One Size Fits All? Teacher Appraisal in a Chinese Culture
Walker, Allan;Dimmock, Clive
Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education; Jun 2000; 14, 2; ProQuest Central
pg. 155

Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education 14:2 155–178, 2000
© 2000 Kluwer Academic Publishers. Manufactured in The Netherlands.

One Size Fits All? Teacher Appraisal in a Chinese Culture

ALLAN WALKER
Chinese University of Hong Kong

CLIVE DIMMOCK
Graduate School of Education and University of Western Australia

Abstract

In this article we suggest that the penetration of Western policies and practices—in particular, teacher appraisal—into Asian cultural contexts needs to be questioned. We begin by making a general case for considering the influence of societal culture on educational policies and practices, and a more specific argument for assessing its role in the implementation of teacher appraisal in different cultures. We argue that it may be unwise simply to clone appraisal practices in contexts and cultures quite different from those in which they are chartered. The study briefly reviews the status of teacher appraisal in Hong Kong, given that in the next few years all Hong Kong schools must implement appraisal schemes, a fact causing considerable consternation. We then suggest that the most common forms of appraisal being promoted and implemented in Hong Kong are based on traditional Anglo-American understandings and practices. This leads to a discussion of the possible influence exerted by culture on teacher appraisal in the Chinese society of Hong Kong. Noteworthy features of Hong Kong's culture are collectivism and high power distance, both of which are sufficiently different from Anglo-American cultures to suggest that the forms taken by teacher appraisal in those countries may be inappropriate for Hong Kong. In the final section, we briefly discuss a number of issues that, it is suggested, deserve consideration when Hong Kong schools design and implement teacher appraisal schemes. As we stress throughout the study, our discussion is not intended to be definitive. Rather, we hope it will stimulate discussion and research into discovering more culturally sensitive ways of appraising teachers in different parts of the world.

An important continuing problem facing policymakers and school practitioners is the implementation of meaningful and practicable teacher appraisal schemes. Debate about the appropriateness of different approaches to appraisal and their associated processes has been largely restricted to English-speaking Western settings. Little has been written about teacher appraisal outside these confines, and in particular, the influence of societal culture on teacher appraisal in Asian educational contexts, such as Hong Kong. This gap in the knowledge base has become more conspicuous now that all Hong Kong schools face the mandated implementation of teacher appraisal schemes and are increasingly exposed to ''foreign'' appraisal practices. This study questions the efficacy of transplanting teacher appraisal systems and processes developed in English-speaking Western countries into a predominantly Chinese society. While recognizing the current policy drive to implement teacher appraisal in all Hong Kong schools, we discuss the possible influence that societal culture—in this case, Chinese culture—exerts on various elements of appraisal schemes.

From its early stages, the introduction of teacher appraisal in Hong Kong schools has been problematic for both policymakers and school practitioners (The Task Group of Evaluation of the SMI Scheme, 1994). One reason for this may be that the modes of appraisal infiltrating schools are based predominantly on Western assumptions. In this article we explore the possible influence of national or societal culture on the implementation of teacher appraisal in Hong Kong schools. In doing so, we aim to heighten the awareness of policymakers and school leaders to the role played by culture in the implementation of meaningful teacher appraisal schemes. Although scholars studying international business have addressed the influence of culture on appraisal (Huo & Clinow, 1995), and found this influence to be important (Chow, 1995), the perspective has not, to our knowledge, been explored in the education context. It is therefore necessary to initiate discussion of how the enduring values, norms, and beliefs composing a society's culture may influence the shape and operation of appraisal in schools and, in so doing, make culture more overtly a factor to be taken into consideration. Because of the dearth of education literature in this area, our analysis is unavoidably exploratory and our discussion nondefinitive. We do not suggest that culture alone is sufficient to explain the suitability of particular appraisal approaches in the Hong Kong context—social, political and economic factors also play an important role—but we do suggest that culture is a neglected angle and consequently merits attention. (For a discussion issues related to researching the influence of culture, see Dimmock & Walker, 1998a,b, and Walker & Dimmock, 1999.)

The study is divided into four sections. In the first, we argue against the cloning of educational policies and practices accompanying globalization. In particular, we suggest that the unidirectional flow of ideas from the West ignores the influence of societal culture on educational practice in schools. We also suggest that greater insight into the influence of culture on educational processes, such as teacher appraisal, might offer two-way benefit and inform understanding in English-speaking Western societies as they struggle to accommodate increasing cultural diversity. In the second section, we provide a brief commentary on the history and status of teacher appraisal in Hong Kong and submit that the models and processes most commonly recommended and used draw primarily on Western literature and practice. We also argue that teacher appraisal is one of the most problematic aspects of educational reform in Hong Kong. In the third section, we consider some important tenets of appraisal espoused in the U.K. and the U.S. and their cultural suitability for Hong Kong schools. For example, Western appraisal models prevalent in Hong Kong are primarily individualistic, whereas Chinese cultures are more collectivist or group oriented. Thus, approaches that target individual performance and development may be misplaced in Hong Kong schools. In the final section, we discuss a number of issues that deserve to be addressed if teacher appraisal is to be meaningfully implemented in Hong Kong.

In this first section, we challenge the current trend of importing educational structures, policies, and practices into contexts and cultures that are quite different from those within which they were originally conceived. We question the generalizabilty and applicability of appraisal practices as one of a broad range of educational conventions circulating the globe under the guise of globalization (Walker & Walker, 1998).

One Size Fits All?

Like many Western and non-Western societies, Hong Kong is currently in the throes of hurriedly reforming its education system. A recurrent theme of the reform movement—highlighted by the trends of internationalization and globalization—is the origin of policies and practices in predominantly English-speaking Western educational philosophies and suppositions. This phenomenon of unquestioning acceptance of practices such as teacher appraisal from the West denies the influence of societal culture on policy and practice in schools (Dimmock & Walker, 1998a).

The importation or cloning of policies, processes, and approaches such as appraisal is not a new problem; it has endured for many years under the pretext of different forms of colonization (Dimmock, 1998). The trend, however, has become even more pronounced in recent years as a direct result of globalization. There appears a naïve belief among many policymakers and practitioners that policies and practices designed in one context can be unproblematically transported elsewhere. Whitty, Power, and Halpin (1998) point out that adopting policies across cultures without recognizing their distinctive historical and cultural dimensions risks ''false universalism'' (Rose, 1991). In other words, unthinking importation too often concentrates on identifying ''surface'' similarities, but does so without ''**reference to the culture in which they the policies and practices were developed**''. Although not addressed in this article, the risks of ''cross-cultural cloning'' (Dimmock & Walker, 1998b) may apply equally between and within different English-speaking Western societies as they do between more obviously diverse cultures. For example, Seddon (1994, cited in Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998) argues that, in general, Australia has displayed ''a dependent and subservient preoccupation with development in the UK and USA'' (p. 4), while Dimmock (1998) claims the same is true of Hong Kong education (also see Walker & Dimmock, 1998).

Given the predominantly Chinese culture of Hong Kong (Westwood & Kirkbride, 1998), it is naïve to assume that approaches to appraisal developed predominantly in Western countries are suitable for either judging or developing teachers there. As Steingard and Fitzgibbons (1995) note, somewhat acidly ''Despite its unchallenged and unfettered expansionism, globalization is *not* a value free, natural phenomenon catapulting the world into a pristine state of progress'' (p. 31, emphasis in original). In line with such challenges, arguments urging deeper examination of the influence of national culture on educational leadership and its related functions have recently begun to appear in educational literature (Cheng, 1995; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996b; Walker & Dimmock, 1999a+b).

The most persuasive argument for considering the role societal cultures play in policy implementation and, more importantly, their resultant processes and practices, calls for the ''donning (of) a cultural lens'' (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996a, p. 4) for investigating educational processes in differing societal contexts. While decrying the dearth of research and comment in this area, Dimmock and Walker (1998a) elaborate the case for increased cultural understanding on a number of grounds. Among other arguments, these include recognition of the inappropriateness of many Western theories in non-Western settings and the continued training of academics and policymakers from around the world in this same

المنارة للاستشارات

tradition; the need for exploring the possibilities of two-way cross-cultural fertilization of ideas; the need to improve understanding of the nature of relationships between phenomena within education, and between education and the wider social, political, and economic sectors of society; and the need to promote the improvement of international understanding, cooperation and goodwill across the international community of educationalists (Walker & Dimmock, in press–a).

