddens 1990: 25).

Comprehensively speaking, since the possession of money and the actual

transaction with money (which is the embodiment of the transaction capability represented by money) do not necessarily take place at the same place or the same moment, money is considered as a medium disembedding transaction from specific space and time. In other words, money is a means which couples instantaneity and deferral, presence and absence (Giddens 1990: 25).

Expert Systems

“Expert System”, or “abstract system”, refers to systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise that organise large areas of material and social environments where people live today (Freidson 1986; Giddens 1990: 27). Generally speaking, an “expert system” includes technology, knowledge, and the professional practitioners who master, develop and apply these technology and knowledge.

In modern society, expert systems continuously influence the everyday life of individuals. They have to rely on expert systems in order to carry on their living. In particular, expert systems can provide individuals guarantees of expectations, and minimize threats encountered in everyday life. However, most individuals are laymen without mastery of sophisticated expert knowledge. Thus, they have to trust the judgements and decisions made by professional practitioners with expert knowledge, who are the representatives or delegates of the expert systems (Giddens 1990: 84). When necessary, individuals may even consult professional practitioners for advice (Giddens 1990: 27-28). For example, lawyers, architects and doctors are professional practitioners of legal, architectural and medical expert systems respectively.

With expert systems, individuals can maintain their living without developing and mastering the expert knowledge which has continuous impact upon their life. They remove social relations from the immediacies of context. Therefore, expert systems can be considered as disembedding mechanisms.

Trust and Ontological Security

Giddens uses “ontological security” to refer to “the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action” (Giddens 1990: 92), or “a sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual” (Giddens 1991: 243), which is closely related to the phenomenological term “being”. In other words, it can be understood as the self-security feeling developed through the experience of repetitive patterns in the interactive actions with the external actors and environment.

Individuals do not possess the capability to manipulate all the environmental happenings on their own. In order to sustain a secure ontological condition, individuals have to build trust on some external bodies. An example of trust relationship is one between a child and a caretaker (Giddens 1991: 51-52): the child, who is incompetent to take care of himself, has to trust the caretaker in order to realize his everyday life. With the stability and repetitiveness of the outcome of the caretaker’s performance, the child establishes a customary expectation on the caretaker, and develops a trust on the latter.

In the pre-modern world, ontological security is rooted in tradition, while in modernity, symbolic tokens and expert systems are the source of ontological security. However, in late modernity, ontological security has been threatened by detraditionalization, existence of risks, and the co-existence of multiple expertises. This is elaborated in the following parts of this section.

Detraditionalization

Detraditionalization, for Giddens, refers to the undermining of traditional bases for social actions by the dynamism of modernity in late modernity. Traditional and modern sources for self-identity (such as class or religious affiliation), and traditional and modern conceptions of life stage or trajectory (which relate to family, schooling, occupation, marriage, parenting, retiring, etc.) are no longer rigid foundations for personal life in late modernity. Social institutions, which previously gave social actions their meanings, are now being reconfigured. (Heaphy 2007: 83, 85)

In the pre-modern world, time-space distancing is relatively low. Human activities are overwhelmingly limited to a localized region. In such a localized context, trust is largely based on kinship relations, which stabilize social-ties, and local community, which provides a familiar milieu (Giddens 1990: 100-03). Religion is another major source of trust in the pre-modern world. In the pre-modern conditions, natural factors are the chief source of dangers and threats. People do not believe they have the power to combat with the nature or to interpret the human-nature relationship. Rather, they regard religious cosmologies as a provisional interpretation of human life and nature. They believe that they need to rely upon

supernatural beings or forces, which are the symbols of security, in order to sustain stability and minimize potential threats. In this context, religious belief and ritual practices are what people trust to achieve ontological security in a pre-modern society (Giddens 1990: 103-04). Tradition is also a source of trust in the pre-modern world. Tradition contains the beliefs, rituals, and activities inherited from the past and are still continually permeate the social life. Although hazards and uncertainties exist in the pre-modern society, they are dominated by the physical world. Under this condition, people establish a backward-looking mentality, from which they believe that history is repetitive. “The past”, “the present” and “the future” are not discrete to each other. With this mentality, it is believed that traditions can provide guidance and guarantees for the future life, or, in Giddens’ terminology, contribute to the ontological security. (Giddens 1990: 104-06)

Beck shared Giddens’ view on the significance of tradition to pre-modern societies, in which uncertainties are understood as “natural hazards” (Beck 1992: 98; 1995: 78). Natural disasters such as earthquake and tsunami are potential threats which people commonly face in their life. But apart the threats from nature, personal problems, such as health problems and other unfavourable experiences, are also considered as elements from nature, which can be reflected by their belief of personal problems as misfortune. All these “natural” uncertainties are considered as a result of the rage of the supernatural. People did not believe they can understand the mechanism of these uncertainties by human knowledge. Thus, people tended to appeal to traditional means, such as religious or ritual practices, as a response to uncertainties.

In the modern condition, where abstract systems dominate social life, trust in

abstract system replaces (the old form of) trust in person as the major source of security. While personal trust in pre-modernity is built upon mutuality and locality, personal trust in modernity is not limited to local community and kinship networks. Rather, it is established upon instrumental reasoning and other impersonal principles offered from the abstract systems. (Giddens 1990: 114-120) In particular, when mass communication has made the world more unified with respect to time and space, individuals must invest a high degree of trust in non-face-to-face relationships (Heaphy 2007: 98)

As a result of detraditionalization, Beck and Giddens agree, as Heaphy notes, that social, cultural, political and personal lives become experiments in late modernity. Individuals have to make decisions for oneself without recourse to certain knowledge or sources of legitimacy and authority. (Heaphy 2007: 83)

Consumer culture, as a product under capitalism and modernization, treats individual problems as technical problems which are solvable through commoditized expert solutions (Bauman 1990; 2001). The proliferation of books, courses, programmes, therapies, recipes for self-help or self-esteem development is an example to reflect this phenomenon. Commoditized expert solutions replace the traditional authority to become a new source of authority on self development.

Risk, Trust and Late Modernity

Risks, the definitive environmental feature of late modernity, are hazards, dangers or uncertainties resulting from the complication of natural and cultural environment due to the substantial use of different modernized systems. As

man-made modernized systems are not isolated but situated in the natural and cultural world, their existence and operation may alter the climate and the ecology of both natural and cultural environment, the original conditions may be changed, resulting in new uncertainties. In addition, the co-existence of different modernized systems may also mutually affect each other, resulting in new uncertainties inside these systems. Nuclear wars, oil crises, greenhouse effects and uncertainties in competitive market are examples of risks. These risks provide new dangers to everyone, and their impacts transcend borders between different economic, social, cultural and geographically based groups (Giddens 1990, 1998; Beck 1992, 1995, 1999).

Trust in expert systems normally serves to reduce or minimize dangers involved in an activity (Giddens 1990: 35, 83). In late modernity, there are often multiple sources of expertise, which may conflict with each other. All claims to truth are open to question and revision. Individuals are thus faced with competing “truths” on any given issue. With little knowledge about the uncertain, contingent and uncontrollable future and the potential risks associated, people are not sure what actions should be taken. In such a situation, individuals become sceptical to, or even distrust, the capacities of expert systems and expert bodies. Individuals are engaged in the ongoing experiment and self-critique to monitor risks. They have to constantly negotiate life choices on their own, and share a sense of responsibility with respect to risk. (Beck 1992, 1994, 1998; Giddens 1990, 1991)

In brief, the existence of risk in late modernity has broadened the significance of modern uncertainties to the daily life, resulted in different patterns for life-choices and negotiation with the surrounding environment.

Individualization and Reflexive Project of Self

Modernity has a future-oriented character. The future is always subjected to openness as a result of the innate contingent nature of future plus the reflexivity of knowledge to which social practices are organized (Giddens 1990: 83). For Beck and Giddens, as Heaphy notes, individual experience in late modernity involves consideration of potential risks entailed in future possibilities (Heaphy 2007: 98).

Giddens argues that the construction of the self-identity and personal life is a reflexive project, in which individuals negotiate choices and risks in everyday life. “Reflexivity” of late modernity, for Giddens, refers to “modernity’s institutional reflection, awareness and self-consciousness and the mutual transformative relationship between this and the reflection, awareness and self-consciousness of social actors in day-to-day life” (Heaphy 2007: 83). It allows for an analytical focus on how expert knowledge and cultural resources are crucial for engagement in challenges in social, political and personal life. It promotes a culture of radical doubt where all kinds of knowledge, including expert knowledge itself, are only valid until further notice (Heaphy 2007: 76). An individual enjoys the power to create and monitor his or her identity and life amidst the strategies and options available in the expert systems. Individuals are empowered to become capable agency to transform social conventions and remoralise social life (Giddens 1990: 124; 1991: 223-26).

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim suggest “individualization” as a characteristic tendency of social life in late modernity. Previously existing social forms, such as clan, class, race, community etc., disintegrate in understanding social life. Instead,

the individual becomes the institutional focus of social life, or the basic unit of social reproduction. Demands and responsibilities related to basic social, civil and political rights are increasingly focused on the individual and not the group. Individuals are liberated from taken-for-granted roles and cut loose from traditional securities. Every individual encounters institutional pressure to constructing a separate do-it-yourself biography, to become the maker of their own identity and livelihood, and to negotiate new forms of security. Individuals assume greater responsibility for the consequences of their choices and actions. (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995, 2002; Beck 2000)

However, less optimistic than Giddens' view, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's "individualization" does not mean that individuals enjoy complete freedom in negotiating choices. Although life chances and experiences are individualized, the processes of individualization are still constrained by outside influences. Individual decisions and solutions are subjected to the pressure to conform and to behave in a standard way. In other words, individuals are confronted with a double-faced situation which encourages individualism but also sameness (Beck 1995: 40).

Risk Culture

To emphasize the significance of "risk" in late modernity, Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) named the society with characters of late modernity as "risk society". The culture of a risk society is referred as "risk culture", with heightened risk-awareness, detraditionalization, individualization, and reflexivity as major elements. On individual level:

- Ontological security has been threatened by detraditionalization,

existence of risk, and openness of the future.

- Individuals are required to adopt a future-oriented, calculative mentality to negotiate with risks in order to maintain ontological security in risk society.
- Individual subjectivity, instead of social background (clan, class, race, community, etc.), becomes a more significant force to individual behaviour.
- Confronted with multiple sources of authority, including various expert systems and bodies, individuals have to reflexively construct their own lifestyles, life plans and social biography.

Critiques

Several critics argue that Giddens' analysis on self-monitoring, self-making and "empowered" individual conceives contemporary self-identities in over rationalistic terms, overplays individual agency, overplays the possibilities for empowerment which are generally available to people in modernity, and fails to fully engage with how power works in relation to the self.

By Giddens' "reflexivity", individuals are viewed as rationalizing and self-mastering subjects. This view is considered as an oversimplification of selfhood and subjectivity. By psychoanalytic theory, individuals' desires, actions and emotions are profoundly influenced by the unconscious, which places limits on individuals' capacity of rational reflexive decision-making and mastery over the self (Craib 2001). In particular, cultural values and prohibitions had significant role in shaping and limiting human experience. Norms and values in civilized society are

not necessarily a representation of human desires, but more likely a repression and dissatisfaction of such (Freud and Bersani 2002). This results in the tension between “freedom” and “order”, and ambivalence of human experience (Bauman 1992; Smart 1998).

While Giddens views expert system as an empowerment source for individuals to ward off contingency and threats to ontological security, Lash (1993), employing a Foucauldian perspective, pointed out that expert system is actually a disciplinary mechanism of power. For Lash, “freedom of agency” in Giddens’ analysis of reflexivity is only an illusion, and is just a means of control by self-knowledge, which is only the result of internalization of disciplinary expert knowledge

Bauman, despite holding similar views as Giddens that individuals holds responsibility in decision-making and choice negotiation for self-identity in confrontation with multiple sources of authority, is sceptical that Giddens’ self-reflexivity is a genuine self-constitution (Bauman 2000). Unlike Giddens, Bauman is aware of the importance of “resources” to the freedom of choice. For Bauman, the dynamics of modernity, as identified by Giddens, means the empowerment for those being well resourced, and, at the same time, disempowerment and threats for those without access to resources. The poor and the powerless lack the resources and freedom to choose, the protection from the consequences due to wrong choices, and must live with the consequences of the choice of others. The consequence is the formation of a new social hierarchy from choice to no-choice; from the autonomy of self-identification at the top to the dependency on assigned identities at the bottom (Bauman 2000a: 214-218).

Similar to Bauman, Skeggs (2003) recognized the limitations of agency for Giddens' self-reflexivity, and argued that Giddens' analysis ignores the significance of class-based economic, social and cultural differentials, which are determinant for the access to discourse, cultural resources, techniques and practices for producing and knowing a self, and the availability of the options of selves and subjectivities. For Skeggs, possibilities of self-making are not open to any individual, but only to particular types of socially located individuals. She criticized Giddens for providing a partial analysis of life experience from the middle-class perspective, and theorizing only the conditions of the privileged.

2.3 Youth and Late Modernity

A number of empirical studies have revealed that the lives and experiences of youngsters in contemporary society diverge from those in the past. Some phenomena portrayed in the late modernity thesis have been identified. The following discussions are on the education and employment of young people in developed countries in the post-industrial era.

In the 1950s and 1960s, or the Fordist industrial era, life experiences of the masses were relatively standardized and homogeneous. Transitions from school to full-time jobs were stable and predictable. A large amount of employment opportunities were available in the industrial societies like Britain for minimum-aged school leavers without professional qualification or academic credentials. Transition from school to factories, building sites, shops and offices were common pathways for young school leavers. Young people often had little incentive to improve their academic qualifications. In particular, while the young

people with privileged social backgrounds were aware that the maintenance of their economic and social advantages partly depended on their educational attainment, those who grew up in lower working-class families perceived educational attainment as irrelevant to their future careers. (Ashton and Field 1976; Hall and Jefferson 1976; Willis 1977)

In contrast, in the post-industrial era, the demand for unskilled youth labour has declined, and levels of post-compulsory educational participation have increased rapidly. The majority of young people are spending longer years in educational institutions and building up a range of qualifications for transition to the labour market (Chitty 1989; Heinz 1987), credentialism and qualification inflation resulted (Dore 1976). Individual academic performance and credentials have become a prerequisite for smooth transition to the labour market, survival in the contemporary economy, and purchase of safety and freedom from risk (Beck 1992; Büchner 1990).

The unprecedented environment has brought youngsters new risks and uncertainties caused by the changing industrial and economic structures, followed by the restructuring of youth labour market, which are indeed out of their control. In Giddens' terminology, the labour market in the post-industrial era becomes increasingly "diverse and segmented" (Giddens 1991: 83). Insecurity of employment, unemployment and underemployment have become more significant in recent years (Ashton et al 1990; Bauman 1998; Beck 1992, 2000; Castells 1996; Giddens 1991; Gorz 1999; MacDonald 1988). In particular, in the developed world like Britain and the Netherlands, non-standard employment, insecure employment, being employed below one's capabilities, and moving between various employment states have been emerging since the 1970s (Batenburg and de Witte 2001; Dex and McCulloch 1997;

Furlong and Cartmel 2004; MacDonald and Marsh 2005; Philpott 1999; Pollock 1998, 2002). Some commentators suggested that new trends, including the shrink of manufacturing industries, the dominance of the service sector, the globalizing influence, and the rise of information and communication technologies have caused new insecurities and uncertainties in the labour market, which differentiated the situation from the past. Coherence and predictability of life have been broken down, youngsters are less sure of what the future holds than their parents were (Bauman 1998; Beck 1992, 2000; Castells 1996; Furlong et. al. 2003; Giddens 1991; Gorz 1999; Polluck 2002; Roberts et al 1987; Roberts and Parsell 1992; Wyn and White 1997). In such a context, young people lack the clear frames of reference which can help smooth transitions from school to work. They develop a heightened sense of risk. Even those with privileged social backgrounds and excellent academic credentials frequently worry about failure and about the uncertainty of future events and experiences (Walkerdine et. al. 2001)

Risk society is argued as a society where agency triumphs over structure. It may have positive effect on individuals, as it provides individuals more choices and possibilities, which were not available to young people of previous generations. A variety of different transitions to adulthood, such as education, employment, housing and relationships, are available to young people today when compared to earlier generations (Bynner et. al. 1997). For example, educational paths have become more diverse as young people experience a greater range of academic and vocational courses available within the same educational institutional setting (Chitty 1989; Heinz 1987); the boundary between the stages of studying and employment becomes blurred that having jobs besides full-time studies and studying besides having full-time employment have become very common (Bynner et. al. 1997a; Du

Bois-Reymond 1998; Roberts 1995; Wyn and White 1997); an increasing number of young people eschew the couple-based living arrangement, and opt to experience different forms of residence with friends and lovers over a long period of time (Heath 2002). Apparently, young people today are given more cultural resources to involve in various life experiments, shape their own lifestyle and construct their own biography through their life choices (Muggleton 2000; Polhemus 1999).

Some studies suggested the youngsters are not passive recipients or powerless victims of social change in risk society. Rather, they positively utilize the structural and cultural resources of the risk society to develop their strategies to cope with their transition in the ever-changing world. For instance, Miles (2002) probed into the case of “Hope Street”, a training programme in performing arts for disadvantaged young people in Liverpool. Joining this programme was the participants’ own decision. Participants did not merely want to demonstrate their characteristic lifestyle in opposition to the dominant, hegemonic culture, but also had a strong motivation to be the master of their own identity and biography through their choice, and to acquire long-term generic skills for their future life through cooperation and interaction with other peers. Similarly, in studies on youth employment in Britain, findings showed that youngsters have the opportunity to choose their own career path from a vast number of alternatives. Availability of more career choices liberalizes individuals’ employment biographies from their social origin and offers them the chances to realize their own unique ambitions (Sennet 1998).

With heightened sense of risk, lack of predecessors’ footsteps, and the availability of various alternatives open to individuals, young people are forced to navigate in the complicated web of choices and negotiate with potential risk and

uncertainty on their own: They make their life choices on their own, monitor their biography on ongoing base, and develop a sense of responsibility with the likely consequences of their actions on a subjective level (Evan and Furlong 1997; Furlong and Cartmel 2007)

On the other hand, some commentators were reserved on the view that diversity of choices empowers individuals. On career choices, they argued that diversification of career choices are only a reflection of fragmentation of education and employment, or “structured individualization” (Robert et. al. 1994), in the periodically renewing capitalization process. In such a condition, not all existing opportunities are opened to each individual. In other words, what kinds of opportunities are available to an individual still depends on his educational, employment and socio-economic background (Furlong and Carmel 2007; Pullock 2002).

Similarly, on educational choices, diversification of educational opportunities does not necessarily mean freedom of choice for individuals regardless of their socioeconomic background. Although the expansion of post-compulsory education has offered opportunities for the working-class young people to pursue further studies, it does not imply to the equalization between social groups (Croxford and Raffe 2007; Shavit and Müller 1998). In advanced European countries, costs, affordability, availability of financial aids are still crucial factors for the decision to attend university for young people (Callender 2003; Forsayth and Furlong 2000; Huisman et. al. 2003). Most students in the older universities are from families with professional and managerial backgrounds, while those in the newly established universities are more likely come from working class families, with many entering

as mature students or after following the non-traditional academic pathways (Aamodt and Kyvick 2005; Blackburn and Jarman 1993; Burnhill et. al. 1990; Dobson 2003). In addition, in Britain, Belgium, Finland and Ireland, under the commodification of education, choosing a school becomes a consumption activity for maximizing “cultural capital”. Young people with higher economic status still enjoyed advantage for choosing better educational opportunities (Ball 2003; Croxford and Raffe 2007; Gewirtz 1996; Harris and Ranson 2005).

3.1 Theoretical Framework**3.1.1 Significance of Late Modernity to the Social Context of Mass Tutoring Enrolment**

The late modernity thesis has two sides. One is the “risk society” thesis concerning the complication of modern uncertainties in a broader “social” aspect. Climate adversity, deterioration of natural environment, chaos by breakdown of highly computerized systems, potential threats by the global financial market, etc. are the areas commonly studied with the “risk society” thesis. These studies usually focus on the origins of risks, their relationship to the existing modernized systems, and their adverse impact on society. Some studies may also discuss the strategies adopted by concerned organizations (such as government bodies, research organizations, private firms, etc.) in responding these risks.

Another side of the late modernity thesis is the “individualization” thesis, concerning the individualization of ethical values, life-choices, negotiation with the external environment and personal responsibility of one’s fate. With modern enlightenment, individuals do not consider personal problems as mere misfortune, and believe the responsibility to solve them by individual effort. Confronted with the uncertain environment, traditional practices and past experiences are not reliable to achieve ontological security. Moreover, since defects may exist in an expert system, no individual professional or single expert system is totally trustworthy. Without

dependable outsiders, individuals are forced to experience different alternatives in response to the uncertain surrounding.

Education system, the public examination system in particular, is a means of surveillance incorporating regularity (an aspect of industrialization) and competition (an aspect of capitalization). Students are required to follow the regular curricula and examinations. By using standardized and quantified tools, students' academic ability is assessed in public examinations. Students' results in public examinations become their assets for competing for study and career opportunities. Although evaluation by public examinations may be far from a complete portrayal of what knowledge and skills an individual have already mastered, as the questions do not exhaust everything covered in the syllabi, the grades attained by individual students are still recognized as a reliable account of their individual academic achievement. This can be reflected by the fact that local institutions largely count applicants' public examination results when deciding admission offers.

Apparently, examination system is different from those highly technological systems which are always affiliated with risk society. Taking the Internet as an example, it is a highly intricate network composed of numerous smaller-scale networks and terminals worldwide running simultaneously. Besides, networking hardware, communication software, and programming languages are advancing. In such a condition, no engineer or technician has the necessary knowledge and skills to look over the whole system. New threats (such as virus and spyware) are still possible to appear in the future. Security measures, although limited in capacity, are still necessary to lower the potential harm by these threats.

In contrast, the regulations and syllabi of a public examination are designed by those having power in hand (i.e. those working for HKEAA). In principle, there are persons (or bodies) who are totally familiar with the details of this public examination “system”. Nevertheless, in practice, regulations and syllabi are only a loose framework for setting the actual public examination. For most subjects, due to the application of statistical means (e.g. norm-referencing) in handling the candidates’ results, score required for each grade are subjected to all candidates’ performance and varies year from year. Marking schemes and distribution of grades may be adjusted after examiner meetings during the script-marking stage. Thus, no one in HKEAA can affirmatively know the real marking scheme till the final moment. More importantly, to the majority of daytime teachers and students, question setting, marking schemes and distribution of grades are blind to them before they are officially released and published. Therefore, to ordinary students and teachers, public examination is somehow like an uncertain environment, just like surfing on the Internet, or living in a changeable climate.

If we consider the labour market and the examination system as the “environment” surrounding individual students, who are striving for “ontological security” in this environment, while “daytime schooling” and “cram schools” are the “expert systems” (which are also modernized systems) to help student deal with the uncertainties in the “environment, then the risk society is a possible analogy to the above environmental setting, and late modernity is a possible paradigm to explain the interactions in this environment. This explains why the objective of this research is “to extend the (possible) applicability of late modernity theory”.

3.1.2 Research Questions

The theme question of this research is “To what extent is the enrolment in mass tutoring by Hong Kong senior secondary students a reflection of risk culture of late modernity?” To answer this question, the following objectives have to be achieved:

- a. To explain why the current social context confronting the senior secondary students can be considered as late modernity.
- b. To explore the extent that tutees are aware of the late modern conditions, including risks in their future prospects.
- c. To explore the significance of the above risk awareness to the tutees’ decision of enrolling in mass tutoring.
- d. To explore the extent that students’ enrolment in mass tutoring demonstrates the key elements of risk culture: independence from traditional values, individual reflexivity, and conditional trust on authority.

In order to answer the theme question, the whole research consists of several sub-theme questions, which are listed and illustrated in the following:

QUESTION 1

Do the tutees think that they are encountering risks on their educational attainment and career prospects?

By this question, I try to find out the students’ self-expectation on educational and career attainment; to what extent they are aware of the highly modernized social

conditions; whether they subjectively believe that these conditions cause a sense of insecurity about their existing status and future prospects, impose potential threats and difficulties on their current studies and future career path; and what the dominant threats and difficulties are in their mind.

QUESTION 2

What are the meanings of senior secondary schooling to the tutees?

With this question, I try to explore the meanings of senior secondary schooling for the tutees. Value beliefs about learning to be studied include: the purpose of learning, the appropriate way of learning for senior secondary students in Hong Kong, the importance of examination results versus the importance of knowledge, and the appropriate pedagogy a teacher should adopt. Students' attitude towards traditional norms and values about learning, such as "learning is not for scoring"⁵, is also discussed.

QUESTION 3

Why do the tutees enrol in mass tutoring?

The study explores the purposes of students' enrolment in mass tutoring. What are the students looking for when they decide to enrol in mass tutoring? Do they think daytime schooling inadequate? What do they expect to get from mass tutoring? Why do they choose mass tutoring, but not other means (such as individual tutoring, or supplementary references/exercises), for enhancing their performance of studies?

⁵ "Learning is not for scoring" is the literal translation of the Chinese slogan 「求學不是求分數」 appeared in the promotional materials by the EMB (Educational and Manpower Bureau) in 2004. This slogan agrees with the Confucian traditional educational ideal that virtue and wisdom are the core concern of learning. The official English version for this slogan is "Learning – More than scoring", but the meaning of this version deviates from the exact meaning of the Chinese version of the slogan.

The study also investigates whether their decision has strong connection with the awareness of potential risks addressed by the sub-theme question 1.

QUESTION 4

How do the tutees make their choices?

In late modernity, individuals demonstrate individual reflexivity. They have to negotiate personal risks, figure out their lifestyle and life goal, and find out measures to fulfil their personal needs on their own. With this question, the researcher tries to locate the criteria of evaluating tutors when making choices, and to explore the extent that students' decision reflects individual reflexivity. The study discusses the relationship of their choices with their self-expectation, and whether the students have strong ambition to carve out the most suitable mode of learning for themselves through enrolling in mass tutoring. The study will also investigate the influence of advertising, parents, peers and other possible external information channels on the students' decisions, and discuss whether these sources of influence are significant to the students' choices.

QUESTION 5

To what extent do the tutees trust their daytime school teachers and cram school tutors?

With this question, the researcher aims to evaluate the degree to which the students trust their daytime school teachers and cram school tutors in providing help for their academic studies. Students are asked to comment on their daytime school teachers and cram school tutors on their teaching performance and study aids provided. The phenomenon of withdrawal or change of tutors by some interviewees

is also investigated so as to further clarify the nature and level of these students' trust on mass tutoring and cram school tutors.

The connection between the focused areas of this research is illustrated in Figure 3.1 at the end of this chapter.

3.1.3 Orientation of the Study

Phenomenology, originated by German philosopher Husserl (1962), concerns how people describe things and experience them through their sense. It assumes that people can only make sense of their experience with perceptions and meanings which awaken their consciousness. Applied to social research, phenomenology aims at gaining a deep understanding of the nature or meaning of people's everyday life by digging into their subjective experience and consciousness (Van Manen 1990: 9-10). Subjective interpretation of social experience, rather than objective occurrence of social conditions or events, is the focus of phenomenological studies (Patton 2003: 106).

However, Husserl's phenomenology assumes the existence of an essence of social phenomena which is shared in people's experience. Social reality, composed by essences, is "out there" and independent of individual's consciousness. Social researchers should keep a distance from people's subjective world in order to objectively locate the essence of social world. These stances have been challenged by hermeneutics, which argues that meaning of social world depends on the cultural context within which people interpret their meaning of experience from some

perspectives, a certain standpoint, a praxis, a tradition or a situation (Patton 2003: 113-15). Individual and experience are not distinct to each other, but co-constitute each other (Heidegger 1962). In hermeneutical tradition, multiple social realities exist, and social reality can be totally unique to each individual.

By incorporating hermeneutical view on multiple realities into phenomenological concern on the interrelation between meaning of life and subjective consciousness, hermeneutical phenomenology is derived (Gadamer 1998). In methodological application, hermeneutical phenomenology combines the descriptive nature of phenomenology and the interpretative nature of hermeneutics.

Strictly speaking, hermeneutical phenomenology is not taken as the orientation of this study, but measures have been taken to facilitate the restoration a comprehensive picture of the interviewees' subjective experience as far as possible. In the interviews, students' are not only asked to describe their own experiences and confronted situations, but also asked about their judgement and interpretation on their experienced world and their responding behaviour to their situation. After the interviews, the researcher tries to further interpret their narrated experiences and thoughts, and their dialectic relationship with the existing ecology of senior secondary schooling in Hong Kong

3.1.4 Significance of the Study

Studying plays the crucial part in the daily life of most senior secondary

students (who are in their teens) in Hong Kong. Its importance is not solely reflected by its significant occupation of the students' daily life, but also by its dominant impact on their future prospect (i.e. how these students will become). By exploring the issue of senior secondary students' mass tutoring enrolment, we can have a better understanding on youngsters' lifestyle, ideology, self-equipment strategy and logic of decision, and the impact of the radical modernization on these elements. In short, the research can act as an illustration of youngsters' perception towards the contemporary world and their position in contemporary society.

Popularity of cram schools and mass tutoring is not solely found in Hong Kong. It is also a characteristic feature in other well developed regions in Asia (Fung 2003; Kwan-Terry 1991; Marimuthu et al. 1991; Ministry of Education Taiwan 1997; Monobushô 2001; Yim 1997). Therefore, the study sheds light on how radical modernization shapes the vision, ideology and life plan of Asian youth today. In particular, the research can also serve as an evaluation of the significance of late modernity theories to the fate of youngsters in contemporary Hong Kong.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Research Approach: Qualitative Inquiry

The qualitative research approach was adopted as the main strategy of this research. The main credit of qualitative research over quantitative research is its capacity to reveal the sequence in which the participants' meaning are deployed and

establish the character of a social phenomenon (Silverman 2006: 43-44). It can yield understanding on the multiple interrelationships among dimensions emerged from the data without any prior assumptions and hypotheses (Patton 2003: 56). It is particularly useful for documenting the world from the point of view of the people studied (Hammersley 1992: 165).

3.2.2 Data Collection

Individual in-depth interviewing is used as the data collection method. Interviewing allows the researcher to enter into informants' mind and perspectives in order to find out their feelings, thoughts, intentions and experiences (Patton 2002: 341). Moreover, by using individual interviews, limitations of group interviews, including restriction in number of questions, limited available response time for each individual interviewee, reluctance of speaking up from interviewees with minority perspectives, and failure to assure confidentiality (Patton 2002: 386-87) can all be avoided. In other words, individual interviewing permits a larger number of questions, permits more available response time, prevents embarrassing and offending situation from different views, and assures confidentiality so as to provide more room for interviewees to express their own views and stories in the greatest depth.

Interview guide approach (or semi-structured interviewing) is adopted for the in-depth interview. With this approach, the interviewer conducts interviews according to an interview guide, with subject areas to be explored, sample questions,

and important reminders (See Appendix II). The interviewer decides the sequence and wordings of questions in the course of interview.

This approach ensures that the same basic lines of enquiry are pursued with each person interviewed. By delimiting the issues to be explored, it ensures that interviews are focused, systematic and comprehensive. Also, it avoids omission of any subject area in the interview. On the other hand, it provides the interviewer with certain level of freedom and flexibility in wording and sequencing questions and establishing conversation with interviewees. The interviewer can make the best use of limited time available during the interviews, and can maintain the interviews to be natural, conversational and situational. (Patton 2002: 342-44, 349)

The interview questions are open-ended. Before asking questions, interviewees are reminded that all the questions are only probes, not strict guidelines. There is no standard way or fixed content to answer. Interviewees are always welcome to give any answer they believe appropriate and relevant. This is to encourage the interviewees to give answers as much informative as possible.

