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Special Issue on Tertiary Educations (I)

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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

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Mr. Joseph W.C. Lau has joined the Hong Kong education sector for the past decade where he had initially taught language arts in local secondary schools. He also worked for the Examination and Assessment Authority where he developed territory-wide assessments for both primary and secondary students. He currently teaches at the Institute of Vocational Education of the Vocational Training Council, where he provides vocational training for young adults in multiple trade-related disciplines. His areas of interest and research are higher education management, academic social identities, self-efficiency and student learning behavior. His current project is on the impact of education reform and outcome-based learning on the learning motivation of students in higher education.

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EDITORIAL

Since this Journal was re-launched in Spring 2012 with the support of the new co-publisher, the School of Professional Education and Executive Development (SPEED) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), we have published four issues on various aspects of public administration and a first special issue on "Health Policies" in Spring 2014. The current issue is the second special issue on "Tertiary Education". We are delighted to have Professor Peter P. Yuen, Chairman of the Federation for Self-financing Tertiary Education and Dean of the College of Professional and Continuing Education (CPCE) of The PolyU as our Guest Editor. As there are many good papers received on this topic, two special issues will be dedicated to Tertiary Education. We would like to thank Professor Yuen, all the paper contributors and reviewers of these two special issues.

In this issue, we also have a special contribution on "Qualities of Political Leaders" by Mr. Tsang Yok Sing, President of the Legislative Council, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. It is a speech delivered by Mr. Tsang at a luncheon of the AGM of HKPAA in June 2014. It is interesting to learn the kind of qualities which the political leaders should possess in order to move Hong Kong forward.

The PAAP Journal has progressed gradually in the past three years. In addition to the printed version, the e-version was introduced in 2013 and was made available for readers free of charge through the HKPAA and the PolyU SPEED's websites. We are currently negotiating with an international publisher to go for global open access publishing and citations tracking in 2015. We hope this will enhance the journal's circulation and citations of our authors' articles.

There will be some changes in the editorial structure of the Journal starting in 2015. Professor Sonny Lo, who was instrumental in re-launching the Journal in 2012 as Editor-in-Chief, will leave the Journal as he is very busy with his new position as Associate Vice President of the Hong Kong Institute of Education. We thank him for his outstanding contribution to the Journal's rebirth. I will take up the post as Editor-in-Chief and Professor Peter P. Yuen will be Co-Editor-in-Chief. A team of Associate Editors will be appointed to assist the academic and production aspects of the Journal. We hope the new editorial team will continue to bring the Journal to a new height.

With the global open access and citations tracking, we hope more academics and practitioners will contribute their papers to this Journal so that it will continue to provide a forum for intellectual exchange in public administration and policy.

Peter K.W. Fong
Editor-in-Chief
PAAP
President
Hong Kong Public Administration Association

Qualities of Political Leaders

Tsang Yok Sing
President of the Legislative Council, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

(Following is the speech by the President of Legislative Council, Mr. Tsang Yok Sing, delivered at the AGM and Luncheon of the Hong Kong Public Administration Association, held in the Police Officers' Club on 9 June, 2014. The original was delivered in Chinese.)

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

Our society seems to have a deep-rooted aversion to politics. This was epitomized by an appeal made by our first Chief Executive Mr. C.H. Tung at the founding of the Hong Kong SAR, calling on everybody to "stop playing politics and start doing real work". Hong Kong people must have grown tired of the persistent political disputes throughout the pre-handover years, thought Mr. Tung, so now that the disputes were over, we would be able to concentrate ourselves on doing useful things. He soon discovered things did not happen the way he wished.

More recently, we often hear people lamenting a phenomenon of "pan-politicization", that is, a tendency of turning every livelihood or economic issue into politics, making it impossible to resolve. But let us pause and think for a moment. Can there be "purely" livelihood and economic issues? Is there any public policy issue that is free from politics?

Take for example housing, which everyone from the Chief Executive to ordinary citizens would place at the top of their priority list of livelihood issues. To increase housing supply we need to build more residential units, and we need land to build them on. All kinds of political problems will be encountered in seeking land for development. No matter in what way the government tries to acquire new land --- by reclamation, by carving out parts of our country parks, or by turning into building sites the preciously few open spaces still left in developed areas --- there are bound to be objections, and dealing with these objections is a political task.

Similarly, other livelihood issues like poverty alleviation, public health services and care for the elderly, can hardly be discussed in isolation from politics. My colleague the Hon Leung Kwok Hung filibustered the Government Budget to demand a comprehensive retirement protection scheme. Retirement protection is a livelihood issue; whether or not to provide a comprehensive scheme is a political decision.

Thus "pan-politicization" is not a creation of certain individuals or political groups for the purpose of obstructing government policies. Of course there are indeed cases of politicians and political parties deliberately "politicizing" social and economic issues in order to create conflicts they can capitalize on in their next election campaign. But we have to realize that every major public policy will affect people's interest in different ways, some less favourably than others. Even if a proposed policy gives everybody something, there will always be some who cry "unfair" because they think they are receiving less than others. Few policies affecting people's interest can have the public's unanimous support, and if the government fails to neutralize opposition and allows it to ferment in the community, it may eventually grow to such a scale as make it impossible for the policy to be implemented.

How can opposition be dissipated? One way is to talk the opposition out with reason. For example the government can say to those who are against expanding landfills and building incinerators that we should consider the greatest good for the whole community, that some of us will have to put up with the presence of obnoxious but necessary facilities in our neighbourhood.

But we all know how difficult it is to persuade people to make sacrifices for the benefit of society. So sometimes the government may have to mobilize social pressure to force the opposition to give in, or on other occasions to negotiate for a price to compensate for the hardships caused. Each one these methods of dealing with opposition, be it persuasion, coercion or negotiation, requires political skills.

A political leader cannot only convince himself what he is doing is good for the people. He must also convince a majority of the public, and that is politics. Simply complaining about "pan-politicization" does not help. For "pan-politicization" is a fact of life these days, not only in Hong Kong, but probably everywhere. Even in the Mainland, where authoritarian rule used to work, mass demonstrations against unpopular government decisions are now no longer an uncommon sight.

It is therefore necessary for political leaders to possess political skills, without which they will be unable to win support for their decisions. But the ability to win support is not the same as the ability to make good or correct decisions. Bad political decisions cannot lead to good governance, even if public support is successfully garnered. So we must also ask, what other qualities should we expect of our political leaders, to ensure they can make the right decisions for the people?

I believe there are two more important qualities. The first is political morality, which we must expect of a political leader if we are to believe he will always make decisions in the best interest of the people. Confucian teaching says those in power should possess three virtues: charity, wisdom and courage. I think these three virtues can be taken as the ingredients of political morality.

"Charity" is a profound concept in Confucianism, but we can take it simply to mean altruism, or benevolence to all, especially to the needy. A good political leader

should always put the needs and happiness of the people before his own. He should think of the interest of the greatest number of people when making important policy decisions.

"Wisdom" for a political leader is the conscious exercise of good judgment to make proper decisions. When deciding to push forward with a particular policy he should ask: Is my decision consistent with the principles of social justice? Have I considered the interest of all affected parties with fairness? Is this the right time for implementing this policy? Are circumstances suitable for its implementation? Is it within the capability of my working team to implement it?

"Courage" is a third constituent of political morality. When the political leader is confident he has made a good and wise decision, he must have the courage to put it into action and see it through even if there is strong opposition. A responsible decision-maker cannot simply act in accordance with the results of opinion polls, doing whatever has popular support and shying away from any unpopular undertaking. He must have the courage to push forward with a policy decision if he believes it is for the greatest good of the community, even if many refuse to support it for the time being.

The one remaining quality I think a political leader should possess, is he must have a clear set of political beliefs which form the basis of his political decisions, of his ideas as to how various conflicts should be resolved. The political beliefs will define whether he is left or right, liberal or conservative.

Every government must work to promote development; this is the "hard rule" as pointed out by Mr. Deng Xiaoping. Economic development must come first, before any social development is possible. However, economic development will inevitably be accompanied by a host of conflicts that must be resolved by the political leader. There is conflict between growth and distribution of wealth, and between growth and environment protection and energy conservation. There will also be conflict between economic growth and democracy, for while democracy can prevent disastrous decisions made by an authoritarian government, it does so at the expense of efficiency. It may lengthen the process of decision-making and slacken the pace of growth. Choosing the balance point in each case is a political decision, made in accordance with the political beliefs of the leader.

Hong Kong needs political leaders with well-defined political beliefs, noble political morality and effective political skills. There was a time when we all believed we had such a superb system of government that our economy would keep growing and our livelihood would keep improving, without anybody bothering about politics. Times have changed. We should take a new look at politics, and realize that we need high-quality political leaders to take Hong Kong forward.

Thank you.

PREFACE TO SPECIAL ISSUE ON TERTIARY EDUCATION (I)

The tertiary education landscape in Hong Kong has undergone many significant changes in the last 15 years or so. A notable development is the rather sharp increase in the tertiary education participation rate -- from around 30 percent of the relevant age group to close to 70 percent. This development is made possible largely through the growth of the self-financing sector.

On this topic, HKPAA collaborates with the Federation for Self-financing Tertiary Education (FSTE) for the publication of this Special Issue on Tertiary Education. The Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (FCE), the precursor of FSTE, was initially established in 1994 as a coalition for the continuing education arm of publicly-funded universities in Hong Kong, with a mission to advance lifelong learning and continuous professional development in the territory. Later on, these continuing education units also began to offer self-financing full-time programmes for secondary school leavers in a major way, and the Federation changed its name to FSTE in 2011. FSTE's membership has also been extended to include other major non-profit-making self-funded tertiary education institutions. FSTE membership now comprises thirteen institutions. On a self-financing basis, FSTE members offer programmes at degree and sub-degree levels, in full-time and part-time modes, lifelong learning, continuous professional development, and transnational education. Together, FSTE members cater for a full-time student load of well over 60,000, which is larger than the equivalent publicly funded sector.

This Special Issue seeks to shed light on a number of education polices, as well as some teaching and learning issues particularly relevant to self-financing tertiary education in Hong Kong. The Permanent Secretary for Education and Raymond So discuss separately the challenges and opportunities facing the self-financing tertiary education sector. Yuen et.al examine lifelong education and continuous professional development programmes, which are important components in the tertiary education portfolio. W.L. Wong illustrates a tripartite partnership involving government, schools, and a self-financing tertiary institution. Ted Poon et.al look into the perceived effectiveness of part-time lecturers -- a common teaching arrangement in self-financing institutions. Jonathan Kwok et.al examine issues relating to students competencies. We hope that academics, teachers, and policy makers will find this Special Issue useful. In view of the high interest expressed, PAAP has decided to publish two issues on this topic. This current issue is the first of the two Special Issues on Tertiary Education.

Peter P. Yuen
Editor
Special Issue on Tertiary Education (I)

Challenges Ahead: Not Changing is not an Option

Cherry K.C. Tse
Permanent Secretary for Education, The Hong Kong SAR Government

(Following is the keynote speech by the Permanent Secretary for Education, Mrs. Cherry K.C. Tse, delivered at the FSTE 20th Anniversary Conference on Self-financing Tertiary Education: The Way Forward, held in the Hong Kong Jockey Club on 13 November, 2014.)

Professor (Peter) Yuen, Professor (Edward) Chen, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Federation for Self-financing Tertiary Education (the FSTE in short).

The FSTE's role

In human terms, the first 20 years denotes birth to adulthood, at a stage where reflecting upon the past and contemplating what may lie ahead is most appropriate.

The Federation has been a strategic partner of the Government in promoting self-financing post-secondary education in Hong Kong. It has been actively involved in implementing and coordinating major initiatives in the sector, including the development of Common Descriptors for Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes; design of the Award Titles Scheme and the operation guidelines for the use of Qualifications Framework credit; the introduction of Yi Jin Diploma programme; and the use of the Specification of Competency Standards in the electives of Yi Jin Diploma. I would like to thank the Federation for its invaluable contribution.

In the process, true to its role, the Federation does not hesitate to apply pressure on the Government! Don't take me wrong, this is not meant to be a complaint; this is meant to be an expression of gratitude! Why? As a coordinating organization, the Federation is understandably keen to promote the interests of the self-financing post-secondary education sector. Without the Federation, we would still have to deal with the institutions but individually. With the Federation, our dialogue with the sector has been enriched. We now have, in addition to individual voices, an overall, coordinated representation. In the few minutes to follow, I shall briefly scan where we are now, followed by some observations on the challenges ahead and why I think not changing is not an option for the sector as a whole.

Where we are now

Over the past ten years, we have witnessed the phenomenal growth of the self-financing post-secondary education sector in Hong Kong, both in terms of student number as well as the number and diversity of the programmes offered. This growth was propelled by clear market signals demanding more post-secondary and higher education opportunities. Epitomizing the sector's efficient response is the rise in number of self-financing local degree-awarding institutions from only three to 10 in the past decade. Concomitant is the phenomenal increase in the number of places available. Ten years ago, only around 1,000 or 6% of our full-time locally-accredited first-year-first-degree places were offered by the self-financing post-secondary education sector. Today, 7 000 such places are offered by the self-financing sector. In addition, thanks to the collective efforts of the publicly funded and self-financing sectors, today, more than 38% of the relevant age cohort has access to undergraduate education opportunities.

The growth is no less impressive at the sub-degree level. The last decade has witnessed a three-fold increase in full-time locally-accredited intake places offered by the self-financing sector, from about 10,000 places to 30,000 in the 2013/14 academic year. The overall post-secondary participation rate for relevant age cohort has reached nearly 70%, which is more than doubled the 30% record of 2004.

Nevertheless, number was not the only thing on the Government's mind. Diversity was also a key consideration. In this connection, I would also like to thank the Federation and the self-financing institutions for giving students more choices — choices in terms of not only fields of study, but also duration, outcomes, target groups and mode of delivery. The programmes available range from non-credit-bearing interest classes to credit-bearing professional courses. In terms of learning outcome, applicants can choose from craft level to doctoral degree level. In terms of mode of delivery, distance learning, blended learning and face-to-face programmes are available. In terms of duration, the range is a few hours to a few years. There are programmes targeted at different types of learners including full-time and part-time students, school leavers and working adults with different learning objectives and levels of affordability.