The lack of serious development of cross-cultural understanding in the area of educational management and leadership, and in processes such as appraisal, stands in contrast to developments in business management, political science and cross-cultural psychology (Bond, 1996; Hofstede, 1991; Ronan, 1996). Organizational theorists outside education have long recognized the limitations of English-language Western organizational theory in non-English-speaking Western and non-Western contexts (Mamman & Saffu, 1998). As Hofstede has repeated throughout the last decade: ''US theories like those of . . . McGregor, Likert, Blake and Mouton may not or only very partly apply outside the borders of their country of origin—assuming they do apply within these borders'' (Hofstede, 1994, p. 28). Even though some of these so-called conventional theories have been increasingly challenged in their countries of origin, they are still promoted openly and in unabridged form in very different cultures (Dimmock, in press; Walker & Dimmock, 1999a + b; Walker & Quong, 1998).

Hofstede (1995) specifically addressed the influence of societal culture on appraisal practices in the context of the business world. He noted that performance appraisal systems strongly advocated in Western management literature suggest that employees' performance will improve when they receive direct feedback, usually from a superior. This may be true, he claims, in individualistic cultures such as the U.S., but not in more collectivist cultures, such as Hong Kong (also see Seddon, 1987, in Chow, 1995). For example, Western models of appraisal not only assume direct feedback, open communication, and more equal relationships between the principal and teacher but also assume that organizational members see themselves as individuals rather than as team or group members. In collectivist cultures, however, these assumptions may not hold, and the giving of direct feedback can destroy the harmony that is considered so important in governing interpersonal relationships.

To confront the all too common notion that, at least on the surface, policy, systems, structures, and leadership practices are homogeneous across the world, the influence of culture must find its place in educational discourse. Unless and until educators attempt to understand processes such as appraisal as at least partially derived from, and influenced by, societal culture, there is serious risk that our understandings will remain too narrowly conceived. On a more practical level, the considerable resources being committed to introducing teacher appraisal in places such as Hong Kong may be misspent and the value of appraisal to teachers and schools marginalized if inappropriate practices are widely installed.

Exploring the influence of culture on appraisal can help expose the value of theory and practice from different cultural perspectives, which may, in turn, inform existing Western paradigms. Such paradigms themselves may well be in need of adjustments as their own societies become increasingly multicultural (see Lomotey, 1995). As Ovando (1996) states, ‘‘those in supervisory positions must develop productive relationships with teachers and other personnel with diverse backgrounds’’ (p. 2). Hallinger and Leithwood (1996a) summarize such positions neatly below:

> Countries/regions and, therefore, schools within them are rapidly becoming more culturally diverse. This trend toward multiculturalism has implications for the management of schools and for the knowledge base underlying school leadership. It is crucial to better understand how schools can productively accommodate such diversity and the forms of leadership likely to assist such accommodation (p. 6).

In summary, we suggest that it is important to promote the level of understanding of how ‘‘culture’’ influences the implementation of philosophies and practices, such as appraisal, in different cultural contexts. Societal culture can be defined as the enduring sets of beliefs, values, and ideologies underpinning structures, processes, and practices. Since it provides the context within which schools operate, it exerts a substantial influence on teacher appraisal and its successful operation. Unless we view processes such as appraisal within their cultural context, it is unlikely that we can construct an accurate understanding of how practices and relationships in different cultural settings are played out. Culture can be conceptualized at a number of interrelated levels, from the micro (school) level to the macro (national) level, all of which influence leadership and teaching. While considerable research into various aspects of school organizational culture has already been undertaken, little is known about the influence of societal cultures on appraisal practices (Dimmock, 2000).

In the following section, we provide a brief summary of the status of teacher appraisal in Hong Kong as the pressure for implementation grows. Two of the major school restructuring policies of the 1990s—the School Management Initiative (SMI) (Education and Manpower Branch and Education Department, 1991) and the Education Commission Report No. 7. (ECR7) (Education Commission Report No. 7, 1997)—are unequivocal about the necessity to introduce a staff appraisal system.

Teacher Appraisal in Hong Kong

Teacher appraisal is a relatively recent phenomenon in Hong Kong. Until the early 1990s, appraisal was rare in Hong Kong schools. It was limited to the occasional, summative external inspection of teachers seeking promotion. (For a brief background to appraisal prior to this period in Hong Kong, see Mo, Conners, & McCormick (1998). For a general description of the Hong Kong education system, the organizational structure of schools, and history of the education policy, see Walker & Dimmock (1998), and Dimmock & Walker (1998a,b).) The Code of Aid did not require schools to develop any formal procedures for evaluating teacher performance (Education and Manpower Branch and Education Department, 1991). Formal recognition of the need for teacher appraisal arrived in 1991 as part of a comprehensive school reform policy called the School Management

Initiative (SMI). In essence, SMI proposed a model for school-based management in line with trends in many Western countries. The SMI was introduced as a voluntary scheme, with individual schools given the latitude to decide whether or not to join. In short, the policy aimed at defining more clearly the roles of those responsible for administering schools, particularly sponsors, managers, and principals. It also aimed to provide for greater participation by teachers, parents, and former students in school decision-making and management; to give schools more flexibility in the use of their resources; and finally, to encourage more systematic planning and evaluation of school activities (Dimmock & Walker, 1997). It is the last of these aims that interests us here; and specifically, the section related to teacher appraisal.

Recommendation 9 of the SMI document lamented the fact that Hong Kong schools were not required to have any formal procedures for evaluating the performance of staff. The report suggested that the absence of such procedures hindered the assessment of staff strengths and weaknesses and hampered the provision of relevant staff development and the operation of an equitable promotion system. Accordingly, a teacher appraisal system was recommended, and schools were urged to consult their management committees and to look at the Education Department's (ED) own appraisal form as a possible starting point.

It is important to note at this stage that the SMI drew heavily on philosophies, procedures, and innovations dominant in Western countries (Dimmock, 1998). For example, a large section of the policy document was devoted to Australian and American ideas on school effectiveness and school-based management. The American research findings of Wilson and Corcoran (1988) were well cited and a comprehensive account given of the school collaborative decision-making model advocated by Caldwell and Spinks (1988) in Australia, which was strongly advocated as a model for Hong Kong schools to follow. By implication, approaches to appraisal were also firmly grounded in Western conceptions and models. One of the primary purposes of the present article is to question the assumption that such models and their inherent processes can be successfully adopted in very different cultural contexts, such as Hong Kong.

The relatively small number of schools[1] which opted to join the SMI Scheme were required to develop and implement a school-based teacher appraisal program. Schools had to develop their own model of appraisal, and some guidance was provided in the form of workshops and the distribution of a handbook on Staff Appraisal in Schools (Advisory Committee on the School Management Initiative, 1992). The model presented in the handbook appeared to clone approaches then in vogue in Western countries such as the U.K. (for example, see Bell, 1992) and were roughly based on a traditional clinical approach to supervision. From the outset, the appraisal component of the reform caused dissension and dissatisfaction in schools—a fact reflected in the second formal evaluation of the SMI released in 1994. As the evaluation reported:

> Compared to other changes in the SMI Scheme, staff appraisal system was the only rather controversial in some schools (*sic*). Many teachers felt that the appraisal system had achieved only a little in their schools. The major difficulty as reflected in their response was that some teachers were skeptical of the function of the appraisal system.

> They did not consider that the appraisal system could help them in their professional development (Task Group of Evaluation of the SMI Scheme, 1994, p. 4).

The report recommended that more training be provided, especially in school-based settings; that schools be given longer to develop and implement appraisal schemes, and that the main emphasis be geared to promoting staff development. Other evaluations of SMI drew similar conclusions (The Task Group of Evaluation of the SMI Scheme, 1993, 1995, 1997). Single-school case studies have also found teacher appraisal to be troublesome in schools. In one school, for example, teachers and department heads saw the single most challenging task confronting them to be the implementation of staff appraisal. Not only were teachers generally hostile to appraisal but also middle managers felt they lacked the knowledge and skills to manage the process. They also felt that a school culture and climate conducive to appraisal is a fundamental prerequisite for its successful operation, and while the creation of such remains to be achieved, they felt that was beyond their individual control (Dimmock & Lim, 1999).