3.2.3 Sampling Methods

Purposeful sampling is adopted in the study. With purposeful sampling, the researcher should decide the purpose which informants are expected to serve (Bernard 2000: 176). This sampling strategy is useful for selecting information-rich cases which can yield insights and in-depth understanding on the inquired social

issue (Patton 2002: 46, 230). In this study, which focuses on Hong Kong senior secondary students who have enrolled in mass tutoring, interviewees have to fulfil the following basic criteria:

1. They have been studying Secondary 4 to Secondary 7 in a local daytime secondary school within two years before the interview.
2. They are attending, or have attended, mass tutoring classes run by cram schools for their senior secondary studies.

8 Xanga bloggings⁶ with the largest number of senior secondary students, namely (1) *I'm sitting for the HKCEE 2007*, (2) *|| * I AM SITTING FOR THE 2007 HKCEE* ||*, (3) *:: I'm sitting for the 2008 HKCEE!!! ::*, (4) *I'm sitting for the HKCEE 2008*, (5) *:: I'm sitting for the 2007 HKALE!!! ::*, (6) ****I'm sitting for the HKAL 2007***, (7) **I'm sitting for 2008 HKAL**: and (8) *>>*I'm sitting for 2008 HKALE*<<* are chosen as the target pools. The number of members of each group varies from 179 to 4,531⁷. Invitations, with brief description of the study, the researcher's profile and contact details, are sent to users with message reception function enabled or an e-mail address listed in their blog. The users are expected to receive the invitation message and reply the researcher through e-mail or phone to

⁶ Xanga is a website that hosts weblogs, photoblogs, and social networking profiles. It offers traditional social networking features, including the ability to connect with friends, to search for friends, and to fill out profile fields. Members can also create and join bloggings, which are groups of common background or interest. It now has an estimated 40 million users worldwide. As of March 29, 2007, Alexa Internet ranked Xanga as the 60th most visited site on the internet.

⁷ Number of members of each group is as in May 2007:

(1) <i>I'm sitting for the HKCEE 2007</i>	4,531
(2) <i> * I AM SITTING FOR THE 2007 HKCEE* </i>	517
(3) <i>:: I'm sitting for the 2008 HKCEE!!! ::</i>	1,511
(4) <i>I'm sitting for the HKCEE 2008</i>	949
(5) <i>:: I'm sitting for the 2007 HKALE!!! ::</i>	305
(6) <i>***I'm sitting for the HKAL 2007**</i>	1,521
(7) <i>*I'm sitting for 2008 HKAL*</i> :	865
(8) <i>>>*I'm sitting for 2008 HKALE*<<</i>	179

show their willingness to participate the interview. They are also encouraged to forward my invitation message and invite their acquaintances who meet the prescribed requirement to join my study.

The invitation process does not involve reference by daytime school teachers and cram school tutors. Although inviting interviewees through daytime school teachers and cram school tutors may save time and effort, it may sacrifice the validity of the collected data due to interviewees' sensitivity towards the relationship between the referrer and the researcher. Interviewees may suspect the interviewer's identity and refuse to give any negative but true comment on their teachers or tutors. Direct invitation for interviewees by the researcher can avert this problem.

A pure convenience sample, albeit convenient, easy, and saving time, resources and effort, can yield least credible and critical findings (Patton 2002: 242, 244). In addition, due to constrained time and resources for a master's level research, the number of cases cannot be too large, so loss in generalization power may result. To overcome these defects, maximum heterogeneity sampling strategy is used to select cases from the pool of potential informants in order to generate a small but diverse sample (Patton 2002: 235). Potential informants are further asked for information on their schooling background, including school attended, banding of school, category of school (i.e. government, aided, directly subsidized, private), schooling level (i.e. Secondary 4 to 7), subjects studied (arts, commerce, science or combination of these), academic performance in school (i.e. ranking in class/form), past public examination performance (if any), whether they have repeated in a level, tutorial classes attended, and other forms of studying aids sought (if any). Final interviewees are chosen with reference to these dimensions so that each interviewee is as different

as possible regarding their schooling background.

Maximum heterogeneity sampling has the following credits for qualitative inquiry. Firstly, quality and detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful for documenting uniqueness, are possible to be achieved (Patton 2002: 235). At the same time, important shared patterns cutting across cases are also possible to be obtained (Patton 2002: 235). As this research aims to explore the individual behaviour and thoughts of the tutees, and also aims to examine the commonality, if any, in the manifests among the tutees, heterogeneity sampling can serve both aims.

Extreme case sampling strategy (Patton 2002: 230-34) is also applied. When selecting the final interviewees, the researcher pays particular attention to special or unusual cases among the potential candidates, and includes them in the interviewee list. Examples include: high-achievers with outstanding academic performance from top-ranked schools in the territory; students who have daytime schooling in a private college which operates mass tutoring business, but enrol in tutorials run by another cram school; students who repeat a level and are going to sit the same public examination for the second time; students who receive mass tutoring for every subjects for which mass tutoring is available in the market; and students who have followed more than one cram school tutor for the same subject. By including the extreme cases, the study can highlight the peculiarity, if any, of the extreme cases, and can shed light on other less extreme cases by comparing them with these extreme cases.

With consideration on the balance between the richness of collected data and the

constraints on time and resource for a master's research, 41 candidates were chosen as final interviewees. Their level of schooling and their level of involvement in mass tutoring are illustrated in the following table⁸:

	Certificate Level (Secondary 4 and 5)	Advanced Level (Secondary 6 and 7)	Total
<u>Higher Involvement</u> Receiving mass tutoring for not less than half of subjects studied	10 (CH1 – CH10)	10 (AH1 – AH10)	20
<u>Lower Involvement</u> Receiving mass tutoring for less than half of subjects studied	10 (CL1 – CL10)	11 (AL1 – AL11)	21
Total	20	21	41

Table 3.1 Categories and Number of Interviewees

Students of the same schooling level normally face similar course requirement, and have similar learning experiences, needs and expectations. Also, the enthusiasm towards mass tutoring might be distinct between highly involved students and lowly involved ones. By grouping the interviewees in terms of their schooling levels and involvement levels in mass tutoring, certain level of homogeneity among the interviewees of the same category can be achieved. Differences in findings between categories, if any, can be identified.

⁸ For profiles of interviewees, see Appendix I.

3.2.4 Details of Execution

The interviews were conducted from June and August 2007, when the interviewees were enjoying their summer holiday. The interviews, conducted on one-to-one basis, took place at restaurants with quiet and relaxing atmosphere so as to facilitate the interviewees' comfortable feeling to share personal experiences and thoughts.

The normal duration of each interview was about 2 hours. In practice, some interviewees would like to stay longer, so some interviews were extended to 3 hours or longer.

Interviewees' privacy should be respected by social researchers (Neuman 2006: 138-40). To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, interviewees' name, identity and the audio-taped and transcribed conversations would not be disclosed to any third party. Once the research is completed, the audiotapes and transcripts would be destroyed. The interviewees were informed about the privacy-protective measures before the interview began to increase their trust on the researcher, and to lower their reluctance to provide sensitive information.

3.2.5 Reliability and Validity

Reliability refers to the consistency level with which instances are assigned to

the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions (Hammersley 1992: 67), or the degree of independence of research findings from accidental circumstances (Kirk and Miller 1986: 20). To achieve a high level of reliability, interview guide is used in interview to ensure certain level of consistency between interviews with different interviewees. During the interviews, the interviewer repeats and summarizes what the interviewee has answered for confirmation to enhance the accuracy of collected data. All the interviews are audio-taped and carefully transcribed by the researcher to ensure consistency during after-interview reference and analysis.

Validity refers to the level of truthfulness of the collected data to the social world under study. In other words, a valid qualitative study should give a fair, honest and balanced portrayal of social life experiences of people being studied (Neuman 2006: 188). As reliability is the necessary for validity (Babbie 2001: 145; Neuman 2006: 188), the aforementioned measures for ensuring reliability also enhanced validity. Besides, to capture a comprehensive picture of students' thoughts, experience, and the inter-relationships between two, the researcher requires the interviewees to explain the grounds of their views in detail, and to describe some scenarios in their experiences explicitly. Diversity in interviewees schooling background and mass tutoring enrolment patterns also promotes validity of this study.

Figure 3.1 Connections between Focused Areas in this Study

CHAPTER FOUR PERCEPTION ON CAREER PROSPECTS AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

This chapter discusses the interviewees' perception on their educational attainment and career prospects. The sections cover the interviewees' aspiration on their career goal and academic target respectively. The reasons behind their aspirations are explored. The level of security for their career and academic future is elaborated. Focus is put on how they felt about the chance to achieve their goals in mind, and their feeling about the external factors affecting their academic and career achievement.

4.1 Aspirations on Career Prospects

Career Goals

Interviewees were asked about their career goals, if any, at the moment of interview. A considerable number of interviewees (34 in total) had set specific career fields as their career goals (AH1, AH2, AH3, AH5, AH6, AH7, AH8, AH10, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL5, AL6, AL7, AL8, AL9, AL10, AL11, CH1, CH4, CH5, CH6, CH7, CH8, CH10, CL1, CL3, CL4, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL8, CL10), yet individually speaking, many of them (19 in total) did not limit their career goal to a single field. In other words, these interviewees had two or three preferred career field simultaneously (AH2, AH3, AH5, AH6, AH7, AH10, AL6, AL10, CH1, CH4, CH6, CH8, CH10, CL1, CL4, CL5, CL6, CL8, CL10).

The most aspired career fields varied broadly among these interviewees.

However, business-related jobs were the most common preference among them (AH1, AH6, AL4, AL6, CH5, CH6, CH7, CL1, CL3). Even for those who had not put business-related fields as their highest priority, many of them considered these fields as their second or third preferences (AH2, AH5, AH7, AL10, CH1, CH4, CL4, CL10).

Why did the interviewees have such career goals? Personal traits, such as personal interest, character and strength, were factors considered by a number of interviewees. 19 interviewees chose the career fields with nature matching their personal interest (AH1, AH5, AH7, AH8, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL7, AL8, AL9, AL10, CH4, CH5, CH8, CH10, CL5, CL7, CL8, CL10). For example, 6 of them targeted at nursing, social work, policy research, counselling or teaching because they were interested in serving other society members (AH8, AL1, AL7, AL9, CL7, CL10). 3 interviewees targeted at the career field which best suits their personal character (AL1, CH8, CL10). For example, AL1 found herself talkative and willing to listen, so she wanted to be a counsellor in the future. 2 interviewees considered their personal strength when planning their career goal (AH6, CL5). For example, AH6 wanted to enter marketing field because he had admirable performance in a summer sales job, while CL5 wanted to be a designer because she was good at visual arts and design and had won a territory-wide designing competition for secondary students.

Nevertheless, interviewees also considered realistic factors when thinking about their career goals. Some realistic factors were related to the nature of the career field, including satisfactory income (AH1, AH3, AH7, AL3, AL1, AL8, AL11, CH1, CH5, CH6, CH9, CL1, CL3, CL5, CL7), stability of the job (CL1, CL3), and room for further development in the field (CH9). In their eyes, these factors were

crucial to ensuring the quality of life of themselves and their family members. Another realistic factor was the context of social development (AL4, CH5, CH6, CL10). 2 students (AL4 and CH5) pointed out that business and financial activities are dominant in Hong Kong's economy, so they regarded careers in business and financial sectors had better prospects, while another student CH6 preferred an accounting or other business-related career because of the large demand in Hong Kong.

When the career fields matching their personal traits did not satisfy the above realistic criteria, they weighed the realistic criteria more than personal traits, and preferred the career fields which satisfy these criteria (AH1, AH7, AL1, AL8, CH5, CL5, CL7). For example, CL5 was interested in and good at designing, but a designing career was not her first priority because of the instability of this career. Thus, she also targeted at entering the discipline forces, like the customs, which offer a stable and satisfactory salary.

There were also interviewees (7 in total) who did not have a clear career goal (AH4, AH9, CH2, CH3, CH9, CL2, CL9). They did not have any preferences on specific careers fields, for example, CH9 wanted to be "a professional in any field". In their view, it was not meaningful and unrealistic to think about their own career path at such an early stage. There were still some years away from entering the labour market, and a lot of uncertainties might exist in these years. They believed that academic qualification and the major discipline in university had dominant impact on their career choice, but whether they would have opportunities to study further, and which discipline they would study in the university, were still unknown at that moment. Thus, they did not have concrete ideas on their career goal, and

preferred to think about that later. Despite this, they were aware that good academic achievement ensures more career choices and heightens their competitiveness in the labour market, so focusing on studies was their way to prepare for their career future.

Although there were interviewees not targeting at specific career fields, most of them still had specific conditions for their ideal future career, including: job stability (AH4); satisfactory salary (AH4, CL2); securing a fairly good quality of living (CH2, CH3); opportunities available for further development in the career field (CH9); and higher social status (CH2). These considerations were similar to those by the interviewees with specific career targets.

Impacts of Family on Career Goals

Did family members, especially the parents, have impact on their career aspirations? Most interviewees did not encounter any pressure from their family members. For 9 interviewees, their parents allow them to choose their career goal based on their own will (AH8, AH9, AL4, AL6, AL11, CH1, CH9, CL3, CL7). Every career satisfying their children was alright to the parents. For the rest of these interviewees, their parents or other family members had soft advice to their career choice (AH1, AH2, AH3, AH4, AH5, AH6, AH7, AH10, AL2, AL3, AL5, AL7, AL8, AL9, CH2, CH3, CH4, CH5, CH6, CH7, CH8, CH10, CL1, CL4, CL5, CL6, CL8, CL9). These parents just told these children about their wish on the condition (such as not physically demanding, offering a salary sufficient for economic independence) or the specific field (such as business, legal and medical) of their children's future career. However, these were not strong advice. Their parents would still allow their

children to set their own career goal and respect their choices. For example, AH1's parents wished him to become a doctor or a lawyer, yet his parents did not feel discontented about his own career choice of financial career. Similarly, AL7's parents, who preferred their child to target at business-related careers, did not complain about his career goal of community service and policy research.

On the other hand, 4 interviewees' parents had strong advice on their career goals (AL1, AL10, CL2, CL10). 3 interviewees' parents' strong advice was based on their understanding or impression on the corresponding career field (AL1, AL10, CL10). For example, CL10's parents strongly discouraged her from choosing child care as her career goal, because they thought that child care is a painstaking job with little reward. Similarly, AL1's mother discouraged her from development in the field of Psychology because she thought the field is too narrow. Despite their parents' discouragement, they still insisted in their original career plan, because they thought that they were interested in and pretty familiar with their targeted career fields. In other words, their career goals were not much affected by their parents.

For CL2, impact on her career goal from her family came from the realistic situation of her family. She preferred a job with good salary because of her family's financial need:

“My father and mother divorced. Now I am living with my mother and my elder sister. My father has not paid us alimony for a long time, so we have to afford our living expense on our own. My mum and my sister are working to earn money for my family. My elder sister, who is just a Form 5 graduate, does not earn much. My mother has to work for long hours every day to get a monthly salary of about \$10,000. With limited income, my family is facing a heavy financial burden, including the loan for the

flat we are living. Therefore, my mum puts all of her expectation on me and strongly wishes me to enter university and get a job with good salary afterwards in order to alleviate the financial burden of my family.” (CL2)

Confidence in Reaching Career Goals

In the previous paragraphs, interviewees’ career aspirations have been discussed. What did they think about the chances of reaching their aspired career targets? Except 6 interviewees (AH6, AH7, AL3, AL8, AL11, CH7) who did not think that reaching their career targets was difficult, and 1 interviewee (CH6) who never seriously thought of his chance to reach his career target, the rest of the interviewees felt unsure about the chances of reaching their career goal. Many of them even clearly described their career future as “uncertain” (CH2, CH3, CH5, CH4, CL1, CL3, CL5), “unimaginable” (AH1, AL2, CH9, CL2) or “too far to foresee” (AH4, CL7). A number of interviewees even took incremental steps (i.e. only thinking about the direction to go along for the single section ahead) along their academic and career path as a measure to encounter the uncertain future (AH1, AL6, CL2, CL5, CL7).

One of the factors mentioned by the interviewees is the possible change of socioeconomic environment (AL10, CH9, CL2, CL3). As CL2 said, “the availability of jobs of a certain field always varies with the social and economic environment. Currently there are a lot of financial jobs available in Hong Kong, but whether this situation last longer is still unknown.” Under the ever-changing socioeconomic context, some interviewees still felt uncertain about which specific field they should target at, albeit confident in their personal ability (CL3). Their career goals might be changed with the socioeconomic context and the actual human resources demand in

various career fields (CH9). Thus, the interviewees dared not fix their career goal to a specific field, or believed that thinking about career future at such an early stage was impractical.

In addition to the fluctuated socioeconomic context, the interviewees thought that the aggravated competition on academic qualification adds more uncertainty to their future career path (AH5, AH8, AH10, AL2, AL7, AL9, CH1, CH2, CH3, CH5, CH8, CL1, CL6, CL8, CL9). As the interviewees observed, today's Hong Kong economy is a knowledge-based one demanding a highly-educated labour force. At the same time, there are plenty of university graduates entering the labour market every year. Moreover, many bachelor's degree holders even further their studies to strive for higher degrees in order to strengthen their competitiveness in the labour market. In such a context, the interviewees thought that a bachelor degree is a basic qualification to secure a job. Some interviewees were even worried that the aggravated trend threatens the career opportunities of the graduates from universities with lower ranking, since graduates from lower class universities do not have advantage over those graduates from first-tier universities in competing for jobs, especially when the vacancies are limitedly available. Therefore, to these interviewees, higher academic qualification, especially those awarded by first-tier universities, is an element which can provide a certain amount of security and overcome, or lower, the uncertainty in job competitions.

High academic qualification, in the interviewees' views, can help one deal with the uncertainties in their future careers. Nevertheless, before earning a high qualification, senior secondary students still need to stride over the hurdles to acquire further studies opportunities. Interviewees pointed out that their unsecure

feeling was arisen from the uncertainty in getting a place for further studies (i.e. sixth form for Secondary 4 and 5 students; tertiary education, particularly bachelor's studies, for sixth form students), since what grades they would get, and whether their results would be adequate for getting a place, were still unknown. Thus, their uncertainties in academic achievement partly contributed to their uncertainties in career prospects. The uncertainties in academic achievement will be further elaborated in the next section.

As mentioned earlier, 6 interviewees did not think that reaching their career goals was difficult. Their grounds for such thought include their confidence in being admitted to a university programme related to their aspired field (AL3, AL8), confidence in their own working ability which had been demonstrated in past summer job experience (AH6), and their belief that one can still move upward from the bottom with pure diligence and practical working experiences (AH7, AL11, CH7). However, from the cases of AL3 and AL8, we can see that a bachelor's degree was the source of their confidence in their own career future. AL3 even further added, "There are too many university graduates nowadays. Form 7 graduates do not have many career choices." For the other four interviewees, they commonly agreed that high academic qualification is a requisite to ensure further career development, especially promotion in the career ladder.

4.2 Aspirations on Academic Attainment

Interviewees were also asked to state their target for their academic studies at the moment of interview. The interviewer did not specify the meaning of "target for academic studies", and just let the interviewees answer what they thought most

appropriate. All interviewees' targets were about achievements in public examinations, or opportunities of further studies. In the following, the aspirations of sixth formers are described first, followed by the aspirations of Secondary 4 and 5 students.

Academic Targets for Sixth Formers

For the sixth formers, most interviewees stated a satisfactory result in the HKALE was their target for their academic studies. The specific details of a "satisfactory result" varied among different students. Some interviewees regarded meeting the minimum grades for securing a university offer as satisfactory (AH5, AL6, AL9), but most others had specific expectations for certain subjects (AL1, AL2, AL3, AL7, AL8, AL10), or hope for a result with which they could be admitted to their aspired university programmes (AH2, AH6, AH9, AL1, AL3, AL4).

A number of sixth formers regarded getting admitted to an undergraduate programme as their academic target. Some interviewees did not have very strong preferences for a specific discipline or institution (AH5, AH7, AL11), yet more interviewees had strong preferences for specific disciplines (AH1, AH2, AH6, AH8, AH9, AH10, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL5, AL6, AL7, AL9) or institutions (AH1, AH2, AH3, AH4, AH6, AH9, AH10, AL4, AL6). For those who had preferences on disciplines, their preferences varied broadly, from arts, business, social sciences, engineering, to medical subjects. However, for those who had strong preferences on institutions, their preferences riveted on the first-tier universities in the territory, i.e. HKU, CUHK and HKUST (AH1, AH3, AH4, AH9, AL4).

Among the interviewees, higher diploma programmes and associate degree programmes, which are run by IVE, community colleges or universities, were never their academic targets. 2 of them were even strongly reluctant to enrol in these programmes (AH5, AL2). For example, AH5, a Secondary 7 repeater, had given up an offer from an associate degree programme and preferred to sit the HKALE again.

Academic Targets for Secondary 4 and 5 Students

For the Secondary 4 and 5 students interviewed, their academic targets resembled those of the sixth formers. Results in the HKCEE were the biggest concern of most Secondary 4 and 5 students. Some of them hoped for 14 points, a bare requirement for eligibility for admission in the first stage of the Secondary 6 admission procedure⁹ (CL6, CL7, CL8, CL9), while some others set better general results beyond the basic requirement (CH1, CH3, CH4, CH5, CH7, CH8, CH9, CH10, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, CL5), or better grades in specific subjects in addition to the basic requirement in the HKCEE (CH6) as their academic target. For the latter two types of interviewees, some of their targets were usually the actual required grades for admission to Secondary 6 places of their home school, but there were still a number of interviewees targeted at an examination result higher than the actual requirement for securing a home school Secondary 6 place, or basic requirement for admission to bachelor programmes or other tertiary education programmes aspired for.

There were interviewees who targeted at further studies opportunities. Majority of these interviewees had target at examination grades as well. Most of them set

⁹ For details of Secondary 6 admission procedure, please refer to Appendix VI.

Secondary 6 places as their target (CH2, CH6, CH7, CH8, CH9, CH10, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL6, CL7, CL8, CL9), including those who specifically preferred a Secondary 6 place in their home schools (CH2, CH8, CH9, CL1, CL3). In addition, there were students who set admission to university as their long term target (CH1, CH2, CH3, CH4, CH6, CH7, CH8, CH9, CH10, CL1, CL3, CL8, CL9). Most of those targeted at university places did not have specific preference on disciplines. Like the sixth form interviewees, some students had preference on first-tier universities (CH1, CH2, CH3, CL3). In particular, 2 academically outstanding interviewees (CH1, CH4) even targeted at admitted to university through EAS, in which only students with 30 points and level 4 or above in Chinese and English Languages are eligible to apply for admission to bachelor degree programmes offered by the three first-tier local universities without sitting the HKALE after completion of Secondary 6.

2 interviewees (CL5, CL10) also targeted at diploma programmes run by IVE as their academic targets. Diploma programmes in early childhood education were the favourite programmes of CL10, while diploma programmes in visual arts and design were among the preferences of CL5. Nevertheless, these two interviewees had clearer career goals (i.e. a kindergarten teacher and a designer) than other Secondary 4 and 5 interviewees, who did not consider these alternative paths for further studies. For the latter, sixth form was their highest priority.

Further Study Opportunities as Academic Target: Reasons

In the above paragraphs, we have seen that good public examination results, opportunities to study Form 6 and admission to bachelor programmes were the academic targets shared by majority of interviewees. Alternative options for further

studies, such as vocational training, associate degree programmes and overseas studies, were not welcome by most interviewees. In the following paragraphs, we will look into the reasons behind their academic targets.

For those targeting at admission to university degree programmes, most of them considered a university degree as a stepping stone to a good career future (AH1, AH2, AH3, AH4, AH5, AH6, AH7, AH8, AH9, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL5, AL6, AL9, AL11, AL4, AL6, CH1, CH2, CH3, CH4, CH6, CH7, CH8, CH9, CH10, CL1, CL3, CL8, CL9). They were aware that in the knowledge-based economy of Hong Kong, most employers value high academic and professional qualifications, including university degrees. For most professional fields, a university degree is a requisite to enter these fields. In this context, interviewees believed that a university degree can offer them better competitive advantage in the labour market, broader career choices, job offers with better remuneration, and better career development opportunities (such as promotion). However, 2 students had other reasons for their aspiration for university studies (AH10, AL7). For example, AL7 aspired for university studies because he thought that university studies have intrinsic value for all-round personal development. University, he stressed, is not a place for career training.

As previously described, many Secondary 4 and 5 interviewees targeted for promotion to Secondary 6. To them, the sixth form is an access to university studies. Similarly, many sixth formers aspired for university studies as their next step. In fact, there were alternative local further study paths available apart from Secondary 6 or university bachelor's programme, such as diploma programmes, higher diploma programmes and associate degree programmes, which are either run by IVE,

community colleges or affiliated units of universities. Completion of these programmes satisfies the basic entry requirement of various bachelor's programmes, including those offered by local universities, yet these programmes were not welcome by most interviewees. Here are the reasons accounting for this. Firstly, they thought that these programmes were less promising paths for further studies and career development (AH2, AH8, AL8, AL9, AL11, CH5, CH6, CH7, CH8, CH9, CH10, CL2, CL3, CL6, CL7, CL9). As far as they knew, the chance of admitted to local bachelor's programmes was lower for higher diploma or associate degree graduates than Form 7 graduates with qualified HKALE results. As these programmes had been recently introduced and were still far from maturely established, they thought that the recognition of these qualifications in the labour market and academia was questionable. Secondly, they thought that these qualifications were not widely accepted by society (AH3, AH5, AH6, AH9, AL1, AL8, AL9, CH4, CH5, CH7, CH10, CL1, CL6, CL7, CL9). To their understanding, society regarded these qualifications as inferior labels, even worse than the sixth form. Few students even honestly admitted that their self-image would become negative if they were students of diploma or associate degree programmes (AL1, AL5). Thirdly, few students pointed out that these programmes were self-funded by students, the tuition fee was far higher than that of the sixth form, so these more costly alternative programmes were not their ideal paths (AH5, AH8, AL2, CL2, CL6, CL7), .

Satisfactory Public Examination Results as Academic Target: Reasons

Besides further study opportunities, satisfactory public examination results were also aimed at by many interviewees. In fact, when these interviewees

elaborated their reasons for targeting at satisfactory public examination results, most of them gave reasons related to further studies opportunities (AH1, AH2, AH3, AH4, AH6, AH9, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL5, AL6, AL11, CH1, CH2, CH4, CH5, CH9, CH10, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL5, CL7, CL8, CL10) and future career (AH2, AH6, AH8, AH9, AL2, AL5, AL7, AL9, CH4, CH9, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL8, CL10). A student even pointed out that public examination results are regarded as the uniform and objective standard of assessing the academic quality of an individual person by most members in the territory, which cannot be replaced by other assessments or courses (CL10). The students were aware of the wide recognition of the public examination results, and believed that educational bodies and employers weigh heavily on one's public examination results during the admission or employment procedures. For the former, there are always explicit requirements on applicant's public examination results for admission to Secondary 6, bachelor's programme and other further educational programmes. For the latter, interviewees believed that public examination results give a significant first impression of job applicants on the employers. They believed that public examination results are more crucial than actual ability for competing for jobs, especially for youngsters without considerable working experiences. Some interviewees even believed that employers consider an applicant's public examination results as a reflection of his/her diligence, talent, attitude and other general traits during the selection process (AL2, CL5). So, these students strived for satisfactory public examination results in order to secure further study opportunities and a good career future. To these interviewees, the public examination results of an individual have significant impact on his/her whole life (AL2, AL3, AL5, CH10, CL5).

19 interviewees (AH1, AH2, AH3, AH4, AH8, AH9, AL1, AL2, AL8, CH1, CH3, CH4, CH5, CH7, CH9, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL5) targeted at public examination grades which are higher than the minimum requirement for admission to further studies. In particular, setting high examination targets were more common among the high involvement groups (6 out of 10 high involvement sixth formers, 6 out of 10 high involvement Secondary 4 and 5 interviewees). Most of these interviewees were competent students with good academic performance. Failure in meeting the minimum requirement for further studies was unlikely. If so, why did they still strive for higher public examination results? The following paragraphs elaborate the reasons for their higher targets.

These interviewees thought that better public examination grades can offer better chance of getting an offer from the aspired or quality further study programmes, since the admission procedure weigh heavily on applicants' results in public examinations. Generally speaking, those with higher examination grades are given higher priority of admission. For those who aspired for specific university programmes, their aspired programmes (such as medical studies and programmes run by first-tier universities) are highly competitive. In previous years, the actual admission grades for these programmes were far higher than the minimum required grades. For them, the only way to increase the chance to get admitted was to strive for high public examination grades. For those who did not have specific targeted disciplines, they believed that higher examination grades could offer them more programme choices, and could guarantee them to be eligible to enter quality bachelor's programmes, which normally require outstanding public examination results.

For the academically outstanding students, excellent public examination result is a capital for competing for exceptional opportunities or prestigious honours. Two academically competent interviewees, CH1 and CH4, targeted at eligibility of EAS, which allowed students with 6 distinctions (including credits in language subjects) in the HKCEE to enter bachelor's programmes run by local first-tier universities without sitting the HKALE. In addition, CH1 and CH3 also pointed out that excellent public examination results are the basic requirement for competing for highly competitive scholarships. Without excellent public examination results, achieving the above two targets becomes impossible.

For the Secondary 4 and 5 interviewees who targeted at high public examination grades, a bare fulfilment of the eligibility of application for the sixth form places did not guarantee them a place in their home schools, which were normally territory-wide or district-wide top ranked schools. They preferred continuing their studies in their home school because they did not want to study in schools with lower standard than their home schools. Thus, they expected results higher than the bare requirement in order to enhance the chance of getting a home school Secondary 6 place.

Besides significance in further study opportunities, higher grades have significance in other aspects. For future career, AL8 targeted at grade B or above in UE because good results in language can be served as a proof of language proficiency to potential employers. For self-satisfaction, 4 students believed that they should try their best to exhaust all available means to achieve the highest possible result for self-satisfaction and a sense of pride (AH8, CH1, CH3, CH5)

Impacts of Family on Academic Targets

On parents' impact on the interviewees' academic targets, 3 students (AL4, AL6, CH1) did not feel any pressures from their parents. Their parents did not have specific requirement for their public examination results and highest academic qualification, and let their children progress naturally. In particular, AL6's family members were not highly educated, and thought that completion of the sixth form was already desirable.

Nevertheless, for the rest of the interviewees, they encountered requirements of various extents, from softer to harder, on their academic achievement from parents. Most parents' requirements were on their children's academic qualification. Graduation with a bachelor's degree was the commonest requirement by these parents. Meanwhile, there were sporadic cases among the interviewees that their parents' had higher requirements. On future studies, CH2's parents strongly wish her to enter the first-tier local universities, while two interviewees' parents (AH5, CH10) disfavoured their children to study diploma programmes, associate degree programmes or other alternative tertiary educational programmes instead of a bachelor's programme offered by the local universities. On academic performance, CH3's father had continuously kept a close watch on his son's grades in tests and examinations, and had occasionally punished him because of worsening performance.

Apart from the above cases, few interviewees (AH6, CH10) had experiences that their parents always compared their academic achievement with those achieved by their kith and kin of similar age. Among these cases, AH6's experience was a

typical case:

“My family members, including my father, mother and I, occasionally have big dinners with my grandparents and my uncle’s family, including uncle, auntie and my cousins, during main festivals like the Chinese New Year. The academic performance and achievement of me and my cousins are always a hot issue for discussion. My uncle is always very proud of the academic achievements of his two sons, of whom his elder son got brilliant results in public examinations, completed his doctoral studies in his twenties, and has been appointed a teaching post at a leading university overseas, while his younger son has also completed his master’s studies at HKU recently. In contrast, I only got 15 points, a fair result with which I failed to get a home school sixth form place, in the HKCEE. My uncle always reiterates how well his sons did for their academic studies, and criticizes me, with scorn and arrogance, for my failure to perform as well as they do. Once, my uncle’s swank even provoked a dispute between my father and my uncle, because my father felt offended with my uncle’s words. Finally my grandpa reconciled their conflict. Although my father never scolds me for my unsatisfactory performance in the HKCEE, I feel a little ashamed, and become aware of the need to push myself harsher for my studies.” (AH6)

Although parents had expectations or even requirements on the interviewees’ academic studies, according to the responses from interviewees, parents’ impacts on their academic goals were minimal. They believed that, without pressure from their parents, they would still aim at their original goals, such as satisfactory public examination results and admission to bachelor’s programmes of local universities.