The Federation and the self-financing sector that it represents have served Hong Kong well, thanks to the sector's flexibility, diversity and responsiveness. Complementing the growth of the self-financing sector is our work on the Qualifications Framework and the Credit Transfer System, which together help lay the foundation for lifelong education. Lifelong education is a never-ending endeavor. On an individual level, it enables a person to stay relevant and competitive. On a macro basis, it determines if an economy is sustainable and can survive and thrive in a fast-changing, globalized knowledge-based economy.

Hong Kong's manpower needs always top our priority. The Government has introduced the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors starting from the 2015/16 academic year to subsidize up to 1,000 students per cohort to pursue designated full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes in selected disciplines to nurture talents to meet Hong Kong's social and economic needs. The Scheme will be implemented on a pilot basis for three years and then subject to a

review on its effectiveness. We are glad that the Scheme is well-received by the sector.

What we are facing

I have no crystal ball. But one thing is certain. The coming 10 years would be rather different from the last. Quantitatively, the "growth period" will probably take a reverse gear. Based on Census figures, we project a decline in the number of secondary school graduates, implying also a corresponding drop in the number of prospective student intakes of post-secondary education. In concrete terms, the projected drop is from about 65,500 in 2014 to 42,700 in 2022; thereafter, it is projected to pick up again, rising to 43,700 in 2023.

The decline in the first few years should be relatively mild but will be more drastic from around 2018 onwards. Disequilibrium will be unsettling for the institutions, both management and staff. Though the storm is brewing, this does not mean that there is nothing that we can do. With careful planning, an orderly consolidation mitigating significantly the negative impact is still possible. To facilitate the sector to devise a consolidation game-plan, my Bureau has kick-started a dialogue with the institutions and the Federation. The most recent sharing session was in April this year. We shall continue to provide the sector with updated demographic projections and manpower trends. These updates enable us to adopt an evidence-based approach to urging the sector to critically examine their medium to long term planning, from HR to programme diversity, student number and contents.

Sustainability hinges not only on getting students, but more importantly, on the credibility of the learning process and learning outcomes. Credibility in turn rests upon the tripod of quality, vocational relevance and sound governance. Over the last 20 years, the Government has put in place various support measures, all aimed to ensure, directly and indirectly, that the tripod is sturdy. We have done so because we value highly the self-financing sector and our partnership with the sector.

Partnership in addressing challenges

To help promote a healthy development of the self-financing sector, the Government has, right from the very beginning, provided land and premises at nominal premium or rent and made available interest-free start-up loans and student finances. The terms of some of these support measures have also been enhanced. We remain vigilant in identifying measures which may enhance the credibility of the sector without detracting from its market responsiveness. For instance, we have in the last few years, introduced quality assurance subsidies and a $3.52 billion Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund to provide scholarships and support quality enhancement efforts of institutions.

We have also allocated $3 billion to support research projects to enhance the academic and research capacity of self-financing tertiary institutions. Prior to 2013, the Matching Grant Scheme was confined to the publicly funded institutions. The academic year 2013-14 saw the extension of the Scheme to the self-financing sector, with $2.5 billion earmarked for the self-financing sector. It is our hope that in seeking to garner more funds and diversify funding sources, the institutions will enhance their dialogue with the business and industrial communities on talent and manpower development. These discussions will in turn help ensure institutions' programme relevance.

Notwithstanding the Government's keen concern about programme relevance, we do not subscribe to micro-management. Instead, we facilitate. In October last year, the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education organized the "Seminar on Closer Alignment between Post-secondary Education Institutions and Industries" to promote exchanges between institutions and industries. To sustain the momentum, follow-up actions such as stock-taking of the current situation through surveys, focus group meetings with post-secondary graduates, sharing of good practices by post-secondary institutions, conduct of industry-specific surveys on employers' views on the performance of post-secondary graduates, etc. are being or will be taken.

We are gratified to note that, responding to community demands, the self-financing sector has been progressively enhancing quality assurance and student support. Examples include the adoption of common application and admission arrangements, making known the estimated intake places, and promulgating in April last year a set of guidelines for locally-accredited self-financing programmes at the undergraduate level and below to enhance consistency and transparency in enrolment and admission arrangements.

Worth particular mention is governance. Governance makes or fails an organization because for any institutions, governance is the Central Processing Unit which filters all deliberations. The Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education, serving as a useful platform for discussing macro and strategic issues of common interest to the self-financing post-secondary sector, announced in August this year the outcome of a consultancy study on good practices on governance and quality assurance with reference to local, regional and international experiences. To advance the work on governance enhancement, a sharing session with the institutions will be organized later this month. Hopefully, others' good practices will provide useful reference for institutions to take forward their own reflections of how their governance mechanisms could be strengthened.

Concluding remarks

Ladies and gentlemen, the self-financing sector is very vibrant. On the whole, it is responsible and takes prompt action to develop remedies to address identified inadequacies. It is also responsive to market signals and to information provided in good time. Therefore, at this point in time, we see no cogent case for micro-management by the Government. Nevertheless, the Government does have a role to facilitate the healthy and orderly consolidation by the sector. Apart from support measures in money and in kind, we also provide the sector with timely updates of

demographic projections and manpower trends. We also encourage the sector to enhance partnership with employers and various business and professional organizations to help ensure programme relevance as well as to secure internship and employment opportunities for their graduates. Underlining all these reflection and planning processes is the promotion of good governance.

The next decade is going to be a trying period for the self-financing sector. Not changing is not an option. Institutions that can adapt in good time will stay fit and excel with quality and market appeal. As Albert Einstein put it, "The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking."

My colleagues and I are grateful for the support given by the Federation and its Members. We also look forward to continuing our close partnership. Thank you.

Self-financed Higher Education: The Hong Kong Experience

Raymond W. So
Hang Seng Management College

Abstract

This paper examines the challenges faced by private higher education in Hong Kong. The historical developments of private higher education in Hong Kong demonstrate some of its limitations and obstacles. Nevertheless, the importance of private forces in higher education is increasing globally. Successful private higher education requires policy support from the government, in addition to committed financial resources from the patronage bodies of the private higher education institutions. Public universities and private higher education institutions have issued calls for differentiation.

Keywords: higher education, private universities, Hong Kong

Introduction

Higher education in Hong Kong is at a crossroad. Facing skyrocketing operating costs and scant government funding, public universities in Hong Kong have increasingly turned to private sources for support. Public universities are receiving substantial resources from non-government sectors. For example, for the 2012-2013 academic year, The University of Hong Kong (HKU) received 51.6% of its income from government subventions, a decrease from the 57.5% it received during the 2004-2005 academic year. [1] This decrease demonstrates that private sources are becoming more important to higher education.

Table 1 compares HKU's income sources for the 2004-2005 and 2009-2010 to 2012-2013 academic years. Although tuition and programme fees constituted around 17% of the University's total income for the reported academic years, tuition fees increased by 97.3% from 2004 to 2012, and government subventions increased by only 77.5%. Given that undergraduate student tuition was kept frozen during these academic years, the large increase in tuition income arrived along with an increase in self-financed programme fees. HKU's experience is not unique. Indeed, the increasing importance of non-government funding sources is becoming more prominent. It demonstrates that tuition income from private programmes (more commonly known as 'self-financed' programmes in Hong Kong) contributes to the large increase in public university income, and reflects the growing importance of non-government support to higher education in Hong Kong.

Table 1: Comparative Income Figures of the University of Hong Kong

	Academic Year 2004-2005		Academic Year 2009-2010 to 2012-2013								Percentage Increase from 2004 to 2012
			2009-2010		2010-2011		2011-2012		2012-2013		
	Amount (HK$ Millions)	Percentage of Total Income	Amount (HK$ Millions)	Percentage of Total Income	Amount (HK$ Millions)	Percentage of Total Income	Amount (HK$ Millions)	Percentage of Total Income	Amount (HK$ Millions)	Percentage of Total Income	
Total Income	4,443.5	100.0	6,022.2	100.0	6,820.7	100.0	5,351.3	100.0	8,686.2	100.0	95.5
Government Subventions	2,526.4	57.5	2,793.7	46.4	3,089.7	45.3	3,201.8	59.8	4,483.7	51.6	77.5
Tuition, Programmes and Other Fees	758.5	17.1	1,033.8	17.2	1,102.6	16.17	1,201.2	22.5	1,496.4	17.2	97.3

* This is the double cohort year, in which the number of first-year undergraduate places was doubled. The double cohort increased the amount of government subventions.

The importance of private funding in higher education is a global trend. The increased involvement of the private sector has become important to higher education on a global scale. The UNESCO 2002 Report discusses this issue thoroughly (Belfield and Levin, 2002). Banya (2010) also critically examines the effects of globalization on the demand for private universities. The general view is that private universities can introduce both more benefits and concerns to society.

Private university development in Hong Kong is relatively lagging from an international perspective. Shue Yan University did not officially obtain its 'University' title until 2006, when Hong Kong society began to recognize the roles played by private universities. Some later developments favoured the development of self-financed higher education institutions in Hong Kong. The Government has recently been more supportive of the development of self-financed education programmes. For example, the Report of the Phase Two Review of the Post-Secondary Education Sector recommends that Hong Kong should develop more self-financing degree-awarding institutions and private universities (Education Bureau, 2008).

Despite this increased involvement of the private sector in higher education at the local and global levels, private higher education has not gone without criticism. Some undesirable outcomes such as rising costs and concerns over academic quality at the expense of financial considerations have also arisen (Tilak, 2006; Li, 2009). Private universities have been perceived as profit-making institutions that compromise academic quality in the face of cost and income considerations. For a long time in Hong Kong, education was considered a form of social welfare and a government investment in human resources. Hence, the provision of government resources for education is both essential and desirable, and particularly important in the higher education sector.

However, this thought is not entirely consistent with the historical developments of education in the Chinese culture. In the past, both state and private forces jointly provided education to the people. The general public was taught virtues through the education they received at government-run schools. Si shu (private-run schools) were also common,[2] and provided the public with complementary education opportunities. Apart from teaching virtues, the private-run schools offered different types of education. For instance, the courses they provided ranged from short courses covering basic written characters to long courses covering literature, which prepared students for civil servant examinations. Even before 1949, China was home to many famous private universities. Notable examples include Yincheng University in Beijing (燕京大學), St. John's University in Shanghai (上海聖約翰大學) and the Private University of Nanking in Nanjing (金陵大學).[3] History has clearly shown that education provided by the state alone is inadequate, and that education provided by the private sector is important. Private higher education institutions are currently providing degree programmes. The current dominance of public universities in Hong Kong's higher education sector is a rather recent development in the Chinese education system.

Despite the dominance of public universities, private higher education institutions have been booming. In the international setting, private higher education institutions are most prevalent in North America, as state schools must serve government needs and cannot respond to the specific needs of different sectors.[4] In addition, patronage bodies such as churches apply specific ideologies and directions to their brand of schooling. Furthermore, many wealthy families have decided to set up charitable foundations to establish schools free from state control. These schools collectively provide higher education to meet their own teaching philosophies. For example, in the U.S., some small private colleges with religious backgrounds may require students to enroll in a prescribed number of biblical studies courses, and others may require students to volunteer in their neighbourhoods.

Concerns over the perception of private higher education have arisen. To a large extent, many consider private higher education as 'secular, demand absorbing, vocationally and commercially oriented' (Agarwal, 2008). This perspective is particularly prevalent in societies in which public universities once dominated the higher education sector. Due to this tradition, people tend to have skeptical views of private higher education, and many still believe that education should be a non-profit activity provided by public resources. Considering the Ethiopian experience, Alemu (2010) finds that many people are concerned that profit-driven private higher education programmes may compromise education quality. In short, many studies such as the one by Klees (1999) do not accept the idea that education should be linked with private institutions.

This paper discusses the issue of private higher education in Hong Kong. Business education is used to exemplify the points and arguments developed herein, a justifiable approach gives that Hong Kong is a major international financial centre and business education is in high demand. Of the eight government-funded universities in Hong Kong, seven provide business programmes at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. However, the Hong Kong Government decided not to subsidize taught programmes in business at the postgraduate level a decade ago. Since then, the postgraduate business

programmes offered by government-funded universities have operated on a full-charge basis. In this sense, postgraduate business programmes are indeed run by the private units of public universities. Such business programmes are popular in Hong Kong. Private schools also actively supply business programmes. An understanding of how these programmes operate may help clarify the mechanism of private higher education. This study aims to shed light on the future development of private higher education in Hong Kong.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: next section provides a brief history of the development of private higher education in Hong Kong. This historical account is useful, as the development of private higher education in the past decades provides a background and helps clarify the challenges faced by private higher education institutions. Then, it discusses the operation of the self-financed programmes offered in Hong Kong. Next, it explores the challenges faced by private higher education programmes and their future directions. The final section concludes the paper.

Historical Developments of Private Higher Education in Hong Kong

Hong Kong is unique in the development of its higher education sector. After Hong Kong was established as a British colony, its education system was initially based on the British system. However, at that time, higher education was not a major concern and no government support was provided. The situation changed in 1911 when the British government decided to set up a university it intended to be the Oxbridge of the Far East. This objective was not set purely on academic grounds. Rather, the aim was to educate young Asian men in British traditions so that British influence in the region could be ensured. HKU was therefore established out of colonial interests.[5] Nevertheless, the effects of these colonial interests have decreased over time. After a century of development and excellence, HKU has evolved into an internationally respected research university. The point to note is that higher education in the colonial era was considered a tool to strengthen the imperial rule of the British Empire. It aimed to train an elite social class, and produce capable civil servants who would serve colonial interests and strengthen British influence in the Far East. Private higher education was highly restricted, as evidenced by the deficiencies of the relevant legislature applied to establish universities and colleges. Even today, there remain severe restrictions on the use of the terms 'University' and 'College'.[6] The provision of private higher education in Hong Kong was originally highly restrictive with minimal development.

The situation changed dramatically during the Chinese civil war between 1945 and 1949, and with the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. During this period of political turmoil, many Chinese people flooded to Hong Kong to escape the war and social turbulence. The influx of people not only increased Hong Kong's population, but also led to calls for services such as education.