Deliberate moves towards developing formalized systems of teacher appraisal in Hong Kong started in earnest in the early 1990s in SMI schools. This move, however, had limited impact beyond the 30 per cent of schools who joined the SMI Scheme and a small number of schools outside the Scheme who of their own volition had instituted various approaches to appraisal. Even in schools where teacher appraisal was mandated, it presented more difficulties than other requirements of the Scheme and was seldom considered successful or worthwhile.

The next major initiative aimed at introducing teacher appraisal to Hong Kong schools came, once again, as part of a major reform package, this time entitled Quality School Education (Education Commission [EC], 1997), commonly referred to as ECR7 (Education Commission Report Number 7). ECR7 continued the trend set in motion by the SMI but did so with a different emphasis. Whereas SMI primarily aimed to introduce a system of school-based management, founded on the body of school effectiveness research, the thrust of ECR7 was to develop quality schools possessing quality cultures and to introduce a framework by which to monitor and assure quality. The marked change in nomenclature from *effective schools* to *quality schools* was in line with shifts in English-speaking Western countries (Dimmock & Walker, 1998c).

ECR7 made fifty-six wide-ranging recommendations, many of which have now become policy. The recommendations can be grouped as follows: setting goals and developing indicators; putting into place a quality assurance mechanism; providing funding flexibility; providing incentives to encourage quality school education; raising professional standards of principals and teachers; and related reforms. ECR7 states that schools will develop along these lines at different rates of progress, with the leaders acting as points of reference for other schools. The recommendations targeting quality assurance continued the push towards the implementation of ''a fair and open performance appraisal system'' (EC, 1997, p. 39) for all teachers, but, unlike SMI, the report makes such systems mandatory for all schools. The underpinning rationale and direction, however, are remarkably similar to those for the SMI. The rationale stated, ''A proper appraisal system will enable the school management to identify the strengths and weaknesses of its staff members, and provide timely counseling to help them develop their full potential'' (p. 39). As with SMI, individual schools are left to decide on the detailed form that teacher appraisal should take but were provided with some guidance from the SMI Branch (School Management Initiative Section, 1998) and other bodies.

It is worth briefly reviewing the document entitled Teacher Appraisal (SMI, 1998) for its insights into how schools in Hong Kong approach appraisal. The contents, which are similar to the previous guide distributed in 1992, provide examples of appraisal forms used in selected schools and draw heavily on traditional Western, mainly North American and British, approaches and processes. For example, three objectives of appraisal are proposed, namely, accountability, staff motivation, and professional development These are the standard purposes found in many supervision or appraisal texts in countries such as the U.K. and the U.S. Sergiovanni (1997), for example, suggests that the three main purposes of supervision and evaluation are quality control (accountability), teacher motivation, and professional development The document then goes on to explain the procedure that schools may follow when developing an appraisal system, a number of processes that may be adopted, and a collection of answers to common appraisal questions. Key elements of the content are listed briefly below:

- The booklet suggests to schools that teacher appraisal should focus on performance rather than personality and that the criteria should, wherever possible, be based on concrete performance indicators (SMI, 1998, p. 5). The underlying message, then, is that appraisal should not be based on who the teacher is, or on his or her relationship with others, but rather on what the teacher does in the school and classroom. Except for some mention of peer appraisal, it is clear throughout the document that appraisal is seen very much as an individual exercise.
- The booklet explains the difference between summative and formative evaluation, suggesting that an appraisal system needs to address both (SMI, 1998, p. 6) and that different systems can be established in schools to meet what is seen as these different purposes. Advice is provided for appraisers when communicating with teachers. Recommendations are similar regardless of the form of appraisal being conducted and focus on the need for open communication and a free-flowing exchange of views.
- A basic three- or four-stage clinical supervision process is suggested as a means of conducting formative appraisal (along with some suggestions for conducting peer appraisal for developmental purposes). The basic aim of the process is to support teacher professional development. Recommendations on process include that the appraiser should ''show appreciation and recognition'' (p. 8) and ''understand the appraisee's feelings, problems and expectations'' (p. 9).
- The booklet acknowledges the importance of an open school culture—conducive ''communication [that] encourages the teachers to express their views, engage in discussion and respect different views'' (p. 13). It also suggests that appraisers need qualities that fit with such a culture (p. 35).

The above summary reflects the dominant approach to existing and proposed teacher appraisal for Hong Kong schools. The approaches and advice provided reveal the strong influence of Western appraisal methods and philosophies. This is understandable given that until July 1997 Hong Kong was a British Colony and adopted, almost verbatim, many of that country's educational philosophies and policies (see Dimmock, 1998; Mo, Conners, & McCormick, 1998; Walker & Dimmock, 1998). The adoption of Western models of appraisal is also unsurprising given that most of the available literature in this area is from the U.K. or the U.S. (Dimmock & Walker, 1998), most of the consultants who aid policy development and training are short-term Western visitors, and most local university staff and a large number of school and ED personnel are educated in countries such as the U.K., the U.S., and Australia.

In summary, Hong Kong policymakers are increasingly championing teacher appraisal as a key to improving school quality. It is now mandated that some form of teacher appraisal must be implemented in all schools early in the new millennium. The modes of appraisal most commonly being suggested and implemented are firmly grounded in fairly traditional Western approaches and understandings. In a small, hitherto centrally regulated system like Hong Kong, with little tradition of appraising teachers, most schools tend to take careful note of the resources and advice provided by central authorities and academics. Many schools view the implementation of appraisal schemes as the most problematic aspect of educational reform. In this they are probably no different from their Western counterparts. However, in Hong Kong there is the additional problem of appraisal blueprints emanating from Anglo-American sources and reflecting little of the local societal culture. Hong Kong's predominantly Chinese culture poses questions as to the suitability of staff appraisal policies and approaches forged in Western cultures and imported into its schools. In the following section, we comment on the suitability of these policies and approaches in Hong Kong schools by examining the possible influence of culture on a number of school-level appraisal issues and processes.

The Influence of Societal Culture on Teacher Appraisal in Hong Kong Schools

Despite a confluence of influences, Hong Kong remains first and foremost a Chinese society, with 98 per cent of the population being ethnic Chinese. It remains imbued with aspects of traditional Chinese culture, in which the Confucian ethos continues to shape values and actions (Bond, 1991b; Westwood & Kirkbride, 1998). Any attempt in this article to delineate Chinese culture in its entirety would be impractical; instead, we make only selective reference to those aspects of Chinese culture connected with work and organizations, and particularly appraisal. Likewise, it would be unrealistic to attempt to address all aspects of appraisal, given the burgeoning, constantly evolving literature in the area. We therefore put aside discussion of many of the emerging issues (see Education Update, 1999) and concentrate on what appear to be the dominant approaches being advocated in Hong Kong. We also acknowledge that the effective implementation of teacher appraisal continues to evoke considerable principal and teacher resistance wherever it has been introduced and regardless of context. Its form and constituent elements are also widely debated across cultures by policymakers, administrators, teachers, and academics. Our focus here is not to enter into this general debate, but rather to probe the influence societal culture may have on the dominant approaches to teacher appraisal infiltrating Hong Kong.

The cultural suitability of Western appraisal models for Hong Kong schools can be divided roughly into two areas. The first is what can be thought of as the general principles of appraisal; the second is the processes involved in the implementation and operation of an appraisal scheme. The principles of appraisal include generic tenets such as the following: all teachers should be accountable for what they do; all teachers need information (feedback) that can help them perform better in the classroom; and schools need mechanisms for determining the most appropriate persons for promotion and for contract renewal. Such principles can be regarded as universally acceptable and are difficult to oppose, regardless of the values underpinning beliefs and actions. In other words, such principles cut across cultural differences and, in most instances, are the domain of policymakers and are mostly accepted in schools.