Confidence in Reaching Academic Targets

As discussed in the previous paragraphs, interviewees had set certain goals on their public examination results and academic achievements. However, only a few of

them had absolute confidence in reaching these goals. For the others, they thought that uncertainties might exist, the final outcome was hard to be determined, so they did not have absolute confidence in reaching the targets, including those who were competent in their schoolwork. The following paragraphs investigate the sources of uncertainties in the eyes of these interviewees.

Several students pointed out that the question format, level of difficulty, topics covered varies year from year, while the grading are based on a “norm-referenced” system for most subjects, it is very hard to estimate how many marks are needed to achieve a certain target grade. In other words, striving for a target grade is like climbing towards an invisible ceiling. Ironically, what were crucial to further prospects were the grades, not the actual marks or the actual capability of a student. Thus, some interviewees deemed that examination results depend on certain luck and diligence is not sufficient for good results (AH1, AH6, AH8, AH10, CH1).

In addition, school performance did not have direct relevance to the public examination performance. The format, the level of difficulty and the assessment criteria of internal examination might not consistent with those of public examination. Also, there were a lot of competitors from other daytime schools, especially those from the top-ranked schools, not only stronger academically, but might also be privileged by better training in school and exposure to additional information about how to excel in the public examinations. Due to these reasons, it was not easy to understand how well a student would do in public examinations from his performance in school (AH6).

Public examination result was also a source of uncertainty for the achievement

of an academic goal. For those who had specific preference for their field of university study, public examination result was a dominant factor which affects the chance of entering the bachelor's programme in the preferred field. Similarly, for the Secondary 5 students, public examination result was a determining factor for their chance of promotion to the sixth form. The actual minimum admission grades depend on the public examination grades of the competitors, and they may vary from year from year, so it is difficult to estimate the chance for getting a good offer for further studies (AH9, CH2).

4.3 Discussion

According to the late modernity thesis, life choices and opportunities become open for individuals in a post-industrial society. The responses from the students on their career aspiration revealed that students had incorporated this view. Family's socioeconomic background was not what they took into account when planning their career path. Instead, they considered their personal interest, aptitude and strength when choosing their aspired career. Although many of them did not have high confidence in reaching the career target, they still endeavoured for their own dream, as they believed that every individual is granted an open window to approach one's aspired career goal with one's own effort. This reflected students' belief that career opportunities were open to every youngster today with appropriate quality and ability, and were not determined or blocked due to their families' socioeconomic background. In Beck's terminology, career paths, in the students' eyes, had been "individualized" among youngsters in Hong Kong today.

Despite the openness of career opportunities to the youngsters, individuals are

not completely empowered to make their own career plan. From the replies of the students on their career aspirations, students realized the need to negotiate with the contextual factors, including social and economic environment, and familial factors, including families' financial situation and parents' expectation. Thus, compared to these factors, personal interest, aptitude and strength become the less decisive factors when formulating a career plan. Their career paths were still subjected to constraints imposed by the social context and their families.

Besides openness, uncertainty is another characteristic feature of post-industrial society. This is the main source of unconfidence in reaching their career goals. Sources of uncertainty are rooted in the modern institutions. Students noticed that modern institutions and ideology have dominant effect to their academic and career paths. As mentioned by the students, economic development in and out of the territory, which is ever-changing in a rapid pace, influences the availability of career choices of the youngsters. Together with the sharpening competition between individuals in the capitalist society, the popularized access to higher education, and the credential inflation in the knowledge based economy, credentials, experiences and other personal qualities, which were sufficient for securing a job in the past, does not necessarily secure a job for the youngsters in the future

Students' sense of uncertainty for their career future can also be shown by the fact that a number of students did not have a very firm career target. Usually they simultaneously had two or three possible targets. Some even thought that it was too early for them to plan their career path at that moment. In particular, some students even expressed their thoughts that the career environment is ever-changing and its future is uncertain. These demonstrated that, in the students' minds, they only

grasped very little about their own career future.

In fact, whatever having a specific career target or not, students viewed that getting a satisfactory job after graduation is vital to their life. As previously discussed, they had common expectations for their future career, including stable income; satisfactory salary; securing a fairly good quality of living; less physically demanding; opportunities available for further development in the career field; and higher social status. Here, potential threats to the future career and living were “risks” faced by the students. They had to take actions for the pursuit of “ontological security”, which means a sense of continuity and order in their life trajectory, including their transition from studies to career.

A modern society has “future-oriented” character. As a modern institution, the education system running at the present has aligned with the screening and recruitment of young employees in the future. Under this institution, individual youngsters also incorporate an “future-oriented” mentality, by which present acts involves consideration of potential risks entailed in future possibilities. They have to deal with the risk in their latter life through their monitoring of academic performance and their choice of career path when they are still attending secondary school, or even earlier. Regardless of the variety of career and academic “goals” among the interviewees, their common central concern was the future life quality of themselves and their family members. Good examination results, university degrees, and good jobs were not the ultimate ends, but only means to achieve further goals. In other words, what they were doing in each stage is not merely for accomplishment of the current task, or satisfaction of their current interests, but also for equipment for the future.

Good public examination results and high academic qualification were students' academic goals. They, as understood by the students, have been widely recognized by society, including the employers, educational bodies and ordinary society members, as legitimate and trustworthy measures of individuals' ability. In Giddens' terminology, public examination and universities' assessment scheme are modern "expert systems" for evaluating students' academic achievement and ability, with public examination grades and academic qualifications as "symbolic tokens". Without good examination grades and academic credentials, competing for good offers for further studies or jobs will become more difficult. Examination grades and academic qualifications become an "identity" representing a student's competence and potentials.

For senior secondary students, to strive for good grades in public examination was to achieve "ontological security" for surviving in the competition in job market and in the pool of further studies applicants. In other words, good public examination result is a basis to help these youngsters better deal with the risks and uncertainties in the competitive environment. This is why some students saw public examination results not less important than university degrees, since almost every youngster in the territory has to sit this common examination, and the results are always linked to the further studies and career opportunities. This also explains why some students focused in subjects with higher values for maximizing opportunities of achieving aspired career or further academic goals, such as languages and science.

Although there are alternative study paths available, youngsters did not trust

their value in preparing them for a good future path, even these alternatives are praised and recommended by government officials, mass media and advertisements, or even some interviewees have acquaintances with a good career after following these alternative paths. When there are many different kinds of qualifications, while the comparability of these alternative qualifications to the basic legitimate system has not been widely established, these qualifications are less likely to be trusted by the higher institutions and potential employers. These alternative qualifications, like bad stocks or debts, may result in more uncertainty in selection of candidates. This shows, even stepping into a career environment with open possibilities, individuals still prefer standard qualifications with track record of credibility, and avoid risking alternative study paths for other qualifications with questionable credibility

To conclude, students viewed that career opportunities are open to every youngster with suitable personal qualities, irrespective of one's families' socioeconomic background. However, they were aware of uncertainties along their future prospects on higher education and career development, so they did not have very firm long-term goal. With the future-oriented mentality, they realized the need to strive for their own long-term prospect. In this situation, they had to set their short-term goals, and endeavoured to achieve them, so as to maximize their future opportunities and to minimize the potential risks to their future development. When good public examination results and university degrees, to their understanding, gain wider recognition than other alternative qualifications, they preferred to set them as target.

CHAPTER FIVE VALUES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLING

This chapter discusses the values of learning subscribed by the students. At the beginning, purposes of learning in the students' eyes will be investigated. Their opinions on the following areas are explored in the subsequent sections: importance of subject knowledge and public examination results; proper studying methods which should be adopted by senior secondary students in Hong Kong; qualities which should be possessed by a good teacher; whether students should have the rights to choose their daytime school teachers; whether cram school is a possible alternative to daytime school.

5.1 Purposes of Learning

The majority of respondents considered achieving good future prospects to be the main objective of their learning. Among these students, some regarded learning as only for achieving good grades in public examinations (AH3, AH4, AL1, CH4, CH6, CH9, CH10, AL3, CL5), some regarded learning as a means for further study opportunities (AH2, AH8, AH10, AL3, AL9, CH8, CL2), while some regarded learning as a means to prepare a bright career future (AH2, AH3, AH5, AH6, AH7, AH9, AL8, AL9, AL10, AL11, CH2, CH3, CH5, CH7, CH10, CL1, CL3, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL8, CL9, CL10). Although these students might mention either of the above elements, if not all, in their answers, when elaborating their answers, they always related “good grades in public examination”, “further studying opportunities” and “career future” together. In other words, they believed that these three objectives are

nearly inseparable and can be considered as the same thing:

“I don’t regard public examination results as my ultimate objective of learning. To me, public examination is only a means, not the end. The real ultimate objective of learning is to get further study opportunities, especially a good university offer, and to prepare for a good career future.” (CH8)

“Learning for me is for a good future career. I buy the saying “knowledge can change one’s fate”, because knowledge acquired in the learning process can help me to get a high academic qualification. In a knowledge based economy like Hong Kong, high academic qualification is essential for getting a good job offer.” (CL8)

When asked whether preparing for a good career future is the sole purpose of learning, there were students agreeing completely (AH1, AH4, AH5, AH6, CH9, CL9), agreeing to a large extent (AH7, AL11, CH2), or agreeing if “learning” refers to receiving secondary education (AL1, AL9, CH7).

Nevertheless, there were also a comparable number of respondents disagreeing. Apart from “public examinations”, “further study opportunities” and “future career”, a number of students had mentioned other aims of learning. Some were related to self-enhancement, including broadening knowledge horizons (AL5, CH8, CL1, CL2, CL8), acquiring cultural knowledge (AL2), developing good personal character (CL3), developing interpersonal and leadership skills (CH8, CL5, CL7, CL8), cultivating moral values (AL2), deepening understanding on personal strengths and weaknesses (AH10), etc. Some were related to self-satisfaction, including fulfilling personal curiosity to certain knowledge aspects (AH3, CH1, CL6), and attaining psychological satisfaction of achievement (AH9, AL5, CL4). Two respondents even

considered fulfilling parents' expectation as a purpose of learning.

However, except for few interviewees, these "other purposes" were not of the highest rank when compared to "public examinations", "further study opportunities" and "future career". For them, although self-enhancement was one of the elements looked for in their learning process, it was never the ultimate end. Rather, it was just an alternative means to equip them for their future career development, as practical knowledge, leadership and interpersonal networks were also important qualities for future career.

5.2 Public Examination Results versus Real Subject Knowledge

When asked to compare the importance between public examination results and real subject knowledge, nearly two-third of the interviewees felt that the former had a higher importance than the latter (AH3, AH4, AH5, AH6, AH7, AH8, AH10, AL2, AL3, AL6, AL8, AL9, AL10, AL11, CH2, CH4, CH5, CH6, CH7, CH8, CH9, CL1, CL6, CL7). This group of students did not completely deny the importance of real subject knowledge, but considering the realistic social context, they thought that mere subject knowledge cannot guarantee a person with good opportunities for further studies or good job offers, because what are actually recognized are the grades attained in the public examination by a candidate, not how much he has actually learnt in the process. As public examination results are the legitimate criteria for preliminary assessment on a candidate's quality, without good public examination grades, a candidate, even equally knowledgeable as the cream in the public examination, is still disadvantaged when competing for admission to a good academic programme or a good job offer.

Meanwhile, a quarter of all interviewees thought that the importance of public examination results and that of real subject knowledge are hard to be compared, because they are more or less equally important (AH1, AH2, AH9, AL1, CH1, CH5, CL2, CL3, CL9, CL10). Although they shared the same stance, the bases of their stance were different, and could be divided into two different groups. A group of students (AH9, CH5, CL2, CL3, CL9, CL10) admitted that public examination results are a significant tool to compete for further study opportunities and job offers, but they also recognized that real subject knowledge has higher practical significance: what a person apply to deal with his job and daily life problems is the real subject knowledge and the experience acquired in the learning process, not the public examination results. Since they have different significance, their importance cannot be directly compared. Another group of students (AH1, AH2, AL1) believed that mastery of real subject knowledge is the prerequisite of getting good public examination results, and a high scorer in public examination must have good understanding on real subject knowledge. In other words, they believed that public examination is an accurate account of a persons' achievement of real subject knowledge. To them, mastery of "real subject knowledge" and attainment of "good examination results" are inseparable, and thus incomparable.

In fact, there were also a few students who regarded real subject knowledge as more important than public examination results (AL4, AL5, AL7, CH3, CL4, CL5, CL8). Their view was based on their higher concern on long-term importance. Similar to those who believed real subject knowledge has more or less the same importance as public examination results, they were aware of the lifelong applicability to daily life of real subject knowledge, such as language. They believed

that after a person has passed the stage of schooling, real subject knowledge, not public examination results, determines how good he lives. Still, they did not deny the short-term significance of public examination results on future prospects of further studies and future career.

“Learning is not for scoring”¹⁰ is a Chinese slogan promoted by the Education and Manpower Bureau (the predecessor of the Education Bureau) to publicize the value that scores are not everything of learning outcomes, and to discourage the overemphasis on examination scores among students, parents and other society members in Hong Kong. Despite the widespread promotion of this slogan, not many interviewees subscribed to this value. Most interviewees, including some of those who weighted real subject knowledge as more important than public examination results, regarded the value behind the slogan as unrealistic to the situation confronting Hong Kong senior secondary students.

27 interviewees did not agree on “learning in not for scoring” in the context of Hong Kong, particularly for the senior secondary students facing public examinations (AH2, AH3, AH5, AH6, AH7, AH8, AH10, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL9, AL10, CH2, CH3, CH4, CH6, CH7, CH8, CH10, CL1, CL3, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL8, CL9, CL10). Even some of them regarded real subject knowledge as more important, they still believed that they are necessary to pay serious attention on public examinations.

Most employers weight heavily on applicants’ academic qualifications and

¹⁰ The official English version for this slogan is “Learning – More than scoring”, but the meaning of this version deviates from the exact meaning of the Chinese version of the slogan. “Learning is not for scoring” is the literal translation of the Chinese slogan.

public examination results during selection of employees. An interviewee (CL1) even pointed out that this situation is not only confined to the private employers, but also the Government, which has set 5 passes in the HKCEE as the minimum academic requirement for applying for civil servant vacancies. In addition, a person can get a recognized, competitive academic qualification only if his score in public examinations is considerably high, which is the necessary condition for admission to competitive further study programmes to let him receive higher academic qualifications. In particular, clear requirement on public examination grades has been set for admission to local academic and technical training programmes at various levels. For example, the minimum requirement for the sixth form admission is 6 passes (including languages) or 8 points in 5 different subjects (including languages) in the HKCEE. In the JUPAS system, admission offers are only given to applicants who get the minimum number of passes in the HKCEE and the HKALE, and fulfil the minimum grade in language subjects. Priority of admission is largely based on applicants' grades attained in public examinations.

Since a selection mechanism based on public examination results has been widely adopted and depended on by our society, students believed that they should follow this game in order to secure an advantageous position for competing for better opportunities in further education and job market, or they would lead to a harder future otherwise.

In fact, there were a quarter of all students in my sample (AH1, AH8, AL5, AL6, AL7, CH1, CH5, CH9, CL2, CL4) agreed that "learning is not for scoring", because they thought that scoring, particularly striving for good grades in public examinations, is not the real meaning of learning. For them, learning should be

purely the pursuit for knowledge to satisfy one's curiosity and promote one's healthy life. Nevertheless, all of them still admitted that public examination cannot be completely ignored. They even added that "learning is not for scoring" can only be actually implemented after leaving school, when one have the real power to choose whatever to learn.

5.3 Proper Studying Strategies for Hong Kong Senior Secondary Students

As already discussed in previous sections, many interviewees considered public examination as a crucial component in their senior secondary studies. In the following discussion, we will see that, when the interviewees were asked on what studying strategies Hong Kong's senior secondary students should adopt, their replies always revolved their entrenched aim of getting higher grades in public examination results.

Frequent drilling on supplementary exercises, especially questions appearing in past examination papers, was one of the practical measures commonly heard from interviewees (AH5, CH2, CH9, AL4, CL1, CL2, CL10). They regarded this important, because they believed this as an effective way to get familiar with the examination requirement and the question formats, and to understand their strengths and weaknesses in handling real examination questions. This is also a practice for applying the answering techniques and tactics, which may be taught by their cram school teachers, in real examinations.

Rote was also important in some interviewees' view (AH6, CH2, CH3, CH7, CL1, CL6, CL7, CL9). Most examination syllabi, particularly the arts subjects,

require students to memorize a substantial amount of facts and information. In the eyes of these interviewees, rote plays a more fundamental role than comprehensive understanding for achieving high grades.

A student (CL2) suggested extensive reading as one of the proper practices that senior secondary students should follow. This seemed to be contradictory to the mainstream examination-oriented belief among my interviewees. Yet, this was indeed based on an examination-oriented consideration:

“Past paper drills is necessary, but it is still far from adequate if your target is an A. In such a case, extensive reading and exploration on the Internet are needed, since some examination questions may be about the current issues, which may not be discussed in textbook and daytime lessons.”
(CL2)

In the eyes of many interviewees, receiving mass tutoring is also a necessary practical measure (CH9, CH10, CL1, CL2, CL10). They believed mass tutoring a possible channel to improve their ability in dealing with examination papers. Examination-focused drilling, answering techniques and tactics, shortcut to memorize the examination content, and extra knowledge source that may relevant to the examinations, were what students look for by attending tutorials. Some even regarded mass tutoring as a necessity for ordinary senior secondary students except those who are exceptionally talented. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6, which focuses on students’ purpose of receiving mass tutoring.

Some interviewees thought that senior secondary students should reduce their involvement in activities not closely relevant to public examinations, including

extra-curricular activities, community services, and extra-curricular reading about irrelevant subject areas (AL5, AL10, CH4).

Furthermore, some interviewees suggested some proper learning attitudes which should be taken by senior secondary students, such as diligence in schoolwork (AH5, AH9, AL4) and attentive to lessons (CL1). Although these qualities, they thought, are necessary to a solid study life in the senior secondary level, these qualities should accompany practical measures, which have been described in the previous paragraphs.

To conclude, interviewees generally believed that frequent examination drilling, mastering answering techniques and tactics, memorization of examination content, and looking for extra knowledge sources are the studying strategies which should be adopted by Hong Kong senior secondary students. These strategies are effective way to heighten the chance of getting better grades in public examinations. Tutorials run by cram schools can provide students resources which are consistent with these four strategies. In addition, interviewees believed that involvement in activities not relevant to public examination should be reduced or even stopped. Although diligence and attention are important, they are only the accompanying attitudes with the good grades hunting measures. Generally speaking, interviewees' responses strongly reflect their attachment to public examination, regarding public examination as the largest component, if not the whole, of the senior secondary schooling.

5.4 Qualities of a Good Teacher

Interviewees were asked to suggest the most significant qualities a good teacher should possess. They were also encouraged to give some real examples of good teachers (in daytime schools and cram schools), describe some distinctive credits in their teaching, and explain why they are considered as competent teachers. Their response is a reflection of their viewpoints on how a good teacher should be, which are summarized and discussed in the following paragraphs.

Interviewees mentioned a lot of qualities on the effectiveness of teaching. Examples include concision and clarity of illustration (AH6, AL11, CL1, CL4), systematic organization of lectures (AH10, AL4), and providing real-life or interesting examples in explaining abstract concepts (AH8, CH7, CL3).

Besides, enthusiasm of a teacher was also considered important (AL2, AL4, CL1, CL3, CL5, CL6, CL8, CL10). Some interviewees believed a good teacher should have passion in teaching, and should readily response to students' enquiries.

Close relationship between student and teacher was also valued by some students (AH1, AH7, AH10, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL8, CH2, CH4, CH5, CH7, CL2, CL6, CL7, CL9). According to some interviewees, a good teacher should have frequent face-to-face interaction with students, should treat students as friends, and should spend time on understanding every student in order to take care of individual differences.

The aforementioned qualities are actually general ones which are not confined

to the context of Hong Kong secondary education. However, in addition to these qualities, fitting the examination requirement was also a requisite of a good teacher as believed by the interviewees. This is illustrated in the following.

First, a good teacher should not only be knowledgeable in the subject area taught, but should also be very familiar with the requirement of the examination syllabi, and the trend of question setting in recent years (AH1, AL8, AL10, CH6, CH10, CL2, CL10). According to the interviewees' report, daytime teachers in general knew which topics are covered by the syllabi, but they might not be very clear about the latest requirement. As the syllabi and questioning format are revised from time to time, some sub-topics may have been withdrawn, and questioning style and marking standard may have been changed. Thus, familiarity with the syllabi requirement is an essential quality of a good teacher, since with this quality, a teacher can provide reliable guidance to the students on examination preparation. This is also a fundamental quality for the practices described below, which can enhance the students' mastery of examination skills.

Second, a good teacher should provide substantial amount of examination practices, such as providing more past examination questions, providing more mock examination exercises, and arranging in-class tests frequently (AH5, AL1, AL10, AL11, CH7, CL2).

Third, a good teacher should prepare good lecture notes for students (AH5, AL2, AL4, AL11, CH3, CH9, CL4, CL10). How should "good lecture notes" be? They should not only be clear, concise and well-organized, but also highlight the key points required in examination answers.

Fourth, a good teacher should be capable of analyzing the trend of the topics appearing in the past examination papers, forecasting the topics which will highly probably appear in the coming year, and providing the relevant hints to the students (AL1, CH3).

Fifth, a good teacher should teach students answering techniques (AH2, AH8, AH9, AL3, AL4, AL7, AL6, AL8, AL9, CH3, CH7, CH8, CH9, CH10, CL5, CL9). In particular, they should analyze the marking schemes of the past examination papers, and discuss them with the students. For example, AL6 highly appreciated his CL&C teacher because of his teacher's in-class activity focusing on the marking standard of the past examinations:

“My teacher has been a marker for years. In some lessons, he gave us the official marking schemes and some sample answer scripts of the past public examinations, and asked us to try to mark the sample answers. After that, he discussed with us why the sample answers deserve such marks. After this activity, we had a deep understanding with the examination requirement, because we did not only know which points are required by the marking scheme, but also knew how to evaluate an essay from the marker's point of view.” (AL6)

For some interviewees, a good teacher should also not spend too much time on out-of-syllabus materials, or any content which would unlikely appear in the real examination (AH2, AH5, AL4, AL6, CH6, CH10, CL2, CL10). In these students' view, since beyond-syllabus issues are valueless to examination preparation and may not interest the class, teaching beyond-syllabus issues is just a waste of lesson time and may probably delay the normal teaching schedule. They preferred their teacher

spending the same amount of time to focus deeper in the examination related issues.

For some others, a good teacher may teach contents beyond the syllabi requirement (AH1, AH6, AL10, CH7, CH8, CH9, CH1, CH2, CH3, CH4, CL1, CL3, CL4, CL9), but their argument was still based on the efficacy of these extra contents on enhancing their examination performance. They suggested that extra information may help them to understand the concepts covered by the syllabi better (AL2, CL3, CL4). Also, public examination questions may extend to some cases which are not described in the standard teaching materials such as textbooks (AH6, CH8, CL1). Nevertheless, extra contents should be taught only if everything required by the syllabus has been thoroughly discussed.

To conclude this section, it is found that in the students' view, clarity of presentation, enthusiasm, knowledgeability and close relationship with students are not sufficient qualities for a good teacher. In the context of secondary schooling in Hong Kong, students took heavy account of their teachers' ability to strengthen students' mastery of public examination requirements when evaluating their teachers' performance.

5.5 Students' Right to Choose Daytime School Teachers

More than half of interviewees (AH1, AH2, AH3, AH4, AH5, AH6, AH7, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL5, AL8, AL10, AL11, CH3, CH6, CH7, CH8, CH9, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, CL5, CL9, CL10) believed that students should have the right to choose their subject teachers in daytime school. The ground for their supportive view was quite common: if the students have the right to choose their subject teachers, they have the

capacity to ensure themselves to be taught by teachers with effective teaching approach. As some interviewees had encountered school teachers with poor teaching, they did not totally regard school teachers are necessarily authoritative. At the same time, they were aware that not every teacher is equally competent in delivering knowledge to students. In such a reality, these students thought that if they were given the rights to choose their subject teachers, they could avoid these poorer teachers, and could receive more effective teaching. Their answers revealed their thought that their daytime schools do not necessarily make the most beneficial arrangement for them. Without freedom of choice, a favourable learning outcome cannot be guaranteed.

Whether a teacher suits individual needs and tastes was another important consideration to some students. If individual students are allowed to choose the school teachers who can satisfy their individual learning needs and interests, then learning outcomes will become maximized. As AH1 said:

“Many teachers are good teachers, but their teaching method and style may not fit everyone best. If I were allowed to choose the teachers whose teaching method and style fitted me most, then my gain from schooling could be maximized.” (AH1)

In addition, some students (AL5, CH9) pointed out that granting the right of choice to the students can change the current non-competitive environment among their daytime teachers, which lacks the initiative for good teaching performance. If students hold the right to choose their teachers, teachers with better performance will be welcome by more students, especially those with better attitude and performance, while those with poor teaching may have no students and risk

dismissal by the school. This establishes a competitive mechanism among daytime school teachers which encourages them to do their best in their teaching. In turn, the general teaching quality of the whole teaching staff will be enhanced, and students will benefit more from the improved teaching quality.

Among this group of interviewees, three of them (AH3, AH4, CH6) clearly pointed out that students should be given the right to choose because they were the consumers who paid for daytime schooling. Besides, another student (AL3) believed that the practice can save students' tuition fees for mass tutoring, implying that the role of cram school tutors are the same as that of daytime school teachers. In other words, these interviewees considered teacher-student relationship as a kind of consumer-dealer relationship, and the right to choose as a kind of basic consumer right.

On the other hand, there were 11 students (AH8, AL1, AL4, AL6, AL7, CH5, CH10, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL8) who had reservation on the practice.

4 interviewees were suspicious about whether senior secondary students are mature enough to make the right choice for themselves (AH8, CH10, CL6, CL7). They worried that students may abuse the right to intentionally choose the teachers who have lower requirement on the students, so as to escape the harsh and strict schoolwork and simply make their school life easier. Those teachers with strict requirement on students may be unwelcome by students and face the risk of dismissal as a result. Even abuse of the right to choose may not always be the case for all students, the interviewees still felt sceptical on whether senior secondary students have ability to differentiate good teachers from bad ones, and to identify

which teachers are the best for enhancing their learning. Also, without having attended the lectures by a particular teacher before selection, students are impossible to hold the clear and accurate information about this teacher's performance. Thus, these interviewees still doubted the belief that right of choice can guarantee the efficacy of learning.

4 interviewees concerned the adverse impact to the teacher-student relationship by the practice (AH8, AL7, CH5, CL5). AH8 believed that teachers would be less respected by their students if the practice was introduced to daytime schools. AL7 and CL5 thought that it should be the students who try their best to adapt to their school teachers. CH5 also added that the availability of cram school tutors has already provided an alternative for students if their daytime school teachers do not suit them best. With this availability, it is not necessary to alter the existing practice of assigning teachers.

2 interviewees did not believe that the practice would bring significant changes to the efficacy of learning and teaching (AH10, CL8). As CL8 believed, all the teachers of the same subject are actually teaching the same syllabus, so in principle, the difference in their teaching is insignificant. AH10 pointed out that, even students are given the right to choose from a pool of candidates, the candidates have been selected by the school in an earlier stage. Therefore, even given the right to choose, it is not likely that the students can find a teacher who perfectly fits their expectations.

2 interviewees' reservation was based on the practical feasibility. They concerned that the arrangement may bring extra burden or even chaos to the school's

administration (CL6, CL7).

5.6 Is Mass Tutoring a Possible Replacement for Daytime Schooling?

Interviewees were asked whether mass tutoring can fully replace daytime schooling for the delivery of the senior secondary curricula. Although not all interviewees agreed that mass tutoring can supersede daytime schooling, the fact that a number of interviewees considered mass tutoring as a better substitute for normal daytime schooling should be noticed.

7 students (AH3, AH4, AH7, CH2, CH6, CH10, CL10) felt positive about the replacement, especially for preparation for public examinations. Most of them had attended mass tutoring for more than half of the subjects taken (i.e. the AH and CH groups). In their opinion, although mass tutoring sessions are usually shorter than daytime school lectures, these tutorials cover all the necessary knowledge and techniques useful in public examinations in a concise way. In contrast, daytime school teachers always not just spend much longer time to finish the same pieces of knowledge, but also skip the examination techniques and teach knowledge useless to public examinations. Therefore, these students thought that mass tutoring is more effective than daytime school lessons for helping students prepare for public examination. CH2 even commented that “a two-hour tutorial session is equally effective as daytime school lectures of 5 days,” implying that daytime school lectures are just a waste of students’ time.

Despite the fact that some students considered mass tutoring as a better replacement for daytime schooling, they were not the majority of the interviewees.

33 out of the 41 students (AH1, AH2, AH5, AH6, AH8, AH9, AH10, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL5, AL6, AL7, AL8, AL10, AL11, CH1, CH3, CH4, CH5, CH7, CH8, CH9, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL8, CL9) thought that daytime schooling is necessary for senior secondary students. Even though a large number of them recognized the effectiveness of mass tutoring, they still believed mass tutoring cannot fully substitute daytime schooling.

Most of this group of interviewees thought that daytime schooling is necessary for several reasons. Firstly, daytime schooling is the necessary source for fundamental subject knowledge (AH2, AH8, AL2, AL5, AL7, AL8, CH3, CH4, CH5, CH7, CH8, CL1, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL9). It provides the detailed and comprehensive illustrations to the fundamental concepts and theories. This cannot be found from mass tutoring, for which teaching time is much more limited, and only concise outlines of the syllabi are provided. Without attending daytime school lessons, it is not easy to understand thoroughly the subject knowledge. Therefore, to these students, mass tutoring can only be served as an after-class supplement to the daytime schooling with focus on examination requirement.

Secondly, most cram school tutors do not take care of individual learning progress (AH6, AH9, AH10, AL1, AL3, AL11, CL1, CL7, CL8). As cram school tutors usually deliver their classes to a large number of students at the same time, or even deliver their classes through prerecorded videos, students do not have close interaction with their tutors. Also, in most tutorials, there are no compulsory assignment or revision tests for the students. In addition, cram school tutors do not keep track of individual students' learning progress and performance. For the above reasons, communication between cram school tutors and students is unidirectional

from tutors to students. Unlike cram school tutors, daytime school teachers have two-way face-to-face interaction with students, and understand better students' learning progress through assignment and tests. With face-to-face contact, some daytime school teachers may even offer emotional support to their students who encounter depression and frustration. Therefore, to these students, daytime schooling is indispensable.

Furthermore, to these interviewees, daytime schooling is far more than academic training (AH1, AL5, AL10, CL1, CL2, CL5). All-round development was considered non-negligible by these students. Daytime schools offer students extracurricular activities to enrich their learning experience and develop their interests and potentials in non-academic aspects. In addition, daytime schools provide students with disciplinary training to build up their moral values. As cram schools cannot fulfil non-academic needs of students, daytime schools still have their value of existence.

Despite the fact that the majority of interviewees did not agree that mass tutoring can replace daytime school lessons, over a third of them (15 interviewees: AH1, AH5, AH6, AH9, AL3, AL4, AL6, AL7, AL8, AL10, CH3, CH8, CH9, CL2, CL3) preferred their daytime school teachers to adopt the teaching methods of cram school tutors. To them, traditional teaching method adopted by most daytime school teachers is time-consuming and less effective. If daytime school teachers can provide students with focused lectures, concise reference notes, useful examination techniques and in-depth analysis on past examination questions, it will be more beneficial to students.