Among the people who came to Hong Kong in the late 1940s and early 1950s were established and respected scholars like Ch'ien Mu (錢穆), Tang Junyi (唐君毅) and Mou

Zongsan (牟宗三). These scholars established schools, and provided higher education to the Chinese people who came to Hong Kong in addition to local young people. A large number of private post-secondary colleges began to emerge. For example, New Asia College was founded in 1949, Chung Chi College in 1951 and United College in 1956.[7] The former Chu Hai University in Guangzhou moved to Hong Kong and renamed itself as Chu Hai College. Other post-secondary colleges such as Baptist College (1956), Lingnan College (1967) and Shue Yan College (1971) were also founded.[8]

Other less prominent post-secondary colleges such as Hong Kong Buddhist College (1969) and the Hang Seng School of Commerce (1981) were also founded. The idea of setting up private higher education institutions in Hong Kong was nothing new. However, the majority of the programmes offered by the private higher education institutions were conducted in Chinese and not English, which was the official language in Hong Kong.

As explained previously, the Hong Kong Government was not supportive of private higher education. Private post-secondary institutions could not use the name 'university', and the Government did not recognize the qualifications they conferred. The Government was also concerned about the institutions' use of Chinese as their medium of instruction. Government support for private higher education was virtually zero at the time. Although these private higher education institutions produced the human resources required to meet society's needs, they operated in a period of financial hardship and difficulties.

The situation changed dramatically when some of the institutions decided to accept government subsidies and offer government-subvented programmes. Higher education initially followed the British model, with a three-year university curriculum being the norm. However, many private higher education institutions operated according to the traditional Chinese system of a four-year university curriculum. The acceptance of government subventions also implied the need to change the four-year curriculum over to the British system of a three-year university curriculum, and to follow government rules and regulations. The institutions receiving government subsidies became public institutions and lost the independence of their operations.

The entire private higher education landscape changed when the first Fulton Report was published in 1961, recommending the establishment of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. New Asia College, Chung Chi College and United College subsequently became member colleges of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Baptist College and Lingnan College have received government funding ever since. Only Shue Yan College and Chu Hai College continued as independent private higher education institutions, and were the major players left in the private higher education sector.

Based on the preceding discussion, it is important to note that private higher education in Hong Kong actually began to grow in the early 1950s. The advent of a

diversified higher education sector in the 1950s alerted the Government, which began to regulate private higher education by providing financial resources and thereby directing institutions to follow its roadmaps. Needless to say, private higher education is not on the radar of government policies. The recent wave of privatization in higher education is a global trend, and the Hong Kong Government has responded by encouraging the development of private higher education.[9]

Self-Financed Higher Education Programmes in Hong Kong

As mentioned in Section II, the Government has influenced higher education institutions through subventions. This has given private higher education institutions little room to develop, as it prevents them from competing with public universities over financial resources and student intake quality. However, developments in three major areas, including the lower proportion of government subventions in relation to the total incomes of public universities, international competition and the advent of new educational qualifications, have triggered a new wave of private higher education development in Hong Kong.

The first area worth noting is the decline in the proportion of government funding provided to public universities. This is by far the most important factor influencing the development of private higher education, particularly in business programmes. The Hong Kong Government once subsidized public universities that offered postgraduate programmes in business. Because of this government subsidy, postgraduate business courses charged tuition fees that were similar to those of Government-funded undergraduate programmes. The amount was around HK$42,100 (US$5,400) per year, far below the international standards for similar programmes. The Government later decided that because students in postgraduate business programmes had better financial backgrounds and received additional benefits from these programmes, they should be charged the full cost instead. In view of this big change, local public universities began to collect different tuition fees for the postgraduate business programmes. The programmes offered are known locally as 'self-financed' programmes, and their fees vary by programme and university. Nevertheless, a price tag of over HK$200,000 (around US$26,000) is not uncommon.

From this perspective, self-financed programmes are actually programmes offered by private units of public universities. Operating in a full cost-recovery mode, self-financed programmes reflect the full cost of higher education. Students did not support the initiative at first. They argued that because students enrolled in the self-financed programmes helped to improve the human capital of Hong Kong, the Government should provide the necessary funding. Nevertheless, the resulting developments suggest that the general public began to accept the concept of self-financed higher education programmes. This was a major breakthrough, as the idea of charging the full cost of higher education to students was not easy to accept. The market began to accept this change and help promote the idea of private higher education.

The second major area of change is international competition. International competition has several dimensions, one of which is the exercise of international rankings. Many international media have published school rankings based on prescribed methodologies, in which the internationalization of the student body is an important factor. To survive in the ranking game, public universities must diversify their student intakes and strive to enroll more international students. Accepting more international students in government-subvented programmes raises the issue of subsidizing overseas students. Local students complain about being deprived of their opportunities to enter into these programmes. Hence, taking more international students at the undergraduate level is not feasible. However, self-financed postgraduate programmes do not need to operate according to government directions. Unlike government-funded programmes, self-financed postgraduate programmes have no specific quota set aside for local students, and can accept any number of international students as desired. To the public universities, self-financed postgraduate programmes are not only new revenue sources, but also vital paths toward international competition and academic excellence. Table 2 shows the student headcounts of HKU's government-funded and self-financed programmes. Although the growth rates of the government-funded undergraduate programmes decrease, so do the number of self-financed undergraduate places. On the contrary, the self-financed postgraduate programmes exhibit considerable growth. As a result, more self-financed programmes develop and become the major source of postgraduate student intakes. This in turn helps to promote the idea of private higher education.

Table 2: Student Headcount of The University of Hong Kong's Government-Funded and Self-Finance Programmes across Academic Years 2009-2010 to 2012-2013

Panel A: Programmes Funded by the Government					
	Academic Year				Average Growth Rate
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	
Undergraduate Programmes	10,296	10,307	10,619	14,316	—
Growth Rate of UG Students (%)	0.58	0.11	3.03	34.82	8.78
Postgraduate Programmes	3,604	3,609	3,697	3,744	—
Growth Rate of PG Students (%)	4.01	0.14	2.44	1.27	1.95
Panel B: Self-Financed Programmes					
	Academic Year				Average Growth Rate
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	
Undergraduate Programmes	1,293	948	871	911	—
Growth Rate of UG Students (%)	-25.04	-26.68	-8.12	4.59	-14.75
Postgraduate Programmes	6,946	7,396	7,846	8,034	—
Growth Rate of PG Students (%)	11.58	6.48	6.08	2.40	6.59

International competitions accompany the offshore programmes offered by overseas universities. As mentioned earlier, the Government once subsidized postgraduate business programmes. One direct effect of government subsidy is that the programme sizes are limited due to government-determined quotas. When the supply cannot meet the demand, many overseas universities offer offshore programmes in Hong Kong. In response, local public universities address the challenges involved in offering competing self-financed programmes. In turn, the society begins to accept private higher education.

The third area that promotes public higher education is the advent of new educational qualifications, or associate degrees. Associate degrees used to declare educational qualifications as conferred by two-year community colleges in North America. In the early 2000s, the Hong Kong Government decided to upgrade the public's educational qualifications and encouraged both public universities and private higher education institutions to launch associate degree programmes. After students obtain their associate degrees, the majority wish to further their studies and finish their bachelor degrees. Although the demand is great, local public universities cannot meet it due to the government-imposed quotas. Many overseas universities have offered top-up bachelor degree programmes in Hong Kong. These top-up programmes are self-financed at the undergraduate level, and have helped the society come to accept private higher education. From this perspective, private higher education also has its roots in top-up programmes. Some of the local public universities also offer top-up bachelor degree programmes on a self-financed basis. Compared with government-subvented bachelor degree programmes, self-financed bachelor degree programmes usually have higher tuition fees. In this way, private higher education emerges within the government-funded universities. Indeed, self-financed programmes are essentially private higher education programmes operating within the public universities.

This wave of self-financed programme development has met with its share of criticism and drawbacks. Reports have suggested that some public universities must offer self-financed programmes to generate extra income that will compensate for the insufficient government funding. When the general public associates self-financed programmes with revenue earnings, it comes to doubt the quality of the education provided. This perception is consistent with the findings of Agarwal (2008). In other words, the offering of self-financed programmes leads to questions of quality control.[10] When self-financed postgraduate programmes become cash cows for some universities, their education quality becomes suspect.

Discussion

A comparison of the developments of self-financed programmes in Hong Kong reveals that the concept of private higher education existed long before the establishment of private higher education institutions. Indeed, many public universities offer private higher education. The real issue is whether the term 'private' is mentioned in the process. Private higher education institutions clearly state that they are independent from the Government and that they offer higher education programmes on their own. As discussed in the previous section, public universities also operate self-financed programmes. The Government has recognized the idea of 'privatization within nationalization', but does not seem to consider it a potential problem, as the majority of self-financed programmes are offered at the postgraduate level. Indeed, the Government is more concerned about private higher education at the undergraduate level.

The degree programmes currently offered by independent private higher education institutions must be scrutinized and accredited by The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ). When comparing the development of private higher education after 1949 with the current situation, it becomes clear that the government did not support private higher education in the past. The provision of government subventions to private higher education institutions in the past originated from the intention to regulate the higher education sector, rather than promote private higher education.[11] Hence, the factors mentioned in Section III lead to a boom in private higher education opportunities. Global trends also favour the development of private higher education. Although the environment is now more favourable, certain issues must still be addressed.

The quality of private higher education is the first and foremost concern, and quality assurance must be addressed adequately. The HKCAAVQ is the current statutory quality assurance body that accredits programmes offered by private higher education institutions. It performs the role of gatekeeper and ensures that the degree-granting institutions are of an acceptable quality. Although this is a necessary step in terms of quality control, the quality assurance process must be improved to facilitate the development of private higher education. One oft-mentioned area in need of improvement is the lengthy accreditation process. A typical accreditation process requires substantial preparatory groundwork and involves many administrative hassles. The entire process typically takes nearly one year to finish, not counting the preparatory work. However, the changing external environment of private higher education requires a more proactive approach in the accreditation process. A balance must be struck between quality control and administrative complexity.

Second, the Government has identified education as one of the six industries in which Hong Kong has a niche, and has mentioned plans to develop Hong Kong into an education hub. The opening of more private higher education institutions and plans to invite overseas universities to open offshore campuses in Hong Kong will no doubt place new demands on teaching staff.[12] Hong Kong's competitiveness over attracting the required quality teaching experts is concerning. Nevertheless, the success or niche of the local private higher education institutions relies on the relevance of the education that can be delivered. In other words, private higher education institutions must focus on the areas in which they can excel. If private higher education institutions in Hong Kong were to compete with government-funded universities on the grounds of research

and ranking, the former would not have much of a chance to succeed.

For illustrative purposes, business education is used as an example. There has been strong international competition over recruiting qualified business doctorates. Many new recruits of the private higher education institutions are doctorate graduates from local public universities. Although these young business doctorates are mainly trained to conduct academic research, they have weak connections with the external business sectors. Worse still, not many of the doctorates who graduated from local universities have local backgrounds. Take the business doctoral programmes of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) as an example. Table 3 shows the distribution of non-local candidates in HKUST's business doctoral programmes.

As shown in Table 3, HKUST had 80 PhD candidates in its business doctoral programmes during the 2010-2011 academic year. It is clear that non-local candidates constituted the bulk of the doctoral students. It is logical to suggest that these candidates would have attempted to enter the local academic market, and that many would have gone to private higher education institutions upon graduation. Although being a non-local doctoral graduate does not necessarily imply that the graduate's education lacked local relevance, it presents a genuine concern. The industry has voiced its concern over the lack of local relevance provided by local public universities. Hence, the hiring process of non-local doctoral graduates should focus on the ability to teach, rather than the ability to produce top-tier research outputs. Internally, private higher education institutions should have clear reward system for quality teaching. Also, it should be emphasized that good research is to supplement quality teaching, and research should not come first at the expense of teaching. Private higher education institutions in particular cannot ignore this voice, as their success relies heavily on the quality of the education they deliver.

Table 3: Distribution of Non-Local Candidates in HKUST's Business Doctoral Programmes During the 2011-2012 Academic Year

	Number of Doctoral Candidates	Number of Non-Local Candidates	Percentage of Non-Local Candidates
Accounting	11	11	100
Economics	9	9	100
Finance	17	15	88.24
Information System and Operation Management	18	15	83.33
Marketing	12	12	100
Management	13	13	100

Third, Hong Kong is characterized as an expensive city with large operating costs and high land prices. Compared with overseas universities, Hong Kong universities are small in terms of both scale and space. Even the government-funded universities are limited by the amount of land granted. Compared with public universities, the private higher education institutions do not have enough land resources to develop. Given this important constraint, private higher education institutions cannot be expected to emerge as comprehensive universities. This means that they must specialize in certain areas rather than try to excel in every area. The most obvious areas to be specialized in are likely to be in business and humanities. Because of these specializations, private higher education institutions are likely to excel in liberal studies and in business studies. These can be the areas for the positioning of private higher education institutions.

Fourth, the financial resources of private education institutions cannot compare with those of government-funded universities. If private education institutions were to rely entirely on tuition fees to support their operations, they would not be able to provide adequate resources to students and would find it difficult to retain and recruit qualified teaching staff. Based on overseas experience, the patronage bodies of the private higher education institutions must be financially viable and have strong and steady income flows from endowment resources. This observation is consistent with the results documented by Lee (2009), who examines 766 private colleges and universities in the US and concludes that capitalization rates, capital spending, endowments, tuition subsidies and revenue contributions are important success factors for private higher education institutions. It is recommended that the Government should provide more financial incentives like matching grants for private higher education institutions to build up their endowment funds. Matching grants provide the incentives for private higher education institutions to look for private donations. With strong endowment funds, the private higher education institutions can operate with adequate financial resources.

Fifth, the positioning of private education institutions should be carefully designed. Without proper positioning, these institutions suffer from an absent reputation due to their short histories and a lack of a strong alumni network. All of the best universities in the US are private schools. These top-notch universities are famous and highly respected in the scientific research field. Calls have been made to upgrade the research profiles of private higher education institutions in Hong Kong so that their rankings can be enhanced. Nevertheless, this would force the institutions to play the same ranking games as other public universities. The research emphasis may be a double-edged sword. Although it may raise the academic profile of the private schools, without proper postgraduate research programmes, private schools would need to devote many resources to a game they would probably not win. In other words, private higher education institutions should not position themselves as research intensive institutions, at least for the time being. Private higher education institutions should treat research as essential in improving teaching quality. When the public starts to recognize the philosophies of research activities conducted by private higher education institutions,

the private higher education institutions will be more accepted by the general public.