General principles and policies, however, become problematic at the implementation and operational level; it is here that cultural considerations particularly come into play. These relate to the operation of the appraisal process itself and include the following: whether the focus is on individuals or groups of teachers; who should be the appraisers; the relationships necessary for appraisal to be successful; the skills required by appraisers; and the need for open communication and ''impersonality'' (Chow, 1995). The remainder of this section examines the intricacies and underlying assumptions of these processes by juxtaposing them with elements of Chinese culture and commenting on their suitability in Hong Kong. Our discussion targets three key areas of appraisal: the form of appraisal; who conducts appraisal; and the relational dynamics that underpin the appraisal process. We suggest that the efficacy of many of the practices envisaged is questionable when set within the societal culture of Hong Kong and the reflection of this culture in schools.

Form/s of Appraisal

Typically, the form of appraisal being advocated in Hong Kong schools follows a clinical supervision model, where the appraiser and appraisee proceed through a three-stage cycle. The cycle comprises a preobservation conference, classroom observation, and a postobservation conference or appraisal interview (SMI, 1998). This form, with minimal variation, is promoted for both judgmental and developmental purposes. Such models place the individual at the heart of the appraisal process, a practice that may sit uncomfortably in Chinese cultures, which tend to be more group oriented than person oriented (Hofstede, 1991).

Research by Hofstede (1980, 1991) and others (Bond, 1996) points out that the most notable difference between English-speaking Western countries, such as the U.S. and the U.K., and Chinese societies, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, relates to what has been labeled the individualism/collectivism dimension. This term refers to the degree to which people see themselves or their collective group as more important (Adler, 1997). Individualistic societies tend to emphasize the ''I'' above the ''we,'' while collectivist societies respect the goals of their own group more than individual achievement (Shaw &

Welton, 1996). In individualistic societies, the task is held to prevail over personal relationships, and hence, appraisal systems have developed along individualistic lines. In collectivist societies, personal relationships are considered more important than tasks. Hong Kong is recognized as a highly collectivist society, while countries such as the U.S. and Britain are individualist.

The collectivist nature of Chinese societies has been widely attested to. As Westwood and Kirkbride (1998) state: ''The significant point of reference for (Chinese) people is the collectivity rather than the individual self and the interests of the collective supersede those of the individual. A sense of identity is achieved via membership of and reference to the group rather than self-reference'' (p. 567). This perspective receives support from the work of Redding (1984, 1990) and Redding and Wong (1986) in the more specific context of Chinese businesses, where collectivism is reported as an orientation that mediates organizational relationships and influences behavior patterns.

In collectivist cultures, good relationships and interpersonal and organizational harmony are preeminent considerations. In other words, relationships are valued over tasks. Relationships are underpinned by The Confucian Doctrine of the Mean (Chung Yung), which pushes the individual to adapt to the collectivity, to control personal emotions, and to avoid confusion, competition, and conflict (Hsu, 1949, cited in Westwood & Kirkbride, 1998). This doctrine is associated with the primary moral precept of harmony, which is viewed as a fundamental outgrowth of collectivism (Westwood & Kirkbride, 1998). The maintenance of harmonious relationships within the social collectivity is the basis of interaction, and people must subdue individual desires and interests in the cause of harmony. Cross-cultural psychology suggests that the individualism and egocentrism of many Western cultures contrasts with the collective orientation of Chinese societies. Chow (1995) concludes that individualist cultures emphasize getting ahead and being a good teacher/leader, whereas collectivist cultures stress belonging and being a good, equal group member.

The apparently easy transferability of appraisal systems developed within individualistic cultures and imported into collectivist societies can therefore be questioned on at least two fronts. First, a system based on the judgment of individuals appears incongruent with collectivism. If teachers are predominantly concerned with ''fitting into'' and supporting the group, individual performance becomes secondary, and any individual judgment or advice means less than a person's role in the wider group. Since collectivist cultures are characterized by the avoidance of conflict and competition, two-person, face-to-face appraisal discussions tend to remain at a surface level only, with both parties extremely reluctant to risk saying or doing anything that might lead to confrontation. We will return to this point later in this article. Second, since relationships are valued over tasks in Chinese organizations, related Western notions of impersonality, objective measures, and personal achievement become troublesome when decisions are being made about what form appraisal should take.

An individualist approach to appraisal, as promoted in Western literature, may be unrealistic in Chinese organizations because of the importance placed on ordered relationships and reciprocity. As we discuss below, values orientations, such as hierarchy and seniority, rank organizational members into a prescribed place with accompanying obligations, and this ranking, to some extent, militates against task performance-based, impersonal and impartial judgments or opinions in appraisal situations. The promotion of objective measures in Western performance appraisal schemes may also be antithetical to Chinese organizations. Again, the reason is tied to the valuing of relationships over task. Huo and Clinow (1995) submit that appraisal systems in Chinese organizations avoid using too many objective techniques or instruments. The authors suggest that the Chinese have a higher tolerance of subjectivity and that as long as they feel they can trust the leaders who conduct the appraisal, they will accept subjective evaluations on their performance. As Huo and Clinow note, ''They feel comfortable with a straightforward form of appraisal, even if it means some loss of precision or sophistication'' (p. 10). Such perspectives are supported by Hofstede's (1980) assertion that Hong Kong is a low Uncertainty Avoidance culture, implying that its members are comfortable with less formality and formalization and with fewer explicit organizational rules, policies, and procedures.

Appraisal based mainly on achievement is also a difficult concept to implement in Chinese organizations, for two reasons. First, the Chinese tend to value effort over achievement (Lee, 1996). This perspective makes it difficult to rate teachers' performance outcomes on objective instruments, such as those suggested by central bodies, or to challenge a teacher's performance (even if it is weak) if the teacher has committed the required effort to his or her work. Second, achievement in collectivist cultures holds different meanings to those held in individualistic cultures. According to Yu (1996, p. 29), achievement motivation in Western cultures reflects middle-class Western values that are ''self-oriented, person-oriented, or individual oriented.'' In other words, achievement is seen in relation to the individual. In collectivist cultures, on the other hand, achievement motivation is based on achievement for the family or the group, not for oneself (Westwood, 1992). If achievement is conceptualized in terms of the group rather than the individual, individualized forms of performance appraisal may be ineffective in Hong Kong schools. At the very least, they risk painting an inappropriate picture of performance.

A further related issue is that the Western forms of appraisal often promoted in Hong Kong call for individuals to formally set their own, individual achievement goals. As noted above, Huo and Clinow (1995) suggest that the Chinese appear more comfortable working without clear goals or criteria, whereas individualistic societies prefer more explicit, formalized rules to ensure impartiality. While a lack of such rules may appear disadvantageous or even ''wrong'' from a Western perspective, in collectivist cultures this lack affords the flexibility and adaptability seen as necessary for maintaining harmony and making decisions on relational grounds. To force teachers in Hong Kong schools to set ''individual'' achievement goals may be impractical and have little influence on performance. It may be that a form of small-group goal setting would be more appropriate in collectivist societies, as discussed below.

Given the collectivist orientation of the Chinese, it is likely that some sort of group appraisal process would be more efficacious. Interestingly, team- or group-oriented teacher evaluations have attracted attention even in the U.S. over the last decade. For example, Glatthorn (1997) suggests cooperative professional development (CPD) as one of the main developmental tenets of ‘‘differentiated supervision.’’ Although approaches such as CPD may hold promise for appraisal in Chinese societies, they would still need adaptation for a number of reasons. First, Chinese teachers who hold high respect for seniority and status and are consequently more willing to accept comments from superiors than peers may not favor democratic modes of appraisal such as CPD. Second, the Chinese are generally uncomfortable about disclosing their inner self and with criticizing or praising their own performance, even in a group context. As a result, they are reluctant to be observed by peers and will attempt to cover up any inadequacies. Given these factors, it may be that a suitable form of appraisal for Hong Kong schools would combine a group emphasis with the stronger presence of the principal to judge progress. This perspective raises the question of who is best suited to conduct appraisals in Hong Kong schools.

Choosing the Appraisers

Inextricably related to the form of appraisal is the issue of who should conduct the process. This is also contentious in Western societies (for example, see Webb, 1994). The intricacies underpinning the problem in Chinese cultures are, however, quite different. In Chinese societies, relationships are guided largely by seniority, as reflected in terms of position, connection, and age. Hence, relationships tend to be ordered and governed on hierarchical grounds. Within such relationships, implicit norms and rules govern aspects such as openness, obedience, and face. The way in which hierarchies are played out in schools in Chinese societies will have a significant effect on the question of who appraises and on how the process is conducted. In this section, we discuss the influence of hierarchy on the appraisal process.