Apart from the two mainstream views described, two students (CH1 and AL9) thought that whether mass tutoring is a perfect substitute for daytime schooling depends on the nature of the subject concerned. In their opinion, for subjects which are largely based on concepts and practices, such as Economics, mass tutoring is a possible substitute for daytime school lectures. For these subjects, not many concepts and theories are required to learn, but practices are crucial to master these concepts and theories. Therefore, mass tutoring is sufficient, since tutors are able to clearly illustrate the required concepts and theories even in such a limited time. The rest of the path to good grades is frequent self-practice. In other words, long teaching hours in daytime school are unnecessary for these subjects.

5.7 Discussion

“Detraditionalization”, as elaborated in Section 2.2, refers to the fading out of significance of traditional values, institutions and authority to the formation of personal life in late modernity. The ground and validity of traditional values, institution and authority are subjected to question, review and challenge by reflexivity.

For centuries, Chinese imperial governments adopted examination, on classical literature and philosophy, as a means to recruit government officials. Young people aspiring for government positions subscribed to an examination-oriented learning attitude, and only focused their learning on examination-related materials. While the examination was highly competitive, and the result was not useful for pursuing career paths other than government officials and school teachers, examination-oriented learning was limited to the circle of young intellectuals, and

not very popular among the mass public. In other arena of learning, such as martial arts and handicrafts, apprenticeship was practiced, and the authority of master was appreciated by the apprentices.

Examination-oriented learning attitude, which had existed in the intellectual community of the traditional Chinese society, was inherited by the interviewees in this study. Despite this, some other traditional educational ideals, which were once widely respected values, such as “real subject knowledge has standalone intrinsic values”, and “learning is not for scoring”, become questioned and challenged by the students.

Instead of blindly subscribing to traditional values, students reflexively evaluated the validity of these values to the situation they were facing based on their own observation and experience. In fact, not all interviewees discredited the traditional educational ideals. However, for those gave credit to traditional educational thoughts, they realized the discrepancy between realistic and ideal values, and felt inefficacious to change the realistic value. Thus, they confessed that these thoughts are invalid for guiding senior secondary students on their studies, and following the realistic mainstream is the only choice

Daytime school teachers, a traditional authority, have lost obedience from their students. Unlike master-apprentice relationship, students’ appreciation on their teacher is not purely based on his seniority and experience, but whether he catches up with the latest (curricular and examination) requirement. Similarly, the necessity of daytime schooling, a traditional institution for educating youngsters, is also subjected to challenge. Some students have believed that mass tutoring in cram

school can replace standard daytime schooling. In their view, traditional teaching approach, which has been practiced and worked for a long period, may not necessarily best meet the need of the latest circumstances.

Students' values and mentality, which were the ground of judging the validity of traditional principles, authority and institutions, have been largely shaped by instrumental reasoning and impersonal principles offered by the modern abstract system. As revealed from students' responses, they have incorporated many instrumental and calculative values. For example, what is good and what should be practised depend on the likeliness to achieve a favourable outcome in the existing institutions. As students, they thought that they should try best to fit themselves to the credential-based environment, while their teachers should offer useful aids to maximize students' achievement in this environment. This is why some students thought that daytime schooling can be replaced by mass tutoring. As elaborated in Chapter 4, good examinations grades, in students' eyes, are the key to develop ontological security in response to risk-filled environments for further studies and career, so it is unsurprising that achieving good examination grades is crucial for their senior secondary studies. Although some students valued real subject knowledge, their justifications were usually related to its importance to workplace application and career development.

Students credited the application of modern mechanisms. For example, they valued the existence of public examinations, and viewed public examination results as a credible summary of students' ability. They valued competition and its capacity to bring them advancement, so some students believed mass tutoring, under a highly competitive environment, should have better quality than daytime schooling, and

some students even thought that right of choice should be granted to students in order to promote competition as well as teaching quality among daytime school teachers. Some students even viewed themselves as consumers, and thought teacher-students relationship analogous to the relationship between customer and service provider. Given numerous alternatives in the education market, choosing teachers who best fit their individual needs and expectations is as normal as choosing commodities from the showcase.

In short, “detraditionalization” has happened on students’ educational values. Traditional educational ideals and daytime schooling have been undergoing question and challenge from the students. Modern abstract system, which emphasizes instrumental reasoning and impersonal principles, and modern mechanisms, including competition and consumerism, have become the basis of educational values among the students today.

CHAPTER SIX PURPOSES OF ENROLMENT IN MASS TUTORING

This chapter discusses the purposes of the students to enrol in mass tutoring. In the first section, the aims of attending mass tutoring are the foci of discussion. In the second section, we take a look at sorts of help which students expected to seek from mass tutoring. In the last section, we look into the reasons why the students did not receive mass tutoring for certain subjects.

6.1 Aims of Attending Mass Tutoring

Higher Grades in Public Examinations

For almost all interviewees (36 in total), the major concern of mass tutoring was for better grades in public examinations (AH1, AH2, AH4, AH5, AH7, AH9, AH10, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL5, AL6, AL7, AL8, AL9, AL10, AL11, CH1, CH2, CH4, CH5, CH6, CH7, CH8, CH9, CH10, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL8, CL9, CL10). In particular, few interviewees (AL7, AL9, CH6) even unambiguously admitted that upgrading public examination results is the sole purpose of attending tutorials. For all of these interviewees, they expected that mass tutoring could enhance their chance of achieving targeted or higher grades, or minimize the possibility of failure, especially for the subjects of crucial importance, such as language subjects.

Mass tutoring was not confined to weak subjects. Even for those who were certain about their abilities in passing, they still enrolled in mass tutoring for good grades. For example, AH4, a Form 7 student from a territory-wide prestigious school,

already got 25 points in the HKCEE. Despite this, she found the advanced level subjects were harder than the HKCEE level subjects, and was not confident in her ability for maintaining good grades in the HKALE. Even the chance of failure was slim, she was still afraid of getting bad grades in the HKALE. Thus, she received mass tutoring in all subjects she studied. Similar for AH7, who was confident in passing Geography, found himself marginal for a credit, which was his aspired grade, so he sought help from mass tutoring to enhance the chance to achieve his target.

In particular, excelling in public examinations was important for the academically strong students (AH1, CH1, CH4, CH5, CL1, CL3). For them, attending mass tutoring was a way to approach nearer to distinction.

CH1, an outstanding fifth former in a top-ranked secondary school, was a highly involved tutee attending regular tutorials for 5 subjects. Getting 8 distinctions in the HKCEE was his minimum target. For the weaker subjects, like Chinese Language and Chemistry, he expected that joining tutorials could assure him to get a credit of above. Meanwhile, although he was strong in English Language, Physics and Economics, he still continuously attended regular tutorials for these subjects. For example, he was very confident in securing a B grade in Economics merely with his own effort. Anticipating chances for distinctions in Chinese Language and Religious Studies were slim, he had to ensure distinctions in all other 8 subjects in order to achieve his target. In this circumstance, he decided to join a regular tutorial for Economics, and expected it could help him to get an A grade. Without mass tutoring, he estimated that he can only get 3 to 4 distinctions at the most.

Similar to CH1, CH4 was a Secondary 4 student from a top-ranked secondary

school. Before the first term of Form 4, he did not think that getting 3 distinctions in the HKCEE would be difficult, yet his minimum target was getting 6 distinctions. He thought that mass tutoring could be a way to help him meet the goal. Therefore, as early as the summer holiday before Form 4, he began to attend mass tutoring classes. He viewed attending mass tutoring classes as a tactic to reach his target.

CL1, one of the lowly involved tutees with good academic performance, also thought that attending tutorials for outstanding public examination results was worthy.

“Although attending tutorials may be time-consuming and long-lasting, it only lasted for some years. It is rewarding if I can eventually get more distinctions. I never feel antagonistic about the tiring experiences due to attending tutorials after school.” (CL1)

As discussed in previous chapters, public examination grades, in the interviewees’ eyes, had critical affiliation to their chances of earning further study opportunities, especially the preferred ones. Thus, when the students found themselves still weak for achieving the prescribed required grades for further study opportunities, they had to seek some aids in order to improve the chance of fulfilment of the requirement, or otherwise played the risk of failure to get a further study opportunity. This explains why a number of students (AL7, AL11) who were weak in language subjects received mass tutoring for these subjects, because passing in language subjects is the basic entry requirement for any undergraduate programme offered by local universities. Some other typical examples are listed below.

CL8 was a Form 4 repeater in arts with very poor academic performance. Mathematics was his weakest subject. Without a pass in Mathematics, he would be impossible to meet the entry requirement to the sixth form and undergraduate studies. So, he enrolled in a regular Mathematics tutorial for consolidation of his fundamental mathematical knowledge, so as to secure himself for a passing grade in public examination.

Not only does admission to the sixth form and undergraduate programmes have requirements on applicants' public examination results, but also programmes offered by IVE require applicants to have at minimum 5 passes in the HKCEE. Thus, CL10, whose goal was entrance to the Higher Diploma programme in preschool education run by IVE, still attended mass tutoring for some subjects in order to secure herself for meeting the basic entry requirement.

Many quality undergraduate programmes normally admit applicants with public examination results much higher than the basic requirement. In other words, applicants with bare pass were very unlikely to get offers of these programmes. Since many students had specific preference for undergraduate programmes, it was not surprising that some students expected that mass tutoring could help them achieve grades higher than the basic requirement for admission to further studies. For example, AL3 enrolled in mass tutoring to enhance her chance to get 2 credits in the HKALE, which was the anticipated actual required result for admission to the bachelor programmes she aspired for. Furthermore, if a Secondary 5 student wants to enter university through EAS, he has to get at least 6 distinctions, with credits or above in languages. Specific programmes, such as medicine, normally admit EAS applicants with 8 distinctions or above. This explains why the academically strong

interviewees, including CH1, CH4 and CL1, sought help from mass tutoring for distinctions in 6 or 8 subjects.

Compared to a decade ago, the availability of university places is higher nowadays, and the minimum public examination result for admission to university becomes lower. However, students' intention to receive mass tutoring for higher examination grades has, seemingly, not been weakened. On the contrary, the intention becomes stronger, especially for the weaker students, lower minimum requirement means higher chances to get admitted, so they have become more enthusiastic to sort out possible ways to upgrade their performance in order to compete for offers (AL5).

Investment for Future Career Path

Further to public examination results, over 10 interviewees considered mass tutoring as an investment for their long-term career prospects (AH2, AL1, AL4, AL5, AL9, CH1, CH7, CH8, CL1, CL3, CL4). As reviewed in the previous chapters, high correlation between career prospects and academic achievement is a common belief among many students. Thus, for these students, an investment for academic achievement is equivalent to an investment for career prospect.

7 students (AL1, AL4, AL9, CH1, CH7, CH8, CL4) believed that mass tutoring could help them promote their competitiveness in the job market and social recognition. As CH7 said:

“Good public examinations results are the necessary condition of

securing a sixth form place and a university offer. A university degree is a legitimate entry ticket to the job market. Social recognition can be earned with a university degree. Attending tutorials aims at enhancing the chances of attaining good public examination grades. It, therefore, can be viewed as an investment in which job market competitiveness and social recognition are expected rewards.” (CH7)

2 students even believed that mass tutoring had certain value in assuring a good career future (CL1, CL3). As CL1 said, “mass tutoring can help students attain higher grades in public examinations. With higher grades, a good career future can be assured to a certain extent.”

Certain career fields, such as medical practice, require practitioners to have professional training in the relevant knowledge disciplines in university. At the same time, undergraduate programmes in these knowledge disciplines are normally highly competitive and only admit applicants with brilliant public examination results. Therefore, to some students, mass tutoring, which can enhance the chance of achieving good grades in public examinations, has determining effect on opportunities to enter an interested career field. The case of CH1 demonstrated that public examination results can be critical in determining whether a student can achieve his aspired career path. Mass tutoring, for him, was a means to enhance the chances of getting 8 distinctions, admitted to the medical studies programme through EAS, and entering the career field of medical practice in long-term.

Better Mastery of Examination Requirement

4 students (AH1, AH4, CH5, CL9) enrolled in mass tutoring for better understanding public examination requirement. In particular, on the subjects with

new syllabus and examination format, such as Certificate level Chinese Language and English Language, students wanted to understand better the new requirement from attending tutorials (CL9).

For certain academically stronger students targeting at distinctions (AH1, CH5), mass tutoring was a way to acquire a more concrete understanding on the requirement of distinctions. As AH1 said, “It is very hard to conjecture the required level for an A grade. Mass tutoring is a source which helps me develop the concept of ‘A’.”

Psychological Security in Public Examinations

25 interviewees (AH2, AH4, AH7, AH9, AH10, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL5, AL10, AL11, CH1, CH2, CH7, CH8, CH10, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL9) deemed mass tutoring as a means to raise their confidence or psychological security in handling public examinations.

All but 4 students in this group (AH4, AH7, AH9, AH10, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL10, AL11, CH1, CH2, CH7, CH8, CH10, CL1, CL4, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL9) felt higher confidence in performing well in public examinations with extra guidance, references and practices. By attending tutorials, they could acquire extra guidance by cram school tutors, extra references including examination hints and tips, and extra practices including mock examination questions for enhancing their confidence in sitting the public examinations. In particular, a few students (AH10, AL1) even thought that extra elements attained from mass tutoring could relieve their anxiety when the public examinations were approaching. Also, some

academically strong students (CH1, CH2) even believed that their examination results would probably be poorer without mass tutoring: “Without attending tutorials, I would probably get many B grades in the HKCEE” (CH1), “Without attending tutorials, I would probably get a few points less in the HKCEE” (CH2).

Besides, 4 students (AH2, AL5, CL2, CL3) chose to attend tutorials for subjects in which they particularly confident. They were confident in their understanding in particular subjects, but they still did not have absolute confidence in getting good grades without examination-oriented aids. For example, CL3 believed that his rich knowledge and thorough understanding in Economics deserved an A grade in the subject, but after practising past papers at the latter stage, he found that he could only get a C or even a D if his score in the real examination was more or less the same as the scores in practices. The disparity in his real ability and his examination performance had to be immediately resolved. Thus, he enrolled in the intensive review course in Economics for securing an A grade.

Avoidance of Disadvantage Compared to Tutees or Taking Advantage over Non-tutees

17 interviewees (AH2, AH3, AH4, AH6, AH7, AH8, AL1, AL4, AL7, AL11, CH2, CH5, CH7, CH10, CL2, CL3, CL6, CL7, CL9) believed that mass tutoring could bring advantage to tutees over non-tutees, since it provided tutees with useful extra information about the public examination. As some of them (AH3, AH4, AH7, CH2, CH5, CH10) pointed out, tutees can acquire extra examination skills and collect tutorial notes with the essentials of the examination syllabi, something that non-tutees lacked. In addition, after listening to tutors’ lectures and reviewing their

notes, tutees can spend less time on preparing public examinations than non-tutees (AH3, AH4, AL4, CH2). An interviewee (CL10) even regarded that never attending tutorials and never reading tutorial notes before sitting public examinations are “perilous”.

An interviewee with high involvement in mass tutoring after advancement to the sixth form had been aware of the disadvantage of not attending tutorials from his real experience in the HKCEE:

“I did not enrol in mass tutoring for most of my Secondary 4 and 5. At that time, I did not think that mass tutoring can guarantee all tutees to achieve good examination results. With this belief, I only enrolled in intensive courses shortly before the public examination. Eventually, I failed to get good results for my HKCEE. I felt a bit regretful that I only received mass tutoring to a very limited extent. If I had joined more tutorials, I should have got a much better result. Mass tutoring is like money: it does not guarantee success, but one would be disadvantaged without it.” (AH6)

Followed by the above beliefs, these interviewees enrolled in mass tutoring for taking advantage over non-tutees (AH2, AH6, AH7, CH5, CH10, CL3), or avoiding disadvantage compared to tutees (AH3, AH4, AH6, AH8, AL1, AL4, AL7, AL11, CH2, CH5, CH7, CL2, CL9).

Familiarity with Their Relative Abilities

2 students (CH5, CL10) were aware of the disparity in requirement, format and level of difficulty between internal assessment of their daytime school and public examinations. Also, for most subjects in public examinations, grading is

norm-referenced: candidates' grades are relative to the general performance of all the candidates in the same sitting. So, internal assessment is insufficient to reflect how well a student would perform in public examinations. As CH5 said, "excelling in school examinations does not necessarily mean capability to excel in public examinations". Thus, they needed mass tutoring as a channel for knowing their relative abilities.

"By attending tutorial together with students from other schools, I can know more about the academic abilities of these outsiders. By comparing myself to these outsiders, I can have a more accurate understanding on my own actual academic ability. The difference between myself and the outsiders in terms of academic ability can be minimized." (CL10)

Mass tutoring can also offer a channel to make friends with students from other schools, which also help each other to compare their academic ability and level. As CH5 explained:

"I want to get acquainted with students from other secondary schools who I met in tutorials. In this way, I can exchange the papers of my internal test and examination for theirs. These materials let me know the average ability and level of students from other schools, and help me objectively know my actual ability and level. (CH5)

Fulfilment of Curiosity

3 students (CL3, CL6, CL7) said that they went to tutorials due to curiosity. However, their further elaboration on their curiosity revealed that they were actually concerned with the matters related to public examinations. For example, they

wanted to see whether mass tutoring provided some important or useful contents for preparing and sitting public examinations which were never learnt from their daytime school teachers. Also, they were interested to verify whether mass tutoring was more effective than daytime school teaching in enhancing students' academic performance, especially examination performance.

Remedy to Unsatisfactory Daytime Schooling

19 interviewees' enrolment in mass tutoring was triggered by their dissatisfaction on their daytime school teachers' teaching performance (AH1, AH2, AH4, AH5, AH6, AH7, AH8, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL6, AL7, AL8, AL10, AL11, CH1, CH2, CH7, CL9).

As analyzed in Section 5.4, students took heavy account of their teachers' ability to strengthen students' mastery of public examination requirements when evaluating their teachers' performance. Thus, when these students found that their daytime school teachers (1) failed to keep up with the latest examination syllabi, format and marking standard, (2) failed to highlight the key points or deliver answering techniques in lectures and notes, (3) failed to provide useful examination practices, or (4) failed to spend the teaching time wisely (such as spending too much time on basic knowledge, or spending lesson time on examination-irrelevant information), mass tutoring was a remedy to the unsatisfactory teaching of their daytime school teachers.

Supplementary Knowledge Source

As seen in the previous discussion, most interviewees considered mass tutoring as a more focused tuition on the examination syllabus. However, in addition to instrumental purposes, 4 students (AH1, AL1, CH7, CH9, CL5) viewed mass tutoring as a supplementary source of subject knowledge.

4 students (AH1, CH7, CH9, CL5) enrolled in mass tutoring in English for improvement in their language proficiency. By attending tutorials, they expected to learn vocabulary, phrases, grammatical knowledge, practical usage and rhetoric styles which they had not learnt before elsewhere. As shown in the case of one of them:

“To me, learning a language is not merely for examinations, but for developing my lifelong communicative skills. There is no ceiling for learning a language. Even my former daytime school English teacher has given me a huge pile of handouts for additional reference, mass tutoring can still offer other useful reference materials which do not overlap with them.” (CH7)

2 students (AH1, AL1) believed that mass tutoring, as a supplementary knowledge source, is always beneficial to the understanding and mastery of the subject knowledge. As AL1 explained:

“Different teachers may convey the same piece of knowledge in different ways. They may provide different angles and examples. By listening to different teachers, not only can I learn how to view the same theory in different angles, but also have a deeper understanding on the topic.” (AL1)

Rectification on Learning Performance and Attitude

5 students (CH9, CH10, CL2, CL5, CL8) were motivated to receive mass tutoring due to their worsening academic performance in school. They were worried that their performance would continue to fall. Thus, they took a positive measure of attending tutorials to rectify the problem. As seen in CH10's case:

“During junior forms, I always outstood my schoolmates. However, after promoted to Form 4, it became a totally different story. I found myself not well adapted to the graded curriculum. Although I had put much effort on my studies, my academic performance was still dropping. In the first term examination, I was only ranked 35th in a class of 37. Facing this situation, I had to go for mass tutoring for improvement.” (CH10)

There were also 6 interviewees (AH1, AH5, AH8, AH9, CL2, CL3) who received mass tutoring for keeping up their serious learning attitude. They were afraid that their diligence, and consequently their learning performance, could not sustain without mass tutoring.

“During summer holiday, nobody fixed my daily schedule. I could spend my time freely. So, I had to fill in my summer time with mass tutoring. Otherwise, my daily life might become disordered, I might become lazier with my studies, and extra effort would be needed to restore the level of diligence before the holiday.” (AH8)

In particular, for 3 students (AH1, AH5, CL2), mass tutoring was effective to promote their diligence in learning because they had spent extra money on that. If they were not diligent enough, they would feel guilty because their poor learning attitude contributed to the waste of tuition fee.

Revision of Daytime School Lessons

5 interviewees (AH2, AH8, AL3, CL2, CL8) enrolled in mass tutoring for revision. They believed that listening to the same content for a second time in mass tutoring could refresh their memory and consolidate their grasp of the content they had learnt from daytime school lessons. However, part of these students (AH2, CL2) honestly admitted that they focused on the key elements of examination syllabi during their “revision” in tutorials.

6.2 Expectation on Mass Tutoring

In the last section, we have reviewed students’ aims of receiving mass tutoring. By receiving mass tutoring, what sorts of aids did these students expect for achieving those aims? This is the central question of this section.

Tutorial Notes

Tutorial notes were the main target of 12 tutees (AH3, AH4, AH8, AH9, AL4, AL7, CH2, CH3, CH5, CH9, CL1, CL2).

Most of the daytime school teachers of these interviewees only followed one textbook in their teaching, and did not provide any additional reference notes or aids. Standard textbooks, albeit comprehensive, are usually written in long paragraphs, and contain contents which are not closely relevant to public examination requirements.

Tutorial notes, on the other hand, offer a more concise review on the examination-relevant contents. In spite of their conciseness, tutorial notes, as in the eyes of these interviewees, do not miss out any content necessary for public examinations. The way of presentation provides a clearer and better organized map of the subject knowledge, and facilitates students' understanding on the subject. As AH3 commented:

“Tutorial notes present the concepts in a more concise way. In addition, there are many pictures and diagrams in the notes. These presentation styles are more interesting and effective than the comprehensive presentation styles found in textbooks.” (AH3)

In addition, tutorial notes highlight the key content of the examination syllabi, and even provide systematic analysis of past examination papers. These were normally not done by daytime school teachers. With tutorial notes, students need not spend much time and effort on digging out the necessary content from standard textbooks and materials from daytime school teachers on their own (AH3, AH9, CH3, CH5, CL1, CL2). As CH3 said:

“With tutorial notes, I need not summarize the subject content on my own. What I needed to do is to memorize all the points in tutors lecture notes. This significantly reduces the time and effort to master the subject. I can get a good result in a less painstaking way.” (CH3)

Practical Answering Techniques

29 students (AH2, AH3, AH6, AH8, AH9, AH10, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL5,

AL7, AL9, AL10, CH1, CH4, CH5, CH7, CH8, CH9, CH10, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, CL6, CL7, CL8, CL9) expected that mass tutoring could provide them practical techniques for answering public examination papers.

In normal circumstances, daytime school teachers only teach the standard problem solving techniques described in textbooks. However, some students found that they were often tedious, time-consuming and difficult to memorize, especially in mathematical and logical demanding subjects. Under this situation, some students wished to look for some shortcuts for problem solving and more effective way to memorize the required techniques. Examples of shortcuts include slogans for easy remembrance of problem solving procedures, non-standard problem solving techniques (such as finding the right answer by substituting the given options into the equation for multiple choice questions, for Mathematics), or efficient answering strategy (such as highlighting key words and sentences in the given passages before starting answering the writing tasks, for the practical skills paper of UE) (AH2, AH3, AH6, AL2, AL7, CH7, CL2, CL9).

Examination sessions always have tight time limit. It is very common that candidates can only manage to finish answering the paper in time, or even unable to finish within the time limit. Spending time wisely is important. So, a student (CL7) expected that mass tutoring could offer her advice on proper time management in public examinations, for example, how much time should be spent on a particular section, or which type of questions should be attempted first.

3 students thought that they had a good grasp of the subject knowledge, but they didn't know how to answer in a good way which fulfils the marking scheme. So,

while daytime school teachers rarely deal with answering skills, they expected mass tutoring can improve their answering skills for increasing her rate of pinpointing the right points and getting higher grades (AL2, CH8, CH10).

Some practical skills, such as the map reading and graphical presentation in the subject of Geography, are required by the examination syllabus, but due to various reasons, for example, these skills are supposed to be taught in lower forms, daytime school teachers may simply omit them in their teaching. In order to fill in the gap, students had to seek help from mass tutoring (CH2, CH7, CL3).

2 students (AH6, AH10) looked for further information useful for public examinations. For example, AH10 pointed out that there have been questions related to current affairs in past Geography examinations. Similarly, AH6 was aware that the paper on cultural issues of CL&C demands candidates' abilities to connect the prescribed cultural texts to real life cases. While their daytime school teachers did not discuss the connection between subject knowledge and current affairs too much, mass tutoring could fill in the gap and better prepare them with necessary knowledge for handling current affairs-related questions.

Tips on Examination Questions

11 interviewees (AH3, AH6, AH7, AH8, AL4, AL10, AL11, CH3, CL6, CL7, CL9) were interested in the examination tips from cram school tutors. These tips could be about the topics which would highly probably appear in real examinations, or even the details of a real question.

These students thought tips as necessary for examination preparation, because the scope of examination syllabus was very broad, while certain question types, such as essays, required candidates to demonstrate their understanding on a particular issue with depth and detail. For most students, it was unlikely to go deep into every unit covered by the syllabus. With the tips from cram school tutors, they could narrow down the revision area, and could have more attentive and intensive study on the issues which were very likely to be questioned on. Time on examination preparation could be saved, and the chance of achieving good grades could be improved.

Further Examination Practices

6 students (AH9, AL4, CH9, CL1, CL2, CL8) expected that mass tutoring could provide them further examination practices.

In fact, exercises were already given by daytime school teachers, and were already included in their textbook, yet these exercises were not designed in the format of real examination questions. Suggested answers or solutions might be appended, but not were the detailed marking criteria for the questions, such as the allocation of marks to points or steps. Also, even though past examination papers were available, they might not conform to the latest examination requirement due to occasional revision of examination syllabus and paper format. Therefore, these students wished to obtain further practices, with most updated format and detailed explanation on marking criteria, from their cram school tutors. By practicing these questions and referring to the marking criteria, they would have a more solid idea of how many marks they should get with their answers, and had a clearer concept on

their weaknesses.

In particular, an academically stronger student, CL1, wished to get harder mock examination questions from mass tutoring. By doing these questions, not only could he get accustomed to the question format, but his problem solving skills could also be advanced at the same time.

6.3 Reasons for Not Attending Mass Tutoring for Certain Subjects

In the previous section, the objectives for attending mass tutoring by the interviewees have been discussed. However, enrolling in mass tutoring for all subjects studied was extremely rare. If mass tutoring was such valuable to the interviewees, why did not they receive mass tutoring for every subject? This is the focus of this section.

In fact, tutorials are unavailable in the tuition market for some subjects, most of which are only offered by a very limited number of daytime secondary schools, such as Religious Studies, English Literature, Commerce and Psychology. In this case, students have no way to receive mass tutoring for these subjects.

However, after excluding the cases due to the unavailability of tutorials, there were still many cases in which tutorials were available, but the interviewees did not join. The reasons are discussed in the following paragraphs.

In 5 cases, interviewees did not receive mass tutoring for the subjects for which they did not have very high expectations (AH8, AL4, AL11, CL5, CL9). In other

words, they did not expect a credit or a distinction for these subjects, and felt satisfied even only with a bare pass, which they were confident to achieve. So, receiving mass tutoring for extra improvement was unnecessary. In particular, when students were confident in passing, but deemed their ability too far from attaining a credit or a distinction, they would regard spending money and time on mass tutoring as just a waste (AL11).

However, for those having expectations on their examination grades, why did not they receive mass tutoring for every subject?

Some interviewees believed that mass tutoring was not very helpful for certain subjects due to the nature of particular subjects. They did not think that special answering techniques or shortcuts were useful for these subjects. For example, three students commonly pointed out that memorizing the content was the only way to get good grades in Chinese History, answering techniques did not help much, so they did not believe that attending tutorials would make significant difference to the learning outcome or examination performance (AL9, CH6, CH7). Similarly, some other students believed that Chinese Literature (AL9, CH6), Biology (CH10, CL5), CIT (CL10), and language subjects (CL3) mainly required good memory, and no special answering techniques were really useful. In addition, two sixth form students (AL1, AL10) even suspected the availability of standard answering format for cultural essays in CL&C, which demand candidates' independent critical thinking capacity. AL1 even worried that the standard answering techniques for cultural essays conveyed by cram school tutors might limit the room of thinking, which might have adverse effect on the examination performance.

Inconsistency of the teaching approach of mass tutoring with the studying approach of the student was also a reason for non-enrolment in mass tutoring for some subjects, as seen in AL7's case:

“I never thought of receiving mass tutoring for Economics, Geography and Chinese History. Mass tutoring, generally speaking, only helps students remember the fragmented points, but rarely help students discover the relationship between the concepts and view these concepts as a whole system. On the contrary, I study Economics, Geography and Chinese History by understanding the system of concepts, not just remembering the fragmented points.” (AL7)

Another reason for non-enrolment in mass tutoring was that interviewees thought it manageable for themselves to reach the target grades in particular subjects with their own effort (AH5, AH7, AH8, AL2, AL7, AL8, AL10, AL11, CH4, CH5, CH9, CL4, CL9). Either they were very confident in their own abilities in the concerned subjects (AH5, AH8 [for M&S], AL8, CH4, CH5, CH8, CL1), or they had find their own way to improve (CH4, CH9). For the latter, CH4 chose to have more frequent conversation in English with his peers, while CH9 chose to have frequent practices in reading, writing and speaking for Chinese Language. They viewed their own ways not less effective than attending tutorials.

Some students did not enrol in mass tutoring for some subjects because they had already appealed to alternative aids, such as small group tutorials (CL2 [for mathematical subjects]), individual tutoring (AH1, CL6), and lecture notes of mass tutoring classes (AH6, CL10).

The performance of subject teachers in daytime school also led to students'

non-enrolment in mass tutoring for those subjects (AH5, AH6, AH8, AL3, AL4, AL6, AL8, AL9, AL10, CH1, CH6, CL5, CL7). When their subject teachers were able to provide the examination-focused techniques and practices with comparable performance to a cram school tutor, students did not receive mass tutoring for those subjects. For example:

“My school subject teachers teach very well. My Biology teacher teaches students the way to remember the subject content easily. After completing teaching a chapter, he reviews the past examination questions and explains the answering techniques in class. Similar for my PA teacher, he even adopts examination questions in the past 20 years as exercises. So, I do not receive mass tutoring for Biology and PA.” (CH1)

“My Chinese Language teacher repetitively and thoroughly studies the sample examination papers of the new syllabus, especially the way for getting high scores. He even prepares detailed notes about answering techniques for our reference. So, I don’t need to seek help from cram school for this subject” (CH6)

“My CL&C teacher is an experienced public examination examiner. As an examiner, he had attended the meetings for examiners, and got some internal confidential documents, such as samples of marked answer scripts to essay-typed questions on cultural issues. He gave us photocopies of the marked scripts, showed us which were excellent, good and fair answers, analyzed the merits and demerits of these sample answers, and told us the required answering tactics for getting high scores. He even taught us how to mark an essay, and gave us some answer scripts and let us experience marking an essay. As he was so familiar in the examination requirement, and even taught us how to judge an essay from the markers’ perspective.” (AL8)

All the aforementioned reasons are about interviewees’ denial on the need for mass tutoring for particular subjects. Nevertheless, there were cases that non-enrolment was due to other constraints, even the students identified the need for

mass tutoring for the concerned subjects. Examples of constraints are financial constraints and time constraints. These two kinds of constraints are elaborated in the following.