Conclusions

This paper outlines and critically evaluates the developments of private higher education in Hong Kong. These developments indicate that government support in the form of policy direction is the major factor affecting private higher education outcomes. In turn, government policy constructs some of the limitations and obstacles that confront private higher education. Given the growing importance of private forces in higher education worldwide, the Hong Kong Government should be more proactive in promoting its private higher education sector. For private higher education to be successful, financial resources committed from the governing bodies of the higher education institutions are vital, in addition to policy support from the Government. Calls have been made for the differentiation of public universities and private higher education institutions. Without proper positioning in the higher education sector, private higher education institutions will lose their identities and probably fail.

Notes

1. These figures are taken from various issues of HKU's Quick Stats.
2. In Chinese these are known as '私塾' , which literally refers to private schools.
3. Yincheng University and St. John's University in Shanghai were broken up in the early 1950s. The majority of the Yincheng University faculties were incorporated into Peking University, Tsinghua University and Renmin University, and those of St. John's University were mainly incorporated into the East China Normal University and Fudan University. The Private University of Nanking merged with other institutions in the early 1950s to become Nanjing University.
4. American Council on Education (2004) provides a good summary and discussion of the problems and changes faced by American state universities.
5. Mellor (1992) provides a good account of the political objectives and origins of the founding of HKU. For a simple description of HKU's historical development, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Hong_Kong.
6. The use of the names 'University' (大學) and 'Hok Yuen' (學院) are restricted and regulated by the Post-Secondary Colleges Ordinance, more commonly known as CAP 320 in Hong Kong. Schools are not allowed to use the two terms freely.
7. These three colleges later become the constituent colleges of The Chinese University of Hong Kong.
8. Baptist College, Lingnan College and Shue Yan College, were renamed Baptist University in 1994, Lingnan University in 1999 and Shue Yan University in 2006, respectively.
9. Bray (2002) provides a good account of the recent trends in higher education privatization in Asia. Sivalingam (2006) summarizes higher education privatization in Malaysia. Mok (2003) compares the types of higher education privatization in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.
10. For example, the Hok Yau Club, a Hong Kong-based organization that provides information for further studies, surveyed high school teachers in June 2010 and found that 86% doubted the quality of associate degrees. The Hong Kong media have also covered some negative news related to the revenue earnings of associate degree courses. (For example, see editorials by Wen Wei Po on 9 April 2008 and Mingpao on 22 December 2010).
11. The special role of the government and political forces in shaping higher private education is not restricted to the colonial era of Hong Kong. McLendon, Hearn and Mokher (2009) observe that in the US, political forces play an increasing role in influencing the choice of private higher education through state funding.

12. Lane (2011) provides two good examples of how offshore campuses affect a host country's education system and manpower demand.

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Continuous Professional Development and Lifelong Learning: Needs Assessment and Way Forward for Hong Kong's Business and Industries

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Abstract

This Study aims to assess the needs of Hong Kong's industries and businesses for continuous professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning (LLL) as well as the state of development of organizational learning (OL) in selected industries and businesses. The Study consists of two stages. The qualitative stage adopts a data-driven approach through which the analytical framework is derived from the data collected from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews of employees, employers, relevant officials, and course providers. A total of 133 informants participated in the exercise. The text data is organized with the aid of the NVivo software. The subsequent quantitative stage collects data via a questionnaire survey. A total of 544 completed questionnaires were received.

Results show that industries and businesses in Hong Kong show concern for CPD, and recognize its importance. Government, industry/business sector, and training/education providers have put in effort in setting up a series of mechanisms to support CPD and LLL. Courses that are in high demand -- such as language and management-related topics -- have ample supply. Programmes for the service industry are not in short supply. For more specialized or manufacturing-related courses, the supply tends to be scarce. The importance of non-credit bearing short courses is recognised. All are supportive of Government's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme, as well the Qualifications Framework (QF) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) schemes. Most working individuals are familiar with Continuing Education Fund (CEF) and many have received support from the Fund. Not many companies provide flexible work arrangements for employees undertaking training. There is room for most companies to increase their training resources. Under-staffing is a common problem.

Government is recommended to take the lead in coordinating various stakeholders for CAT. It should further promote QF, and establish mechanisms to enable credit accumulation on a lifelong basis. It should review CEF's policy details, including the range of eligible subjects and the amount of entitlement for each eligible applicant. Employers are recommended to provide flexible working hours for employees pursuing training or further study.

Keywords: continuous professional development, lifelong learning, organizational learning

Introduction

It is generally accepted that in a rapidly changing world individuals and organizations need to constantly acquire new knowledge and skills to remain competent and productive. Lifelong learning (LLL), continuous professional development (CPD), and cultivating organizational learning (OL) have been widely advocated throughout the world (Young 2014; Hong Kong Institute of Engineers 2010; UNESCO 2006; OECD 2010). In Hong Kong, many education and training bodies have been offering such programmes, and the Government has also launched a number of measures -- such as the Continuing Education Fund, the Employees Retraining Board, the Qualifications Framework — to support this important initiative (Lee and Cribbin 2014; University Grants Committee 2010, p. 47).

A number of studies, mostly questionnaire surveys, on the demand of LLL/CPD have been conducted by various organizations (HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education 2012, Committee on Management and Supervisory Training 2011, Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management 2012). These surveys examine the participation rate, the preferred subject areas, the programme mode, and the training budget of companies.

However, there is a lack of more in-depth analysis of the LLL/CPD market in Hong Kong to determine whether or not the needs of individuals and businesses/industries are currently being met, the major barriers to learning, and the difficulties encountered by the providers.

This Study aims to (1) assess the needs of Hong Kong's industries and businesses for continuous professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning (LLL); (2) to review the existing CPD and LLL programmes and schemes, and to identify areas for improvement; (3) to assess the state of development of organizational learning (OL) in Hong Kong companies; and (4) to make recommendations regarding CPD, LLL and OL to the Government, and businesses and industries in Hong Kong.

This Study adopts the "lifelong learning framework" of The Organization for Economic and Co-operation and Development (OECD) that suggests action on five systemic features: (a) improving access, quality and equity; (b) ensuring foundation skills for all; (c) recognising all forms of learning, not just formal courses of study; (d) mobilizing resources, rethinking resource allocation across all sectors, settings and over the life cycle; and (e) ensuring collaboration among a wide range of partners. For the purpose of this study, the working definitions of the key constructs are described as follows: continuous professional development (CPD) is defined as the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of relevant knowledge and skills, and the development of these qualities necessary for the successful carrying out of professional duties throughout one's career (HKIE, 2010). An ILO framework describes CPD programmes as: (a) school-based; (b) participatory; (c) emphasis on practice and content; and (d) continuous and ongoing (ILO, 2012). Lifelong learning (LLL) is defined as all

learning activities, whether formal or informal, continuously undertaken with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence for individuals (UNESCO, 2006). Organizational learning (OL) is defined as the way firms organize knowledge around their activities and within their culture, and expand their capabilities by fostering learning among and improving the skills of the workforce (OECD, 2010). Under OECD's OL framework, organizations should: (a) make sense of and connect to their environment; (b) promote an inquiry climate where organizational members challenge and experiment to improve organizational functioning: (c) provide strategic leadership to learning, instill behaviour and culture where learning is embraced; (d) create continuous learning opportunities, promote collaboration and team learning; and (e) establish systems to capture and share learning.

Methodology

This research is a two-stage study which applies both qualitative and quantitative methods: Phase 1 is the qualitative stage, in which data were collected from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. All text data were content analyzed and then organized via the NVivo software. Phase 2 is the subsequent quantitative stage, in which data were collected from a questionnaire survey. Data from this stage were analyzed using SPSS.

Qualitative Data Collection

In the qualitative stage, informants were asked to provide views relating to various features of CPD, LLL, and OL. Informants came from two categories. Category I — demand-side informants, nominated by institutional members under The Professional Validation Council of Hong Kong Industries (PVCHK), The Professional Validation Centre of Hong Kong Business Sector (PVCBS), and individual members of the CEO Club of Institute for Entrepreneurship (IfE) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). Participants came from different positions/levels[1] and sectors[2]. Category II — supply-side informants, include the Government and public officials with relevant policy or regulatory responsibilities, as well as leading members of educational and/or professional institutes providing CPD and LLL programmes.

A total of 133 informants from 80 selected organizations in the industry/business and education sectors participated in the Study. The 118 informants from the industry/business sector participated in one of the 13 focus group sessions, or one of the five in-depth interviews. A total of 13 training/education organizations[3] were visited by the investigators and conducted in-depth interviews with 15 of their representatives.

Analytical Framework: The qualitative stage followed a data-driven approach — the Grounded Theory[4] — through which an analytical framework was derived from the data received, following content analysis of the transcripts. A schematic tree was drawn up to depict the detailed hierarchy and relations of different themes[5] and categories[6] of views collected as shown in Exhibit 1.

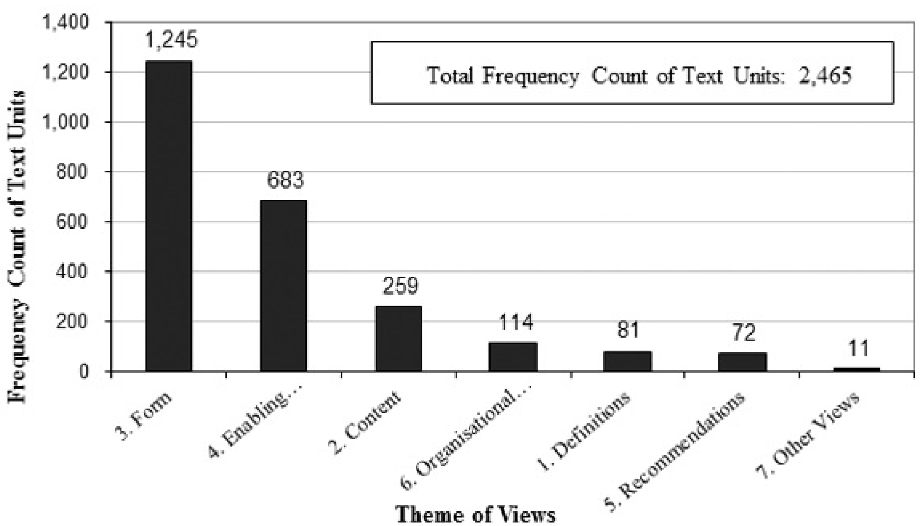
Exhibit 1: Schematic Framework for Analysis of Views Received

1. Definitions	2. Content	3. Form	4. Enabling Practices & Barriers	5. Recommendations	6. Organizational Learning	7. Other Views
1.1 Definition of Continuous Professional Development (CPD)	2.1 General Topics	3.1 Formal (Off-the-job)	4.1 Resources	5.1 General Recommendations	6.1 Formal	7.1 Purpose
1.2 Definition of Lifelong Learning (LLL)	2.2 Management	3.2 Informal (On-the-job)	4.2 Access / Equity	5.2 Policy Recommendations (e.g. government policies)	6.2 Informal	7.2 Other Views
1.3 Definition of Organizational Learning (OL)	2.3 Functional Topics		4.3 Culture			
1.4 Interrelation of CPD,LLL and OL	2.4 Personal Development		4.4 Incentives			
			4.5 Coordination of Stakeholders			

The views expressed in each summary of focus group discussion and interview were organized into "text units". A "text unit" is a phrase, a sentence or a sequence of sentences representing a point made by the informants. Each view expressed in the summaries of focus group discussions was coded based on the established themes and categories. NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software, was employed to organize, analyse and summarise the coded data according to specific categories within the analytical framework. Excerpts of comments representing major views on various aspects were displayed and "salient points" were drawn up to facilitate the identification of key points.

Results: Views collected were grouped under 7 themes and 21 categories, and 70 subcategories. The 7 themes and their associated frequency counts in terms of text units totaling 2,465 are shown in **Exhibit 2**.

Exhibit 2: Seven Key Themes of Views in Descending Order



The frequency counts in terms of "text units" of the top 10 categories of views are shown in **Exhibit 3**. Themes and Categories receiving high frequency counts indicate that ideas under them were put forward many times by informants.

Exhibit 3: Top 10 Categories of Views in Descending Order

Item	Category of Views	Frequency Count of Text Units	Percentage of Total Number of Text Units
1	3.1 Form - **Formal (Off-the-job)**	1,028	41.7%
2	4.1 Enabling Practices & Barriers - **Resources**	280	11.4%
3	3.2 Form - **Informal (On-the-job)**	217	8.8%
4	4.4 Enabling Practices & Barriers - **Incentives**	183	7.4%
5	2.3 Content - **Functional Topics**	121	4.9%
6	4.2 Enabling Practices & Barriers - **Access or Equity**	108	4.4%
7	4.3 Enabling Practices & Barriers - **Culture**	99	4.0%
8	6.1 Organisational Learning - **Formal**	85	3.4%
9	2.2 Content - **Management**	79	3.2%
10	2.1 Content - **General Topics**	61	2.1%

As shown in **Exhibit 3**, issues that came up most during the focus group and in-depth interview discussions were related to off-the-job training — attending courses organized by providers external to the company. Issues associated with resources devoted to the promotion of LLL/CPD were the second most discussed topic. Issues related to on-the-job training, the content of training programmes, organizational culture for LLL/CPD, and Organization Learning were also extensively discussed.

Quantitative Data Collection

In the quantitative stage of the Study, the design of the questionnaire was based on the findings from the qualitative stage. The questionnaire focused on the needs for future CPD and LLL identified by the informants of the qualitative stage. Respondents were selected from the participating organizations under PVCHK, PVCBS, and individual members of the CEO Club of PolyU's IfE. A total of 544 completed questionnaires were collected: 348 printed questionnaires, 170 online questionnaires, and 26 returned by emails. Responses to the questionnaire were codified and then analysed with "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences" (SPSS). The profile of the respondents is shown in **Exhibit 4**.