According to Cheng (1995), groups and organizations in Chinese societies are more likely than their Western counterparts to be structured around (hierarchical) sets of relationships and the rules that govern them. Hierarchical structures with uneven power distributions are prevalent and accepted in most Chinese social structures, including groups and organizations (Jackson & Bak, 1998). This phenomenon, related to the distribution of power within a society, has been labeled Power Distance (PD) (Hofstede, 1991). PD concerns the ways in which less powerful members in institutions and organizations perceive and cope with the inherent inequities involved in the distribution of power; that is, how the culture institutionalizes inequity. The followers as much as the leaders enforce a society’s level of inequality. In countries with small PD, such as the U.S. inequality is treated as undesirable, and efforts are made to reduce it wherever possible. In high PD societies, such as Hong Kong, inequalities are accepted as natural and are legitimized in customs, relationships, and institutional policies. Thus, people in high PD cultures tend to be more accepting of unequal distribution of power than are people in low PD cultures (Walker, Bridges, & Chan, 1996). As Hofstede (1991) admits, ‘‘all societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others’’ (p. 151).

One of the main characteristics of high PD in Confucian and neo-Confucian societies is the ingrained respect for seniority and hierarchy. In schools, this means that formal leaders are granted respect by virtue of their hierarchically superior position, rather than because of their expertise. Similarly, teachers who are older, particularly males, are granted respect because of their age, often regardless of their position. We now discuss how these values shape relationships, which, in turn, can influence the appraisal process.

One result of high PD in schools is that teacher participation in school-level decisions and managerial tasks is uncommon, and authoritarian leadership tends to prevail (Walker, Dimmock, & Poon, 1998). As a result, many Chinese leaders have little practice in making decisions and submitting them to scrutiny (Bond, 1991a). Redding and Wong (1986) claim that the Chinese are trained to be obedient to superiors from childhood and normally, at least at a surface level, accept instructions without challenge. Studies on authoritarianism (Yang, 1970) and compliance offer empirical evidence that supports the traditional values of respect for authority and conformity associated with prescribed social structures and behavior patterns. In practice, this acceptance of authoritarian leadership leads to a situation where only formal leaders are deemed qualified to evaluate others' performance. Chinese teachers tend to comply with superiors in the interests of harmony, even if they disagree with them. This is not to say that there is never disagreement, but when it surfaces the leader must still be given face. Hence, if a teacher disagrees with the leader, he or she may first agree with what has been said and only then will differences be voiced, and usually in an indirect, private way. This process often entails using an intermediary or third party. In the rare instances that face-to-face confrontation is inescapable, the teacher will use only very mild language (Bond, 1991a). The relational dynamics bred from respect for authority aim to maintain a harmonious group environment—a preeminent consideration in Chinese groups.

Conversely, leaders in Chinese organizations have difficulty in openly singling out a staff member as better or worse than others, since doing so may cause animosity and sabotage relationships. Consequently, one of the purposes of appraisal—to promote more capable teachers to positions of authority—may be nullified. The result may be that promotions are made on the grounds of seniority or connections, even if the best person does not get the job (for example, see Walker & Dimmock, 1999, in press–b).

Despite what has been discussed so far, the way leadership plays out in Chinese organizations is not as straightforward as an all-powerful figure, the leader, tactfully criticizing teachers. The trade-off for the obedience and respect granted to leaders is an equally powerful obligation for the leader to reciprocate. As Bond (1991a) explains, ''In a culture system that gives wide-ranging power to those in authority, there must be a reciprocal emphasis on compliance and loyalty in those subject to authority'' (p. 82). Westwood and Kirkbride (1998) further explain that the moral and philosophical basis of the Confucian ethic includes ''a legitimized and expected set of reciprocal relationships—emperor/minister, father/son, husband/wife'' (p. 568). Such implicitly scripted relationships are captured by the key Confucian values of Li and Jen. Li refers to the ethic of propriety and prescribes social relationship structures that discourage individuals from challenging or disturbing the role system. The concept of Jen verifies that individuals should not be considered as separate entities but as inextricably bound to social context, the family, and the organization (Westwood & Kirkbride, 1998). Again, these ''rules'' aim to maintain harmony, which in turn calls for reciprocity.

In simple terms, reciprocity dictates that in exchange for obedience and conformity, leaders must care for and protect their followers. In practice, this means that leaders should not embarrass or openly criticize teachers. Nor can they place others' jobs, careers, or standing at risk (Walker & Dimmock, in press–b). Reciprocity dictates that both parties must be given face. For example, during an appraisal meeting, the leader gives the teacher face through praising the teacher's performance and, likewise, the teacher attempts to give the supervisors face by agreeing with them. The requirement for harmonious relationships then implies that both teachers and formal leaders are expected to yield to established structures and the accompanying behavioral prescriptions, which include, conformity, reciprocity, compliance, uniformity, and obedience. According to Bond (1991b), comparative data suggest that the Chinese readily conform and so are less likely to take the initiative, proffer opinions, take risks, or depart from established procedures without a superior's approval. In appraisal terms, such behavior is unlikely to lead to open discussion of strengths, weaknesses, or developmental needs, thus turning any discussion into a ''polite'' one-way conversation.

Given the complications that arise from authoritarian leadership and the Chinese predisposition toward group orientation, it may appear that peer appraisal presents a viable alternative. However, this may not necessarily hold true, because implicitly regulated hierarchical relationships stretch beyond formal leadership roles. Most often, distinctions are also made in terms of age and seniority. The Chinese are generally uncomfortable in criticizing older colleagues. For example, in a study of appraisal beliefs in Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China (PRC), Chow (1995) reported that 70 per cent of respondents believed it impolite to say negative things about people of a more advanced age. This issue becomes even more complicated if the appraiser is younger than the teacher being appraised, and is female.

Beliefs about seniority, hierarchy, and harmony combine to militate against Western approaches to peer evaluation, such as those currently in vogue in U.S. schools. Teachers are reluctant to participate in peer appraisal because involvement tends to be accompanied by the authority to evaluate others' performance. Since the outcome of a low performance rating can be problematic, ''many Chinese employees would rather not participate in such a process lest friendship with co-workers be ruined'' (Huo & Clinow, 1995, p. 10). In other words, teachers are not willing to risk disrupting harmonious relationships through appraising or criticizing each other. This need not imply that peer appraisal will not work in Hong Kong schools, but it does point to the need for greater consideration of what shape the appraisal might take, and who might be involved.

In sum, collectivism and high power distance play an important role in Chinese organizations, such as schools. Westwood and Kirkbride (1998) provide a concise summary of the cultural context within which appraisal needs to be implemented in Hong Kong schools:

> Chinese organizations are configured by a legitimized hierarchy based upon status overlaid with a system of reciprocal personal relationships and rituals. It is the tacit (Confucian) social ethic and the prescribed set of relationships that orders and controls the system, not an abstract and impersonal rule system—as in the Western bureaucratic

> model. Acceptance of, and compliance to, this form of structure and governance has been deeply rooted in Chinese organization and persists down to the present day (p. 568).

Relationships and Communication

It is clear that Confucianism stresses the importance of relationships and the conscious effort required to maintain them—all people, all things, have a purpose and a station in life. The belief is that if all people understand their purpose and station, and perform their duties well, they will work together harmoniously. Harmony then gives rise to the conscious exercise of ''proper behavior'' and high PD. It should be noted here that proper behavior as the basis of harmony does not mean that people do not think poorly of their superiors or always agree with what they do. Rather, it means that they will not easily or openly disagree with someone in a hierarchically superior position or someone who is older. In this way, the demand for smooth outward relationships might be best thought of as *surface harmony.*

As we have also suggested, decisions in Chinese organizations are often based on the person rather than the task. This relates to an implicit assumption, or hope, that performance is in some way linked to relationships, such as loyalty. Relationships are governed by the notion of guanxi. In simple terms, guanxi refers to ''the status and intensity of an ongoing relationship between two parties'' (Westwood, 1992, p. 51). The quality of guanxi, which people consciously attempt to develop, then guides relationships according to an implicit set of rules. When two people have established guanxi, it can make them extremely reluctant to say ''no'' to any request or to outwardly disagree. Within relationships, the Chinese are often socialized to mask their true feelings in personal interactions, often by nodding and smiling. In Western appraisal terms, the shape of such relationships influences the essential communicative elements of feedback and personal exposure.