Tuition fee for mass tutoring was a burden to 8 interviewees (AL4, AL10, CH7, CL1, CL2, CL8, CL9, CL10). To them, receiving mass tutoring for all subjects was very expensive. Thus, they handpicked a limited number of subjects with particular importance, and received mass tutoring for these subjects only. As clearly revealed by CH7's case:

“It would certainly be better for attending tutorials for all subjects, but financial burden should also be considered. It would be a large sum of money if I enrolled in regular tutorials for all subjects. Thus, I have to select the subjects with particular importance, such as English Language, and the subjects I want to excel in, such as Economics, to receive mass tutoring.” (CH7)

A lowly involved tutee, CL1, also expressed that financial constraint is a barrier to him to enrol in more tutorials. He honestly admitted that receiving mass tutoring in all subjects would be perfect. “Normally, a regular tutorial for a subject costs around \$400 monthly. It is too expensive for me. If I had more money, I really wanted to participate in regular tutorials for all subjects.” Confronted with financial constraint, he had to skip some subjects in which he felt more confident, like language subjects.

Similarly, AL5 wanted to receive mass tutoring for all subjects, but finally she only received mass tutoring for Economics. For other subjects (apart from those for which she didn't find suitable tutorials), i.e. Chinese Language and Chinese History,

she seldom failed in these subjects, but she thought that, even with assistance from mass tutoring, she was still too far from getting an A. On the other hand, Economics was the subject in which she was particularly confident, and mass tutoring might help her get an A. In order to minimize the expenses on mass tutoring, she only enrolled in tutorials for Economics.

Other than financial constraint, time constraint is another considered factor for some students (CH8, CH10, CL1, CL2, AL4, AL5, AL7). Students had to balance the time spent on studying and other activities, so they might have insufficient time for attending mass tutoring for all subjects. The following two cases are typical examples.

CH8 realized the need to attend tutorials as early as in Secondary 4. Meanwhile, as a piano learner, she also had to spend a substantial amount of time for piano lessons and practices apart from schoolwork. She could only squeeze two evenings each week for tutorials, so she had to choose two subjects in which she needed help most (i.e. Physics and Chemistry), and enrolled in tutorials for these two subjects only during the school term. For other subjects, she tried her best to spare time for intensive tutorial courses during summer holidays.

Similar for CH10, she already attended tutorials for 5 subjects. “Besides mass tutoring classes and exercises, I also have to distribute time on school assignments and personal revision. If I enrolled in tutorials for all 7 subjects, almost no time would be remained for sleeping.” In fact, she had already suspended her violin lessons during Form 4 and 5 so as to release more time for schoolwork. “Thus, I chose not to enrol in tutorials for two subjects. One was Biology, which only

requires memorization; the other subject was Chinese, in which my performance was not bad among all subjects I was studying.”

From the above cases, we can see that non-enrolment in mass tutoring is not necessarily due to regarding mass tutoring as unhelpful. It may result from time or financial constraints. As a remedy to non-enrolment, most of them had borrowed tutorial notes from others for reference. We will further discuss this in Chapter 8.

6.4 Discussion

In Chapter 4, we have seen that students were aware of the uncertainties in their future study and career paths, and aspired for good examination grades and high academic qualifications in order to minimize the risks in their career prospects. In Chapter 5, we have seen that public examination results, followed by applied knowledge, were most valued by the students. Also, students showed suspicion or distrust towards daytime schooling, together with daytime school teachers and standard teaching materials in their effectiveness to enhance their learning and public examinations performance. Following these findings, it is unsurprising to see that students’ objectives of enrolling mass tutoring were consistent with their perception on their future and their values of studying.

As discussed in previous chapters, students were aware of the uncertainties along their future career path, and had strong intention in achieving good public examination results so as to minimize the likeliness of unfavourable outcomes in their academic and career paths. Nevertheless, risks and uncertainties do not only exist in students’ academic and career future, but are also embedded in the public

examination system, which is an expert system with the modern values, such as standardization and competition, embodied. For example, uncertainties are caused by norm-referenced system (such that candidates' examination results are not only subjected to their own ability, but also to the performance of other candidates in the same sitting), and the variance in questioning format and areas from year to year. In addition, uncertainties are also caused by the variety of educational background among candidates in public examinations: although they follow the same syllabi and sit the same examination, they have been trained in different ways, have been exposed to various reference materials, and have received different amount of assistance (including mass tutoring). In particular, the blooming enrolment in mass tutoring has radicalized the competitive environment, complicated the differential among students with various degree of access to examination-related materials, and aggravated the unpredictability of the likely examination results of a student, even with some knowledge in his level of mastery in a subject. In such circumstances, knowing well about one's familiarity and competence in a subject does not mean knowing well what result one will most likely to attain in public examination. Uncertainties in public examination have further complicated the situation encountered by the candidates, including students with higher capability. The loss of calculability, as a consequence, initiates a threat on the future-oriented mentality of students, as well as risk perceptions for their academic attainment and future prospects.

Under this complicated environment, students realized the possible inadequacy in promising their future study and career path with daytime schooling and their own effort. They had intention to look for any available measures to minimize the risk in public examinations and maximize their ontological security of their transition to

further studies and future career. Even some students did not find serious problems with daytime schooling and their schoolwork, they were still curious for searching available alternative means to further promote their future opportunities. When a particular means, say mass tutoring, was widely resorted to by senior secondary students in the territory, students still thought that they needed to try this means and see if this means really effective to them. Once locating the most effective measures, students did not mind exhausting their limited financial and time resources on these measures.

Among various available measures, mass tutoring offers examination-focused practical aids, including concise review on key contents of the syllabus, guidance and drills on techniques for answering and problem solving, and tips on questioning formats and topics, which are not commonly found in other kinds of private tuition and self-help study aids. This is why many students consider mass tutoring as the most effective way in terms of time and cost for enhancing their abilities to deal with examination papers, and increasing their chance to get good results in public examinations.

In addition, mass tutoring is also distinctive to other measures by offering students a window for knowing the qualities of competitors from other schools. In this way, students can have a clearer idea of their own abilities relative to other students, have a more solid idea of the rough standard required for their target grades, shorten the difference between other competitors and themselves, and avoid disadvantage compared to other competitors.

Peer effect is one of the possible causes for students' mass tutoring involvement.

Yet, it is too early to argue that they are blind trend followers without reflection on their own needs for mass tutoring enrolment, or without considering other available alternatives. From the findings of this study, the root of peer impact, rather than a fancy to a fashion, was the awareness of the need to diminish personal competitive disadvantage or to maximize personal competitive advantage among the pool of competitors, who might have appealed to advantageous resources like mass tutoring, in the individual-based competitive environment. Also, students, as a reflexive individual, were aware that mass tutoring is not always the best way. Many students did not receive mass tutoring for every subject. They had independent reflection on the necessity for mass tutoring for each subject. They were open-minded to other alternative ways, and reflexively judged whether these alternatives would better suit their own style, need and expectation than mass tutoring.

Even some students realized that mass tutoring did not necessarily promise good results, they still viewed receiving mass tutoring as an advantage by providing them with more reference resources and strengthening their psychological confidence. At least, students believed that, by attending mass tutoring, they would not be disadvantaged by being blind to some essential information which most other students had known.

Despite the fact that a large portion of interviewees, especially the high involvers, focused on the competitive instrumental values of mass tutoring, it should not be overlooked that a few other interviewees, particularly the low involvers, attended mass tutoring mainly for purposes which were not examination-oriented, such as acquisition of a supplementary knowledge source, enhancement of language proficiency, rectification of improper learning attitude, consolidation of what had

been learnt from daytime school, and maintenance of coursework performance in daytime school

In short, students had intention to seek measures to minimize the risks in attaining satisfactory public examination results, which were crucial to achieving ontological security in the uncertain competitive environment for further studies and career development. Mass tutoring, in students' view, was an effective measure for this purpose, since it could equip them with the necessary skills, provide them sense of security, and avoid them from disadvantage in public examinations. Despite mass tutoring was popular among senior secondary students, including their peers, the effectiveness to satisfy individual need was the real core concern of their mass tutoring enrolment.

However, despite offering an alternative for daytime schooling to students, the blossoming of mass tutoring in Hong Kong's context has protruded the difference in risk-averse capacity between students from different social classes. As seen in Section 6.3, for the students from families with poorer economic conditions, their opportunities to appeal to mass tutoring or other means to prevent unfavourable outcomes were constrained by limited financial resources.

CHAPTER SEVEN DECISION AND CHOICE

7.1 Decision of Mass Tutoring Enrolment

This section discusses the issues related to students' decision to enrol in mass tutoring. Firstly, who made the decision is investigated. Parents and teachers' attitude towards mass tutoring, and their impact, if any, on students' decision, are also explored. Secondly, the reasons why students opt for mass tutoring, but not other modes of tutoring or other types of study aids, are discussed.

Who are Decision Makers?

Among 41 interviewees, 39 of them made the decision on their own. They initiated the idea of attending mass tutoring because they were aware of their own need for mass tutoring.

For the other 2 students, the decision was made by parents (CH3) and class teacher (CL8) respectively. CH3 was a Secondary 4 science student from a district-wide top-ranked school. He performed well in junior forms, but was gradually lagging behind during Secondary 4. His father was extremely concerned about his worsening academic performance, so his father required him to go for mass tutoring, and he willingly followed his father's requirement. CL8 was a Secondary 4 repeater with concentration in arts subjects. He always failed in tests and examinations. His class teacher thought that mass tutoring offered him a second chance to listen to what had been lectured in daytime school, which might consolidate his memory on the lectured content, so his class teacher asked him to

attend tutorials.

Parents' Impact on Decision Making

21 interviewees' parents had not discussed with their children on whether their children should attend tutorials (AH2, AH3, AH8, AH9, AL3, AL4, AL7, AL8, AL9, CH2, CH4, CH5, CH6, CH7, CH9, CH10, CL2, CL4, CL6, CL9, CL10). For this group of interviewees, their parents neither showed their support nor objection to their children's decision to enrol in tutorials, always left the decision to their own, and respected their final decision. As AL9 said, her parents thought that their child was old enough to decide for her own sake.

On the other hand, excluding CH3, whose decisions were made by their parents, 18 interviewees' parents had discussed with their children on whether they should enrol in mass tutoring.

11 interviewees' parents had advised their children to enrol in mass tutoring (AH1, AH6, AL1, AL2, AL10, CH1, CH8, CL1, CL5, CL7, CL8). A common situation faced by these students was that their parents advised them to receive mass tutoring, usually for the weaker subjects, but their parents never forced them to do so. Neither did the students always follow what their parents recommended. For example, AL1 only enrolled in tutorials for less than half of the subjects she was studying, even her mother wanted her to receive mass tutoring for all subjects, since she thought that attending too many tutorials was exhausting and might not maximize the gain. Similarly, CL1's mother was lured by the advertisement of English tutors, which highlighted that many distinction achievers had attended their

classes. Even though his mother recommended, he decided not to receive mass tutoring for English, as he found it unnecessary.

There were 3 interviewees (AH5, AH7, AL5) whose parents, who had discussed about the need of mass tutoring with them, had not made any comments on whether they should go for mass tutoring before they decided to do so. When their parents knew their children's decision, they supported the decision and believed that mass tutoring was beneficial to their children's studies.

Meanwhile, there were 3 interviewees whose parents did not think that their children should attend any mass tutoring classes (AH4, AH10, AL6). The common reason for their negative stance towards mass tutoring was their belief daytime school teachers should have taught their children everything which their children need to know. Mass tutoring, in the view of these parents, was redundant. Therefore, they discouraged their children from enrolling in mass tutoring. However, albeit encountering discouragement from their parents, these three students still insisted to enrol in tutorials. One of them, AH10, had finally convinced his parents of the need for mass tutoring. The other two, AH4 and AL6, enrolled in tutorials even their parents disagreed on their decisions.

Furthermore, there were 2 interviewees (AL11, CL3) whose parents did not have a clear stance on whether their children should attend tutorials, yet they had shown concern on whether their children needed mass tutoring. For example, CL3's parents had asked him whether he needed mass tutoring for PA, the subject he had failed in school examination. But his parents did not have any inclination on whether or not he should attend tutorials.

Teachers' Impact on Decision Making

During this part of interview, some interviewees mentioned their daytime teachers' attitude towards mass tutoring. Their teachers had told them their thoughts about mass tutoring during lessons, parents' day or after-class conversation. Some teachers encouraged their students to enrol in tutorials (AH6, AL2, AL3, CH6, CH7, CH9, CL9, CL10). These teachers believed that mass tutoring might have positive effect to students' learning, especially for the academically weaker students. In particular, one of CH9's teachers even made a recommendation with a newspaper advertisement in a lesson.

On the contrary, some interviewees encountered teachers who discouraged students from attending tutorials (AH1, CH6, CH8, CL2, CL3). These teachers told their students that daytime schooling is sufficient for mastering the subject and preparing for public examination, and mass tutoring cannot deliver real knowledge to students. They did not want their students to skip the extra classes offered by daytime school teachers for attending tutorials. Some teachers were angry after discovering their students attending tutorials for the subject taught by them. For example, CL2's Biology teacher was not happy about her that she had been enrolled in a Biology tutorial run by a cram school. When she mentioned to her teacher during an after-class consultation that she was attending a tutorial for Biology, her teacher refused to provide help on her questions, and asked her to consult her cram school tutor with anger and discontent.

Although some interviewees had encountered teachers with clear stance

towards students' enrolment in mass tutoring, they emphasized that their decision were independent of teachers' comment. In other words, they did not always buy their teachers' views. They did not blindly follow their teachers' recommendation to enrol in tutorials for some subjects, nor changed their decision when encountering teachers' discouragement.

Other Study Aids

In fact, mass tutoring was not the only choice which secondary students can choose for enhancing their learning and academic performance. There were other modes of tutoring, such as individual tutoring and small-group tutoring. Other than tutoring, self-help study aids for senior secondary curricula, such as supplementary exercises and solution guides, were also available to the students. However, although some students adopted these alternative ways along with attending tutorials, receiving mass tutoring and other study aids together was not very common. For those who tried other study aids, they still most depended on mass tutoring.

Other Types of Tutoring

Individual tutoring was not considered as the best option by the interviewees. They thought that the general quality of private tutors is inferior to cram school tutors. Qualification was one of the concerned areas (CH1, CH3, CH5, CH8, CL3, CL9). As CH1 said,

“Most private tutors are only university students or even sixth-formers. Not all of them attained outstanding results in public examinations. Some private tutors only got 5 distinctions in the HKCEE, while some only got

3 distinctions.....their ability to help students get good grades in public examination is doubtful.” (CH1)

Experience was another concern. They thought that individual private tutors were generally less experienced in teaching than cram school tutors.

Besides, interviewees thought that private tutors’ guidance on public examination may not be as reliable as that provided by cram school tutors (AH2, AH5, AH8, AL2, AL3, AL4, CH8, CL3, CL9). To the interviewees’ understanding, private tutors have to prepare their teaching solely on their own effort, unlike cram school tutors, who usually have a team of assistants. In addition, most private tutors are on part-time basis, so usually they do not conduct depth research on the latest examination requirement and trend. Therefore, interviewees generally thought that private tutors are less familiar with the latest examination requirement, and less authoritative in offering examination techniques and tips than cram school tutors.

In addition, interviewees thought that private tutors were not as competent as cram school tutors for providing systematic guidance (AH3, AH5, CH2, CH5, CL10). Systematic notes were highly valued by the interviewees, since these notes could help them understand the subject content efficiently and effectively. However, as these interviewees knew, private tutors usually do not prepare their own set of systematic notes like cram school tutors do. They usually give guidance to their students based on the daytime teaching materials of their students. Therefore, in these interviewees’ view, receiving private individual tutoring is not very different from asking daytime school teachers for supplementary guidance after class.

Furthermore, to these interviewees' understanding, private individual tutoring is less common than mass tutoring among senior secondary students in Hong Kong (AH4, AH6, CL6, CL7). Not many of their acquaintances hired private tutors for enhancing their senior secondary studies. Due to the lower popularity, these interviewees did not have much confidence in private individual tutoring.

Apart from the above reasons, some interviewees did not prefer private individual tutoring because the tuition fee was more expensive but less cost effective (CL3, CL5, CL9), and an interviewee did not have private individual tutoring in sixth-form because of disappointing experience in this kind of tutoring in Secondary 4 and 5 (AH5).

In fact, 3 interviewees received other kinds of tutoring, yet they adopted these kinds of tutoring for one or two specific subjects only (AH1, CH8, CL2). CH8 and CL2 enrolled in small group tutoring for mathematical subjects, because they believed step-by-step close guidance was more effective for enhancing their understanding for mathematical subjects. But they did not think that small group tutoring also worked for other subjects. AH1, a highly involved student in mass tutoring, still opted for private individual tutoring for Pure Mathematics and Physics. Like CH8 and CL2, AH1 regarded close guidance as more effective for mathematically demanding subjects. More importantly, his private tutor, who had attended a mass tutoring class for Physics during the sixth form, delivered his teaching based on the lecture notes of the class. Therefore, AH1 could enjoy the advantages of close guidance from private individual tutoring and systematic lecture notes from mass tutoring at the same time.

Self-help Study Aids

Self-help study aids for senior secondary curricula were widely available in local bookstores. Nevertheless, not many interviewees resorted to these materials. Some interviewees had purchased these materials, but they did not use them frequently. Mass tutoring was still their highest priority choice. In the following, the reasons for not resorting to self-help study aids are illustrated.

Interviewees found self-help study aids not very helpful because these materials generally did not contain detailed guidance on the way of thinking to solve a problem, complete a task, or organize an answer (AH8, CL3, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL9). Although suggested answers were usually included, the principles behind the answers or the techniques involved to reach the answers were always missed out. Thus, it would become inefficient and time-consuming to dig out the core techniques and key points from these materials by the students themselves.

Besides, some interviewees pointed out that these materials might have been published for some years (AH2, AH3, AL4, CH6, CL5). They might not reflect the latest examination format and requirement. Examination tips for the coming year could not be found.

Furthermore, some interviewees were not confident in the effectiveness of their self-study ability (AH4, AH8, AL3, CH6, CL6, CL7, CL9). For them, listening to a lecture could facilitate their understanding and consolidate their memory on the content. Also, without supervision, students did not have the initiative to complete the supplementary practices.

For the above reasons, interviewees found self-help study aids less effective, so they preferred mass tutoring to self-help study aids.

7.2 Choosing Tutors

The first part of this section looks into the factors considered by the students when they selected their tutors. In the second part, the information sources consulted by the students during their selection process are discussed.

Personal Qualities of Tutors

When choosing tutors, a number of students mainly considered personal qualities of individual tutors.

Popularity

9 students (AH3, AH4, AH9, AL3, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL9, CL10) considered tutors' popularity when making choices. They commonly believed that a tutor must possess some merits in order to become well-known in the territory. In other words, they saw popularity as an evidence of high quality. Therefore, choosing the most popular tutors, they thought, was less risky.

Academic Qualification

7 students (AH10, AL2, CH1, CH3, CL1, CL3, CL9) particularly paid attention

to tutors' academic qualification when making choices. They tended to choose tutors with exceptionally high qualifications, such as master's or doctorate degree holders. Some might even concern the grades attained by the tutor for public examinations or university degrees. As CL1 said, "I chose Mr. L for Chemistry because he had got first class honours for his bachelor degree."

Although there were students concerning much on tutors' academic qualifications, 5 students (AH9, AL3, AL6, CH8, CL7) firmly stated that tutors' academic qualifications were never on their list of considered factors. They did not believe that tutors' academic qualification had any direct relationship to their quality of teaching, or whether their teaching fit their needs or expectation. If a tutor taught well, they never mind their tutors having low qualification. For instance, Mr. S is an English tutor without a university degree, but his student AL6 still chose him for the following reasons:

"High academic qualification had nothing to do with a tutor's quality of teaching. Mr. S is not a university graduate, but his teaching always focuses on public examination, and fits my need and expectation perfectly, so I have never minded of his lower qualification when choosing his class." (AL6)

Public Examination Results of Former Students

8 students (AH6, AH7, AL4, CH2, CH3, CH6, CL5, CL9) considered public examination results of tutors' former students as important when making their choices. They chose the tutors who had a large number of students with outstanding performance in previous public examinations. For example, CL9 chose Mr. S

because hundreds of his students got credits and even distinctions in a sitting. Similarly, CH2 chose Mr. C's Biology class because many of his students got distinctions, some of whom even got 10 distinctions.

However, 5 students (AH5, AL6, AL7, CL6, CL7) clearly stated that they did not concern much on the grades attained by the former students of a tutor. They did not believe that those students' outstanding results could be totally ascribed to their tutors' effort. Also, some students were aware that learning need might vary among different individuals, so, as AL6 said, "A tutor may be able to help many other students to get high grades in public examinations, but this does not necessarily mean that the same tutor can do the same on me".

Experience

Tutors' teaching experience was considered as an important factor for making choices by 8 students (AH7, AL2, CH7, CH9, CL3, CL4, CL10). They preferred tutors with longer teaching experience. Among these students, 2 students particularly preferred tutors with daytime teaching experiences. One of them, CL8, believed that tutors with past experience in teaching in daytime schools were more familiar with students' need and weaknesses. Another student, CH9, who was attending a first-tier daytime school, was particularly fond of tutors with experience in teaching in first-tier daytime schools, since he believed tutors with such experience were more familiar with the special needs of the first-tier school students, including him.

Besides teaching experience, few circumspect students also took tutors' other relevant experience into account when making choices. Experience in marking or

question setting were considered by two students (AH1, CL8) because they regarded these experiences as a guarantee of tutors' familiarity with the examination requirement. Experience of writing a widely-used textbook was considered by CL1, because he viewed this as an evidence of the tutor's familiarity with the examination syllabus.

Other Views

While many students considered tutors' personal qualities when choosing tutors, 4 students (CH4, CH7, AL6, CL6) clearly stated that they did not pay much attention to tutors' personal qualities. Rather, they valued more on the comment on tutors' performance from those who had attended their classes.

Qualities of Tutorials

In the previous paragraphs, we have seen students who considered tutors' personal qualities when making choices. Apart from tutors' personal qualities, students also considered features and qualities of tutorial classes. Examples are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Teaching Style

Teaching style was a criterion adopted by 12 interviewees (AH1, AH5, AH6, AH10, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL6, AL7, CH8, CH5, CL1) for the selection of tutors. They preferred tutors whose teaching style made them most comfortable. For example, AH1, a sixth-form student with high involvement in mass tutoring, always

emphasized the importance of “fitting tone and style between the tutor and the student” when describing his criteria for choosing tutors. He (and also some others, including AH10) disliked the tutors who always wasted time on jokes which were not relevant to the subject matter of the course. Other aspects of teaching styles concerned by the students include presentation skills (CH5) and teaching pace (CL2).

Course Content

Course content was considered by 10 students (AH1, AH5, AH6, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL5, AL9, AL10, CH8). They considered whether the course content focused on their individual weakness. For example, AL10 preferred English tutorial courses with particular focus on writing, which was her weakest area in the subject, while CH8 looked for Chinese tutorial courses with particular focus on the speaking component for the same reason. Besides individual weaknesses, whether the course content focused on the public examination was commonly considered by these students. Most of them preferred examination-oriented courses. For example, AL5 did not choose a popular Economics tutor Mr. K, because she found that Mr. K’s course included contents not required by the examination. On the other hand, few students preferred tutors who did not only teach examination techniques, but also the necessary subject knowledge. For example, AH1 chose Mr. C’s English class because not only did he teach answering techniques, but also taught language items, such as grammatical knowledge and useful phrases.

Delivery Format

Delivery format was considered by 2 students, AH1 and CL8. They preferred live lectures by the tutor rather than pre-recorded ones, as the former is more interactive. Students may directly ask questions and get immediate response when encountering difficulties in understanding the lecture.

Quality of Tutorial Notes

In Chapter 6, it has been mentioned that getting reference notes are one of the main reasons why students enrolled in mass tutoring. Thus, not surprisingly, 14 students considered quality of reference notes as a criterion to judge which tutors' classes were more worth attending. They considered whether the reference notes were useful for public examination, whether they were suitable to their individual level of competence, whether they did not include too much irrelevant content.

Examination Tips

Examination tips were also the target of attending tutorials for some students. Thus, for these students (AL11, CL5), they concerned much on whether the tutors provided accurate examination tips when selecting their tutors.

After-class Support

5 students (AH1, AL1, CH8, CL3, CL5) considered the availability of good after-class support when making choices. For example, AH1, AL1 and CL5 chose

their English tutors because they provided many after-class exercises and practices. Their tutor even welcomed their students to submit their writing for marking and feedback. Similarly, CH8 chose Mr. C as his Geography tutor because Mr. C was willing to mark their students' answer to essay-type questions. Besides after-class marking services, after-class online support was also a credit in the students' view. CL3 selected Mr. N as his Economics tutor because Mr. N had established an Internet discussion forum for his students and responded to students' questions readily and clearly.

Other Factors

Apart from considering the abovementioned qualities of tutors and classes, some students also considered other factors.

4 students (AL5, CL2, CL6, CL7) considered which cram school the tutor was working at. If they had a good impression on the teaching quality of a cram school, they tended to choose the classes taught by the tutors of this cram school. On the contrary, if they had a bad impression on a cram school, they did not put the tutors of this cram school into consideration.

Supporting Team was also considered as a merit of a tutor by a student. AH1 paid attention to whether the tutor had a supporting team who provided assistance on tutors' preparation of course materials and other teaching affairs.

Factors of convenience, such as time, location and tuition fee, also had impact on few students' choices for tutors. However, these factors were of least priority.

When the students could not differentiate which one was better among the choices, they went for the class with matching schedule, nearer venue or/and cheaper tuition fee.

Sources of Information about Qualities of Tutors and Tutorials

The factors which students considered during their selection of tutors have been discussed in the previous paragraphs. However, how did the students know whether the tutors satisfied their criteria or fulfilled their expectation? Which sources of information the students most depended on? In the following paragraphs, the sources of information about the tutors are discussed.

Peers

Most students sought advice from their schoolmates, friends or other acquaintances, who were studying at the same level or having recently completed the level (AH1, AH2, AH3, AH5, AH6, AH7, AH8, AH9, AH10, AL1, AL2, AL3, AL4, AL6, AL7, AL8, AL9, AL10, AL11, CH1, CH5, CH2, CH3, CH6, CH7, CH8, CH9, CH10, CL2, CL3, CL5, CL6, CL9, CL10). In fact, there might be more than one kind of opinions among their schoolmates and friends. When the students encountered this situation, different students had different preferences when deciding whose opinions should be followed. Some of them relied more on opinions and recommendations from senior schoolmates, who were regarded as having richer experience in mass tutoring and clearer idea about the helpfulness of the classes to their learning or examination preparation (AH6, AH8, AL3, AL4, CH6, CH9), some of them took the opinions from good performance schoolmates or friends from

top-ranked schools (AL9, CH2, CH8, CH9), some of them followed the opinions from peers with closer relationship with themselves (AL11, CH8), while some of them believed those who have attended many tutorials (CL3).

In contrast, seeking advice from parents or teachers was very rare among the interviewees. Although parents and school teachers had more life experiences, they did not have recent relevant experiences in attending tutorials. So, in the students' eyes, they were less familiar with the most updated condition in the cram school classes, and thus they were not ideal target for seeking advice on the matter.

Internet

Alternatively, some students sought information from other channels. Internet forum was considered one major information source by 7 students (AH7, AH10, AL4, AL10, CH1, CH8, CL9). From the internet forum, students could have a more comprehensive idea by reading the description and comment on the teaching of various cram school tutors from those who were beyond their circle of acquaintance.

Advertisement and Promotional Materials

Advertisement and promotional leaflets were widely available to students. A number of interviewees viewed these as supplementary information sources, yet many of them denied their dependence on these sources when choosing tutors (AH2, AH3, AH5, AH6, AH7, AL3, AL5, AL6, AL7, AL8, AL11, CH2, CH4, CH7, CH8, CH9, CH10, CL1, CL2). These interviewees realized that every promotional material praises the tutors and the classes. Exaggeration may be contained in the

description. They are not a fair and accurate account of the teaching performance of the tutors. Enrolment by high achievers is a common highlight in the promotional materials, yet most interviewees did not think that the success of these high achievers should be totally ascribed to their tutorial attendance. Therefore, interviewees did not think that advertisement and promotional leaflets have any reference value for comparing the tutors and making choices. To some of them (AH1, AH10, AL2, CH8), promotional materials were an information source for knowing tutors' qualifications and experiences only. After all, they depended more on schoolmates' recommendation than promotional materials.

Lecture Notes and Recordings

Tutorial notes were another useful information source for the students. They borrowed tutorial notes by various tutors from their schoolmates or friends before finalizing their choices (AH2, AH4, AH6, AH7, AH8, AL4, AL7, AL11, CH5). In their view, tutorial notes could accurately reflect tutors' teaching approach and focus. They were also useful references for comparing the suitability of various tutors to their individual learning need and expectation.

Besides tutorial notes, audio recording of the lectures was also an information source about tutors' teaching (AH7). AH7 had some schoolmates who habitually recorded their tutors' lectures. By borrowing and listening to the audio records, he could have a better idea of how a particular tutor's teaching was like, and whether this tutor's teaching suited him.

First-person Experience

First-person experience was considered the most reliable way to know the teaching of tutors and to see if the teaching style and course content were suitable to them (AH1, AH2, AH6, AH8, AH9, AL1, AL3, AL5, AL6, AL11, CH3, CH4, CH6, CH8, CH10, CL1, CL2, CL3, CL5). Therefore, for those who had attended tutorials before (especially the sixth-form students who had attended tutorials in Secondary 4 and 5), past experience in mass tutoring was a crucial guide for making their choices. For those without any experiences in mass tutoring, they acquired first-person experience by attending free-of-charge trial lessons or short-term summer courses.

7.3 Discussion

According to the late modernity thesis, individuals have to continuously and reflexively “communicate” with their external environment through their daily life experience. In a highly modernized society, traditions, past experience (of the others) and professionals are not totally reliable for providing help to cater the individual need. Life experiences and expectations of individuals in this society may have distinct variation. In addition, there are a great variety of available options for life-choices. Confronting these conditions, individuals have to make decisions and choices, especially those related to the security of their life-chances, on their own. Since they need to decide and choose for their future security, and the decisions and choices are made by themselves, the sense of accountability for their own choices and the sense of responsibility for the outcome of the individuals have been heightened.

In the case of making decisions on mass tutoring and choices on tutorial classes, students were exposed to a diversity of study aids and tutorial classes. At the same time, parents and teachers did not have relevant experience in mass tutoring, so the students did not view them as reliable authority in providing guidance on their decisions and choices. In such a condition, students had to make their own judgement and choice among the diversity of available tutorial classes. Furthermore, from the interviewees' responses, many parents let their children to decide and choose on their own, and respected their children's decisions and choices. This further promoted the students' self-responsibility and accountability for their decisions and choices.

Although some students' decisions to enrol in mass tutoring were made by their parents or teachers, they did not passively follow parents' advice, and did not arbitrarily choose a tutor in order to fulfil their parents' requirement. Rather, they carefully chose the tutors who suited their needs and expectations best on their own. This demonstrated the students' awareness of their self-responsibility of their life-choices, which is a sign of individualization and individual reflexivity.

If an individual has some recent relevant experiences regarding a certain life-choice, these experiences may help him understand whether this choice satisfies his personal need, and may provide some guidance for his further choices. This is consistent with the cases of some Form 6 and 7 interviewees who had considered their past experience of attending tutorials in Form 4 and 5 when making their choices.

