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Belilios Public School

「The Contributions of Catholic Organizations towards the  
Education Development of Hong Kong after World War II」

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10th Inter-school Competition of Project Learning on Hong Kong's History and Culture

BELILIOS PUBLIC SCHOOL

# **The Contributions of Catholic Organizations towards the Education Development of Hong Kong after World War Two**

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# Abstract

Education has always been considered as an important part of a civilized society. As through education, knowledge is able to pass to generations, and it nurtures talents to contribute to a society. Catholic Schools set up by Catholic organizations had made great changes to the education system of Hong Kong. Therefore, in this report, we have decided to look into the development of Catholicism and its contribution to Hong Kong's education system, especially during the post-war period.

In Chapter 2, we will first introduce the early development of Catholicism in Hong Kong. With the establishment of the Prefecture of Apostolic of Hong Kong in 1841, Western Catholic missionaries could arrive in Hong Kong and offer social services, like setting up orphanages and educating orphans. The first Catholic boys school was founded in 1843, which embraced the beginning of Western Catholic education in Hong Kong.

Moving to Chapter 3, we will investigate the negative impacts of World War Two on Hong Kong's education. Since Hong Kong was under the occupation of the Japanese Imperial Army, and had undergone the dim three years and eight months at wartime. The majority of the schools were forced to shut down. Citizens were compelled to learn the Japanese language and culture. Thus, many parents had withdrawn their children from schools, leading to an extremely low number of enrolled students at school in 1941. People living in Hong Kong were suffering from poverty, starvation, and lack of education.

In Chapter 4, we will look at how the Catholic organizations helped the reconstruction of Hong Kong in the post-war period. There was an urgent need for schools and demand for education. Neither the children had received proper education at wartime, nor parents could afford the fees of their children attending schools. On top of that, there was a great influx of population from Mainland China. Many Catholic organizations had founded new schools, and reopened the closed schools to solve the crucial problem. Moreover, the newly established Catholic schools were not only limited to ordinary schools, but more types including night schools and technical schools, by adhering to the change in economy of Hong Kong. Schools with Special Education and Integrated Education were also established in the post-war times. On top of that, the Catholic schools also contributed significantly by providing social services to help people's lives after World War Two. The efforts made by the Catholic organizations were well-recognized.

Currently, there are 250 Catholic schools operating in Hong Kong. They are run by the Diocese, congregations, and other sponsoring bodies. Catholic schools have nurtured many talents, and successful people in various aspects throughout these years.

# Chapter 1) Introduction

In 1841, Roman Catholic Church set up Hong Kong's first Catholic mission prefecture. The Church started providing services to help the less fortunate groups in Hong Kong like orphans by setting up orphanages, as well as providing education to the children with the first Catholic boys school founded in 1843. More Catholic schools were set up between 1843-1941, which embraced the beginning of Western education in Hong Kong.

World War II was very destructive and had caused great damage to Hong Kong's education. Hong Kong was occupied by the Japanese Imperial Army for three years and eight months from 1941 to 1945. Most of the schools were shut down due to war damage, while some were used for military training. Citizens, including the young generation, were compelled to learn the Japanese language and culture. Many parents had withdrawn their children from schools, and there were only 3,000 students enrolled in schools in 1945.

After the surrender of Japan, Hong Kong started its own reconstruction, as a colony of Britain. There was an urgent need for schools, as most of the young generation had not been educated during the war years. As a result, various Catholic organizations like *Sister Katherine Lui of the Sisters of the Precious Blood* had started founding new schools to solve the crucial problem. Both the population and number of students in school had been increasing rapidly afterwards. By 1951, there were about 160,000 students in school. On top of that, the Catholic organization set up technical, vocational and evening schools to adapt with the changes of economy in the society. Special and Integrated education were also introduced to cater with the needs of the students with special education needs. Additionally, the Catholic organizations offered social services to citizens in Hong Kong, which evinced their care towards people's lives. Their work contributed to the reconstruction of Hong Kong after World War Two.

Up to August 2019, there were 249 Catholic schools in Hong Kong. They are run by the Diocese, congregations, and other sponsoring bodies. Catholic schools have nurtured many talents in all aspects throughout the years. The Catholic schools still play an important role and their efforts are well recognized in Hong Kong's modern society.

## Enquiry Questions

In this report, we will be investigating the following questions:

- 1) What Catholic schools did Catholic Missionaries set up in Hong Kong?
- 2) How did World War Two hinder the education development of Hong Kong in 1941-1945?
- 3) What did the Catholic groups help with the reconstruction of Hong Kong during the post-war period?
- 4) How have the Catholic Missionaries contributed to the education system in Hong Kong?



## Methodology

The aim of our research and report is to investigate the remarkable contribution of Catholic organizations to education in Hong Kong, during the pre-war and post-war period.

Throughout the project, we have read and studied both primary and secondary sources related to the development of Catholic education and its contribution to Hong Kong. We selected a few notable Catholic schools, such as the St. Joseph's College and St. Paul's Convent School, to write about their history and included the impressive contributions of the schools and graduates to the society.

Furthermore, we will address the education reforms after World War Two done by altruistic Missionaries. Catholic organizations reopened and set up schools, also there were several changes made in the education system of Hong Kong.

Eventually, we will conclude the significant contributions made by the Catholic organizations.