A key element of teacher appraisal stresses the importance of providing honest feedback on performance to the individual being appraised. Feedback is taken as essential to effective appraisal in the West, regardless of the type of appraisal being conducted—be it formative or summative—or of whether the appraisal is conducted by a superior or with peers. Hofstede (1995) holds that the Western management literature reasons that employees' performance will improve if they receive direct feedback about what the superior thinks of them. Although Hofstede agrees that this perspective may be true in individualist cultures, he argues that such direct feedback destroys the harmony that is expected to govern interpersonal relationships in collectivist countries. In even stronger terms, Hofstede believes that direct feedback can cause irreparable damage to the employee's *face* and ruin his or her loyalty to the organization (Hofstede, 1995).

Chow (1995) provides some support for Hofstede's assertion and suggests that giving open, honest feedback can be problematic in Chinese organizations, since the supervisor is often reluctant to provide critical feedback to staff because he or she does not want to embarrass them by exposing any weaknesses in their performance. In fact, Herbig and Martin (1998) suggest that the Chinese will go to great lengths to avoid embarrassing another person, whether friend or foe. This, again, relates to the Chinese concept of *face*, referring to the ways people seek to present themselves in interactions, so that others ''will attribute to them positive characteristics [and] so as to gain a good impression and the esteem of others'' (Westwood, 1992, p. 51).

While ''looking bad'' as a result of an appraisal is a universally embarrassing experience, one which applies in Western contexts, too, it has even greater significance in Chinese cultures (Westwood, 1992). In Chinese organizations, issues of face govern social relationships through providing powerful social sanctions. Face can only be gained or preserved if a person behaves in an appropriate manner according to the situation and the position of the other person in the relationship. Face is a multifaceted concept. Bond and Hwang (1986) identified six variations of face behavior, including enhancing one's own face, giving face to another, losing one's own face, damaging another's face, saving one's own face, and saving the face of another. Any disruption of face risks unsettling the harmony of the group and therefore the smooth operation and effectiveness of the organization. Appraisers may therefore be extremely reluctant to provide honest feedback on teaching performance, thereby seriously impairing the efficacy of the appraisal process, at least in Western terms.

This point is again borne out by Chow's (1995) study, referred to earlier, of beliefs about appraisal in private sector companies in Hong Kong and the PRC. She reported that negative feedback from a supervisor could cause serious problems within an organization and that ''giving face'' and ''losing face'' discourage frank and honest discussion in the appraisal interview because participants do not want to disrupt the cooperative (harmonious) atmosphere. If, as it is reasonable to assume, the same is true in schools, school principals often find it difficult to provide candid feedback for fear it will cause themselves or the teacher to lose face. The same holds for peer appraisal where teachers are reluctant to openly criticize colleagues for fear of making them lose face. Consequently, any comment about performance or development tends to be superficial, perhaps failing to lead to improved performance.

Hofstede (1995) suggests that ''giving feedback,'' as conceptualized and practiced in Western organizations, should be challenged for East Asian societies. He suggests that feedback might be more appropriately given indirectly, ''through the withdrawing of a favor, or via an intermediary person trusted by both supervisor and employee'' (p. 157). In other words, it may be necessary to adapt appraisal from Western approaches relying on direct face-to-face feedback between appraiser and appraisee to suit more specific cultural contexts.

The Confucian notion of hierarchy and the associated concept of reciprocity discussed earlier, also play an important role in giving feedback. Superiors are bound to give staff face. The concept of face then is multifarious and relates up, across, and down hierarchical relationships. For example, if a supervisor invalidates a teacher's claim to face, such as by saying he or she is underperforming, group harmony is damaged. An effect of this outcome may be that the supervisor also loses face. Since the act of criticism is considered aggressive, the supervisor can no longer support a social identity as a kind or considerate person and so loses respect. Anyone who does not wish to be considered socially illiterate will sidestep any behavior that could lead to such an episode.

On the other side of the face equation, Chinese teachers are generally reluctant to admit to their own weaknesses or problems, typically responding in ways suggesting that they do not have any problems. Consequently, appraisal approaches grounded in self-appraisal may encounter difficulties. Exposing problems may not only be seen as a sign of weakness but, and perhaps more importantly, may also indicate that people are not contributing sufficiently to the goals of the group or organization. Again, this unwillingness to expose problems seems typical, whether the type of appraisal is summative, formative, top-down, self, or peer.

A microsociety, such as a school, whose membership is geographically stable and whose numbers are relatively small, will therefore have a stronger code of behavior about face-saving, since anonymity will be unusual in such a society (Bond, 1991a). In addition, the act of saving another's face promotes cohesiveness among group members that helps and forms a type of protective cocoon around members. Even when criticism is given, it is usually hedged with numerous qualifiers. The appraiser might deprecate his own abilities, clearly disqualifying himself as a competent critic or as an aspirant for the appraisee's position. Finally, the content of the criticism would probably be stated indirectly and with many linguistic modifiers.

Clearly, there is a need for everyone in all cultures to be careful when criticizing others, regardless of how strongly the demands of the situation warrant such criticism. For criticism here involves unfavorable comparisons of a person's performance against socially defined standards. With a heightened reluctance to criticize in Chinese culture comes the development of social skills that preserve the faces of others and the use of linguistic skills in diluting criticism. In these respects, the original purpose of appraisal—as conceived in Western terms—may be lost.

In summary, Western literature on performance appraisal suggests that skills such as listening, giving and receiving feedback, counseling and dealing with emotions are necessary for success (Huo & Clinow, 1995). Chinese school leaders, however, may be reluctant to pursue two-way communication or to provide counseling, a fact that can be explained by the large PD found in Chinese societies. As mentioned above, in Chinese cultures seniority means managing authority from the top (Bond, 1991a), and to challenge the authority of superiors is not considered appropriate for subordinates (Hofstede, 1980). More importantly, in providing feedback, the potential for interpersonal discord between supervisor and teacher tends to increase. Since both supervisors and teachers in Chinese societies want to avoid such direct confrontation, it is understandable that they will try to minimize the frequency of such conflict-prone encounters in the workplace and preserve harmony.

Torringtan and Tan (1994) point out that in Chinese communities any form of unpleasant confrontation that may upset relationships is avoided. The same authors claim that this is the reason why open appraisal is not readily practiced above a perfunctory level in many Chinese organizations and that, as a result, Western appraisal schemes even when officially implemented seldom reflect the real situation. To upset relationships means to upset harmony, a key collectivist value that has featured prominently in the above discussion on relationships.

The centrality of maintaining harmonious relationships in Chinese organizations clashes with the Western notions that some variation of views and convictions, openly expressed, can be productive and lead to fresh ideas (Fullan, 1993). In Chinese organizations, Western notions of power sharing, typified by public explanations and exchanges, debates, voting, and documentation, are unusual. Harmony for the Chinese does not assume participation (Bond, 1991a). Most forms of dispute or disagreement are alien to Chinese cultures, where harmony is paramount. In Chinese organizations, the norm is to consciously avoid directly contradicting others, especially formal leaders or more senior colleagues. To avoid loss of face and to preserve harmony there is no need to say ''no''; people feel comfortable with saying ''yes'', which indicates understanding but not agreement (Bond, 1991a).

In most situations, the Chinese are reluctant to confront others. Open disclosure and critical reflection are uncommon in interpersonal interactions such as appraisal meetings or classroom observations. Disclosure that may lead to confrontation is avoided, since it might be perceived as a threat to authority and hierarchical relationship. Chung, McMahan, and Woodman (1996) conclude that confrontational meetings, negotiation, and even third party interventions that demand an open critiquing of others can prove highly problematic in Chinese organizations. If teachers are unwilling to openly critique their own performance—much less that of others—during appraisal meetings, it appears unlikely that worthwhile discussion will result.