Despite this, everyone had to make their first decision and choice at the initial

stage when they didn't have any prior relevant experiences: experiences in studying senior form courses, experiences in attending tutorials, and experiences in having other kinds of aids. Even when students were familiar with their own learning need, they still needed to make their first decisions and choices without any reference from their own experience. Although there were a few interviewees who did not make serious consideration and detailed comparison during choosing tutorials for the first time, majority of the interviewees had sought advice from others before choosing tutors, especially for those who did not decide to enrol in more than one tutorial class for the same subject. Schoolmates (from the same form and upper forms) and acquaintances (including friends and relatives) attending or having recently studied senior forms were the most common advisers for them. They rarely sought advice for choosing tutors from parents or school teachers, as discussed before, parent and teachers did not have recent relevant experiences in attending tutorials. So, in the students' eyes, they were less familiar with the most updated condition in the cram school classes, and thus they were not ideal target for seeking advice on the matter. Promotional materials did not affect students' choices much, because these materials were too similar that they always highlighted the credits of the classes and tutors only, so they were far from an accurate depiction of the actual condition. From this phenomenon, it can be derived that students, without prior personal experience in attending tutorials, were more likely to seek advice from people who were facing similar situations as themselves and had very recent personal experience in attending tutorials. They regarded their own personal experience, if any, would resemble to those of schoolmates and acquaintances, so the latter was a useful reference for making their choices of classes and tutors.

Students believed that everyone can achieve the career target s/he likes

irrespective to his/her social background, or in other words, they did not think that their career paths were confined by their background. This resulted in the diversity in their career plan. Nevertheless, regardless of their diverse career outlook, the subjects studied by the senior secondary students were more or less the same, they had to follow the same rule in order to excel in the examination, so that their learning need was not as diverse as their career goal. In this case, students could still get some reference for their decision of cram schooling and their choice of tutors from the experience of their peers. Socioeconomic background, social class, race, etc. were not the bases for their variance in choices. Rather, personal quality and expectation have become significant in determining their pattern of choices. Since students tended to follow the decisions and choices of those with similar academic ability, learning ways and academic expectation, resemblance in their decisions and choices resulted. In short, availability of economic resources is still crucial to a students' decision to enrol in mass tutoring, but personal character and vision is more significant to the choices of tutors.

From students' feedback, schoolmates, friends, family members and relatives of the same age were the major sources for advice on tutorial choices. Proximity in relationship was still a main factor for considering from whom one should seek help. Yet, it should also be noted that some students tried to approach someone who were beyond their ascribed or established relationship or acquaintance. Since those with similar academic ability and expectation might exist beyond their circle, or might even not exist in their circle, they tried to search for students from other school from different channels. In the contemporary information era, they might even refer to the comment from students from other schools on internet forum, who did not have face-to-face contact with themselves.

Self-reflexivity is also revealed by the fact that students intended to evaluating the suitability of a tutor or a tutorial to their individual need and expectation by seeking first-hand information as far as possible, even with limited resources, and did not totally dependent on second-handed information. Real personal experiences were significant to the students' choices. Some cram schools offered free-of-charge trial lessons for those who were interested in enrolling in tutorials during summer. Among the interviewees, it was not uncommon that students, without previously attending any tutorials, attended these classes before making their final choices. They believed that this was the best way to see whether a class or a teacher satisfied their need and expectation. Similarly, some students acquired first-hand materials, including notes and audio-recordings of the lecture, for judging the suitability of the tutorial class before finalizing their choices.

The criteria of selecting tutors, as discussed in the previous section, corresponded to the qualities of a good teachers discussed in Chapter 5, and the expectations on mass tutoring discussed in Chapter 6. For the choice of tutor, they preferred those who were most familiar with the syllabus content, examination requirement, and most capable to equip the students with the necessarily techniques for sitting public examinations. For the choice of tutorial class, they preferred those with most effective aids for public examinations. These criteria actually embodied the detraditionalized, instrumental values on senior secondary studies, which have been addressed in Chapter 5.

Nevertheless, it should also be noted that, for many interviewees, even in the information age when interpersonal communication can be realized in a “virtual”

way by the advanced information technology, a kind of “expert system” in Giddens’ terminology, and does not necessarily depend on face-to-face interaction, many students still preferred tutors who could have face-to-face interaction with students through live lectures to those who just provided video lectures or online after-class support. Face-to-face contact was still a major factor for students’ choices. The expansion of technological application to human interaction had still not faded the significance of face-to-face contact for teacher-student interaction in the students’ view.

To conclude, students were not completely isolated during their decisions for mass tutoring enrolment and their choices for tutors. As revealed in the study, schoolmates, friends and relatives were their common referees for their decisions and choices. The core concerns for their choice of tutors were highly similar among tutees. Nevertheless, under the radical modernization development, as a result of the variety of available behavioural options and the breakdown of institutional barrier by speedy information flow, socioeconomic background was no longer the determining factor on their decisions and choices. Personal factors, such as academic potential, academic expectation and learning approach, have become more crucial in determining their decisions and choices. Individual has become the institutional unit for students’ worldview, mentality and behaviour. Together with the circulation of plentiful but probably contradicting pieces of information, every actor has raised their awareness of self-responsibility for their decisions and choices. These are the consequences suggested by the core argument of the individualization thesis.

CHAPTER EIGHT TRUST ON DAYTIME SCHOOLING AND MASS TUTORING

In this chapter, we look into the issue of trust on daytime schooling and mass tutoring by the senior secondary students receiving mass tutoring. In the first section, students' trust on their daytime school teachers and cram school tutors is discussed by exploring their feelings on their teachers'/tutors' efficacy of enhancing students' learning, their teachers'/tutors' familiarity of students' learning needs, and the usefulness of reference materials provided by their teachers/tutors. In the second section, the phenomenon of withdrawal or change of tutorials by some interviewees is investigated so as to further clarify the nature and level of these students' trust on mass tutoring.

8.1 Degree of Trust on Daytime School Teachers and Cram School Tutors

This section discusses the degree of trust on cram school tutors and daytime school teachers of the interviewees in terms of the effectiveness of enhancing academic performance and the familiarity on students' learning needs. The reasons for receiving mass tutoring for those who trusted daytime school teachers more, and for those who trusted daytime school teachers and cram school tutors equally, are also explored.

Considering Tutors as More Trustworthy

In terms of enhancing academic performance, 26 interviewees (AH1, AH3, AH4, AH5, AH6, AH7, AH8, AH10, AL3, AL4, AL5, AL6, AL7, AL8, AL9, AL10,

AL11, CH2, CH4, CH5, CH6, CH8, CH9, CH10, CL4, CL9) trusted cram school tutors more. They comprised the majority the advanced level groups (17 of 21) and the majority of the higher involvement groups (15 of 20). In particular, one interviewee (CH2) even regarded cram schools as her *de facto* daytime schools. In addition, there were 3 interviewees (AL2, CL1, CL3) trusted cram school tutors more for some of the subjects for which they received mass tutoring. In the following, we look at the factors leading to the higher level of trust on cram school tutors in enhancing academic performance by the interviewees.

Effectiveness of teaching approach was a factor which led to the trust on cram school tutors. Clarity and organization were the main concerns on the teaching approaches of their teachers and tutors (AH1, AH10, AL9, CH1, CH5, CH10, CL4). Interviewees regarded cram school tutors' teaching as more effective because of their explanation on lectures was clearer. They often provided more convincing illustration with supporting evidences and examples. Their lectures and tutorial notes were well organized and less confusing. Besides, conciseness and concentration were other credits of cram school tutors (AH5, AH10, AL4, AL10, CH2, AL3, CL4, CL9). Although they often focused the key points only, details in their explanation were not lost. Students appreciated their tutors taught in such an intensive but effective way. In addition, cram school tutors provided more extra references which were useful for learning (AH6, AL4). For example, AH6 appreciated his CL&C tutor because he mentioned many real-life examples relevant to the prescribed cultural texts, while his daytime school teacher did not do so. These examples helped him to understand the cultural texts more thoroughly.

Fitness of teaching approach to individual students' need was another factor

leading to a higher degree of trust on cram school tutors by the students. The first aspect of fitness was suitability to students' level of competence (AL10, CH1). Daytime school teachers' teaching might be too easy or difficult for some students, so they might not manage to enhance students' learning effectively. For cram school tutors, because tutorial classes specially designed for various level of competence were available, students might choose the class which suited their level most in order to enhance their learning to the maximum extent. The second aspect was the effectiveness to promote students' learning interest (AH5). Students found that daytime school teachers' lessons were often boring, while cram school tutors could teach in a more interesting and attractive way so as to catch the audiences' attention to their lessons.

Apart from the teaching approach, better personal qualifications and experiences were also the sources for the students' higher degree of trust on their tutors (AH5, AH8). Students felt cram school teachers more trustworthy because they were more knowledgeable than daytime school teachers. As AH5 said, her Pure Mathematics teacher was always unsure about his calculation steps during in-class demonstrations. This had lowered her confidence in the accuracy of his teaching. Besides, some cram school tutors had higher qualifications which led students' trust on their capacity to deliver reliable knowledge. As AH8 said, once her Biology tutor Mr. C taught something contradicting with her daytime school teacher's version. She finally subscribed to Mr. C's version, because Mr. C was a doctorate degree holder while her daytime school teacher was not. Having longer teaching experience than daytime school teachers was also a factor leading to students' trust on cram school tutors. Since some cram school tutors were experienced teachers, students thought that they had broader exposure and were more capable to cure students' weaknesses

on learning.

Public examination was the major concern of secondary schooling for many students. Thus, the capability of the teachers or tutors to equip them for public examination was the central criterion to evaluate whether these teachers/tutors were trustworthy in enhancing their academic performance. This is illustrated in the following paragraphs.

The fact that cram school tutors provided the essential clues for public examination, while most daytime school teachers did not, was one of the reasons that students thought the former as more trustworthy. Cram school tutors explicitly told students the key points needed for answering the public examination papers, and filtered the unnecessary information (AH6, AL5, CH8, CL4). They might even integrate the tutorial notes with official marking schemes (AH10). This was particularly helpful for subjects with essay-type questions, because the tutors clearly told students what and how much should be included in the essay. Without clear guidance, students would probably perform worse in real examinations, even they might have a pretty good mastery on the subject. Apart from the required key points, useful answering techniques (such as writing styles and problem solving shortcuts) and forecast on real examination questions (or commonly known as “tips”), were other clues commonly provided by cram school tutors (AH6, AL3, AL4, AL5, AL11).

Why the students regarded cram school tutors as trustworthy sources of clues for public examination? In the students’ view, cram school tutors were specialists in analyzing past examination papers and tracking questioning trends (AH1, AH6,

AH10, AL5, AL6, AL7, AL8, CH5, CH6, CH10). Some of them were even authors of popular examination references and practices. With detailed and systematic analysis, these tutors were more capable to crack the secrets of public examinations. They might even have a team of assistant for public examination analysis. Moreover, some cram school tutors had working experiences related to public examinations, which their daytime school teachers might not have. For example, AH1 trusted more on his Biology tutor Mr. C because he had occupied a leading position in question setting and marking. In addition, cram school tutors had sound record for the outstanding public examination results achieved by their former students. Daytime school teachers' performance in teaching also contributed students' impression that they were unfamiliar with the latest public examination requirement (AH1, AH5, AL4, AL7, AL10, AL11, CH2, CH9). For example, CH9 discovered that his Chemistry and Biology teachers used some terminologies in lessons which, albeit not necessarily wrong, were considered as outmoded and not accepted by the latest marking schemes. Therefore, students had an impression that cram school tutors had a more accurate understanding on the official requirement of public examinations than their daytime school teachers.

Other Views

On the other hand, there were 6 interviewees (AH2, AH9, AL1, CH3, CL2, CL5, CL10) equally trusted both cram school tutors and daytime school teachers, 4 interviewees equally trusted both cram school tutors and daytime school teachers for some of the subjects for which they received mass tutoring (AL2, CL1, CL3), and 5 interviewees trusted more on their daytime school teachers (CH1, CH7, CL6, CL7, CL8). Their considerations were similar to those who trusted more on cram school

tutors, i.e. quality of teaching approach, personal qualifications and experiences, availability of examination clues, and familiarity with examination requirement.

On quality of teaching approach, interviewees did not regard their daytime school teachers less trustworthy because they did not think that their daytime school teachers' teaching techniques were worse than cram school tutors' (CH1, CH7, CL1, CL3, CL7). Here is CL1's case:

"I think that my Chemistry teacher is more trustworthy than my Chemistry tutor Mr. M. My daytime school teacher teaches very well. He was the winner of the outstanding teaching award issued by EMB before. On the other hand, my tutor Mr. M's teaching skills was poorer. He failed to explain every calculation steps in detail. I have found no differences between attending his lectures and practicing by myself." (CL1)

On personal qualifications, interviewees believed that daytime school teachers were adequately qualified for delivering their specialized subject at senior secondary level, albeit a few cram school tutors had higher academic qualification than most daytime school teachers (AH2, AH9, CH1). For example, AH2 attended mass tutoring classes for Chemistry and Biology taught by doctorate holders, while his Chemistry and Biology teachers in daytime school were master degree holders. Although the latter were not as highly qualified as his cram school tutors, he believed master degree holders should already well-qualified for teaching them, and he never doubted the accuracy and reliability of the knowledge they delivered. Thus, he trusted both daytime school teachers and cram school tutors equally.

On personal experience, interviewees did not view daytime school teachers as less trustworthy because they were also experienced in teaching (CL1, CL2, CL5).

For example, CL2 trusted both her daytime school teachers and cram school tutors for Biology because both of them had rich experiences in teaching the subject. In particular, CL5's English teacher had teaching experiences in both cram school and daytime school.

On availability of examination clues, these students did not view daytime school teachers as less trustworthy than cram school tutors because the former also provided examination clues like what the latter did (AH9, AL1, CL2, CL3, CL5, CL10). Their daytime school teachers reviewed past examination questions after finishing each topic, and gave them hints for handling those questions. Some of their daytime school teachers even told students clearly which topics had higher chance to appear in the real examination, the approximate required scores for attaining each grade, or the differences in coverage and requirement between old and new syllabi.

On familiarity with examination requirement, these students did not trust their daytime school teachers less because they believed their daytime school teachers were also familiar with the latest examination syllabi and requirement (AH9, AL1, CL2, CL3, CL5). Their daytime school teachers seriously analyzed the questioning trend and marking schemes. They also had experience in marking the answer scripts. In particular, for subjects with recently revised syllabi and examination formats, these students did not believe that cram school teachers would have any advantages over daytime school teachers. They just regarded both of them were exploring the new requirement at the same time.

If these students trusted their daytime school teachers, why did not they merely attend the daytime school lessons, but also attended tutorials run by cram schools?

The following are the two main reasons accounting for such act.

The first reason was to get extra information for public examinations (CH3, CH7, CL2, CL6). Although essential subject knowledge and even examination clues had already been provided by daytime school teachers, they were still afraid of being disadvantaged if they missed any information about the examination which might have been known by the tutees. Therefore, these students still enrolled in tutorials so as to look for other available information, especially alternative tactics to answer examination questions and extra examination tips, which might further help them in their examination preparation.

The second reason was that daytime school teachers and cram school tutors were not good at all aspects in enhancing students' learning. Each of them might have credits in a particular aspect, but not the other (AH2, AL2, CL2, CL10). For example, AH2 trusted his Chemistry and Biology daytime school teachers for their academic qualifications. He regarded everything his teachers taught as correct. However, ability to deliver correct knowledge does not necessarily mean that the mode of delivery is effective. For the effectiveness of teaching approach, cram school tutors did better. Similarly, AL2's daytime school teachers had real experience in marking public examination scripts, so they were regarded as familiar with the examination requirement. In spite of this, cram school tutors were better for systematic classification and analysis on past examination questions. In addition, on teaching approach, CL2 thought that daytime school teachers already did very well in caring for individual weaknesses, because daytime school teachers had interpersonal contact with individual students, yet cram school tutors could provide an intensive and focused review on the subject knowledge and examination

techniques. This explains why these students wanted to experience different teaching approaches.

8.2 Withdrawal and Change of Tutorials: Real Trust on Cram School Tutors?

In the previous section, I have compared students' trust on daytime school teachers and cram school tutors. Among the interviewed tutees, many of them trusted more on tutors, who were regarded as more competent in providing help on students' studies and more familiar with students' learning needs. However, it was not rare that students changed their tutors, or even withdrew from their class in the halfway. If the students trusted their tutors, why did they choose to leave them? In addition, some students chose to attend more than one tutors' class for the same subject at the same time, while some students zealously collected lecture notes by other tutors for reference. What/who did these tutees really trust? In the following paragraphs, the pattern of the interviewees' withdrawal and change of tutorials will be depicted, followed by probing into the reasons behind their change or withdrawal.

Withdrawal or Change of Tutorials: Patterns and Reasons

Among the interviewees, 14 of them (AH1, AH2, AH5, AL3, AL5, AL6, AL9, AL11, CH1, CH7, CH8, CH10, CL1, CL5) had changed their tutors for some of the subjects for which they were receiving mass tutoring. When they decided to change, they always chose the classes and tutors offered by another cram school. Besides, 12 of them (AH2, AH3, AH4, AH5, AH9, AL1, AL8, CH8, CL2, CL5, CL6, CL10) had withdrawn from the tutorial classes attended in the midway. There were cases of

withdrawal shortly after commencement of the class. For example, CL2 left her Chemistry tutorial after having attended 4 weekly lectures; CL6 left her Chinese tutorial one month after the commencement. After withdrawal, they did not look for replacement, and continued to study the subject without mass tutoring. In the following, we will look into the reasons for their withdrawal of the original tutorials.

As discussed in the previous section, most students cared about whether the tutorials match their individual learning need, their level of mastery in the subject, and their preference on teaching styles. While attending a tutorial, they continuously reviewed the suitability of the class to their own specific need, level and preference. If they discovered that the class did not cater to their individual need, level and preference, they would not choose this tutor next time, or even quitted the class in the halfway.

On individual learning need, a number of students quitted the class because they found that the tutorial could not focus on their specific learning need or weaknesses. AL6's withdrawal from Mr. C's English tutorial class is an example. Before taking the class, she expected that the class could expose her to some useful examination techniques for the UE examination. After attending the class, the class disappointed her, as Mr. C spent a very large proportion of lecture time on introducing advanced vocabulary, while examination techniques were not emphasized in this class. Since Mr. C's class couldn't meet her utmost need for UE, she quitted the class after attending few lectures. Besides examination techniques, tutorial notes were also a need for the students. Likewise, some students left their classes since the notes provided were too simplistic or unclear (AH9, CH9, CL2), or no supplementary exercises were provided (CL2).

On individual level of mastery in the subject, a number of students quitted the class because they found that the tutorial classes were either too easy or too difficult for them. For example, CH1, an elite student with high involvement in mass tutoring and high goals for examination results, had quitted two English classes and one Physics class, because what were taught in these classes were too easy for him. He had already mastered those contents, so the classes could not add any value to his studies. AL9, an academic weaker sixth former, quitted the English class by Mr. C because she found the vocabulary taught was too difficult to her. Likewise, some students quitted the class because there was no significant improvement in schoolwork after attending the classes (CH8, CL5).

On individual preferences, teaching style not satisfying students' individual preferences was another reason for quitting. A very common complaint on the tutors was that the tutors always wasted too much time on telling unfunny jokes, which did not satisfy their preference on tutors with serious attitude (AL5, CL6); while some students preferred a more interesting and innovative teaching style, but the tutors' teaching was so boring, not much different from what their daytime school teachers did, and could not catch their attention (AH9, AL8, CH10). Moreover, some others left the class because they felt the tutors' pace of teaching was too slow, which did not meet their preference for an intensive and efficient teaching style (CH8, CL5), while some students complaint their tutors' explanation was not detailed enough (CL1).

Apart from mismatch with individual particularities, some students withdrew from tutorials because of the tutors' personal incompetence, such as poor knowledge

in the subject, or poor presentation skills in lectures (CH1, CH9).

Some interviewees quitted the classes because they were suspicious of what the tutor taught. They compared it their own understanding on the syllabus and examination requirements, or what their daytime school teachers told them. AL3 made the following comment on an examination technique taught by her English tutor:

“Mr. F taught us that we need not give an oral summary of the given article for individual presentation in oral examination. He suggested us to spend all the time of individual presentation on expressing personal view on the article. However, this does not match my understanding on the examination requirement and what I and my schoolmates usually do during in-class practices. To my best understanding, a summary of the article is needed. Marks may be lost for individual presentations without a summary. So, following Mr. F’s advice, I think, is too risky.” (AL3)

Similarly, CL2 was not confident that the tutorial notes written by her Chemistry tutor covered everything she needed to know for the public examination:

“Mr. T’s tutorial notes only include simplistic illustrations on the main concepts. He told us that those are enough for fulfilling the syllabus requirement. However, my daytime school teacher told us that some extended issues, which are not clearly mentioned in the syllabus but relevant to the topic, may appear in the actual public examination. I tend to believe my daytime teachers’ comment and thought the tutorial notes inadequate.” (CL2)

When asked about the reason for quitting the original classes, a number of interviewees replied that other tutors better suited their needs or fulfil their expectations (AH2, AH5, AL11, CH1, CH10). For example, AH2 left the original

English tutor since he had discovered another tutor with more effective teaching: “Mr. S’s class not only more focusing on examination techniques, but also providing writing practices to the students. He even marked students’ writing with detailed feedback.” (AH2) This showed that these students did not completely trust their tutor. Even having enrolled in a tutor’s class, they still kept an eye on other tutors’ news and compare the teaching of different tutors.

Being dissatisfied by a tutorial, students had two different strategies for dealing with the situation. The first strategy was joining another class instructed by a different tutor. They either switched to another tutor whom they thought more capable to address their individual particularity, or repeated the process of searching for tutors.

Alternatively, some students eventually stopped receiving mass tutoring after unsatisfactory experiences. They either found mass tutoring unhelpful, or had discovered more effective way to improve their studies. A typical example for the former is CL5: she tried different English tutors, but she found neither of these tutors’ teaching had suited her English level. What they taught was either too easy or too difficult to her. Since the tutorials were not very helpful for her English learning, she gave up all the tutorials for the subject. For the latter, the most common alternative way was self-studying lecture notes of tutorials, which were available from their schoolmates, friends or seniors.

Collecting Notes of Other Tutorials

Among the interviewed students, 15 students (AH1, AH2, AH3, AH4, AH6,

AH9, AL6, AL7, AL11, CH1, CH9, CL1, CL5, CL9, CL10) had acquired the lecture notes from tutorials which they did not enrol, or exchanged different tutorial notes with schoolmates or friends. Not only did they collect notes for subjects without tutoring, but also notes for subjects with tutoring written by different tutors.

For those could not attend tutorials for some subjects due to various limitations, these tutorial notes were acted as compensatory substitutes. On the other hand, for those who had already been attending tutorials, tutorial notes by other tutors could provide them an additional reference. As discussed in the previous chapter, the students believed that with various reference materials, they would get a more complete picture of the examination syllabus, and avoid any biased understanding of the examination requirement. An analogy by CH9 can reflect their mentality:

“Similar to practising martial arts, following only one school, say Huashan, is inadequate. One should also follow Shaolin, Wudang, Emei, etc.¹¹, then he will become the strongest. In this way, one can maximize the gain in limited time, and considerably minimize the possibility of failure.” (CH9)

Also, these notes were useful information sources for comparing the teaching among different tutors for the same subject. They were particularly useful for choosing potential tutors, and deciding whether switch of tutor was necessary.

Multiple Attendances in Different Tutorials

In fact, there were 2 interviewees (AH2, AH6) who attended more than one

¹¹ Huashan, Shaolin, Wudang and Emei are sects in Chinese martial arts.

tutor's class for the same subject simultaneously. Both of them were advanced level students and had high involvement in mass tutoring. The reason for following this tuition pattern was that they were aware that no tutors were all-rounders. A tutor might be good at a particular topic or paper, but not everything about the syllabus and examination. As AH2 said:

“I attended two different Physics tutorial classes at the same time. The tutors of these two classes, Mr. S and Mr. C, are the most popular Physics tutors among the sixth formers and have the best reputation in town. Despite this, Mr. S is stronger in teaching Mechanics and Atomic Physics, while Mr. C is stronger in teaching Waves and E&M. By attending both tutors' classes, my gain can be maximized.” (AH2)

8.3 Discussion

Many interviewees trusted their cram school tutors more than their daytime school teachers for enhancing their academic performance. On the other hand, there were also interviewees who trusted their daytime school teachers more, or trusted their tutors and teachers equally. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the reasons for interviewees' trust on their tutors or teachers were more or less common. These included familiarity with the examination requirement, effectiveness in equipping students' with the necessary skills for public examinations, effort on public examination analysis, and experiences in question setting and marking. These were actually a demonstration of the examination-oriented values discussed in Chapter 5. In the students' eyes, “public examination performance” had become the synonym of “academic performance” and “learning outcome”.

Free market and open competition were prevalent practices in the post-industrial

society. For the case of cram schooling in Hong Kong, everyone who thinks themselves capable is allowed to enter the cram school market and start their business. In this atmosphere, cram school business has expanded very rapidly in recent years. The choices of mass tutoring classes have been significantly increased.

In late modernity, daily-life problems can be complicated that individuals need to depend on professionals to solve these problems. However, there are a large number of available professionals, who may suggest different solutions to the same problem. So, it is hard for an individual, who had little knowledge on the details behind a problem, to judge which solution is better and more effective. Under this situation, individuals only show conditional trust on the professionals. This is reflected by the pattern of mass tutoring enrolment by the interviewees. On one hand, students were aware of the need to acquire some assistance on their studies. On the other hand, there were many tutors available for the same subject. Therefore, although students chose to seek help from mass tutoring and cram school tutors, they did not necessarily view the tutors as their heroes or saviours, and did not need to totally trust on them.

Under this atmosphere, individuals are forced to negotiate their life choices and future on their own on continual bases. By individual reflexivity, individuals do not necessarily stick themselves on a particular choice. Rather, they make ongoing reflection on their experience, evaluate whether this choice is most suitable to them, and decide whether change is necessary. For the case of mass tutoring enrolment, once having joined in a tutorial, students continuously evaluated the tutors' quality and reviewed the suitability of the tutorial to their own need. When they found that the tutor did not suit their need or expectation, found that the tutor failed to enhance

their academic performance significantly, felt suspicious about the consistency of the tutor's teaching with the examination requirement, or discovered the availability of better alternatives, they would terminate their tutorial attendance. Similarly, students did not necessarily distrust their daytime school teachers. When the students found their daytime school teachers familiar with latest public examination requirement and willing to offer examination-oriented guidance, they would trust their daytime school teachers' teaching. From the findings of this study, high involvers and advanced level students had stronger awareness and deeper reflection on necessity of mass tutoring, performance of the tutor followed, and suitability of the tutorial attended.

Seeking multiple sources of help was quite common among the interviewees, especially the high involvers and advanced level students. As seen from the findings of this study, there were students who depended on both daytime school teachers and cram school tutors, and depended on more than one cram school tutors for a single subject. Some students even collected reference materials from different sources, including those from other cram school tutors or other daytime schools. Students thought that seeking multiple help was better than ascribing to a single source of aid, as the former could minimize the risk of failure. This phenomenon is actually a demonstration of a late modern behavioural pattern: individuals seek help and guidance from various professionals in solving a single problem.

To conclude this chapter, a number of students had a higher level of trust on their cram school tutors than their daytime school teachers for enhancing their academic performance. Their trust was based on capability of the teachers or tutors to strengthen students' ability of handling public examination papers. To the students,

academic performance was equivalent to public examination results. However, facing a great variety of choices for tutors, they only had conditional trust on their tutors. This was demonstrated by their ongoing evaluation on tutors' performance, acquisition of multiple sources of aids, switching of tutors, and termination of receiving mass tutoring.

CHAPTER NINE CONCLUSION

9.1 Conclusion: A Reflection of Risk Culture?

Awareness of Risk in Future Environment

Students' perception for their academic and career prospects has demonstrated their risk awareness and desire for security for their future. Many students viewed the life security of their own and family, and their career stability, as crucial for their future. These were their ultimate purpose of having a job. However, even students were able to depict the essence of their aspired career, not all of them had a solid idea of which career field they targeted at. For those without firm career goal, they deemed destining a career goal was too early and unrealistic for them due to future uncertainties. For those who had aspirations for their academic achievements and career, they were also aware of the difficulties and uncertainties along their intended future path. These uncertainties resulted from the changeable contextual and institutional factors beyond their calculation and control. Footsteps by predecessors could not provide sufficient hints for them to follow. Whether they would successfully jump over all the required hurdles for their aspired career goal was still unknown. In their view, pure diligence and competence were far from sufficient for securing a good future.

Detraditionalization of Values

Public examination is a modern construct to classify youngsters' competence and potentials. It makes the qualities of individual youngsters easily comparable.

Consequently, the cost for assessing the individuals by the tertiary institutions and potential employers can be reduced, and the risk arisen by individual evaluation on various non-comparable qualifications can be minimized. Although public examination involves imperfection, such as incompetence of thoroughly reflecting the real ability of every youngster, it is considered as a legitimate system to evaluate youngsters' academic achievement and potentials.

In fact, this is equivalent to the financial economy, which is considered by Giddens as an "expert system". Money is the basic unit, or the "symbolic token" of this system. By using these tokens, various kind of exchange can be realized. Money becomes significant in everyday life. It is also an identity representing purchasing power of a person. In this context, money is also a kind of resources to achieve ontological security, because without money, an individual can hardly involve in any exchange activities in the modern world. Likewise, public examination is also an "expert system", while public examination grades are the "symbolic tokens". Without good examination grades, an individual can hardly compete for good offers for further studies or jobs. Examination grades become an "identity" representing a student's competence and potentials. To strive for good grades in public examination is to achieve "ontological security" for surviving in the competition in job market and in the pool of further studies applicants.

Therefore, in the students' eyes, good public examination result is a basis to help these youngsters better deal with the risks and uncertainties in the competitive environment. Some of them even viewed public examination results as not less important than qualifications in tertiary education. Consequently, a substantial number of students regarded preparation for public examination as the essence of

senior secondary schooling, which deviated from some traditional educational thoughts. To the students, the traditional educational values which did not comply with the examination-oriented values were no longer a reliable source of security. Striving for the best possible public examination performance had been understood by the students as a normative practice for every senior secondary student.

These detraditionalized, examination-oriented educational values have become the basis for their behaviours related to mass tutoring. Familiarity with examination requirement, and ability to enhance students' competence to deal with examinations, has become the basic criteria for judging the quality of teachers and tutors. Practical examination aids, such as concise notes with highlights, answering tactics and techniques, examination focused practices, and tips on topics and questions which would likely appear in the paper, were their expected rewards from tutorial classes.

Future-oriented Mentality and Intention to Deal with Future Risk

Although their future prospect was still too far away to anticipate, they still realized the need to take active measures to prepare for it, rather than just waiting and seeing. This is a demonstration of "future-oriented" character of late modern life - what individuals do at present is mainly for their future. Since students were still at the stage of studying, and they were living in a society in which public examination results were widely referenced for evaluating individuals' potential by higher institutions and employers, studying hard and striving for good examination results were what they could only do for their future prospects.

Despite good examination results, to the students' understanding, can secure

and better their future study and career opportunities, public examination system itself is a complex modern construct which is embedded with risks and uncertainties for an individual to master. The existence and blossoming of mass tutoring have further complicated the situation, since the tutees might be advantaged over non-tutees by getting access to more information. Therefore, as seen in this study, students took active actions for minimizing disadvantaged factors and achieving security in preparing and sitting public examinations. This is why students were interested in enrolling in mass tutoring and see if these tutorials provide useful assistance.

Individualization of Decisions and Choices

In students' views, their situation on current study and their challenges ahead on further study and career development were different to a large extent from those experienced by the seniors from older generations, including their parents and teachers. In particular, mass tutoring was not popular decades ago, and their parents and teachers might not be very familiar with the tuition market. In their eyes, their parents and teachers might not fully understand their need, and might not capable to offer them useful guidance on decisions and choices on mass tutoring. Thus, many students' decisions on mass tutoring and their choices on tutors were made independently from their teachers and students. At least, they regarded that the decisions and choices were really made on their own, and were irrelevant of opinions or even pressures from parents or teachers.