Exhibit 4: Respondent Profile of Questionnaire Survey
(a) Sector

No. of Employed Persons by Industry	Frequency Count	%
(1) Manufacturing	62	11.40
(2) Construction	47	8.64
(3) Import/Export, Wholesale & Retail Trades	121	22.24
(4) Accommodation & Food Services	4	0.74
(5) Transportation & Storage Services, Postal & Courier Services	8	1.47

(6) Information & Communications	15	2.76
(7) Financing & Insurance	66	12.13
(8) Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	37	6.80
(9) Administrative& Support Services	25	4.60
(10) Public Administration	49	9.01
(11) Education	44	8.09
(12) Social & Personal Services	7	1.29
(13) Cultural, Entertainment & Recreational	7	1.29
(14) Others	34	6.25
No Response	18	3.31
Total	**544**	**100.00**

(b) Occupation

No. of Employed Persons by Occupation	Frequency Count	%
(1) Proprietors	29	5.33
(2) Managers & Administrators	157	28.86
(3) Professionals	81	14.89
(4) Technical Workers	36	6.62
(5) Clerical Support Workers	75	13.79
(6) Service Workers & Sales Workers	109	20.04
(7) Craft & Related Workers	2	0.37
(8) Plant & Machine Operators & Assemblers	2	0.37
(9) Elementary Occupations	4	0.74
(10) Others	24	4.41
No Response	25	4.60
Total	**544**	**100.00**

(c) Number of Persons Engaged / Size of Establishment

Size of Establishment (in terms of number of persons engaged)	Frequency Count	%
(1) Less than 10	80	14.71
(2) 10 to 49	117	21.51
(3) 50 to 99	33	6.07
(4) 100 to 499	82	15.07
(5) 500 and above	209	38.42
No Response	23	4.23
Total	**544**	**100.00**

(d) Age Group (years)

(years)	Frequency Count	%
(1) < 20	20	3.68
(2) 20 - 29	131	24.08
(3) 30 - 39	163	29.96
(4) 40 - 49	122	22.43
(5) 50 - 59	79	14.52
(6) 60 or above	7	1.29
No Response	22	4.04
Total	**544**	**100.00**

(e) By Education

No. of Persons Engaged by Education	Frequency Count	%
(1) Junior High	28	5.15
(2) Senior High/Matriculated	120	22.06
(3) Certificate/Diploma	29	5.33
(4) Associate Degree/Higher Diploma/Higher Certificate	61	11.21
(5) Bachelor Degree Holder	190	34.93
(6) Master's and above	96	17.65
No Response	20	3.68
Total	**544**	**100.00**

Results: Responses to the 19 questions in the questionnaire are summarized in **Exhibit 5**.

Exhibit 5: Results of Questionnaire Survey

	Questions	Questionaires Received	<1> Strongly Disagree (%)	<2> Disagree (%)	<3> Neutral (%)	<4> Agree (%)	<5> Strongly Agree (%)	<6> Nil (%)	Average
1	Unable to identify suitable suppliers	544	29 (5.3)	65 (11.9)	229 (42.1)	134 (24.6)	82 (15.1)	5 (0.9)	3.32
2	The course is based on e-learning, I would still apply	544	87 (16.0)	130 (23.9)	152 (27.9)	104 (19.1)	66 (12.1)	5 (0.9)	2.87
3	I wish I can obtain the qualification through CAT	544	12 (2.2)	32 (5.9)	154 (28.3)	182 (33.5)	159 (29.2)	5 (0.9)	3.82
4	I understand the QF scheme	544	82 (15.1)	95 (17.5)	189 (34.7)	114 (21.0)	50 (9.2)	14 (2.6)	2.92
5	Will apply for courses outside QF	544	53 (9.7)	72 (13.2)	208 (38.2)	139 (25.6)	58 (10.7)	14 (2.6)	3.15
6	Will apply those courses at QF Level 4	544	71 (13.1)	82 (15.1)	198 (36.4)	132 (24.3)	46 (8.5)	15 (2.8)	3.00
7	I will get salary increment or advancement after completing QF courses	544	77 (14.2)	74 (13.6)	229 (42.1)	100 (18.4)	47 (8.6)	17 (3.1)	2.94
8	RPL scheme is helpful	544	40 (7.4)	55 (10.1)	225 (41.4)	132 (24.3)	74 (13.6)	18 (3.3)	3.28
9	My organization has provided sufficient resources for me to pursue further study	544	83 (15.3)	79 (14.5)	202 (37.1)	125 (23.0)	40 (7.4)	15 (2.8)	2.92
10	As a result of undertaking further study, I will have career advancement	544	69 (12.7)	114 (21.0)	210 (38.6)	107 (19.7)	29 (5.3)	15 (2.8)	2.84

11	As a result of undertaking further study, I will have salary increment	544	94 (17.3)	114 (21.0)	199 (36.6)	99 (18.2)	30 (5.5)	8 (1.5)	2.73
12	If I pursue further study, my organization would let me have flexible work schedule	544	84 (15.4)	94 (17.3)	180 (33.1)	138 (25.4)	42 (7.7)	6 (1.1)	2.93
13	If I pursue further study, my organization would adjust my workload	544	122 (22.4)	127 (23.3)	173 (31.8)	82 (15.1)	31 (5.7)	9 (1.7)	2.58
14	Without sponsorship or time-off, I still want to study	544	14 (2.6)	44 (8.1)	172 (31.6)	197 (36.2)	108 (19.9)	9 (1.7)	3.64
15	I will study with partial sponsorship	544	10 (1.8)	23 (4.2)	113 (20.8)	238 (43.8)	147 (27.0)	13 (2.4)	3.92
16	I understand the details of the CEF	544	34 (6.3)	70 (12.9)	164 (30.1)	159 (29.2)	108 (19.9)	9 (1.7)	3.44
17	I have received support from CEF	544	175 (32.2)	59 (10.8)	87 (16.0)	77 (14.2)	139 (25.6)	7 (1.3)	2.90
18	I have given up further study as I cannot afford the fees	544	115 (21.1)	74 (13.6)	145 (26.7)	103 (18.9)	99 (18.2)	8 (1.5)	2.99
19	I have given up further study because the teaching medium is English	544	186 (34.2)	89 (16.4)	145 (26.7)	67 (12.3)	48 (8.8)	9 (1.7)	2.44

The results shown in **Exhibit 5** indicate that close to 40% of the respondents had difficulties finding a suitable provider for a course that they wish to enroll. Close to 30% of the respondents would not like to enroll in a purely on-line programme. There is general support for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme, and for the Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) scheme. Only around 30% of the respondents thought that they understood the Qualification Framework (QF) details. Around 36% of the respondents indicated that they would still enroll on a course that is not registered the QF scheme. Around 32% of the respondents indicated that they would enroll in a course at QF Level 4 (below Bachelor's degree level). Regarding employers' support for employees to undertake LLL/CPD, less than 30% of the respondents felt that their organization had provided adequate resources for them, that the company would adjust their workload, and that they would have greater career advancement or salary increments upon completion of programme. Around 33% of the respondents indicated that their company would let them have a more flexible work schedule should they undertake LLL/CPD programmes. However, more than 55% of the respondents indicate that they would still undertake LLL/CPD programmes even without any support from employers. Over 70% indicated that they would study if granted partial subsidies from employers. Close to 40% of the respondents indicated that they understood the details of the Continuing Education Fund Scheme (CEF), and a similar percentage indicated that they had taken advantage of the CEF scheme. Around 37% of the respondents indicated that they did not enroll in a programme because they could not afford the tuition fee. Only around 20% of the respondents indicated that they did not enroll in a programme because the medium of instruction was English.

Discussion

Based on the results of the focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and the questionnaire survey, the following observations are drawn. Views that received relatively high frequency count in terms of number of mentions and/or corroborated by the results of the questionnaire survey are highlighted.

Needs and Demand for CPD, LLL and OL

Industries and businesses in Hong Kong show concerns for Continuous Professional Development, and recognize its importance. However, they do not share the same level of concern for Organizational Learning and employees' needs for Lifelong Learning.

The programmes that are in most demand are language training, communication and interpersonal skills, team building and management-related topics. Programmes related to functional topics, including industry-specific technical knowledge, product knowledge, sales and related regulatory/legal issues, are also in demand. Enterprises involving in manufacturing also require training courses for more specialized technologies for their employees.

Industries and businesses would like training/education providers to offer courses that could cater to their different needs. They also hope that those industry-specific skills can be given academic recognition, made more standardized and systematic, and having a system that can facilitate their employees' professional development. Some informants expressed their concerns that some of the employees might be deprived of the opportunity to study because of their low English proficiency or the lack of formal academic qualifications. Some informants were of the view that programmes offered by the training/education providers are often too theoretical, not necessarily meeting industry's needs, and requiring a long time to complete.

Current State of CPD and LLL

Infrastructure for CPD and LLL

Government, industry/business sector, and training/education providers have put in effort in setting up a series of mechanisms to support Continuous Professional Development and Lifelong Learning. Examples include the Qualifications Framework (QF), Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Continuous Education Fund (CEF). Most universities have a continuing education arm, and industry and business associations also organize training activities on a regular basis.

Supply and Demand

In terms of programme content, those with high demand — such as language and management-related topics — have ample supply, catering for participants' different requirements in terms of formats, durations, and levels. Generally speaking, programmes for the service industry are not in short supply. For more specialized or manufacturing-related courses, the supply tends to be scarce. Some training/education providers have, in the past, tried to offer such programmes, but they often encountered low enrolment, resulting in financial non-viability. As all continuous professional development programmes are run on a self-financing basis, the supply would naturally be short, and unable to meet the needs of some of these enterprises. E-learning is very common, whether it is provided through the company's intranet, or employees enrolling in external e-courses with company's sponsorship. However, as e-learning has its limitations, it is still not that well received.

Short Courses and Informal Learning

In terms of learning mode, the industry/business sector and training/education providers all recognize the importance of non-credit bearing short courses, which are also the most popular form of learning for employees. They would, of course, be even more popular if they can earn academic credits as well. In general, the industry/business sector and the training/education providers are all supportive of Government's Recognition of Prior Learning scheme. Informal learning is extensively practised in most companies, including organizing in-house seminars, workshops, mentoring by experienced staff, visits to related organizations, job rotation, and overseas placements.

Courses Leading to Academic Awards

The Industry/business sector and training/education providers are aware of and supportive of both QF and CAT systems. As conventional academic programmes generally require a long time to complete, it would be most desirable if short courses can be incorporated into the QF framework, and credits earned from these short courses can be accumulated under the CAT system, providing a more flexible study pathway for employees. However, most of the informants are of the opinion that Government's efforts to promote QF and RPL are inadequate. Many employers, employees, and even some training/education providers are not familiar with QF's level designation mechanisms and operational details. Most employers do not specify QF Levels as their recruitment requirement, nor aligned attainment of QF courses with their remuneration or promotion system. Many industries are still not included in the QF system.

Insufficient Support from the Companies

Not many companies provide flexible work arrangements for employees undertaking training or lifelong learning. There is room for most companies to increase their training resources. Under-staffing is a common problem. Some employers are not willing to provide training to their employees for fear of losing them. Training opportunities tend to be less for employees in the retail industry, in supportive roles, and in lower ranks.

Continuing Education Fund (CEF)

Most working individuals are familiar with CEF and many have received support from the Fund. However, the research data shows that there were a good number of cases where individuals had to forgo their plans to pursue further study because they could not afford the tuition fees. It shows that those lower level employees might not be able to afford the tuition fees charged by self-financing institutions in the market place.

Many programmes are not eligible for CEF. The HK$10,000 lifetime limit is hardly enough for an individual who intends to seriously pursue Lifelong Learning.

Organizational Learning

Industry/business sector and training/education providers all recognize the importance of Organizational Learning and Knowledge Management (KM), and agree that they should be pursued actively. However, as of now, very few enterprises are implementing them in a systematic manner.

Recommendations

The Government should take the lead in coordinating various stakeholders for CAT, and communicate with businesses and industries as well as education providers. The Government should further promote QF, and establish mechanisms to further facilitate credit accumulation on a lifelong basis. The Government should also take the lead in including QF levels in all of its recruitment exercises. The Government should review QF's accreditation procedures and the fee-charging system, regularly revise the Specification of Competency Standards, provide incentives to stakeholders, and encourage industry and business associations to align their qualifications with QF. Moreover, the Government should provide funding support for training programmes for selected industries which are considered to be important for Hong Kong's economy, as many such programmes are often not viable on a self-financing basis. The Government should finalize the implementation details for CAT. The Government should review CEF's policy details, including the range of eligible subjects and the amount of entitlement for each eligible applicant.

The industrial/business sector should encourage companies to provide flexible working hours for employees pursuing training/further study, and organize training activities during working hours. More companies should provide financial support to employees pursuing training/further study, and allow them to undertake studies during working hours. Companies should align training or further study (in particular those within QF) with salary increment and promotion. Companies should actively cultivate an internal learning culture. Companies should promote Organizational Learning in a systematic manner. More sectors should consider implementing a licensing system, requiring practitioners to undertake continuous professional training, as part and partial of quality assurance. Companies can consider collaborating with academic institutions to run specialized programmes.

Acknowledgement

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Notes

1. The four position levels of informants are as follows: owners/executives/senior managers, human resources personnel, supervisory staff; and operational staff.
2. The two broad types of sectors were "manufacturing businesses/industries" and "service business/industries", the former included include jewelry, watches, electronics and electrical appliances, mechanical equipment and metals, mould manufacturing, spare parts, plastics, textile, toys, and so on while the latter included finance, trading, retails, business consulting, beauty, property agents, and so on.
3. The training/education organizations were the Education Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, The University of Hong Kong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, City University of Hong Kong, The Open University of Hong Kong, Vocational Training Council, Hong Kong Productivity Council, The Hong Kong Management Association, Continuing Professional Development Alliance, Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management, and Employees Retraining Board.
4. The Grounded Theory is a systematic qualitative research methodology that emphasizes the generation of theory from data during the research process. Data drive the development of the analytical framework and the subsequent analytical process.
5. A "theme" is a distinct topic of interests emerged from the views of the respondents in qualitative analysis.
6. A "category" of views is a group of views under a particular theme sharing some common characteristics.

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The Model of "Government, Schools & Self-financing Institutions Partnership": Successful Experience of Education Bureau in Hong Kong

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to illustrate the successful policy experience of the Education Bureau (EDB) in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) in enhancing the academic qualification of kindergarten teachers and principals in kindergarten education by providing Teacher Development Subsidies (TDS) to eligible applicants to select relevant self-financed teachers and principals training programmes under the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS). In the paper, the genealogy of PEVS is discussed as the policy background for the policy measures of "professional upgrading". The two policy effects: "surge of kindergarten teacher qualification" and "attraction of more people in joining the profession" are discussed, with the model of "Government, Schools & Self-financing Institutions Partnership (GSSIP)". In summary, this article yields three useful policy implications for policy-makers in Government, Schools and Self-financing Institutions in local and overseas contexts. First, the policy-makers in Government could realize that "financial support is the key to upgrade teacher qualification". Second, the policy-makers in Schools could understand that a "strategic staff development plan" is essential to the direction of "qualification upgrade". Third, the policy-makers in Self-financing Institutions could, on one hand, forge closer cooperation with principals and schools, and on the other hand, propose to the Government on "filling-in" the gap of training that the Government might not be in best position to provide.