In summary, the emphasis on harmonious relations and the concept of face saving can discourage open communication, self-critique, and feedback during the appraisal process. Therefore, the need for openness and confidentiality, as promoted by Western appraisal models in Hong Kong currently, may not fit neatly with Chinese culture.

Implications and Conclusions

While not claiming to be exhaustive, the above discussion indicates that the societal cultural values of Chinese communities may not fit the assumptions and practices of the imported approaches to appraisal currently being promoted and adopted in Hong Kong schools. It is therefore reasonable to question the efficacy of these approaches in schools and to search for more culturally appropriate approaches. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to construct such approaches,[2] the identification of a number of key issues may help to stimulate discussion and research in the area.

A major difference between Chinese, and indeed other East Asian societies, and most English-speaking Western societies is that the former elevates the place of relationships, whereas the latter elevates task and performance. An important question for schools in Hong Kong, therefore, is whether they persevere with a ''task'' model or try to adapt/develop a model that elevates relationships. To do this, greater understanding is necessary of how the Chinese see the relationship between the two. It may be overly simplistic to assume that just because relationships are preeminent, task accomplishment is unimportant. Rather, it might be that task accomplishment is seen as deriving from ordered, hierarchical relationships. An area then that deserves further investigation in searching for a more culturally appropriate model of appraisal is the link between relationships and task and whether this link could provide a platform for judging or improving performance.

A second major difference is the group orientation of Chinese societies when compared with the more individualistic orientation in English-speaking Western societies. The apparent dedication to collectivism in Hong Kong schools casts serious doubts over the effectiveness of instituting teacher appraisal schemes that focus predominantly on individuals. Consequently, it appears that some type of group appraisal model may be more suitable. Coincidentally, some Western literature now recognizes group or peer approaches to appraisal—along the lines suggested as more suitable for Hong Kong schools than the traditional one-on-one models currently in vogue. If we accept that this is so, the question then moves to what type of group appraisal is most appropriate. Given the high respect in Hong Kong for authority and seniority and the accompanying influence this has on open interaction, there appear to be a number of options. One is to group teachers according to their perceived place in the school. For example, all new teachers, or all more experienced teachers, could be grouped on the basis that teachers would interact more easily with those of equal status. A second option may be to allow teachers to form their own groups, thus allowing them to work with those with whom they are most comfortable. Either of these types of configurations may be suited to developmental appraisal, but it is unlikely that they would be effective for judgmental purposes.

It may be that Hong Kong schools need to consciously separate developmental and judgmental appraisal. Indeed, this possibility is alluded to in the SMI Appraisal Booklet (SMI, 1998), but it is not explored in any detail. The separation of these functions would allow for more collectivist approaches to appraisal for professional development and for more hierarchical approaches to judgmental appraisal. Given the reluctance of leaders to openly criticize teachers, it may be that appraisers from outside the school would be more able to take this role. Although this approach could be construed as a step backwards according to recent thought, the introduction of an ''outside'' appraiser could overcome issues of openness or objective judgement. We do not suggest that this is *the* answer, but that it should at least be considered. The use of outside appraisers also gives rise to the use of intermediaries within the school.

Whereas the Chinese are reluctant to provide feedback that may lead to confrontation or a loss of face, they appear willing to receive such feedback through a third party. It seems that feedback, even when negative, can be given as long as it is not in a direct setting. Intermediaries may be used as links between the principal and teachers in order to comment on the latter's performance. These intermediaries may be mid-level staff, with experience as senior teachers. Given the respect for seniority, it could also be possible for schools in Hong Kong to develop structured mentoring programs, where senior staff capitalize on their seniority to advise and develop younger teachers.

The key to a meaningful appraisal system in Hong Kong schools may involve a model that separates judgmental and developmental purposes. Teacher development may best be pursued in carefully selected groups, each group interacting with the principal through agreed-upon intermediaries. Judgments may best be made by qualified people who are somewhat removed from the ordered relationships within the school and its departments. There needs to be an acceptance that feedback and exposure will often be given in roundabout ways and will be nonconfrontational. Approaches based on Glatthorn's (1997) Differentiated Supervision philosophy may hold promise for Hong Kong schools. The aim should be to meet different needs in different ways while taking full account of culture.

Developing a culturally sensitive approach to appraisal in Hong Kong schools is complex, and it would be audacious to suggest that we have done more in this article than highlight important and serious issues that appear to have been overlooked. We have attempted to recognize the influence societal culture plays in teacher appraisal in Hong Kong schools as a means of stimulating further discussion and investigation.

We have suggested that the penetration of Anglo-American teacher appraisal policies and practices into Asian cultural contexts may well result in failed attempts at implementation. We began by making a general case for considering the influence of societal culture on educational policies and practices and then making a more specific argument for assessing the role of societal culture in the implementation of teacher appraisal in different cultures. We suggested that it might be unwise simply to clone appraisal practices in contexts and cultures quite different from those within which they were chartered. We then reviewed the status of teacher appraisal in Hong Kong, noting that in the next few years, all Hong Kong schools must implement appraisal schemes, a fact that is causing considerable consternation. We suggested that the most common forms of appraisal being promoted and implemented in Hong Kong were based firmly on traditional Western understandings and practices. Our discussion then turned to the possible influence of societal culture on appraisal in Hong Kong, a Chinese society. Noteworthy features of Hong Kong's culture are collectivism and high power distance, both of which are sufficiently different from Anglo-American cultures to suggest that the forms taken by teacher appraisal in those countries may be inappropriate for Hong Kong. In the final section, we briefly discussed a number of issues that Hong Kong schools need to consider when designing and implementing teacher appraisal schemes. As we stress throughout, our purpose is to stimulate discussion and research on the influence of societal culture on how teachers are appraised. One size may not fit all.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to acknowledge the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong for its support of this project through an Earmarked Grant (CUHK 4327/98H).

Notes

1. By 1997, 148 secondary, 199 primary and 18 special schools had joined the SMI scheme. These numbers represented, approximately 30 per cent of all schools in Hong Kong (Cheng & Cheung, 1999), an outcome that advocates of school system restructuring might regard as somewhat disappointing.

2. As an extension of our current work, and in collaboration with local Chinese colleagues, we are currently in the early stages of attempting to develop a more culturally sensitive approach to appraisal for Hong Kong schools. This is part of a broader research agenda to revitalize a cross-cultural comparative approach to school administration and leadership.

References

Adler, N. (1997). *International dimensions of organizational behavior* (3rd ed.). Cincinnati, OH: International Thompson Publishing.

Advisory Committee on the School Management Initiative. (1992). *Staff appraisal in schools*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Education Department.

Bell, L. (1992). *Managing teams in secondary schools*. London: Routledge.

Bond, M. (1991a). *Beyond the Chinese face*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Bond, M. (1991b). Cultural influences on modes of impression management: Implications for the culturally diverse organisation. In R. Giacalone & P. Rosenfield (Eds.), *Applied impression management: How image-making affects managerial decisions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Bond, M. (Ed.). (1996). *The handbook of Chinese psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bond, M., & Hwang, K. (1986). The social psychology of the Chinese people. In M. Bond (Ed.), *The psychology of the Chinese people* (pp. 213–265). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Caldwell, B., & Spinks, J. (1988). *The self-managing school*. London: Falmer Press.

Cheng, K.M. (1995). The neglected dimension: Cultural comparison in educational administration. In K.C. Wong & K.M. Cheng (Eds.), *Educational leadership and change: An international perspective* (pp. 87–102). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Cheng, Y.C., & Cheung, W.M. (1999). Towards school-based management: Uncertainty, meaning, opportunity and development. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, *8*(1), 25–36.

Chow, I. (1995). An opinion survey of performance appraisal practices in Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, *32*(3), 67–79.

Chung, M.L., McMahan, G., & Woodman, R. (1996). An international comparison of organization development practices The USA and Hong Kong. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *9*(2), 4–19.

Dimmock, C. (1998). Restructuring Hong Kong's schools: The applicability of Western theories, policies and practices to an Asian culture. *Educational Management and Administration*, *26*(4), 363–378.

Dimmock, C. (2000). *Designing the learning-centred school: A cross-cultural perspective*. London: Falmer Press.

