University and College Admission Policies and Practices in Hong Kong: Opportunities and Challenges in Moving from Secondary to Tertiary Education

Anatoly Oleksiyenko
Kai-ming Cheng
Vivian Lee
Shuangyuan Tang
HK: Basic Facts

- 1997 - reintegrated into China, but retains jurisdictional autonomy as SAR (including independent education system)
- Intensity of global flows and networking (3rd in the GAWC)
- 7 million people and 13% of youth in the age of 15-24 years old
- Declining youth population and increasing immigration (mainland and Asia)
- 3M households (a world’s most expensive real estate)
- GDP per capita = approx. $40,000USD
HK: Basic Facts

- c. 1,100 schools (governmental, direct subsidy, catholic, international)
- 12 universities (8 UGC funded) and 21 [community] colleges (12 university-affiliated)
HK: Changing Context

- Highly competitive exam-oriented education system with a mega private tutoring sector
- Cultural predispositions for higher learning (Confucian cultural heritage) and competition (Marginson 2013)
- Global network of cities - high income jobs and social status require multimodal competencies (e.g., multi-lingual, multi-cultural)
- In a move from elite to mass higher education – making local educational industry (hub) more internationalized to increase quality and reduce the outflow of local talent
- 33,000 young people leave HK annually to study abroad
HK: Changing Context

HK Education System, Before 2012

- Degree, 3 yrs., 19%
- Sub-degree/Higher Diploma, 2 yrs., 41%
- S6-S7: 2 yrs., 40%
- S4-S5: 2 yrs., 100%
- S1-S3: 3 yrs., 100%
- Primary: 6 yrs., 100%
- Kindergarten: 3 yrs., 95%
- TVET, 1-2 yrs., 5%

HK Education System, After 2012

- Degree, 4 yrs., 19%
- Sub-degree/Higher Diploma, 2 yrs., 41%
- S4-S6: 3 yrs., 100%
- S1-S3: 3 yrs., 100%
- Primary: 6 yrs., 100%
- Kindergarten: 3 yrs., 95%
- TVET, 1-2 yrs., 5%
Research: Questions

How does HK higher education system use admission policies and practices to mitigate tensions between elite and mass higher education?

What do universities and colleges gain and lose while trying to reconcile these tensions?
Research: Data

- Current literature
- Institutional materials (admissions web-sites)
- Participants’ (co-authors’) observations (teachers, students; local, international)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UGC-FUNDED UNIVERSITIES</th>
<th>UNI-AFFILIATED COLLEGES</th>
<th>PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES</th>
<th>INDEPENDENT COLLEGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>HKU SPACE</td>
<td>Open University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>Caritas Institute of Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong University of Science and Tech</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hang Seng Management School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese University of Hong Kong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingnan University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**UGC-FUNDED UNIVERSITIES:**
- University of Hong Kong
- Hong Kong University of Science and Tech
- Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Lingnan University

**PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES:**
- Open University of Hong Kong

**INDEPENDENT COLLEGES:**
- Caritas Institute of Higher Education
- Hang Seng Management School
Findings: Current Pressures

- Where do students come from?
- EMI vs. CMI (Cantonese and Mandarin)
- British & Chinese heritages, and US-ranking generated pressures
- Uneven opportunities: school autonomy and differences in curricula, resources, governance, cultures
- HKDSE as a unified graduating exam (away from HKCEE and HKALE): 4 core – English, Chinese, Mathematics and Liberal Studies, and 1 elective - Economics, Geography, Biology
Findings: Admissions Eligibility

UGC-FUNDED and PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Scores:
- Level 3 – English and Chinese
- Level 2 – other subjects
- Differentiated elective scores (decided by schools and programs)

Qualities:
- Leadership
- Communicative Skills
- Creativity
- Interactivity

UNI-AFFILIATED COLLEGES

Scores:
- Level 2 – English and Chinese
- Level 2 – other subjects

Qualities:
- Less important
- Second chance – mature students

INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

Scores:
- Level 3 – English and Chinese
- (transition to Bachelor’s)
Findings: Application Process

UGC-FUNDED UNIVERSITIES

Online JUPAS and non-JUPAS (December)
Mainland China applicants (early June – gaokao)

UNI-AFFILIATED & INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

Online “E-App”
Walk-In Admissions
Recruitment events in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou
By mail

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

“First come-First served”

July –mid August (after HKDSE results) and ongoing
Findings: Screening Mechanisms

UGC-FUNDED UNIVERSITIES

Highest scores = scholarships

“First Choice”

Follow-up interviews

Focus group discussions

UNI-AFFILIATED & INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

Interviews (with second chance)

Immediate offers at the recruitment sites

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

More flexible
Findings: Admission Notifications

UGC-FUNDED UNIVERSITIES

Can be immediate

January – August
(some in December)

JUPAS main round – early August
and confirm - by end August

Mainland China - July

Appeal to HK Examinations and Assessment Authority

UNI-AFFILIATED & INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

No specific schedules

Self-financing/ongoing process

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

More flexible
## Findings: Race or Balance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UGC-FUNDED UNIVERSITIES</th>
<th>UNI-AFFILIATED &amp; INDEPENDENT COLLEGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>No rankings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rankings vs. Fairness</td>
<td>No competitiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scores vs. Personal Qualities</td>
<td>Emphasis on professional skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasingly, leadership predispositions</td>
<td>Social responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced messaging of expectations</td>
<td>Self-financing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing scholarships and self-financing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging ambitious students with disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No rankings</td>
<td>No rankings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizing service to professional communities</td>
<td>Emphasis on professional skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-financing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disability students are cautioned about facility capacities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dilemmas and Further Research

Scores vs. Qualities: institutional variability in admissions (across public/private research and teaching universities; sub-degree colleges; faculties, departments, programs)

Institutional capacities, missions and resources vs. students’ capacities, expectations and resources

Admission numbers vs. employability results

Student mobility vs. retention of local talents at the time of global competition for talent

The increasing need for more sophisticated student advising centers, career counseling services, and alumni networks at universities and colleges
THANK YOU!

Corresponding author:
Anatoly Oleksiyenko (paoleks@hku.hk)