1. Comparative studies of teachers and teacher education indicate that many key differences across countries (e.g. curriculum, teacher status, role of research, goals) are greatly influenced by the role of the state and the nature of its relationship with teachers and teacher education.

2. In running Hong Kong’s major teacher education provider, I have also become aware of that relationship in all aspects of what we do. The government or state has a far more powerful impact on teaching than it has on other professions such as medicine and nursing.

3. This talk will focus primarily on the relationship between the state and teachers in Hong Kong, and to a lesser extent on that between the state and teacher education. The analysis will use a historical perspective which distinguishes the pre- and post-handover situations.

4. The key features I focus on are:
   a. The systems of holding teachers accountable
   b. The status of the teaching profession
   c. The attempts to develop systems of professional self-regulation

5. Before proceeding it is necessary to clarify the meaning of two key concepts: accountability and professionalism, which are amongst the most flexible and overused terms. [quote from Mulgan, p.106]

6. The key feature of accountability is ‘being called to account’ which requires external scrutiny and sanctions. Reflection, self-improvement and aspects of ‘professional responsibility’. The key question is the locus of control. To whom are teachers accountable – teachers or the state?

7. Professionalism is used as a euphemism for efficiency, specialization, being knowledgeable etc. The key features identified by Larson (1977) are that professionals:
   • use and apply a body of knowledge
   • undergo training
   • have a service orientation
   • have distinctive ethics
   • are autonomous
   • are self-regulating

   Eraut (1994) stresses the moral dimension as well.

   Within education a distinction has been made by Eraut between professionalism (behaviour of individuals) and professionalisation (the status of the teaching profession and/or of teacher education). Often these three meanings are confused and conflated e.g. good teachers/ low professionalisation – the cycle of ‘mutual impairment’ referred to by the Holmes group. [quote bottom of p.107]

Hong Kong prior to 1997
In Etzioni’s terms, teaching in Hong Kong has been more of a semi-profession reinforced by:

- minimum entry requirements
- no background in teaching subject
- teacher education outside the higher education sector – despite expansion there
- strong distinctions in status/pay between secondary and primary, graduate and non-graduate teachers – the latter being trained in government colleges of education
- no body that represented teachers’ professional interests – the role of the Professional Teaching Union was more political [note: features common elsewhere but less problematic in highly selective contexts]

These features have provided the reasons for the post 1997 government to strengthen its role in monitoring/evaluating teachers and generally increasing accountability.

The features were reinforced by the view amongst the elite that teaching was ‘women’s work’, it required no specialist skill, subject knowledge was a sufficient qualification, and a desire for strong government control.

The Hong Kong government’s major motive has been to maintain stability and discourage subversion and destabilization. Curricula were depoliticized and there has been in the past a focus on far away places and times. After the 1977 teachers’ strike, there was also the desire to avoid creating a well qualified, professionalized and independent teaching force.

The result was a tendency to encourage a teaching force that was disunited, compliant and uncritical. This was mainly achieved through inaction - and the status quo continued. Thus primary teachers were secondary five (Year 11) students who did short sub-degree training courses, and secondary teachers were untrained graduates. [quote observation of Visiting Panel p.110]

The government’s effort to avoid the emergence of a more professionalized teaching force is illustrated by the following time line:

- 1982 Visiting Panels’ proposal for a General Teaching Council (GTC)
- 1986 Education Commission rejected the proposal
- 1990 GTC again recommended
- 1992 Education Commission rejected it
- 1997? Government discourages a GTC

Instead a Code for Education Professions was produced and a Council on Professional Conduct was created to advise the government. Self-regulation never happened and government control was benign and only exercised when a political threat emerged.

In this context teacher accountability was effectively established via the various non-government agencies which employed teachers, and through the system of public examinations. These served as a proxy measure for teacher performance as schools competed to recruit the most able pupils. Teachers are accountable for pupil results [quote p.112]

The Present and Future
Post 1997 the government inherited a system with a low level of professionalisation and accountability via examination results. Some progress had been made with the establishment of the Hong Kong Institute of Education in 1994 and the introduction of 30% graduate posts in primary schools. [insert quote]

There has been greater concern for educational quality and implementing reforms with new curricula, new language policies and a focus on upgrading teachers. Key measures have included:

- an all graduate and all trained profession (a policy that has not been implemented)
- all kindergarten teachers to be trained
- English and Putonghua teachers required to have a relevant degree and teacher education

The major problems of implementation arise from the ‘legitimacy deficit’, as the government does not have a popular mandate to govern, along with a very lively civil society and a free press. Also education is one of the few policy variables. However the political system basically is an elected opposition. Economic legitimacy has been weak, but is now strengthening.

Promoting reform has relied on a strategy of heavy duty criticism of the status quo (the curricula, schools, teachers and teacher education. For example:

- Examination oriented
- Excessive competition
- Overspecialization
- Rote learning and failure to promote creativity etc.
- Decreased language proficiency

All of which are attributed to poor teaching. [quote p.115]

The situation provided a platform for increased systems for controlling/monitoring teachers i.e. increasing accountability to the state. Key measures were:

- Introduction of the Language Proficiency Assessment Test for serving teachers
- Introduction of a teacher competency framework

This strategy of trying to promote innovation on the back of derision/teacher bashing has created a host of new problems - most notably:

- a massive decline in the attractiveness of teaching as a career
- increased distrust between the teaching profession and government – negative impact on reform

The government’s approach to teacher accountability and the maintenance of a low level of professionalisation are best understood in terms of five factors:

- the legitimacy deficit (discussed earlier)
- a shift from a reliance on policy as ‘symbolic action’ to a greater concern for implementation
- the extent of the capacity to support change of a qualitative nature
- the option of selling education as a public good was declined
- disarticulation in government – the increased fragmentation and competition between parts of the policy community

Conclusion
Teacher accountability and professionalisation are strongly dependent on politics and the role of the state. During the British colonial period in Hong Kong, low professionalisation and low accountability was politically convenient and reflected the government’s low legitimacy and the emergence of a strong teacher’s union.

In the post-handover period the low professionalisation has hampered reform and improvement. There has been an attempt to address this by stressing the professionalism of individual teachers, rather than the professionalisation of all, and to strengthen government control/scrutiny of teachers mainly via systems of assessment. The tendency has been to avoid the emergence of a true self-regulating profession. The outcome is that professionalisation (i.e. a self-regulating profession) has not improved but government monitoring has increased.

The critical issues and paradoxes between teachers and the state are:
- the state’s desire for improved teaching professionalism despite ongoing attempts to restrict professionalisation
- the state’s promotion of low stakes assessment/assessment for learning in schools whilst monitoring teachers through high stakes assessment
- the reliance on derision/criticism to promote educational change whilst denying responsibility for the conditions/factors criticized
- the desire to improve schooling and to encourage partnership/community whilst minimizing the possibility of working in partnership with teachers