Dimmock, C. (in press). Hong Kong's school reform: Importing Western policy into an Asian culture. In C. Dimmock & A. Walker (Eds.), *Future school administration: Western and Asian perspectives*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Dimmock, C., & Lim, H.W. (1999). School restructuring in Hong Kong: The perceptions of middle managers. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, *19*(1), 59–77.

Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (1997). Hong Kong's change of sovereignty: School leader perceptions of the effects on educational policy and school administration, *Comparative Education*, *33*(2), 277–302.

Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (1998a). Towards comparative educational administration: Building the case for a cross-cultural, school-based approach. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *36*(4), 379–401.

Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (1998b). Comparative educational administration: Developing a cross-cultural comparative framework. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *34*(4), 558–595.

Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (1998c). Transforming Hong Kong's schools: Trends and emerging issues. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *36*(5), 476–491.

Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (Eds.). (in press). *Future school administration: Western and Asian perspectives*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (in press). Future school administration—global or culture-bound? In

C. Dimmock & A. Walker (Eds.), *Future school administration: Western and Asian perspectives.* Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Education & Manpower Branch & Education Department. (1991). *The School Management Initiative: Setting the Framework for Quality in Hong Kong Schools.* Hong Kong: Government Printer.

Education Commission Report No. 7. (ECR7). (1997, September). *Quality school education.* Hong Kong: The Government Printer.

Education Update. (1999). New goals for teacher evaluation. *Education Update*, *41*(2), 1, 4–5, 8.

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform.* London: Falmer.

Glatthorn, A. (1997). *Differentiated supervision* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Hallinger, P., & Leithwood, K. (1996a). Culture and educational administration: A case of finding out what you don't know you don't know. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *34*(5), 98–116.

Hallinger, P., & Leithwood, K. (1996b). Editorial. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *34*(5), 4–11.

Herbig, P., & Martin, D. (1998). Negotiating with Chinese: a cultural perspective. *Cross Cultural Management*, *5*(3), 40–54.

Hofstede, G.H. (1980). *Cultures consequences: International differences in work-related values.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Hofstede, G.H. (1991). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind.* London: McGraw Hill.

Hofstede, G.H. (1994). Cultural constraints in management theories. *International Review of Strategic Management*, *5*, 27–48.

Hofstede, G.H. (1995). Managerial values: The business of international business is culture. In T. Jackson (Ed.), *Cross-cultural Management* (pp. 150–165). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Hsu, F.L.K. (1949). Suppression versus repression: A limited psychological interpretation of four cultures. *Psychiatry*, *12*, 223–42.

Huo, Y.P., & Clinow, M. (1995). On transplanting human resource practices to China: A culture driven approach. *International Journal of Manpower*, *16*(9), 3–15.

Jackson, T., & Bak, M. (1998). Foreign companies and Chinese workers: employee motivation in the People's Republic of China. *Journal of Organisational Change Management*, *11*(4), 282–300.

Lee, W.O. (1996). The cultural context for Chinese learners: conceptions of learning in the Confucian tradition. In D. Watkins & J. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural psychology and contextual influences* (pp. 25–42). Hong Kong: The Comparative Education Research Center.

Lomotey, K. (1995). Social and cultural influences on schooling: A commentary on the UCEA knowledge base project, domain 1. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *31*(2), 295–303.

Mamman, A., & Saffu, K. (1998). Short-termism, control, quick-fix and bottom line. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *13*(5/6), 291–308.

Mo, K., Conners, R., & McCormick, J. (1998). Teacher appraisal in Hong Kong self-managing secondary schools: factors for effective practices. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, *12*(1), 19–42.

Ovando, M. (1996). Supervision and diversity: What supervisors need to know. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, April 8–12.

Redding, S. (1984). Varieties of the iron ricebowl. *The Hong Kong Manager*, May, 11–15.

Redding, S. (1990). *The spirit of Chinese capitalism.* Berlin: De Gruyter.

Redding, S., & Wong, G. (1986). The psychology of Chinese organizational behavior. In M. Bond (Ed.), *The psychology of the Chinese people*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Ronan, S. (1996). *Comparative and multinational management.* New York: Wiley.

Rose, R. (1991). Comparing forms of comparative analysis. *Political Studies*, *XXXIX*, 446–462.

School Management Initiative Section (1998, September). *Teacher appraisal.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong Education Department.

Seddon, J. (1987). Assumptions, culture and performance appraisal. *Journal of Management Development*, *6*(3), 47–54.

Seddon, T. (1994). *Decentralization and democracy.* Paper presented at the Teachers and Decentralization Seminar, National Industry Education Forum, Melbourne, 26 August.

Sergiovanni, T. (1995). *The principalship: A reflective practice perspective* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Shaw, M., & Welton, J. (1996). *The application of education management models and theories to the processes of education policy making and management: A case of compound cross-cultural confusion.* Paper presented at the Eighth International Conference of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration, 19–24 August, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Steingard, D., & Fitzgibbons, D. (1995). Challenging the juggernaut of globalization: A manifesto for academic praxis. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *8*(4), 30–54.

Task Group of Evaluation of the SMI Scheme. (1993). *The first survey of evaluation of Phase 1 of the SMI Scheme.* Hong Kong: The SMI Advisory Committee.

Task Group of Evaluation of the SMI Scheme. (1994). *The second survey of evaluation of Phase 1 of the SMI Scheme.* Hong Kong: The SMI Advisory Committee.

Task Group of Evaluation of the SMI Scheme. (1995). *The evaluation of Phase 3 of the SMI Scheme.* Hong Kong: The SMI Advisory Committee.

Task Group of Evaluation of the SMI Scheme. (1997). *The study of good practices and noticeable effects of the SMI implementation in some schools.* Hong Kong: The SMI Advisory Committee.

Torrington, D., & Tan, C.H. (1994). *Human resource management for Southeast Asia.* Singapore: Prentice-Hall.

Walker, A., Bridges, E., & Chan, B. (1996). Wisdom gained, wisdom given: instituting PBL in a Chinese culture. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *34*(5), 12–31.

Walker, A., & Dimmock, C. (1998). Hong Kong's return to Mainland China: Education policy in times of uncertainty. *Journal of Education Policy*, *13*(1), 1–21.

Walker, A., & Dimmock, C. (1999a). A cross-cultural approach to the study of educational leadership: An emerging framework. *Journal of School Leadership*, *9*(4), 321–348.

Walker, A., & Dimmock, C. (1999b). Exploring principals' dilemmas in Hong Kong: Increasing cross-cultural understanding of school leadership. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, *8*(1), 15–24.

Walker, A., & Dimmock, C. (in press–a). Developing educational administration: the impact of societal culture on theory and practice. In C. Dimmock & A. Walker (Eds.), *Future school administration: Western and Asian perspectives.* Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Walker, A., & Dimmock, C. (in press–b). School principals' dilemmas in Hong Kong: Sources, perceptions and outcomes. *Australian Journal of Education.*

Walker, A., Dimmock, C., & Poon, A. (1998). *Accounting for culture in the principalship: a case study of four Hong Kong principals.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, April.

Walker, A., & Quong, K. (1998). Valuing difference for dealing with tensions of educational leadership in a global society. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *73*(2), 81–105.

Walker, A., & Walker, J. (1998). Challenging the boundaries of sameness: leadership through valuing difference. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *36*(1), 8–28.

Webb, G. (1994). *Making the most of appraisal.* London: Kogan Page.

Westwood, R. (Ed.). (1992). *Organisational behaviour: Southeast Asian perspectives.* Hong Kong: Longman.

Westwood, R.I., & Kirkbride, P.S. (1998). International strategies of corporate culture change: emulation, consumption and hybridit. *Journal of Organisational Change Management*, *11*(6), 554–577.

Whitty, G., Power, S., & Halpin, D. (1998). *Devolution and choice in education.* Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Wilson, B., & Corcoran, T. (1988), *Successful secondary schools: Visions of excellence in American public education.* Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

Yang, K.S. (1970). Authoritarianism and the evaluation of the appropriateness of role behaviour. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *80*, 171–81.

Yu, A-B. (1996) Ultimate life concerns, self, and Chinese achievement motivation. In M. Bond, (Ed.), *The handbook of Chinese psychology* (pp. 227–246). New York: Oxford University Press.