

Hong Kong Education System: Go Global

TAI-LOK LUI

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Introduction

In this presentation, I shall focus on one aspect of recent changes in Hong Kong's higher education

- Internationalization

There are many layers of meaning in the concept of internationalization

- Very often, it refers to the recruitment of non-local students and the provision of international learning experiences to local students
- But it is supposed to be more than just these two aspects

Background

Hong Kong was, and to some extent still is, a migrant city. In this connection, its education system has long been opened to both local and non-local students

Hong Kong had been the hub of migration for overseas Chinese (about 6 million Chinese left southern China to work abroad between 1860 and 1940)

- Had strong connections with Chinese communities in Southeast Asia

Inflows

Its colonial status between 1842 and 1997 meant that Hong Kong was part of the British Commonwealth system

- English was the official language
 - A lot of the local schools were run by the missionaries
- Attracted students from the Mainland to acquire a modern education
- Students from Southeast Asia as well
 - Professional training (e.g., medicine)
 - Because of political uncertainty in some of those countries
- Students to be trained in both English and Chinese

So, Hong Kong's education system has a long history of serving non-local students

Outflows

Given its colonial status (and thus was a part of the Commonwealth system), it also meant that some of the local students would see overseas education (especially in the UK, Canada, and Australia) as an option (though for a long period of time, this education strategy was opened to very few well-off families)

- Overseas education (especially in the UK, Canada and Australia) was one of the channels for securing manpower training

Outflows

But increasingly as Hong Kong society became more affluent, more and more families can afford to send their children to study abroad

Nowadays, the pattern follows the global trend of student mobility: growing number of students studying at the undergraduate level and at the pre-college stage

The Changing University System

For an extended period of time, Hong Kong's university system was primarily an institution for the grooming of local elites

- Student quotas was limited (2-3% up to the early 1980s)
- Entrance was based upon competitive public examination
 - Two tiers of public examination prior to the university entrance examination under the old system
- Graduates filled up key positions in the changing occupational structure (both in the public and private sectors)
- Alumni networks were powerful social capital

The same could be observed in other Asian countries

The Changing University System

Undergraduate teaching was the main role of local universities

The colonial government paid limited attention to planning

- Little emphasis on research
- Government officials were the main sources of policy ideas

The economy

- Trade
- OEM manufacturing: very little, if any, R&D

The Changing University System

Expansion of university places from the 1980s onwards

- Largely a response to Hong Kong's uncertain political future
 - Emigration in the 1980s and 1990s
- Established a new university (UST)
- Turned polytechnics and colleges into universities
 - Polytechnic Univ., Baptist Univ., and City Univ
- Student quotas reached 18%
- Public perception of a university place
 - Government subsidy
 - The 'deserved' university student
- Fierce competition continued

The Changing Context

Going beyond the local

- China re-opened and Hong Kong's role in new China-Hongkong economic nexus
 - Training Mainland students at the postgraduate level from the mid-1980s onwards
 - Small scale
 - Mature students (e.g., university professors)
 - Drove the expansion of graduate school in local universities
 - Created the conditions for developing research-oriented universities
 - From teaching only to research-oriented in the early 1990s

The Changing Context

Opened undergraduate places to non-local students in the late 1990s

- The changing China-Hongkong economic nexus
 - Hong Kong's new position in the regional economy
 - The deepening of economic reform in China
- New human resources needs

New regional and global visions

- Internationalization becomes a new feature of local universities

Meanwhile, new challenges to local universities

- Parents' choice
- Competing with overseas universities

Going Global

The 1st phase of internationalization was driven by:

- Inbound international exchange students (short term)
- Inbound students from Mainland China
- Outbound local students joining short-term international programme

This was found inadequate

- Non-local = international?

More emphasis on a broader definition of internationalization

- Broadening the sources of international students
- Overseas exchange becoming credit-based and/or compulsory

Going Global

“Internationalization@home”

- The original idea of enriching campus culture and learning environment
- Students mixing with each other
 - The negative effects of having most of the non-local students coming from one country
- The appreciation of local culture by local and non-local students
 - Soft power

Challenges arising from internationalization

- Medium of instruction

Going Global

Hong Kong: globalization of university 2.0 and 3.0

- via China
- The changing role and function of local universities
 - How to align with other policy changes?
 - Global talents?
- The changing contents of university education
 - Curriculum change (e.g., no. of credits for Majors)
- Preparations for a new generation of students
 - Experiential learning
- Hong Kong under regional and national integration
 - 'One Country, Two Systems'
 - The uniqueness of Hong Kong

Going Global

Historical legacies

- Hong Kong being too English-oriented
- Restricting its global reach

A broader definition of internationalization

- Promoting (“exporting”) Hong Kong’s practice and knowledge at the regional and international level
 - The value of knowledge transfer
 - Provisions of consultancy and training
 - Inventions

Thank you!