Keywords: Education Bureau, Government, Hong Kong

Introduction

Policy Background: Genealogy of Professional Upgrading in Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS)

Pre-PEVS Era (Before 2007)

In the 1950s, the requirement of joining the kindergarten profession was not stringent. Some kindergarten teachers did not possess Form 5 qualification *(Grade 11 in* *western education system)* (Figure 1 refers). Along with time, with effect from the 2001/2002 school year, the minimum academic requirement of kindergarten teachers was raised to "5 subjects at grade E or above (including Chinese and English)" in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), as stated in the Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 54/2000 (EDB, 2000).

Figure 1: Academic Qualification of KG teachers and principals in Pre-PEVS Era (Before 2007)

1950s	Some KG teachers did not possess Form 5 qualification
2001/2002	min qualification for KG teachers: 5 passes (Grade E), including both Chi and Eng in HKCEE
Sep, 2003	ED/ EDB requesting all newly appointed KG teachers: possess a Qualified Kindergarten Teacher (QKT)
2003/04 sy	All KGs were required: To employ 100% QKT of the required staff establishment based on a teacher-to-pupil ratio of 1:15
2005/06 sy	All serving KG principals were required to possess the Certificate in Kindergarten Education or its equivalent.

In September 2003, the EDB (formerly known as Education Department) issued Circular No. 28/2003 (EDB, 2003b) requesting all newly appointed kindergarten teachers to possess a Qualified Kindergarten Teacher (QKT) qualification or its equivalent.

Starting from the 2003/04 school year, all kindergartens were required to attain the teacher-to-pupil ratio at 1:15 or lower in order to allow teachers more time to cater for the needs of individual children, as stipulated in EDB Circular No. 26/2003 (EDB, 2003a).

By the end of the 2005/06 school year, all serving kindergarten principals were required to possess the Certificate in Kindergarten Education or its equivalent.

Post-PEVS Era (After 2007)

From 2007/2008 onwards, kindergarten education in Hong Kong has been one of the most heated educational policies since the introduction of the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS). The Government has showed its determination to mark the new milestones in pre-primary education along with its Policy Address and the EDB circulars. In the EDB Circular No.1/2007 (EDB, 2007) (Figure 2 refers), the EDB has announced a major financial commitment for all children of the relevant age to receive affordable and quality pre-primary education by:

(a) implementing a PEVS from the 2007/08 school year;

(b) providing financial support from the 2007/08 to the 2011/12 school year for ALL KG principals and teachers to upgrade their professional qualifications;

(c) disbursing a one-off School Development Grant to ALL KGs in March 2007 to enrich their teaching and learning resources;

(d) providing a one-off Facilitation Grant for eligible private independent (PI) KGs to meet the necessary legal and accounting/auditing costs incurred in the conversion to non-profit-making (NPM) status by August 2007 in order to join the PEVS; and

(e) subjecting all KGs joining the PEVS to a quality assurance mechanism so that starting from the 2012/13 school year only KGs meeting the prescribed standards might redeem the voucher.

Figure 2: EDB Circular No.1/2007: Post-PEVS Era (After 2007)

1	implementing PEVS from the 2007/08 school year;
2	providing financial support from the 2007/08 to the 2011/12 school year for ALL KG principals and teachers to upgrade their professional qualifications (focus of this paper);
3	disbursing a one-off School Development Grant to ALL KGs to enrich their teaching and learning resources;
4	providing a one-off Facilitation Grant for eligible private independent (PI) KGs in the conversion to non-profit-making (NPM)
5	subjecting all KGs joining the PEVS to a QA mechanism (Quality review)

With the advent of the PEVS from the 2007/08 school year, the EDB provided direct fee subsidy for parents to meet towards school fees for pre-primary education of their children aged above two years and eight months, on the basis of the following principles:

(a) subject to paragraph 6 below, only local non-profit-making (NPM) kindergartens (KG) or relevant classes in local NPM KG-cum-child care centers are eligible to redeem the voucher under the PEVS;

(b) the voucher would only be redeemed by KGs charging a school fee not exceeding HK$24,000 per student per annum (pspa) for a half-day place and not exceeding HK$48,000 pspa for a whole-day place;

(c) the KGs should, at the same time, meet all stipulated disclosure and transparency requirements;

(d) all KGs are subject to a quality assurance mechanism so that starting from the 2012/13 school year only KGs meeting prescribed standards may redeem the voucher; and

(e) all KGs should enjoy full discretion in determining teacher salaries, subject to market forces.

Along the policy-line of PEVS, the EDB also uplifted kindergarten teachers' qualifications by providing financial support for serving principals and teachers of all kindergartens for professional upgrading between the 2007/08 and 2011/12 school years. The policy targets included (Figure 3 refers):

(a) all serving KG teachers would obtain the Certificate in Early Childhood Education qualification by the end of the 2011/12 school year;

(b) all new principals from the 2009/10 school year would have a degree in early childhood education (BEd(ECE)), one-year post-qualification experience and would have completed a certification course before, or exceptionally within the first year of, their appointment ; and

(c) serving principals and aspiring principals were expected to complete the certification course by the end of the 2011/12 school year, and all serving principals are encouraged to obtain the BEd(ECE) qualifications.

Figure 3: Policy Targets: Professional Upgrading between the 2007/08 and 2011/12 school years

1	all serving KG teachers would obtain: the Certificate in Early Childhood Education [C(ECE)] qualification by the end of the 2011/12 school year;
2	all new principals from the 2009/10 school year would have: • a degree in early childhood education (BEd(ECE)) • one-year post-qualification experience • and would have completed a certification course before, or exceptionally within the first year of, their appointment; and
3	serving KG principals and aspiring principals were expected to complete the certification course by the end of the 2011/12 school year, and all serving principals are encouraged to obtain the BEd(ECE) qualifications.

Given this genealogy of professional upgrading under the policy background of PEVS, this paper focuses only on the "professional upgrading of principals' and teachers' qualification" rather than the whole PEVS policy. This article highlights the successful policy effects with the model of **Government, Schools & Self-financing Institutions Partnership (GSSIP)**. With GSSIP, two policy effects were observed. First, there was a drastic lifting up of kindergarten teachers in holding or pursuing Certificate in Early Childhood Education [C (ECE)] from 48.5% in 2008/2009 school year to 87.6% in 2013/2014 school year. Second, the booming of KG market indirectly attracted more young people to join the profession. It increased from 9866 people in 2008/2009 school year to 12384 people in 2013/14 school year. In the following paragraphs, the detailed operation of GSSIP would be discussed.

Analytical Foundations: Government, Schools & Self-financing Institutions Partnership (GSSIP)

Government: Teacher Development Subsidy

Under the model of GSSIP (Figure 4 refers), the role of Government is to give financial support in upgrading the serving kindergarten principals and teachers. The theoretical perspective, or the rationale behind, is similar to that of "school voucher", whereas "money follows the service users". This "financing mode" can be traced back to school voucher programmes "Town Tuitioning programmes" in Vermont in 1869 and in Maine 1873 in the United States. In addition, vouchers also represent "government-financed entitlements or certificates that can be used for a specific purpose such as the provision of health or housing for targeted populations (Steuerle, 2000).

Figure 4: The Model of Government, Schools & Self-financing Institutions Partnership (GSSIP)

Under the PEVS, subsidies are given directly to parents, instead of schools, for tuition. This PEVS has been perceived as one great leap in enhancing subsidy for the Hong Kong parents, especially the needy parents. Currie (2001) also argued investments for the poor are justified by their effect on equality equity and lifetime opportunities while compensating the market failure.

For the modern concept of vouchers, F. A. Hayek (1960) & Milton Friedman (1957, 1980) stated that competition would improve schools and cost efficiency. They believed the power of market in natural selection. In 1996, Milton and Rose Friedman founded "The non-profit making Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice", which promotes universal school vouchers and other forms of school choice. Moreover, in Milwaukee (Witte, 2000), Cleveland (Metcalf, Legan, Paul, & Boone, 2004) and Washington DC (Wolf, Gutmann, Eissa & Silverberg, 2005) in United States, educational vouchers have also been available to students from low-income families.

Proponents of "school vouchers" assert that school vouchers promote free market competition among schools. Parents and students are allowed to "vote with their feet" under the terrain of "market sphere". As such, under-performed schools would strive hard to improve their service in order to "survive and be accountable to the public" (Education Commission, 2010). Through the mechanism of the survival of the fittest, schools better serve families and the community (Ball, 2007).

In Hong Kong, some policy implications of the PEVS such as the "general review" (Education Commission, 2010), "public view of PEVS" (Li, Wong & Wang, 2008), "quality implications" (Rao & Li, 2009), "historical implications of PEVS" (Yuen, 2007), "parental influence under PEVS" (Fung, 2007), "school transparency" (Fung & Lam, 2012) were studied. However, the policy implications of the PEVS on "Principals' and Teachers' qualifications" are not under-explored.

Regarding the funding mode of PEVS for kindergarten principals and teachers, Hong Kong Government believed that serving kindergarten principals and teachers in Hong Kong might have different preferences in "what programme to study", "what institutions to study" and "when to study". Hence, the EDB decided to financially support kindergarten teachers and principals to study "Approved Self-financing Programmes" offered by Self-financing Institutions via the means of Teacher Development Subsidy (TDS). In this connection, kindergarten teachers and principals would have the flexibility in utilizing the TDS in upgrading their qualification by discussing within their own schools on "what programme to study", "what institutions to study" and "when to study" as they are "service users with money following them/schools".

Under the PEVS, there were two types of TDS for two types of schools-- PEVS-schools and non-PEVS schools. Serving kindergarten principals and full-time teachers teaching full curriculum of nursery (K1), lower (K2) and/or upper classes (K3) in PEVS KGs were required to obtain the Certificate in Early Childhood Education (C (ECE))

qualification by the end of the 2011/12 school year. Full-time teachers include teachers appointed by kindergartens teaching morning session and/or afternoon session and/or both morning and afternoon sessions. However, supply teachers and temporary teachers were not eligible for course fee reimbursement. The detailed arrangement of disbursing TDS to two types of schools, the PEVS-school and non-PEVS, are discussed below.

For PEVS- KGs

According to Appendix II, EDBC 1/2007 (EDB, 2007), the PEVS provided fee subsidy for parents of children attending nursery (K1), lower (K2) and upper (K3) classes in PEVS-KG. It also subsidized teachers' professional development from the 2007/08 school year. A four-year funding for teacher professional was listed below in Figure 5:

Figure 5: Subsidy for Staff Professional Development per pupil per annum (HK$) from 2007/2008 to 2011/2011

School Year	Subsidy for Staff Professional Development per pupil per annum (HK$)
2007/2008	3,000
2008/2009	3,000
2009/2010	2,000
2010/2011	2,000

PEVS-KGs were expected to spend the designated part of the voucher on professional upgrading of teachers and principals in the following three areas in order of priority:

(a) course fee reimbursement;

(b) appointment of supply teachers to substitute for teachers on training course; and/or

(c) provision of school-based professional development programmes.

Yet, the unspent balance as at end of the 2011/12 school year would be clawed back by EDB.

For non-PEVS KGs

To encourage principals and teachers of Private Independent (PI) or NPM KGs not under the PEVS to upgrade themselves, they were entitled to claim reimbursement from EDB for up to 50% of the fees for an approved C(ECE) or degree course in ECE and a certification course for principals, capped at $60,000.

With the strong financial support from the EDB to teachers and principals via TDS, there was an immediate demand for teachers and principals to study approved courses for qualification upgrade. Most importantly, there were arrays of programmes for them to select from among self-financed institutions.

School: Selection by Principals and Teachers

To order to follow the EDB's policy in utilizing the TDS, principals had to draw up a Teacher Development Plan (TDP) for their projection of priority as well as the deployment plan in upgrading their professional qualification. KGs were expected to spend the designated part of the voucher on professional upgrading of teachers and principals in the following three areas in order of priority:

(a) course fee reimbursement;

(b) appointment of supply teachers to substitute for teachers on training course; and/or

(c) provision of school-based professional development programmes.

Eligible principals and teachers were given a list of approved courses as shown below. Principals or teachers could complete the relevant courses on or before 31 August 2014 and apply for course fee reimbursement (CFR). In addition, the School could utilize the TDS to appoint supply teachers to substitute for teachers on training courses and to provide some school-based professional development programmes for their professional upgrading.

In this regard, there was an immediate demand and trend of upgrading principals' and teachers' qualification:

- For Principals (Figure 6 refers):
  - ➢ from "Non Principal Certification Training" to "Principal Certification Training"
  - ➢ from "Bachelor of Education Level (BEd)" to "Master of Education (MEd)"
  - ➢ from "Higher Diploma Level (HD)" to "Bachelor of Education level (BEd)"

Figure 6: Upgrading of Principals' Qualification

From	To
Principal Certification Training	Principal Certification Training
Bachelor of Education Level (BEd)	Master of Education (MEd)
Higher Diploma Level (HD)	Bachelor of Education Level (BEd)

- For Teachers (Figure 7 refers):
  - ➢ from "Non Principal Certification Training" to "Principal Certification Training"
  - ➢ from "Higher Diploma Level (HD)" to "Bachelor of Education level (BEd)"
  - ➢ from "Qualified Kindergarten Teacher" to "Higher Diploma Level (HD)"
  - ➢ from "5 passes in HKCEE (including Chinese & English)" to "Higher Diploma Level (HD)"

Figure 7: Upgrading of Teachers' Qualification

From	To
Principal Certification Training	Principal Certification Training
Higher Diploma Level (HD)	Bachelor of Education level (BEd)
QKT	Higher Diploma Level (HD)
5 passes in HKCEE (including Chinese & English)	Higher Diploma Level (HD)

Self-financing Institutions: Array of Self-financing Programmes

With the strong financial support, the TDS from EDB, eligible principals and teachers could select their preferred self-financed programmes out of 30 to upgrade their academic qualification as detailed below:

(1) 13 Pre-service Training Course on Early Childhood Education, including

- 9 Diploma/ Certificate Courses
- 3 Degree Courses
- 1 Postgraduate Diploma Course

(2) 15 In-service Training Course on Early Childhood Education, including

- 6 Diploma/ Certificate Courses
- 5 Degree Courses
- 4 Postgraduate Diploma Course

(3) 2 Certification Courses for Kindergarten Principals

For the above programmes, they are provided in the self-financed mode by the following course providers as shown in Figure 8:

1. The Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Shatin)
2. The Hong Kong Institute of Education
3. School of Continuing Education, Hong Kong Baptist University
4. Open University of Hong Kong
5. Li Ka Shing Institute of Professional and Continuing Education, OUHK
6. Yew Chung Community College
7. The University of Hong Kong
8. The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Figure 8: Number of Approved Programmes Offered by Various Institutions

Institutions	No of Approved Programmes
The Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (Shatin)	3
The Hong Kong Institute of Education	9
School of Continuing Education, Hong Kong Baptist University	8
Open University of Hong Kong	5
Li Ka Shing Institute of Professional and Continuing Education, OUHK	2
Yew Chung Community College	1
The University of Hong Kong	1
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	1
	30

With such a comprehensive array of self-financed programmes, principals and teachers could select their own programmes at their preferred institutions with their professional discretion. Upon successful completion of the whole course, they may submit application for reimbursement. Yet, the KGs should remind and ensure that applicants have not obtained any other publicly-funded financial assistance for the same course, modules or units of studies, to avoid double benefits.