When students needed advice on their decisions and choices, they usually approached their peers, who encountered similar situation and had similar

experience as they did. However, many students did not blindly follow their peers' choices and advice. They were aware of the possible variety in learning needs, academic targets, and expectations on tutorials among individuals. A tutorial satisfying other students was not necessarily most appropriate to themselves. Thus, when making decisions and choices, students also considered whether the tutorial class suited their own need and expectation. Some students even actively sought tutorial notes or lecture recordings, and acquired first-person experience by attending short-term courses, in order to evaluate the suitability of the tutor and the tutorial to their own particularity during the choice-making process.

Students thought that they should bear the responsibility for their life prospect, and the accountability for their decisions and choices. This thought had been consolidated when many parents respected their children's decisions and choices today. Thus, they preferred, and felt responsible, to make the decision on mass tutoring and the choice on tutors on their own. After making a decision or a choice, even it was made after discussion with parents or friends, many students claimed it as their own decision or choice. This is a clear sign of self-accountability of the students.

Another phenomenon of self-accountability is that some students thought that they should enjoy the right to choose their daytime school teachers. In their eyes, they should have the right to participate in the decisions and choices related to their personal interest. Meanwhile, they believed that they were the ones who best understood their individual need. By having the right to choose their teachers, they could minimize the possible harm or disadvantage on their studies and future due to being taught by assigned teachers, who might not be competent enough to satisfy

their particular need and expectation.

Conditional Trust on Authority and Professionals

Students receiving mass tutoring did not necessarily trust their daytime school teachers for enhancing their learning outcome. A number of students regarded the teaching by cram school tutors as more effective and trustworthy. Daytime school teachers whom their students regarded as incompetent had lost their authority.

Although students chose to seek help from mass tutoring and cram school tutors, they did not necessarily view their tutors as their heroes or saviours. Modern institutions, including competition and commodification, have led to the expansion of cram school business and the upsurge of choices of tutors. Facing a variety of choices, they only had conditional trust on their tutors. After enrolled in a tutorial, students still demonstrated their individual reflexivity to continuously evaluate whether their tutors met their individual needs and expectation. Some students were even keeping an eye on information about other tutors while attending one tutorial to see if there were better alternatives. When they discovered that their tutor did not best satisfy their needs and expectation, they would stop attending this tutor's class, and might change to another tutor.

Another sign of conditional trust is acquisition of multiple aids for a single subject. Some students attended more than one tutor's class for a subject. More commonly, students acquired other tutors' lecture notes for reference. These students did not totally trust the tutors from whom they sought help, and thought that a tutor might not be competent in every area in a subject. Thus, in their view, depending on

a single source could not provide them with sufficient security for examination preparation. Multiple sources, albeit not necessary that all were reliable, could minimize the potential disadvantage in public examination.

Concluding Argument

To conclude, situated in the highly modernized environments, students were aware of the risks and uncertainties for their study and career paths, and the need to achieve ontological security in such a changeable environment. Security of life became the ultimate concern for their studies and career aspiration. In the context where public examination results were widely accepted as a reliable account of a youngster's quality by higher institutions and employers in the territory, striving for competitive public examination results became the major meaning of receiving senior secondary education. This detraditionalized value had shaped the behavioural pattern of the students, such as their judgement on the quality of a teacher/tutor.

Students decided to attend mass tutoring because it was a probably effective measure to minimize their disadvantage in public examinations. However, facing a variety of professionals, including their daytime school teachers and numerous tutors in the tuition market, students did not view their teachers or tutors totally trustworthy. In addition, learning need varied among different individuals. Under this circumstance, they had to make ongoing reflection when making their choices and evaluating the suitability of a tutorial.

In the phenomenon of mass tutoring enrolment, students' thoughts and behaviours reflected the elements of the risk culture of late modernity, including

risk-awareness on their future, detraditionalization of values, intention to negotiate with uncertainties, individualization of decisions and choices, individual reflexivity and conditional trust on authority and professionals. In other words, risk culture existed among these tutees.

In fact, not all cases in this study complied with the above risk culture elements. However, it should be noted that late modernity argument does not completely refute the existence of traditional practices in society. It concerns the departure from the earlier social order and the diversity among individual actors. Following this understanding, the case of this study can still be understood as a late modern phenomenon.

9.2 Theoretical Implication: Late Modernity Argument Revisited

Despite the fact that elements of risk culture were observed in students' involvement in mass tutoring, the study has unfolded several specific qualities of individual life and social environment in the post-industrial era, which can expand our understanding on the contemporary social order and the existing argument in the late modernity paradigm.

Strategy to Deal with Uncertainties: Adaptation to Existing Social Order

As discussed, students were aware of the risk in the future environment and the corresponding uncertainties significant to their future studies, career and life. At the same time, they had the intention and bore the responsibility to achieve higher level of security for their future. Nevertheless, when formulating the strategies to deal

with future uncertainties, students were only concerned about passive adaptation to the existing social order, but never considered the possibility to minimize the potential threats by imposing changes to the external social environment. As seen in the responses from the interviewees, they felt that they had no alternatives for securing their future prospects apart from striving for their public examination results. Although they knew some recent cases of getting a university offer without satisfactory public examination results, they considered them as caused by luck and hardly happening on themselves. They considered themselves as powerless to challenge or even subvert the existing examination-dominant atmosphere.

Awareness of Inconsistencies between Traditional Values and Modern Social Order

In this study, detraditionalization of educational values among the tutees has been exhibited. Yet, in fact, “detraditionalization” is not specific enough to qualify the change in social values. To be more specific, the extent of this “detraditionalization” should also be answered. For the extreme of value detraditionalization, individuals completely denied the significance of tradition values to social life, or even ignored the existence of such values. Nevertheless, this was not common among the interviewees in this study. For most interviewees, traditional educational values were not important to senior secondary schooling, because these values do not conform to the realistic requirement on youngsters by the contemporary Hong Kong society. Nevertheless, they did not regard these values insignificant for all life stages. So, many interviewees valued the rationale of lifelong learning for spiritual and intellectual fulfilment, and wished to put this into practice after graduation from university, or after retirement. In short, for individuals,

although traditional values are not significant for negotiation with the modern social order, they are not viewed as valueless. Nevertheless, even some traditional values are respected, they will only be practised only after an individual has achieved security in the highly modernized social environment.

Appeal to Uncertain Measures to Deal with Uncertainties

Students in this study realized the need to achieve security in the uncertain environment for further study and career, so they had to appeal to a measure to attain competitive results in public examinations for this purpose. However, public examination system itself is a modern construct involving uncertainties that an individual is incapable to completely understand how it works. In such circumstances, students had to seek assistance from some channels, including mass tutoring and other reference materials, for promoting their securities in the public examination. Yet, tutors from cram schools and authors of these reference materials were also individuals who might overlook certain aspects of public examinations, so students had to consult their peers for advice before selecting tutorial classes and other kinds of study aids. Nevertheless, with limited exposure to mass tutoring experience and study aids, their peers were unlikely to have a comprehensive understanding on numerous tutorials and study aids, so the trustworthiness of their advice was also a source of uncertainty. Students had to continue their search for alternative advice and references which were not necessarily promising.

The story of tutees is a miniature of the fate of individuals in late modernity. Without a solid ground of security, such as tradition, individuals are locked in a cage where they have to endlessly appeal to uncertain measures to deal with the

uncertainties embedded in daily life.

Difference in Wealth and Uneven Power of Risk Negotiation

According to Giddens' late modernity argument, individualization implies that individual has become the institutional unit for students' worldview, mentality and behaviour. Socioeconomic background was no longer determinant on individuals' preference among various risk-averse measures. Also, information sources are not necessarily trustworthy, so attending more tutorial classes or obtaining more tutorial references do not necessarily mean better mastery on examination requirement or better performance in examinations than having limited access to these information. Nevertheless, students with more wealth still enjoy more opportunities for seeking measures from various channels of information and experiences, so as to enhance the chance of locating the effective aids, and minimize the disadvantages caused by potential risk and uncertainties. As seen from the interview findings, there were students who wished to enrol in tutorials for more subjects, yet they were constrained by limited financial resources; on the other hand, the wealthier students could afford the tuition fee for tutorials, and various sorts of study aids, for many subjects. In addition, for many students without prior tutorial experience, peers' comments and advice were the major sources of reference for selecting tutors, implying that scope of social contact, which depends on social background and economic resources, might shape the domain of available information and choices.

Therefore, the argument that distribution of risks crosses class-boundaries and is not based on wealth does not apply to the case of mass tutoring enrolment. Rather, the case corresponds to the argument by Bauman (2000, 2000a) and Skeggs (2003)

that a hierarchy along economic differential from choice to no-choice, or from the autonomy of self-identification at the top to the dependency on assigned identities at the bottom, is formed.

Unbalanced Dialectic Relationship between Individuals and Social Structure

On the relationship between structure and agent, Bourdieu and Giddens suggested a dialectic relationship between them, and they viewed that structure and agent are balanced, neither one dominates over the other. Yet, from the findings of this study, although students' enrolment and advice to their schoolmates had further consolidated and legitimized mass tutoring (which can be considered as an impact by agent on structure), individuals students did not have real power to make great changes on or even subvert the pervasion of mass tutoring. Even they realized the conflict between educational ideal and reality, and thought that the proliferation of mass tutoring and the over-emphasis on public examination performance were not desirable phenomena, they still regarded themselves as not efficacious enough to change the trend, and thought that following the mainstream practice and subscribing to the mainstream instrumental value were the only choice to them. At initial stage, the mainstream value was always a source of security for the individuals.

When students lacked solid understanding about the education paths and career prospects, and lacked first-hand personal experience, experience and views of their senior, and the mass media coverage on the recent social development have become significant forces in shaping their understanding of the current social

condition and their forecast on its development trend. These were the best information sources available to the individual students to develop their picture on social environment, and to develop the values for planning the onward strategies for coping with their interaction with the external environment. At this stage, individual students had very limited power in creating new meaning of social life and contributing to the existing social order (or the “rule of the game”). The prevalent beliefs, such as “university graduates have better competitive advantage in the labour market than the graduates from vocational training institutes”, “advanced level examination is the smoothest access to the bachelor level programmes than higher diploma programmes and associate degree programmes”, and “public examination results have lifelong importance to an individual’s future life” , have become the sources of security and their reliable guidance for their decisions, choices and aspirations.

When these “readily available” information sources could not sufficiently satisfy individual students’ security feeling about their future, they would search for other alternative sources by themselves in order to attain some personal experiences with the social environment, such as career talks, exhibitions on further education and career, and summer jobs. These were the sources for verifying the validity of the prevalent social values. If these new experiences failed to provide any opposite impulse against the mainstream values residing in their mind, they would further attach their decisions, choices and aspirations to the mainstream values. In turn, their behavioural performance would become a new force to consolidate the legitimacy of mainstream values in the social structure.

On students' mass tutoring enrolment, there were various choices for tutors and tutorials available, and the students really believed that they made careful decisions in order to suit their learning needs best, but after all, their major choices were limited to mass tutoring, and they still had to compete with other youngsters in the public examinations, which was the legitimate and authoritative system of assessing youngsters' potential.

So, although individuals and social structure change each other in the structuration process, they do not have balanced power. Social structure is a more dominant power. Individuals are not really freed for searching their solutions to deal with the external environment in the contemporary society. Instead, "freedom of agency" may just be as what Lash (1993) and other Foucauldians suggested, a means of control by self-knowledge, which is only the result of internalization of disciplinary expert knowledge

9.3 Limitation of the Study

Owing to the nature of qualitative study, and the constraints in time and resources, this study has the following limitations.

Firstly, the sample of the study is not a probability sample, so the findings related to interviewees' personal thoughts and experiences cannot be seen as a general picture of the population of mass tutoring participants in the whole territory. Moreover, even the cases have been carefully selected so as to maximize the variety of interviewees with respect to their educational background and level of mass tutoring involvement, omission of atypical cases is still possible, so the findings

cannot be viewed as a comprehensive account of the phenomenon.

Secondly, the study is largely based on the retrospective account by the interviewees. The views in their responses may contain discrepancy due to the interference of the thoughts arising after the scenario concerned. For example, when interviewees were asked about their perception on the educational and career environment, their values and beliefs on senior secondary schooling, and their criteria of a good teacher, what they answered might not necessarily be their thoughts during the moment of making decisions for mass tutoring. Their answers might be mingled with beliefs which had not been developed till they had attended tutorials.

Thirdly, most interview questions were open-ended. Interviewees were allowed to formulate their answers in their own way. Although interviewees' answers were information-rich, these answers were not likely to exhaust everything of their thoughts and experiences significant to the objective of this study. They mentioned the most important factors or ideas in their answers, yet they did not necessarily disagree on what they did not mention but other interviewees did. Therefore, this study could not exactly tell the exact number, as well as the proportion, of students engaging in a particular thought or not.

9.4 Implications for Further Research

Despite of the above limitations, the findings of this study provide a valuable foundation for further the studies in the same area. For example, similar case studies can be conducted on private tutoring in other regions to examine the validity of the

paradigm of this study to other regions.

The information-rich answers from the interviewees in this study provide a useful source for designing scales and semantic differential statements for large-scale quantitative study on the thoughts, values and behavioural patterns related to secondary schooling and mass tutoring of senior secondary students in Hong Kong.

The new 3-year senior secondary curriculum with the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) is going to replace the current 4-year senior secondary curriculum with 2 public examinations with effective from September 2009. As this study was conducted shortly before the withdrawal of the current senior secondary curriculum, the findings can be viewed as a snapshot of students' thoughts and behaviours regarding secondary schooling and mass tutoring at the sunset of the current curriculum. Similar study can be conducted in the early years of the implementation of the new curriculum and examination, and contrast the findings with those of this study, so as to examine if there are any significant changes on students' thoughts and behavioural patterns regarding senior secondary schooling and mass tutoring after the introduction of the new curriculum.

Appendix I Profiles of Interviewees

Certificate Level, Higher Involvement

Interviewee	Gender	Grade	Daytime School	Stream	School Performance	Subjects with Mass Tutoring	Notes
CH1	M	S5	Top-ranked Aided Boys' School in Central (Central & Western)	Science (incl. RS; Economics by Self-study)	Within Top 10 to 20 of Form	Chin Lang; Eng Lang; Phy; Chem; Econ	Small-group tutoring for Add Maths
CH2	F	S5	Top-ranked Aided Girls' School in Kowloon Tong (Kowloon City)	Arts (incl. Bio)	Middle in Stream	Eng Lang; Chin Lang; Bio; Geog; PA	Small-group tutoring for Maths
CH3	M	S5	Aided Co-educational School in Ho Man Tin (Kowloon City)	Science	Upper-middle in Stream	Chin Lang; Eng Lang; Maths; Add Maths; Phy; Chem; Bio; CIT	
CH4	M	S4	Aided Co-educational School in Sai Wan Ho (Eastern)	Science (incl. Econ)	Middle in Stream	Chin Lang; Maths; Add Maths; Phy; Chem; Bio; Econ	
CH5	M	S5	Aided Co-educational School in Tuen Mun	Science	Top 5 in Stream	Eng Lang; Maths; Add Maths; Phy; Chem	
CH6	M	S5	Boys' School in Tsuen Wan	Arts	Middle in Stream	Eng Lang; Maths; Geog; Econ	
CH7	F	S5	Private Co-educational College in Mong Kok	Arts (incl. Econ and Commerce)	Upper-middle in Class	Chin Lang; Eng Lang; Maths; Econ; Geog	Repeater; 11 points in 1 st Sitting; The Private School also runs Mass Tutoring Business
CH8	F	S4	Aided Co-educational School in Kowloon Tong (Kowloon City)	Science (incl. Geog)	Upper-middle, Top 30 in Form	Chin Lang; Phy; Chem; Bio; Geog	Small-group tutoring for Add Maths
CH9	M	S5	Top-ranked Direct Subsidy Scheme Boy's School in Sham Shui Po	Science	Lower-middle	Eng Lang; Add Maths; Phy; Chem; Bio	

Interviewee	Gender	Grade	Daytime School	Stream	School Performance	Subjects with Mass Tutoring	Notes
CH10	F	S5	Aided Co-educational School in Tin Shui Wai (Yuen Long)	Science	Bottom, 35 th of 37 in Class	Eng Lang; Maths; Add Maths; Phy; Chem	

Certificate Level, Lower Involvement

Interviewee	Gender	Grade	Daytime School	Stream	School Performance	Subjects with Mass Tutoring	Notes
CL1	M	S4	Top-ranked Government Co-educational School in Shau Kei Wan (Eastern)	Science	Lower-middle in Stream	Phy; Chem	
CL2	F	S5	Aided Co-educational School in Tuen Mun	Science	Middle, 40 th of 80 in Stream	Chem; Bio	Small-group tutoring for Maths and Add Maths
CL3	M	S5	Top-ranked Direct Subsidy Scheme Boy's School in Kowloon Tong (Kowloon City)	Arts & Commerce	Upper-middle	Geog; Econ; PA	
CL4	M	S4	Aided Boy's School in Central (Central & Western)	Arts (incl. Econ, Commerce, RS, CIT)	Top 3 in Stream of 40 Students	Geog	
CL5	F	S5	Aided Co-educational School in Sheung Shui (North)	Science (incl. Visual Arts)	Lower-middle, 40 th of 60 in Stream	Eng Lang; Phy; Chem	
CL6	F	S5	Aided Girls' School in Lam Tin (Kwun Tong)	Arts & Commerce	Lower-middle in Stream	Chin Lang; Eng Lang	
CL7	F	S5	Aided Girls' School in Lam Tin (Kwun Tong)	Arts	Lower-middle in Stream	Eng Lang; Chin Hist	

Interviewee	Gender	Grade	Daytime School	Stream	School Performance	Subjects with Mass Tutoring	Notes
CL8	M	S4	Aided Co-educational School in Sha Tin	Arts (incl. Econ and CIT)	Bottom in Stream	Maths	S4 Repeater
CL9	M	S5	Private Co-educational College in Mong Kok	Arts (incl. Econ)	Bottom in Class	Chin Lang; Eng Lang; Econ	Repeater; 4 points in 1 st Sitting; The Private School also runs Mass Tutoring Business
CL10	F	S5	Aided Co-educational School in Sham Shui Po	Science	Middle in Stream	Chin Lang; Eng Lang; Chem	

Advanced Level, Higher Involvement

Interviewee	Gender	Grade	Daytime School	Stream	School Performance	HKCEE Performance	Subjects with Mass Tutoring	Notes
AH1	M	S7	Direct Subsidy Scheme Boy's School in Tai Kok Tsui (Mong Kok)	Science (PM, Phy, Chem)	Upper-middle	26 points 2A, 4B, 2C	UE; CL&C; Chem	Individual private tutoring for PM and Phy
AH2	M	S7	Aided Co-educational Sixth Form College in Tai Kok Tsui (Mong Kok)	Science (Phy, Chem, Bio)	Lower-middle in Biology Stream, 75 th in 90	10 points (1 st sitting); 22 points (2 nd sitting)	CL&C; UE; Phy; Chem; Bio	
AH3	F	S7	Top-ranked Aided Girl's School in Kowloon Tong (Kowloon City)	Science (Bio, Chem, PM)	Middle	25 points	CL&C; UE; PM; Chem; Bio	
AH4	F	S7	Top-ranked Aided Girl's School in Kowloon Tong (Kowloon City)	Science (Bio, Chem, PM)	Upper-middle	27 points	CL&C; UE; PM; Chem; Bio	

Interviewee	Gender	Grade	Daytime School	Stream	School Performance	HKCEE Performance	Subjects with Mass Tutoring	Notes
AH5	F	S7	Government Co-educational School in Kwai Chung (Kwai Ching) [last attended]	Science (PM, Phy, Chem-AS)	Bottom	12 points	UE; PM; Phy	S7 Repeater – by Self-study
AH6	M	S7	Aided Co-educational School in North Point (Eastern)	Science (PM, Phy, Chem)	1 st in Form	15 points C in Maths, A Maths, Phy F in Chin Lang	CL&C; UE; PM; Phy	
AH7	M	S7	Aided Co-educational School in Chai Wan (Eastern)	Arts (Chin Lit, Geog, M&S-AS)	Top in stream	15 points	UE; Chin Lit; Geog	
AH8	F	S7	Aided Co-educational School in Tin Shui Wai (Yuen Long)	Science (Bio, Chem, M&S-AS)	Lower-middle in Biology group: 7 th to 8 th of 12	14 points	UE; Chem; Bio	
AH9	F	S6	Aided Co-educational Sixth Form College in Tai Kok Tsui (Mong Kok)	Arts (Chin Lit, Geog, Hist)	Middle	Over 20 points	UE; CL&C; Geog	
AH10	M	S7	Private Co-educational College in Mong Kok	Arts (Chin Lit, Geog)	Lower-middle	16 points	CL&C; UE; Chin Lit; Geog	

Advanced Level, Lower Involvement

Interviewee	Gender	Grade	Daytime School	Stream	School Performance	HKCEE Performance	Subjects with Mass Tutoring	Notes
AL1	F	S6	Aided Co-educational Sixth Form College in Tai Kok Tsui (Mong Kok)	Arts & Commerce (Chin Lit, PA, Psy)	Upper-middle	25 points (Science)	UE; PA	
AL2	F	S6	Aided Co-educational Sixth Form College in Tai Kok Tsui (Mong Kok)	Arts (Chin Lit, BS, Psy)	Middle	24 points D in Eng Lang	UE	Small-group tutoring for BS
AL3	F	S7	Aided Girls' School in Yau Yat Tuen (Sham Shui Po)	Arts	Middle to Upper-middle	17 points	UE; Geog	
AL4	M	S7	Aided Boys' School in Kwun Tong	Science (Phy, PM, App Maths)	Top 10 in Stream	29 points	UE; Phy	
AL5	F	S7	Aided Co-educational School in Sha Tin	Arts (Chin Lit; Chin Hist; Econ)	Middle	17 points	Econ	
AL6	F	S7	Aided Co-educational School in Sha Tin	Arts (Chin Lit; Hist; PA)	Top 3 in Stream	23 points	UE	
AL7	M	S7	Aided Co-educational School in Tsing Yi (Kwai Tsing)	Arts	Upper-middle	16 points C in Eng Lang (Syl. A)	UE	

Interviewee	Gender	Grade	Daytime School	Stream	School Performance	HKCEE Performance	Subjects with Mass Tutoring	Notes
AL8	M	S6	Aided Co-educational School in To Kwa Wan (Kowloon City)	Science (Phy, Chem, CA-AS, M&S-AS)	1 st in Form	12 points (1 st sitting); 18 points (2 nd sitting)	UE	
AL9	F	S7	Aided Co-educational School in Mong Kok	Arts	2 nd in Class	15 points	UE	
AL10	M	S7	Aided Co-educational School in Ho Man Tin (Kowloon City)	Science (PM, Phy, Econ)	Upper-middle	Over 20 points	UE	
AL11	M	S6	Aided Boys' School in Kwai Chung (Kwai Tsing)	Science (Phy, PM, App Maths)	2 nd in Class (Average mark slightly above 40%)	Slightly below 14 points	UE	

Abbreviation for Subjects

Add Maths: Additional Mathematics

App Maths: Applied Mathematics

Bio: Biology

BS: Business Studies

CA: Computer Application

Chem: Chemistry

Chin Hist: Chinese History

Chin Lang: Chinese Language

Chin Lit: Chinese Literature

CIT: Computer & Information

Technology

CL&C: Chinese Language & Culture

Econ: Economics

Eng Lang: English Language

Geog: Geography

Hist: History

M&S: Mathematics & Statistics

PA: Principles of Accounts

Phy: Physics

PM: Pure Mathematics

Psy: Psychology

RS: Religious Studies

UE: Use of English

AS: Advanced Supplementary Level

Appendix II Interview Guide

Briefing

I am Jeffrey, a master's student in Sociology from Lingnan University. Thank you for accepting my invitation and becoming an interviewee of my study. Today's interview will approximately last for 2 hours. It will be about your current studies, experience in mass tutoring, and future prospects.

我係 Jeffrey，係嶺南大學社會學碩士生，好多謝你接受邀請，成為我呢次研究嘅其中一位被訪者。今日嘅訪問大概會係兩個鐘頭，訪問嘅內容會圍繞你讀書、補習同埋前途嘅。

Our conversation will be audio-taped for future analysis. The recordings will be kept confidential: It will only be accessed by me, and will not be disclosed to any third party. All the recordings will be destroyed once my study is completed.

稍後我地嘅對話內容係會被錄音嘅，作為日後分析之用，但錄音嘅內容係會絕對保密嘅，只有我會接觸到呢段錄音，而呢段錄音係唔會公開俾第三者聽嘅。研究完畢，所有錄音便會銷毀。

All the interview questions do not have standard answers or rigid scope. You need not guess what I look for or purposefully shape your answer to meet my need when responding my questions. Anything you think appropriate and relevant can be included in your answer. You are encouraged to give your answers as detailed as possible. Furthermore, if you find the meaning of certain words in a question ambiguous, you need not ask me for clarification, you should answer the questions with your own understanding on those words as far as possible. Clear?

稍後嘅問題，全部都無標準答案嘅，答嘅範圍係沒有限制嘅，唔需要刻意揣測你答嘅嘢係咪我想要嘅，只要你認為同問題有關嘅嘢都可以講，而且描述得越詳細越好。此外，如果覺得問題部分字眼嘅意思唔清楚，你唔需要問我呢 D 字眼點解或者問我想你答 D 乜嘢內容，請你儘量依你對呢 D 字眼嘅理解去回答就得咖啦。清楚未？

On Career and Academic Prospects

1. Career Goal

What goal do you have on your future career?

喺職業前途方面，你有乜嘢目標？

Why do you have this goal?

點解會有呢個目標？

How certain do you feel about reaching this target?

你有幾大把握達到呢個目標？

Why? // Which factors have caused such feeling?

點解？ // 有邊啲因素令你冇咁嘅諗法？

Do you anticipate any difficulties or challenges on the path to these goals?

要達到呢個目標有冇困難或者挑戰？

(For answering “NO”) Why? // (For answering “YES”) What are these difficulties and challenges?

（如答「冇」）點解？//（如答「有」）呢啲困難同挑戰係乜嘢？

How do you respond to these difficulties and challenges?

你會點樣應付呢啲困難同挑戰？

How confident do you feel about successfully overcoming these difficulties and challenges?

你對成功應付呢啲困難同挑戰嘅信心有幾大？

What qualities do you think an adult should possess in order to survive in the contemporary society?

你覺得一個人要具備乜嘢條件，先能夠喺當代社會裡面生存？

How confident do you feel about possessing these qualities in the future?

你有幾大信心自己第日會具備呢啲條件？

How did you know that what you have described on the contemporary society is reality?

你頭先描述過關於依家呢個社會嘅情況。你點會知道依家個社會實況係咁嘅呢？

2. Academic Target

What targets do you have on your academic studies?

喺學業方面，你有乜嘢目標？

Why do you have these targets?

點解會有呢啲目標？

Is your academic targets related to your career goal? (If “YES”, how is it related?)

你嘅學業目標同職業前途嘅目標有冇關係？（如「有」，有乜關係？）

Do you think a person with poor public examination result hardly successful in contemporary society? Why?

你認唔認為一個公開考試成績差嘅人，將來喺社會上難以成功呢？點解？

How certain do you feel about reaching these targets?

你有幾大把握自己會達到呢啲目標？

Why? // Which factors have caused such feeling?

點解？// 有邊啲因素令你咁樣諗？

Do you anticipate any difficulties or challenges on the path to these goals?

要達到呢啲目標有冇困難同挑戰？

(For answering “NO”) Why? // (For answering “YES”) What are these difficulties and challenges?

（如答「有」）點解？//（如答「有」）呢啲困難同挑戰係乜嘢？

How did you know that these difficulties and challenges exist?

你點知呢啲困難同挑戰存在？

How do you respond to these difficulties and challenges?

你會點樣應付呢啲困難同挑戰？

How confident do you feel about successfully overcoming these difficulties and challenges?

你對成功應付呢啲困難同挑戰嘅信心有幾大？

3. Academic Studies

How was your past and recent academic performance?

你過往同最近嘅學業表現係點？

Could you describe how you handle your senior secondary studies?

可唔可以講下你點樣應付高中課程？

Do you agree that more further study opportunities for secondary school graduates are available nowadays than in the past?

你同唔同意依家提供俾中學畢業生嘅升學機會比以前多？

(If “Yes”) Does this factor lower your anxiety towards your career future? Why?

（如答「有」）呢樣嘢有冇令你對前途有咁憂慮？點解？

Do you think that public examination results have become less important because of this factor? Why?

呢樣嘢會唔會令你認為公開試成績有以前咁重要？點解？

On Value

1. Subject Knowledge and Public Examination Results

For you, what is the ultimate purpose of learning?

對你來講，學習最終嘅目的係乜嘢？

Generally speaking, what is the proper way of studying for senior secondary students in Hong Kong?

對於一個香港嘅高中生，你認為最適當嘅學習方法應該係點？

Do you think that subject knowledge learnt from studying is important?

你認為學習所得到嘅知識重唔重要？

(If “YES”) What importance does subject knowledge have? // (If “NO”) Why do you think that it is unimportant?

（如答「重要」）佢有乜嘢重要性？//（如答「唔重要」）點解佢唔重要？

Do you think that public examination result is important?

你認為公開試嘅成績重唔重要？

(If “YES”) What importance does subject knowledge have? // (If “NO”) Why do you think it as unimportant?

（如答「重要」）佢有乜嘢重要性？//（如答「唔重要」）點解佢唔重要？

Subject knowledge and public examination result, which one is more important? Why?

「知識」同「成績」邊樣重要啲？點解？

For you, how important is achieving good results in public examination to your senior secondary studies?

對你來講，喺公開試搵好成績，喺你高中學習中有幾重要？

What do you think about the saying “Learning is not for scoring”?

你點睇「求學不是求分數」呢個講法？

Yik-hei Chan did not get good results in the HKCEE, but he was admitted to HKUST with his technological achievement. Do you think Chan’s case a valid refutation to the importance of public examination result to future prospect? Why?

陳易希唔係憑公開試成績入大學嘅。你認為佢嘅例子能唔能夠否定公開試成績對升學機會同個人前後有重要影響？點解？

2. Teacher and Teaching Approach

In your opinion, what qualities should a good teacher have?

喺你心目中，點先算係一個好老師？

In your opinion, how is the best teaching approach for senior secondary students in Hong Kong?

喺你心目中，對香港嘅高中生來講，最好嘅教學方法應該係點？

Have your daytime school teachers taught something out of examination syllabus in school lessons?

你嘅日校老師有冇教啲考試範圍以外嘅嘢？

Do you think that they should do so? Why?

你認為佢（地）應唔應該咁做？點解？

With respect to senior secondary academic studies, do you think that daytime schooling can be replaced by mass tutoring? Why?

喺高中學科學習方面，大型補習班可唔可以完全取代日校教育呢？點解？

In your daytime school, do you have the right to choose your teachers? What do you think about this arrangement?

喺日校，你有冇權揀邊啲老師教你咖？你對咁嘅安排有乜意見？

On Purposes of Mass Tutoring

Could you describe your experience in mass tutoring?

可唔可以講下你過往參與大型補習嘅情況？

- Subjects

- Tutors

- Cram School

- Mode of Tutorial Class (Regular? Topical? Intensive? Tips Class?)

- Duration (Which year? How long?)

What are the purposes of receiving mass tutoring for your senior secondary studies?

點解喺讀高中期間參加大型補習班？

What did you expect to get from mass tutoring?

你期望大型補習班可以俾到你啲乜？

(For interviewees not receiving mass tutoring for some subjects)

For certain subjects, why did not you receive mass tutoring?

點解有啲科你又唔去補大型補習班嘅？

On Decision and Choice

Could you describe the background and process of deciding to receive mass tutoring?

可唔可以講下決定參加大型補習班嘅背景同過程？

- Who made the decision? Did other people participate in the decision?
- Any consultation?
- Any external influence / pressure?

Could you describe the background and process of choosing specific tutorials or cram school tutors?

可唔可以講下揀補習班 / 補習老師嘅背景同過程？

- Who made the choice? Did other people participate in the choice?
- Any consultation?
- Any research?
- Any external influence / pressure?