The Policy Effects of Qualification Upgrade

With the implementation of PEVS in the 2007/08 school year, the teacher qualification requirements were significantly improved, as listed below in Figure 9:

Figure 9: Percentage of Trained Teachers in Local Kindergartens with C(ECE)(3) or Equivalent Training

	School/Academic year		
	2008/09	**2012/13**	**2013/14**
No. of Kindergarten Teachers	**9,866**	11,817	**12,384**
Percentage of Trained Teachers in Local Kindergartens			
● With C(ECE) or Equivalent Training ● (or above)	**48.5%**	4.8%	**87.6%**
● With QKT or Equivalent Training	47.6%	10.8%	7.6%
● With QAKT Training	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%
● *Total*	*96.3%*	*95.7%*	*95.3%*

There were two significant policy effects. First, it was observed that there was a drastic lifting up [87.6 - 48.5= **39.1%**] of KG teachers from C(ECE) or Equivalent Training (or above). It lifted from 48.5% in 2008/2009 [1] school year to 87.6% in 2013/14 school year. Second, the booming of KG market indirectly attracted more young people [12384 - 9866 = **2518**] to join the profession. It increased from 9866 people in 2008/2009 school year to 12384 people in 2013/14 school year.

Limitation

Before the elaboration of the discussion, the major limitation of the study has to be highlighted---measurement of "success". The successful drastic lifting up [**39.1%**] of KG teachers from C(ECE) or Equivalent Training (or above) as well as the attraction of more young people [**2518**] to join the profession are measured only in terms of the numbers of teachers taken or taking the approved programmes. This is indeed due to the lack of "access right to research site/relevant institutions" to gauge the "outcome indicator measurement" such as the "participants' satisfaction" and "feedback from schools". This lack of "access right" is attributed to two factors — "data confidentiality" and "institutional competition".

First, the "data confidentiality" is actually a great issue. "Participants' satisfaction" and "feedback from school such as exit survey" are sensitive and confidential data for each institution. This type of data will usually be destroyed even after the discussion of the internal programme boards within the institution. So, only the Government might have the access right to such type of data of all institutions. But despite so, the Government usually respects institutional autonomy when requesting such sensitive data and would not publicize it to the public.

Second, the institutional competition--- provision of these teaching and principal training programmes among eight institutions are basically "market-driven" and "competition seems to be unavoidable". As such, the access of such data becomes very sensitive and restricted to academics who would like to collect relevant data among the eight institutions, no matter which institution he or she is serving. For example, there might be a "perceived conflict of interests" if one researcher in Institution A wants to measure the relevant data in the eight institutions. Hence, access to "outcome indicators" is not feasible to certain extent. Yet, even though the aforesaid limitation prevails, there is still a great room for discussion in view of this successful policy experience.

Discussion: Policy Implication for Policy-makers

This article shows the successful policy experience of EDB in HKSAR in enhancing the academic qualification of kindergarten teachers and principals in kindergarten education by providing TDS under PEVS. Two significant policy effects were observed. First, it was observed that there was a drastic lifting up [39.1%] of KG teachers from C(ECE) or Equivalent Training (or above). Second, the booming of KG market indirectly attracted more young people [2518] to join the profession.

The above two policy effects in the surge of kindergarten teacher qualification were attributed to the model of "Government, Schools & Self-financing Institutions Partnership (GSSIP)". In this connection, GSSIP has been proven as an effective means to achieve policy goals. It also yields three major policy implications for policy-makers in Government, Schools and Self-financing Institutions in local and overseas contexts.

Policy-makers in Government

First, the policy-makers in Government have to realize that "financial support is the key to upgrade teacher qualification". If the Government just sets out the policy targets without any concrete financial support to teachers, these types of policy targets would be hard to achieve. This is because teachers are ready and willing to spend their valuable time to continue their studies after a whole day of hard work. As reflected from personal university teaching experience, teachers have to rush back to university lecture halls for lessons with fatigued bodies, not to mention those who have no time for dinner before classes.

In this article, it has been shown very clearly that the two policy effects in the surge of kindergarten teacher qualification would not have been actualized without the setting up of TDS. In the absence of TDS, Self-financing Institutions would lack incentives to launch relevant Self-financing Programmes as the number of student enrollment is unknown and unpredictable.

In addition, policy-makers in Government could stipulate the framework and specification of the Self-financing Programmes. Quality assurance shall definitely be in place to ensure there is justified use of public money. Policy-makers in Government could set up the objective performance indicators for the Self-financing Institutions to comply with. This outcome-based steering-at-direction approach would assure the necessary quality expected by the Government, but at the same time, allow multiple

approaches to deliver course content in a pluralistic manner with institutional autonomy.

Moreover, policy-makers could have a regular "dialogue platform" with Self-financing Institutions to explore the feasibility of increasing the Government funding to achieve certain policy targets. The traditional top-down bureaucrat-led proposal model can be supplemented with the bottom-up institution-led proposal, which might bring more benefits than harm in policy formulation.

Policy-makers in School

Secondly, the policy-makers in school, namely principals, could understand that a "strategic staff development plan" is essential to the direction of qualification upgrade. Principals are figureheads of schools. They are in best position to formulate a strategy plan on "when, for whom, to study what". Principals could make a well-balance on structural programmes such as MEd as well as specific Professional Development Programmes (PDP) for their teachers to study. Each school, especially kindergarten, is recommended to set up a team called "Staff Development Team (SDT)". The SDT should assist the principal to solicit the needs of the teachers by gauging their views on "what to study", rather than "filling in the 3 School Development Days" by "contracting out" the School Development Days to university professionals with zero concern for their suitability.

In view of the strong flexibility and market sense of Self-financing Institutions, schools can let the Self-financing Institutions know their needs for professional training. To quote a concrete example, my institution gave training to a group of 40 experienced kindergarten principals on a self-financed basis on "Advanced Crisis Management Skills". The well-received feedback shed the light on the uniqueness of Self-financing Institutions in acceding to market needs.

Policy-makers in Self-financing Institutions

Thirdly, the policy-makers in Self-financing Institutions should forge more strategic partnership with their strategic partners, the School. The Government-funded Institutions, namely UGC-funded Institutions, need to fulfill the performance indicators of the periodic Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) such as producing quality research output. In this regard, the Self-financing Institutions have more flexibility and a stronger edge in cooperating with schools on "professional-based activities" than "research-based activities". In this connection, the policy-makers in Self-financing Institutions should, on one hand, forge closer cooperation with principals and schools, and on the other hand, propose to the Government on "filling-in" the gap of training that the Government might not be in best position to provide.

Conclusion

To conclude, this article shows that the successful policy experience of EDB, HKSAR in enhancing the academic qualification of kindergarten teachers and principals in kindergarten education was indeed attributed to model of "Government, Schools & Self-financing Institutions Partnership (GSSIP)". With the Government (Government) providing the TDS to eligible School applicants (Schools), School applicants could select relevant Self-financing Institutions (Self-financing Institutions) to study appropriate programmes. Given this success implementation of policy targets, the model of "Government, Schools & Self-financing Institutions Partnership (GSSIP)" can serve as an effective means to achieve policy goals.

The evidence summarized in this article presents three useful implications for policy-makers in Government, Schools and Self-financing Institutions in local and overseas context. First, the policy-makers in governmental could realize that "financial support is the key to upgrade teacher qualification". If the Government just sets out the policy targets without any concrete financial support to teachers, these types of policy targets would be hard to achieve.

Second, the policy-makers in schools, namely principals, could understand that a "strategic school staff development plan" is essential to the direction of qualification upgrade". Principals are figureheads of schools. They are in the best position to formulate a strategy plan on "when, for whom, to study what". Each school, especially kindergarten, is recommended to set up a team called "Staff Development Team (SDT)". The SDT should assist the principal to solicit the needs of the teachers by gauging their views on "what to study", rather than "filling in the 3 School Development Days".

Third, the policy-makers in Self-financing Institutions could forge more strategic partnership with their strategic partners, the Schools. The Government-funded Institutions, namely UGC-funded Institutions, need to fulfill the performance indicators of the periodic Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) such as producing quality research output. In this regard, the Self-financing Institutions have more flexibility and a stronger edge in cooperating with schools on "professional-based activities" than "research-based activities".

Notes

1. Due to the lack of data on "No. of Kindergarten Teachers" and Percentage of Trained Teachers in Local Kindergartens with C(ECE) or Equivalent Training (or above) in 2006/07 school year in the EDB website, the comparison has to be taken between "2008/2009 school year" and "2013/14 school year"

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Students' Perception of Effective Part-time Lecturers

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Abstract

Recruiting part-time lecturers (PTLs) has been a common strategy adopted by universities to cut personnel expenses; more commonly by self-financing institutions which are highly sensitive to financial viability. Students' perceptions of ideal PTLs' characteristics differ from those of school administrators and researchers. The present study surveyed 225 students from various business courses of a Hong Kong self-financing institute. Students were asked to rate how the statements in a 31-item list compare to the traits or behaviour of an effective PTL in their minds. The result identifies that good presentation skills, good subject-related knowledge and good language skills are what students perceive to be preferable traits. The study also discovers a range of behaviour of PTLs which students appreciate. Based on the findings and implications of this study, recommendations are made for policy makers, university administrators and faculty members for improvement of teaching and learning quality.

Keywords: student perception, commercializing higher education, effective teacher, part-time lecturers, self-financing institute

Introduction

Among all the strategies which universities have used to cut personnel expenses, recruiting more part-time lecturers (PTLs) has been a popular strategy being adopted by universities all over the world. Keels (2005) suggests that shifting economic conditions in the academic institutions accounts for the increasing number of graduates from graduate schools teaching in part-time or adjunct roles rather than full-time tenure-track positions. A report from Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 2005) in the United States also suggests that public colleges and universities are responding to a decrease in funding by hiring more part-time faculty and teaching or research assistants than full-time faculty. In 2004, PTLs and teaching or research assistants outnumber full-time faculty at public four-year colleges and universities in nine SREB states.

In Hong Kong, universities have employed PTLs for various purposes. PTLs are cast frequently to provide the flexibility in staffing for programmes that have high fluctuation in their enrolments. Universities also use part-time employment to access some lecturers who, because of their other obligations, would not be possible to be hired as a full time lecturer (*Hong Kong Economic Times* 2003/May/15, p.A24). Special

talents may also be recruited on a part-time basis to teach special subjects or for the sharing of their special experiences (*Hong Kong Economic Times* 2004/Apr/23, p.D01).

One main force behind this trend is the increasing need to save money (*Sing Pao*, 2003/Sep/10, p.A12). PTLs are paid only on an hourly basis; money for employee fringe benefits and other personnel expenditure are saved. A common application of this concept is to rehire 'downsized' or retired lecturers on a part-time basis and pay them a reduced salary.

In short, universities in Hong Kong are employing more lecturers on a contract or part-time basis. Financial consideration is likely to be the main cause for this commonly observed practice in higher education. This is even more a case for the self-financing institutions which are even more sensitive to the 'bottom line'. Thus, accommodating PTLs is becoming a more and more important component of the institutions. Hence, it would be important to look at what types of PTLs are considered suitable for these self-financing institutions. Besides, it would also be worthwhile to explore what are the selection criteria for these PTLs.

PTLs as Effective Lecturers

For self-financing institutions (SFIs) which have to rely on tuition fees as their predominated source of income, students' perceptions are the most critical element pertinent to attracting and retaining students. Students' perceptions of effective PFLs, nonetheless, are shown to be noticeably different from that of the researchers and administrators.

On one hand, researchers usually would focus on various attributes of PTL that show a correlation with students' performance and academic result (Gappa & Leslie 1993; Jacobs 1998; Fenwick 2003; Sophos 2003; Thorsteinson 2003; Toutkoushian & Bellas 2003). On the other hand, university administrators, usually would assess the effectiveness of PTL via their impact in the operation of the school (Monroe & Denman, 1991).

In contrast, students being one of the most important stakeholders of SFIs, usually would judge PTLs with more emphasis on the PTLs' characteristics. It is revealed that students would focus mostly on their experience from interacting with the PTLs. The following literature review will discover how different students of higher education would look at PTLs. The literature review will also explore and analyse the various factors accounted in judging the effectiveness of a PTL. Finally, the key factors which are adopted by students in their perceptions in identifying an effective PTL will be discussed, which will ultimately serve as the objective of this section in conjunction to the data presented later on in this paper.

PTLs employment status

Sprinkle's (2008) study discovers that students are almost neutral on whether adjunct faculty to be not as effective at teaching course material as professors are. However, Lundy and Warme (1989) find that students are generally unaware of the employment status of instructors and lacked a clear understanding of the nuances of faculty rank. Another study by Bippus et al. (2001) suggests that students are generally unaware of the employment status and rank of their instructors. In fact, they report that students' perception of their teacher's rank is inversely related to their actual rank. Thus, it is unclear to what degree students' perceptions of their teachers are accurately affected by the employment status of their teachers.