Why were these tutorials / cram school tutors chosen?

點解會揀呢啲補習班 / 呢啲補習老師？

- Which factors were considered for the choice?

Have you tried other modes of private tuition or other study aids for your senior secondary studies?

你喺讀高中期間，有冇參加過其他形式嘅補習，又或者使用過其他輔助學習嘅方法呀？

(If “YES”) Why did you choose these alternatives, instead of receiving mass tutoring only?

點解會用呢啲方法，而不淨係參加大型補習班？

What do you feel about these alternatives, especially compared to mass tutoring?

你對呢啲方法有乜野意見，尤其係同大型補習班比較嘅話？

(If “NO”) Why did not you try these alternatives, but receiving mass tutoring alone?

點解唔試下呢啲方法改善學習，而只係參加大型補習班？

On Trust

Could you describe and comment on the teaching by your daytime school teachers?

可唔可以講下你嘅日校老師點樣教書？你對佢（地）嘅教學有乜嘢意見？

To what extent do you trust your daytime school teachers on enhancing your studies?

Why?

喺改善學習方面，你有幾信任日校老師？點解？

Could you describe and comment on the teaching by your cram school tutors?

可唔可以講下你嘅補習老師點樣教書？你對佢（地）嘅教學有乜嘢意見？

To what extent do you trust your cram school tutors on enhancing your studies?

Why?

喺改善學習方面，你有幾信任補習老師？點解？

Daytime school teachers and cram school tutors, whom do you trust more? Why?

兩者比較嘅話，你信邊個多啲？點解？

- Separate answer for each subject

(For interviewees who trust daytime school teachers more) If you trust daytime school teachers more, why do you still attend mass tutoring?

既然你信日校老師多啲，點解仲要去上大型補習班？

There are pieces of reportage on the credibility of qualifications of some cram school tutors' (including one/some of your tutors). Have you noticed these pieces of reportage?

坊間有啲報道指一啲補習老師嘅學歷同教學資格有問題（包括你嘅補習老師）。你有冇留意呢啲報道？

(If “YES”) Did the reportage affect your trust on these cram school tutors? Why?

（如有）呢啲報道有冇影響你對呢啲補習老師嘅信任？點解？

Have you ever changed your cram school tutors?

你有冇換過補習老師？

(If “YES”) Could you describe the reason for and the process of this change / these changes?

（如有）可唔可以講下轉補習老師嘅原因同過程？

CLOSING QUESTION

Do you have anything to add or sum up before ending this interview?

最後你有冇其他嘢想補充，或者作一個簡短嘅總結？

Appendix III Synopses of Selected Cases

1. AH1

AH1 was a Secondary 7 student from an elite boys' school at Tai Kok Tsui. He was a science stream student studying Pure Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, CL&C and UE for his sixth form. In the HKCEE, he got 26 points, with 2 As, 4 Bs and 2 Cs. During Secondary 4 and 5, he received mass tutoring for nearly all subjects. After promoted to the sixth form, he had been attending regular tutorials at cram schools for Chemistry, CL&C and UE, and individual-based private tutoring for Pure Mathematics and Physics.

On academic aspiration, AH1 targeted at business undergraduate programmes run by local first-tier universities, especially quantitative finance or integrated BBA programmes of CUHK. He had also considered the hotel management programme in Switzerland. Good academic results are important because they can ensure more choices for further studies. Although there had been a recent case of admission to universities without good public examination results, it was exceptionally rare. This is why he set his public examination target higher than the minimum requirement for guaranteeing opportunities for further studies.

Even AH1 got outstanding results in the HKCEE, he felt a bit difficult to achieve his academic target. The admission grades of his dreamed undergraduate programme, quantitative finance of CUHK, are very high in the recent cohorts. Also, he felt hard to figure out the actual requirement of getting an A grade. Attending an elite school with keen competition, he felt anxious when he lagged behind his classmates.

On career goal, AH1 aspired for a business-related career, especially finance. He did not want to be the bottom class of society, while, to his understanding, business-related career ensures stable and affluent living. He added that finance is his interest developed through watching television programmes and reading books about finance. Although parents preferred him to be a doctor or a lawyer, they respected his career orientation. Despite having a clear career goal, he viewed the future happenings as unimaginable. Factors not related to personal effort and qualities, such as luck, matter the chance of success. In such circumstances, one has to take one step at a time for his career.

Yet, he thought that diligence and good preparation are necessary for getting a good opportunity. This is why he worked hard on his studies. This is reflected by his frequent revision and frequent academic discussion with classmates.

For AH1, studying is not for scoring, but is merely for a good career future, and aims at acquiring knowledge for future career. Senior secondary students in Hong Kong should focus on public examinations. In his view, it is hard to compare the importance of public examination results and that of real subject knowledge, since the former is a reflection of the latter. In other words, solid subject knowledge is the requisite of good examination results.

In AH1's view, a good teacher should be able to interact effectively with his students. In particular, he should pay attention to his students' learning pace and response. Also, he should be familiar with the public examination requirement. He should even be able to follow the practices of cram school tutors do nowadays.

Furthermore, he particularly emphasized the significance of "fitting tone and style" between teacher and student: whether a teacher is good or not varies among different student, and depends on whether an individual student finds the teacher's tone and style fitting him. Following this view, he believed that students should be granted the right to choose their daytime school teachers.

Despite his concern on public examination, AH1 thought that a good teacher should not only teach the coverage of the examination syllabus. Rather, a good teacher should convey to his students knowledge related to personal life development, which is beyond the examination syllabus. In the eyes of AH1, personal life education is the key distinction of daytime schooling from mass tutoring, and is the reason why the former cannot be replaced by the latter. Nevertheless, he added that it would be perfect for students if daytime school teachers adopted the teaching approach of cram school tutors. Apart from the aforesaid qualities, teaching experience is also deemed by AH1 as an important quality for a good teacher.

AH1 unambiguously admitted that he enrolled in mass tutoring because he wished mass tutoring could help him to get better grades in public examination. He absolutely agreed that there is no ground for one to receive mass tutoring if he is not sitting examinations. In particular, he wanted to grasp the concept of an A in public examination. With his own effort and limited information from daytime school lessons, it is uneasy to imagine the requirement of getting an A.

In addition, in the eyes of AH1, mass tutoring is an alternative source of knowledge which can learn and master the subject knowledge better. For example, tutorials for English teach grammar, phrases and practical language use which can reinforce students' foundation in English language; Tutorials for CL&C can teach students the way of independent and critical thinking, which daytime school lessons inadequately emphasize, but is required to excel in the CL&C paper on cultural issues.

Unlike other interviewees, AH1 disclaimed that his mass tutoring enrolment was for getting examination tips, as he did not believe that the tutors could know the exact details of questions. Also, AH1 did not think that tutees enjoy advantage over non-tutees in public examination.

AH1 did not receive mass tutoring in Pure Mathematics and Physics. Instead, he went for individual-based private tuition for these two subjects. For him, close supervision is more preferable for these two mathematically demanding subjects. When AH1's tutor was a sixth form student, he studied exactly the same subject combination as AH1, so AH1 believed that his tutor was familiar with the need and difficulties which he might face. Since his personal tutor who could provide tutorial notes from cram schools, he could enjoy the credits of both individual tutoring and mass tutoring at the same time.

For AH1, the decision to enrol in mass tutoring was made on his own for most subjects. Except English Language in Secondary 4 and CL&C in the sixth form, he enrolled in mass tutoring for these subjects due to parents' advice. At the early stage of Secondary 6, he had been suspicious of the necessity of attending tutorials for CL&C, but after attendance for some time, he discovered the function of the CL&C tutorial, so he willingly continue the tutorial.

AH1's English teacher discouraged her students from attending mass tutoring. She thought that mass tutoring cannot provide real knowledge on English language. Nevertheless, AH1's initiative to join mass tutoring was not affected by his teacher's comment and discouragement.

Except the English tutorial he attended in Secondary 4 and 5, which was chosen by his parents, all other tutorials attended since Secondary 4 were chosen by AH1 himself. During the early stage of selection, he collected leaflets about tutorials, and consulted his schoolmates for advice, yet he considered whether the tutors' "tone

and style” of teaching suit him as the most important, so he attended free-of-charge trial lessons to acquire some first-person experience before confirming a choice. Besides “tone and style” of teaching, AH1 also concerned on whether the tutors had rich experience in question setting and script marking when selecting tutors.

Regarding enhancing students’ academic performance, AH1 trusted cram school tutors more. He met some daytime school teachers whose teaching “tone and style” did not suit him, or who was incapable to give clear explanation in lessons. Some daytime school teachers were even unfamiliar with the latest examination requirement. On the other hand, cram school tutors, in his understanding, manage to offer convincing explanation with references and evidence, have richer experience in question setting and script marking, and are more familiar with common difficulties and mistakes among examination candidates. Their notes, which are concise but already cover everything needed for examinations, were his core revision materials shortly before examinations. Nevertheless, AH1 was aware that cram school tutors are not necessarily perfect and omnipotent. They may have weaknesses, and their approach may not suit every student. So, he did not totally depend on tutor’s lectures, materials and instructions for examination. He had changed his tutor for English after finding the original tutor’s teaching too easy for him.

Mass tutoring was not the only study aid AH1 subscribed to. Besides individual private tuition mentioned before, AH1 also bought some supplementary exercises for self-practice, collected tutorial notes of other tutors from schoolmates, and collected mock examination papers of other schools. He believed that seeking multiple aids and information sources is necessary, as it can better familiarize him with the requirement of the public examination, especially the required level for a distinction.

2. AL3

AL3 was a Secondary 7 arts student from an aided girls' school in Yau Yat Tsuen. She got 17 points in the HKCEE, and her performance in school in the sixth form ranged from upper-middle to middle. She had attended a regular course for UE in a cram school during the summer before Secondary 7 began, but had changed to another regular course offered by another cram school for the same subject after a month. She also attended a regular course for Geography, which was offered by another cram school, during Secondary 7.

On academic goal, AL3 wished to study language, which was her largest academic interest, in the university. AL3's mother, who always reminded her to be diligent in studies, strongly wished her to enter university. The Bachelor of Arts programme of HKU, which has specialized streams in languages, was the undergraduate programme she most aspired for. According to the actual admission grades of the past cohorts, the minimum HKALE result to secure an offer of this programme was 'C's in compulsory language subjects (CLC, UE) and 'D's in other subjects on average. Thus, this was also AL3's target grades for the HKALE. However, AL3 felt a bit difficult to reach her target grades.

In AL3's view, public examination result was important to her. It was necessary for getting good further study opportunities, such as a place of a quality university programme. It had importance for the whole life.

On career aspiration, AL3 preferred jobs with administrative nature. She did not have interest in legal and medical fields, despite they are socially recognized professional fields. Also, unlike many jobs in the business fields, which require employees to face keen competitions and reach targeted profit, administrative jobs is more stable and less competitive, so these jobs suited her personality more. High salary was not her major concern, but she still hoped that her future job could at least be adequate for covering the financial need of herself and her family members.

AL3 believed that reaching her career goal was not too difficult. Despite this, she admitted that a good university degree is significant to one's career prospect. As she noted, as there are many university graduates competing in the labour market, a Secondary 7 graduate has very limited career choices. On the contrary, as there are much more career opportunities for university graduates with specialization in language, getting a job will become much easier after completing a language degree programme.

Apart from undergraduate studies at local universities, AL3 had considered other alternative study paths, such as associate degree or higher diploma programmes, if unable to enter local undergraduate degree programmes. Despite this, to her knowledge, the tuition fee for alternative study paths is higher. Also, despite opportunities of admission to bachelor's degree programmes are available to graduates of these alternative study paths, students are normally required to spend more years to attain the degree finally. For these reasons, she still preferred local undergraduate programmes to alternative study paths, and strived for the former.

For AL3, the main purpose of studying at senior secondary level was for achieving good results in public examinations, which are necessary for getting further study opportunities. She believed that the proper way of studying for Hong Kong's senior secondary students is attending to the examination requirements and formats. She disagreed the saying of "learning is not for scoring", as she realized the necessity of a screening system to differentiate students with various abilities, and admission to university without good academic result is extremely rare, thus nobody can escape from this reality, and everyone has to follow this rule of game.

In her view, public examination results are more important than subject knowledge for senior secondary students, since subject knowledge is not sufficient for securing further study opportunities, while public examination results are what really matter. In addition, most subject knowledge learnt in school, such as geographical knowledge, is only meaningful for public examinations, and does not have practical significance in daily life.

On the qualities of a good teacher, AL3 mentioned clear illustration and close relationship with students. Besides, she particularly emphasized a good teacher should follow the practices of a cram school tutor, including focusing on the examination requirement and teaching answering techniques.

AL3 did not think daytime schooling should be replaced by mass tutoring, as the latter lacks close interaction between teachers and students. She believed, with longer contact hours and track record on students' coursework performance, daytime school teachers are more familiar with students' learning needs and progress than cram school tutors. However, she thought that daytime schooling would become better if teachers adopted cram school tutors' teaching strategies, such as providing concise, examination-oriented reference notes, and providing drillings in examination skills.

AL3 thought that students should be granted the right to choose their daytime school teachers. By doing so, students can choose the teachers who are more promising in helping students scoring good grades. Students' extra expense on mass tutoring can be saved consequently.

The main objectives for receiving mass tutoring for AL3 were to enhance her chance to get at least 2 'C's in the HKALE, and to boost up her confidence for sitting the examination. In addition, she expected that mass tutoring could consolidate her understanding on the content required by the examination syllabus after attending daytime school lessons. In particular, she wanted to acquire techniques and skills useful for answering examination papers, which were seldom discussed by her subject teachers in her daytime school.

AL3 did not enrol in mass tutoring for every subject she was studying. For Liberal Studies, there were no tutorials available in the market. For other subjects, her daytime school teachers' teaching had already well satisfied her expectation. For example, she appreciated her CL&C teacher very much for explaining examination requirements and skills in detail in lessons.

The decision to enrol in mass tutoring was made on her own, independently from her parents and teachers. Her parents did not encourage nor object to her decision. Her Geography teacher even encouraged her classmates to attend mass tutoring, but her teacher never told them the reason why attending mass tutoring is worthwhile.

When selecting tutors, AL3 sought recommendation from schoolmates, especially senior schoolmates, who had experience in mass tutoring for concerned subjects. She particularly attended to their comments on the tutors' reference notes, teaching style and course content. She did not care much on tutors' qualification, since she believed that tutors' qualification did not matter the suitability of the tutor to her. Although popularity was not the factor she most concerned, and she did not totally depend on the information from promotional leaflets and advisements when choosing tutors, she never considered tutors with very low popularity, as she believed that following tutors with certain popularity was less risky. If there were free-of-charge trial lessons by a tutor available, she would also attend these lessons to experience whether the tutor's teaching style and course content suit her before finalizing her choice.

Besides mass tutoring, AL3 never considered other study aids, including tutoring on individual or small-group basis, and supplementary exercises for self-study purpose. She worried that individual-based or small-group tutoring was not closely relevant to the examination requirement. Supplementary exercise was not an effective tool for her. Without guidance, she lacked self-motivation and direction to finish the exercise

In terms of enhancing students' academic performance, AL3 trusted cram school tutors more than daytime school teachers in general, as the former highlight key points of the examination syllabus, and provide useful skills and techniques for answering examination papers. Shortly before examination, she only revised the materials from mass tutoring, as these materials are usually concise, with key points highlighted, and without examination-irrelevant contents, while textbooks are normally comprehensive and contain beyond-syllabus content.

Although AL3 trusted cram school tutors for their effectiveness in academic enhancement in general, she did not totally depend on her tutors. She had changed her tutor for UE after she suspected what her first tutor taught did not match the official examination requirement announced by the HKEAA.

AL3 never borrowed tutorial notes written by other tutors from her peers, as she believed that these notes were not useful without attending the corresponding tutorial classes

3. CH4

CH4 was a Secondary 4 science student from an aided co-educational college in the Eastern District. He was attending regular courses, which were offered by various cram schools, for Chinese Language, Mathematics, Additional Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology, and an intensive course for Economics. The only subject for which he did not receive mass tutoring was English.

When asked about academic target, CH4 replied that he wished to get 30 points in the HKCEE and to be qualified for EAS, but he emphasized that this was his “dream” rather than a “goal”, because he did not have absolute confidence in reaching this target. He added that law and business were the career fields he targeted at, and HKU’s double degree programme in law and business administration, which was highly competitive with very good admission grades in the past cohorts, was the undergraduate programme he most craved for. Without outstanding public examination grades, it is nearly impossible to get a place of this programme. Also, whether one can enter the desired career field, especially the professions with esteemed social status, depends much on the specialization of university studies. Thus, CH4 felt hard to judge the likeliness of reaching his career target at the moment of the interview, and thought that outstanding public examination grades are a necessary condition for success in society.

For CH4, the major purpose of senior secondary studies was to achieve good public examination results. In his view, senior secondary students in Hong Kong should be examination-oriented, and should give up extracurricular activities for examination subjects when necessary. For him, public examination results are more important than subject knowledge, as he thought that good examination results are more significant than subject knowledge to a person’s level of success and achievement. He believed that those with poor examination results can only success to a limited extent. He also emphasized that, for the mass senior secondary students in Hong Kong, public examination is an inescapable game: everyone is supposed to plunge in public examinations, or otherwise leads to a harder future. Although few students had been granted university offers without good examination results, they had to possess some exceptional talents which the mass students, including him, do not possess. Thus, he strongly disagreed that saying of “learning is not for scoring”.

In CH4’s eyes, a good teacher should be knowledgeable and capable to teach subject knowledge to students. S/he should also be attentive to students’ individual difference in learning abilities and needs. In addition, a good teacher should take the

role of cram school tutors to provide examination-focused training, including teaching examination techniques, preparing concise reference notes, and even offering tips of topics which probably appear in real examinations. A good teacher may teach contents beyond the examination syllabus, but the completion of the syllabus requirement should be placed on the first place

CH4 didn't think full replacement of daytime school teachers by cram school tutors is feasible. He believed that students can hardly follow the course of mass tutoring without prior attendance to daytime schooling.

For CH4, enrolling in tutorials was for higher chance to excel in public examination. His expectation from mass tutoring was the examination techniques and tactics, not subject knowledge. He started receiving mass tutoring as early as the summer before Secondary 4. At that time, he did not think achieving 3 distinctions in the HKCEE too difficult for him, yet his dream was 6 distinctions and eligibility for the EAS. As he believed that mass tutoring is effective to enhance his ability to deal with the public examination, and to help him reach his dreamed target, he enrolled in mass tutoring.

CH4 received mass tutoring for all subjects he was studying except English, for which he had high confidence to attain good grades with his own effort. He thought that opportunities to have English conversations in real life situations are most effective for improving his English proficiency. These opportunities are generally not found from mass tutoring classes

CH4's decision of mass tutorial enrolment was made independently from parents and teachers. According to him, his parents did not have any stance on whether he should attend tutorials, while his daytime school teachers were neutral on the mass tutoring enrolment of their students. However, the reason for his belief on the effectiveness of mass tutoring was that he observed the improvement in academic performance of his schoolmates who were attending mass tutoring.

While selecting tutors, CH4 did not pay much attention on tutors' background. Priority was given to tutors whose tutees among his acquaintance had good performance. For him, acquiring first-person experience and "trial and error" was the only way to know whether a tutor suited him. Nevertheless, till the moment of interview (the summer after Secondary 4), he had not switched any cram school tutors whom he was following.

Besides mass tutoring, CH4 used reference books, including a series designed for last minute review, as a study aid. Yet, he commented that these reference materials, albeit very useful for quick reference shortly before examinations, are not ideal for consolidating the mastery on the principles and ideas covered by the subject. Mass tutoring, which provides clearer and more detailed explanation, is a better way to serve this purpose.

In terms of enhancement of academic performance, CH4 deemed that cram school tutors were generally more trustworthy than daytime school teachers, especially for students who targeted at outstanding grades in public examination. Yet, he also realized the deficiency of mass tutoring, such as delivery in a large class or even through prerecorded videos, which made cram school tutors not as effective as daytime school teachers in understanding and catering to the learning needs of an individual student.

4. CL9

CL9 was a Secondary 5 arts stream repeater in a private daytime school, which also runs mass tutoring business. He got 4 points in his first attempt in the HKCEE. He attended regular course for Chinese Language, English Language and Economics during the repeating year, but these courses were not run by his daytime school.

As a Secondary 5 students preparing for the HKCEE, CL9's main academic goal was to meet the minimum required grades for promotion to the sixth form. For CL9, an opportunity to study the sixth form was important, because a Secondary 7 qualification can ensure better career opportunities and smoother career paths. As he pointed out in the interview, unlike the situation faced by his predecessors, who might secure a stable job with low academic qualification, employers nowadays normally require their clerks to have 5 passes in the HKCEE. Also, he did not want to be looked down upon by the others due to inferior academic qualifications. Although alternative study paths, such as vocational training and pre-associate degree programmes, are available, he was reluctant to follow these paths, as he thought that these paths had not gained wide recognition by society and might not very helpful for his future career development. Thus, he insisted in sitting the HKCEE again and aspired for 5 passes or even an opportunity to study the sixth form. However, he found difficult to reach this goal, as he was very weak in schoolwork and there was a big gap between his academic ability and his targeted grades.

On career, CL9 did not have a solid goal. What he looked for was a job with a salary sufficient for his basic living expense, such as a clerk or a salesperson. Nevertheless, he had little confidence in reaching this goal, as he was not confident in meeting the necessary requirement in academic qualification for competing for these jobs.

For CL9, the objective of studying was for a good career future and a smoother career path. He did not buy the saying "learning is not for scoring", as it is a reality that public examination results have significant impact on a youngster's further study and career opportunities. Although there were cases of admission to university without the required minimum examination grades, CL9 viewed these cases as exceptionally rare, and believed public examination results are still important to the majority.

CL9 thought that it was hard to compare the importance of public examination

results and that of real subject knowledge. According to him, good examination results are necessary for admission to bachelor's programmes and competition for jobs, but language proficiency and subject knowledge can give others good impression in workplace and everyday interpersonal communication.

CL9 did not think that conveying examination techniques is a responsibility of a daytime school teacher, even though he viewed public examination results as important, and teaching examination techniques as a credit for a daytime school teacher. Also, CL9 accepted daytime school teachers to include some beyond-syllabus content, provided that they do not go too far from the syllabus. The qualities of a teacher which CL9 valued most were the capacity to address individual difference in abilities, progress and needs, and the capacity to establish a close, friendly relationship with students.

CL9 agreed that students should be granted the right to choose their daytime school teachers, even he admitted that such arrangement might cause inconvenience in administration. Nevertheless, he did not agreed that daytime schooling can be totally replaced by mass tutoring, as he believed that mass tutoring is only a supplement to daytime school lessons. In his view, students can hardly understand the teaching in cram school classes without attending daytime school lessons.

CL9 attended mass tutoring because he thought it as helpful to build up his confidence and upgrade his results in public examination, or at least to minimize the possibility of failure to reach his target. He admitted that receiving mass tutoring was an investment on his future path. He expected that mass tutoring could further familiarize him with the latest syllabus requirement. In particular, he expected his tutors to provide specific examination techniques (e.g. effective tactics to dig out the theme of a long passage in reading comprehension), tips of topics which would probably be questioned on, and harder mock questions.

To avoid disadvantage in the pool of examination candidates, some of whom were tutees, was CL9's another purpose of attending mass tutoring. During the two years before his first attempt for the HKCEE, CL9 had not enrolled in any mass tutoring classes, as he had not thought that spending money on tutoring was worthwhile. In his view, the examination techniques taught in tutorials did not have any long-term significance to the mastery of subject knowledge. At the same time, he had thought that he was capable to pass the examination without any assistance from mass tutoring. Ironically, when his result was released, he only got 4 points, while his classmates who had attended mass tutoring got better grades. After this

lesson, he realized the fact that the public examination performance between tutees and non-tutees could have a big difference. Hence, he decided to attend regular tutorials throughout the year of repeating Secondary 5.

Nevertheless, CL9 thought that receiving mass tutoring for all subjects was too expensive and might impose heavy financial burden on his family. Therefore, he only enrolled in mass tutoring for subjects which he was least confident in passing.

The decision to enrol in mass tutoring was decided by CL9 himself. His parents did not have any stance on whether he should attend mass tutoring or not, and believed that he should decide on his own. Although a young English language teacher in the school he had previously attended had encouraged students to attend mass tutoring classes, he did not follow her advice before his first attempt in the HKCEE. His decision to enrol in mass tutoring in his repeating year was irrelevant to his teachers' advice.

When choosing tutors, CL9 sought advice from his friends who had experience in mass tutoring. He also visited internet forum and read the comments on various tutors for reference. When there was discrepancy among these advice and comments, he would choose the tutors whose classes were supported by more friends. Another factor CL9 considered during his selection was the grades attained by the tutors' past students. He preferred tutors whose past students had achieved outstanding subject grades. Furthermore, even CL9's daytime school runs mass tutoring classes, he chose tutorial classes from other cram schools, because he wanted to get some additional reference which was dissimilar to what he already received from his daytime school teachers.

Other than mass tutoring, CL9 neither went for other means of tutoring, including individual private tutoring and small-group tutoring, nor purchased supplementary exercise or study guides for self-reference. For individual private tutoring and small-group tutoring, CL9 thought that the tutors were less experienced and poorer qualified than cram school tutors, and the reliability of their guidance and tips was questionable. For supplementary exercise and self-help study guides, CL9 considered them as less effective than mass tutoring. He thought that these materials do not include problem solving skills, especially the specific techniques for public examinations. Also, without an instructor, it was difficult for him to understand the material thoroughly with his own effort.

In terms of effectiveness of enhancing students' academic performance, CL9

did not distrust his daytime school teachers, but when they were compared to cram school tutors, he trusted the latter more. In his view, the materials provided by cram school tutors were more concise, and were more helpful for examination preparation. In addition, the fact that a substantial number of past tutees attained good examination results had convinced CL9 that cram school tutors are more trustworthy. Shortly before the examination, both the materials from daytime school teachers and those from cram school tutors were used in his revision, yet the latter would be more concentrated on.

Although CL9 trusted his cram school tutors and never thought of changing tutors in the halfway, he collected tutorial notes written by other tutors for reference. He believed that, by doing so, he lost nothing but could get some extra resources which might be useful for examination preparation.

Appendix IV Outline of Educational Path in Hong Kong (as in Summer 2007)

Appendix V Brief Description on Public Examinations for Secondary Students in Hong Kong

1. Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE)

The HKCEE is normally taken by a student at the end of his/her five-year secondary education.

The HKCEE is conducted in the months of April and May and the results are released in the second week of August. Most day school candidates take 7 to 8 subjects in the HKCEE. Apart from language subjects and other language-related subjects, all subjects can be taken in either English or Chinese. The same standards are applied in marking and grading and the language medium is not recorded on the result notices or certificates.

Except for the subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and French, the results of all other subjects of the HKCEE are expressed in terms of six grades A – F, of which grade A is the highest and F is the lowest. Results below grade F are designed as unclassified (UNCL).

Starting from 2007, the results of Chinese Language and English Language will be recorded using levels, of which Level 5 is the highest and Level 1 is the lowest. Performance below Level 1 will be designated as “UNCL” (unclassified). Level 5 candidates with the best performance will have their results indicated by the symbol *.

A grade C or above in most of the HKCEE subjects is recognized as equivalent to an O-level pass (grade C or better) in an overseas GCE examination and grade E is widely accepted in Hong Kong as a basic level of achievement for employment purposes.

2. Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE)

The HKALE is normally taken by a student at the end of his/her two-year sixth-form courses.

The HKALE is conducted in the months of March to May and the results will be released in the end of June. There are 19 A-level and 20 AS-level subjects in the HKALE. AS-level subjects are taught in half the number of periods required for A-level subjects, but they require the same level of intellectual rigour. Most day school candidates take 5 subjects in the HKALE. Apart from Chinese Language &

Culture and Use of English which are taken by almost every school candidate, and other language-related subjects, all subjects can be taken in either language. The same standards are applied in marking and grading and the language medium is not recorded on the results notices or certificates.

The results of the HKALE are expressed in terms of six grades A - F, of which grade A is the highest and F the lowest. Results below grade F are designated as unclassified (UNCL).

Grade E of an A-level or AS-level result is equivalent to grade E in their GCE counterparts.

Source:

Website of Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

<http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk>

Retrieved on 12 February 2009

Appendix VI Brief Notes on Secondary 6 Admission Requirements and Procedures

1. Levels or grades attained in the HKCEE are converted into points according to the following table:

Levels (for Chinese Language and English Language)	Grades (for subjects other than Chinese Language and English Language)	Converted Points
5*	A	5
5	B	4
4	C	3
3	D	2
2	E	1
1 or Unclassified	F or Unclassified	0

2. The admission scheme is divided into 5 sequential stages:

STAGE I

Eligibility: Current year HKCEE participants who have obtained 14 points or more from the best 6 subjects in one sitting of the HKCEE.

- Eligible students for this stage should apply to their own or linked school(s).
- Each school is entitled to two discretionary places for each S6 class. The school may use these discretionary places only in this stage to accept students of its own or of linked school(s), including past students, who meet the minimum Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) entry requirement.

STAGE II

Eligibility: Students who have obtained 14 points or more from the best 6 subjects in one sitting of the HKCEE and have not obtained an S6 place.

- Eligible students for this stage may apply to other schools with S6 vacancies.

STAGE III

Eligibility: Current year HKCEE participants with results which satisfy the minimum HKALE entry requirements and have not obtained an S6 place.

- Eligible students for this stage may apply to their own or linked school(s) if there are still vacancies.

STAGE IV

Eligibility: The HKCEE participants with results which satisfy the minimum HKALE entry requirements and have not obtained an S6 place.

- Eligible students for this stage may apply to other schools with S6 vacancies.

STAGE V

Eligibility: The HKCEE participants with current year HKCEE results which satisfy the minimum HKALE entry requirements and have not obtained an S6 place.

- Eligible students for this stage may apply for Central Allocation at designated application centres.
- At the time of application, a list of schools with S6 vacancies will be provided and students should clearly indicate their choices on the Choice of Schools Form. Allocation will be processed by the computer according to applicants' HKCEE results, choices made and the subject requirements of the chosen school(s).
- In the event that NO S6 vacancy is available, or S6 vacancies are only in ONE school in Stage V, Central Allocation will be cancelled. In case there are vacancies in only one school, eligible current year HKCEE candidates should apply to that school direct.

If students are still unable to secure an S6 place after the completion of Stage V, they may be able to get a place at the beginning of the new school year because some successful students may decide not to take up their places. Information on schools with S6 vacancies will be available for reference of the students throughout September. Applications should be made to those schools direct. Admission will be entirely at the discretion of the school authorities.

3. Factors which may affect admission:

In considering an application for admission to S6 at each stage of the Procedure, the school may take into account other factors in addition to the HKCEE results, such as achievements of Chinese Language and English Language in the HKCEE, subject requirements in the relevant stream (Arts, Science and soon), schools' discretion in recognition of alternative Chinese Language qualifications and/or counting the scores for the Applied Learning (ApL) courses for S6 admission, and the student's conduct in school etc. The maximum number of points accumulated in respect of the ApL course for admission to sixth form is two.

4. Minimum HKALE entry requirements

To be eligible for participation in the HKALE, a student must:

- (a) by the end of August in the year before the intended year of sitting, have attained Level 2 above in Chinese Language and English Language in the HKCEE, or grade E or above in previous HKCEE for these two subjects, but not necessarily in one sitting; AND
- (b) by the end of August in the second year before the intended year of sitting, have attained 4 points in at least 4 other subjects, or 5 points or more in the best 3 other subjects in one sitting of the HKCEE and each subject shall carry at least one point.

Source:

Education Bureau, Hong Kong (2007). *Secondary Six Admission Procedure 2007: Brief Notes*.

Education Bureau, Hong Kong (2008). *Secondary Six Admission Procedure 2008: Brief Notes*.

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