Accessibility

Other scholars focus on the differences in availability between PTLs and full-time lecturers (FTLs). 'Availability' can be conceptualized in two dimensions (Bippus et al., 2001). The first dimension, physical accessibility, is defined as the degree to which students view instructors as being physically present and available for outside-of-class interaction. The second dimension, social accessibility, is defined as the degree to which students view instructors as being interested in social or informal interaction with students. The reason why this is considered to be important is students may need to interact with teachers for informal interaction as well as consultation in various issues.

It is generally believed that PTLs are less **physically available** than FTLs. It is due mostly to factors like limited access to office space, computer equipment, and secretarial support on campus, as well as the need of many PTLs to work on multiple campuses. Scarff (2000) suggests that it is more difficult for students to contact the PTLs within the campus. In fact, Lundy and Warme (1989) found that students report a general perception that part-time instructors are unreliable about office hours, and full-time faculty are available on a more regular structured basis. Lundy and Warme (1989) also found that students revealed differences in their perception of the accessibility of part-time and full-time faculty in general, without any reference to a specific instructor.

There is less evidence to suggest differences between PTLs and FTLs in terms of their **social accessibility**. However, it is generally believed that the factors (such as limited office space and limited time) that make the PTL less physically available will also make them less likely to encourage students to interact with them beyond class time. In other words, a PTL is probably less available socially. A research conducted by Bippus et al. (2001), however, suggests rather surprising result: no significant differences between PTLs and FTLs in terms of students' perceptions of their physical and social accessibility.

On the other hand, Wilson, Wood, and Gaff (1974) found that physical accessibility during office hours had little effect on **informal interaction**. Actually, teachers' behaviour in class which encourages such informal interaction had a more significant influence on the amount of informal interaction that takes place between students and teachers. These findings suggest that, other than physical accessibility, instructors' social accessibility exhibits a distinct influence on students' interaction with them. So,

as far as informal interaction is concerned, social accessibility may be more important than physical accessibility.

Ability to Provide Consultation

If students perceive their teachers to be accessible and have the ability to provide students with valuable assistance they need, then students are likely to be motivated to seek out these teachers for assistance. So the question is, *"Do these teachers have the ability to provide consultation to students?"*

Kram (1983) suggests that consultation is usually needed with two main functions: career and psychosocial. Career consultation generally involves assistance in learning the basic skills of organizational life and in preparing for advancement opportunities, whereas psychosocial consultation may include role modelling, counselling, and friendship. Students may seek consultation in a variety of potential concerns regarding coursework, academic programme choices, or simply establishing a sense of belonging in the impersonal environment at many large institutions of higher learning.

Some scholars suggest that PTLs may be less useful to students in two different ways. Firstly, part-time faculty members often lack any protection in job stability (Scarff, 2000; Stephens & Wright, 1999), and hence do not typically have much chance to stay long enough to be socialized by the organizational culture of the school (Roueche, Roueche & Milliron, 1996). Krier and Staples (1993) argue that part-time college teachers tend to be physically isolated from tenured/tenure-track faculty due to the limited or lack of office space offered to them. In fact, most of the PTLs do not have much chance to communicate with students or their colleagues outside the classroom hours. Also, unlike FTLs, PTLs seldom participate actively in the administration of the institutions, and they can express very little about how their working environment should be. These tend to suggest that PTLs will be less useful to students as sources of insider information regarding the operation of the university. Secondly, PTLs are usually not invited to serve on committees or advise students (Monroe & Denman, 1991), and consequently they lack the 'legitimate power' (French & Raven, 1960) of FTLs to help students in a more formal way.

The question is to what degree teachers' employment status may affect students' perception of their teachers' ability to provide consultation. Lundy and Warme (1989) found that students generally perceive part-time instructors to be unknowledgeable about university administrative procedures. As a result, students may perceive FTLs as being more capable to provide valuable consultation because they are more active in the discipline, more experienced, and more connected to the department and college. However, Bippus et al. (2001) reported that students perceived no significant difference between the abilities of PTLs and FTLs in providing consultation in career and course related issues. Actually, students even rated PTLs slightly higher in their abilities to provide psychological consultation. Again, students' view on this issue is not conclusive.

Informal Interaction with Students

Jaeger (2008) suggests that instructor-student interaction leads to positive outcomes, including increased cognitive and affective development, improved academic performance, increased likelihood of persisting, and increased overall satisfaction with the college experience. Hence it is important to ensure students can have the opportunity to establish this kind of informal interaction with their teachers.

However, the most significant difference between the conditions under which tenured/tenure-track and part-time instructors work are in the expectation associated with their appointments and the support they receive from their departments and administration. For example, part-time teachers often face limited support in terms of office space (Stephens & Wright, 1999), secretarial support and computer services (Hickman, 1998) which may make them more difficult to be contacted via telephone or emails. Part-timers also tend to receive low wages and hence they need to work at multiple institutions (Scarff, 2000). These suggest that they may have less opportunity to have informal interaction with their students. The study by Umbach (2008) tends to suggest that PTLs actually have less interaction with students on both course- and non-course related issues. If so, PTLs can contribute less to the students as PTLs generally spend less time on campus and hence have less chance to interact with students.

However, Lundy and Warme (1989) note that students recognize that part-time instructors may compensate for the lack of structured availability on campus by making themselves available in other ways, such as by giving them their home phone numbers or arranging meetings outside the office. With the development of the web-based communication channels like ICQ, Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, it is not surprising to realize that teachers and students establish informal contact outside traditional channels (*Current event*, 2008/Sep/15). Bippus et al (2001) state that no significant difference in students' reported likelihood of pursuing informal contact with PTLs as comparing to their likelihood of pursuing informal contact with FTLs. Therefore, the actual impact of faculty employment status on instructor-student interaction is unclear.

Furthermore, a qualitative study by Cotton and Wilson (2006) investigates student-faculty interaction. Their focus group result indicates that students have minimal contact with faculty outside the classroom, and do not appear to be aware of the importance of interaction with the faculty. This then suggests even if PTLs may actually have less chance to interact with students, students may not view this as a negative factor against PTLs.

Grade Leniency

Cavanaugh (2006) investigates whether the increased use of part-time instructors may result in grade inflation. Using a multiple regression analysis on grades accumulated over a ten years period, Cavanaugh finds that part-time instructors give higher grades to students even after accounting for many alternative explanations for

Grade differences. This kind of grading practices may affect students' preference for PTLs.

Response to Students' Needs

Schuster & Finkelstein (2006) believe that contingent faculty may be more responsive than tenure-track faculty to the needs of diverse student population, especially students who work full-time and attend college part-time.

Teaching Approach

Students' perceptions towards a PTL may be indirectly affected by the teaching approach of the lecturer. Lei (2007) surveyed 400 instructors in two US community colleges and found that PTLs tend to use more lectures, and FTLs tend to use more laboratory teaching, class/discussion/participation, slide/PowerPoint slide presentation, and distance learning. On the other hand, according to the study of Sander et al (2000), university students prefer interactive lectures and group-based activities. This tends to suggest that students may prefer FTLs just because more diversified teaching approaches are more commonly adopted by FTLs.

Hong Kong Students' View on PTLs

Research study related to PTLs of Hong Kong is limited. As the higher educational institutions have shifted more and more towards the self-financing mode, it is logical and predictable to evaluate the behaviour of their PTLs from the point of view of its most important stakeholder — its students. Nevertheless, there have been very few research studies related to PTLs of Hong Kong (Poon, 2008). Besides, there have been even fewer studies on students' view of PTLs (Poon, 2009).

Informal data can be found in the internet and local discussion forums, but they are mostly negative. For example, in the record of a student-staff meeting (University of Hong Kong, 2005), a student complained that: "*The part-time teacher provided very brief and not well-organized notes to students and hence they found it difficult to follow the lectures*". A similar complaint was, "*Due to the copyright problem, the part-time teacher could not provide his PowerPoint file to the students*". These examples point to the fact that students expect the instructor to provide them with "*powerpoint file*" and "*well-organized notes*", and they will be very disappointed if those items are not available. However, very little information on the desirable traits and behaviour of a PTL is available in any kind of media. Therefore, the intention of conducting this study is to add a bit more to this small pool of knowledge.

Methodology

Research questions

The key research questions for this study are:

Research Question One "*What are the preferred traits (Formal qualifications, Social desirableness, and Teaching related competences) of an effective PTL?*"

Research Question Two "*What are the preferred behaviour (Relationship related behaviour and Task related behaviour) of an effective PTL?*"

Research Methods

In this study, quantitative data were collected by survey. The self-administrated questionnaire used was constructed according to the process described in Rememyi et al. (1998). The draft of the questionnaire was designed with reference to basic information collected through literature review and informal survey of the students. The draft questionnaire was then pre-tested in a pilot study, and the result of the test was used to construct the final version.

This study focuses on the self-financing branch of a university in Hong Kong. The topic of interest here is how the students of this institution look at their PTLs. It covers just one organization.

Source of Data

Data were collected via anonymous questionnaires from the students of the self-financing branch of a government funded university. The branch offers programmes at many different levels. The most popular programmes are Diploma programmes, Associate Degree programmes, and Top-up programmes that are equivalent to the last two years of a Bachelor Degree programme. At the time of the study, the student population was about 3500, and nearly 2000 students were studying in business related field.

In the main study, eight groups of students (totalling 343) from different courses of the self-financing branch of the above university were invited to participate in the survey. The courses were all business related. 259 questionnaires (75.5%) were collected from these groups. These returned questionnaires were then scanned for errors. 34 questionnaires were rejected because the respondents showed signs of mechanical answering (for example, selecting choices from only one column); or the respondents did not answer a significant portion of the questions. Finally, 225 questionnaires (92.6%) were accepted after the screening process.

Description of the Research Instruments

The instrument that was used in this study was a questionnaire which asked the students to rate how well 31 traits and behaviours match a PTL whom they considered effective. This list of the traits and behaviour was constructed based on the samples of traits and good behaviour identified by students in a pre-pilot study. The students who attended classes taught by the researcher were asked informally to describe a very good PTL that they had encountered during their years of study. Those terms students used to

describe their good PTL were collated and compiled into a list. Information collected from other publications that describe good teachers (Hong Kong University of Science and technology, 1998; Tam, 1999) was also used to supplement this list. The traits and behaviour in this initial list were compiled into a questionnaire with four parts.

Part A asks students to indicate whether they have ever met an effective PTL during their years of study. This is to obtain data of whether the students' answers to the following parts in this questionnaire are based on their experience or expectation. Part B of the questionnaire asks students to think of an effective PTL when they ranked, in a Likert scale, how close the statements in a 31-item list matched the traits or behaviour of the effective PTL they have in their minds. Part C of the questionnaire asks students to suggest three of the above 31 items that should be used as the selecting criteria in the recruiting process for PTL. This is basically a way to triangulate the results of Part B. Part D of the questionnaire asks students to provide some basic background information of themselves, namely their gender, the years they have studied after secondary five, the mode of study, and the level of their study programmes. The questionnaire was then tested in a pilot study (Poon, 2008).

Presentation of findings

In this section, students' preference for different Traits and Behaviours of a PTL is presented in Exhibit A. The key data presented are the Mean of the rating, and its Standard deviation; the Skewness of the data and the Percentage of students who give a positive rating to that item. The answers for each item are coded in a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 represents *Strongly Agree* and 1 represents *Strongly Disagree*. A mean score of 3 will indicate that, overall, students show no strong preference for this item. The Skewness measurement is used to indicate how one-sided the opinion is. The percentage for positive answer is obtained by adding the total percentages of students who choose either *Strongly Agree* or *Agree* as an answer.

Exhibit A: Traits and Behaviours of an Effective PTL Ranked According to Mean Scores

Traits* / Behaviours	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Skewness	% of positive answer
Good presentation skills	4.43	.755	-1.349	90.2
Use real-life example in teaching	4.32	.638	-.505	91.5
Interesting class	4.29	.752	-.860	86.7
Share experience in studying	4.18	.711	-.650	86.6
Good subject-related knowledge	4.16	.764	-.833	82.7
Provide prompt reply to questions	4.16	.684	-.470	86.2
Give students chance to speak	4.15	.634	-.236	87.1
Spend additional time to help students	4.12	.729	-1.019	86.7
Good language skills	4.09	.802	-.947	84.4
Encourage students to study	3.99	.710	-.283	77.8
Provide opportunity to communicate	3.95	.652	-.822	82.7
Modify course to fit students' needs	3.94	.797	-.857	77.3
Lots of teaching experience	3.90	.831	-.513	72.0

Keep Smiling	3.83	.772	-.060	66.1
Give tips/hint for exam.	3.81	.917	-.428	64.9
High academic qualification	3.77	.745	-.787	70.4
Work experience	3.77	.769	-.411	67.4
High professional qualification	3.73	.722	-.641	68.1
Recognize good performance	3.68	.783	-.372	61.3
Use new approach in teaching	3.66	.805	-.518	61.9
Provide career consulting	3.65	.769	-.157	59.7
Easy pass	3.54	.988	-.055	46.9
Using Cantonese in teaching	3.41	.870	.044	43.5
Good computer skills	3.39	.789	-.309	45.8
Strong research record	3.37	.807	-.292	45.2
Provide psychological consulting	3.36	.858	.044	40.4
High career achievement	3.30	.867	-.247	42.2
Applying IT in teaching	3.25	.752	-.184	37.2
Physical appearance	3.07	.908	-0.70	29.6
Social status	2.88	.802	-.052	20.3

* Items related to Traits are marked with shading.

Students' Preferences related to Traits of a PTL

In terms of **Teaching related Competencies,** 90.2% of the students surveyed agreed (answered either *Strongly Agree* or *Agree*) that *Good presentation skills* fits the description of an effective PTL. The high rating score (4.43 out of 5.00) also indicated that "*good presentation skills*" is a very important factor. The opinion related to *Good presentation skills* tends to be very one-sided, its Skewness: -1.349. (For simplicity, the Skewness will only be used to illustrate some key points in the following discussion). The high importance placed on teaching skills supports the study of Rodger, Murray & Cummings (2007) and they find that teacher's *clarity* affects both learning and motivation. As students' emphasis on teaching skills of their instructors in general is also observed in the studies by other researchers (Miron & Segal, 1978; Sander et al, 2000; Okoye, 2008), this tends to suggest that students had a very high expectation toward the teaching related competencies of their lecturers, regardless if they are FTLs or PTLs.

This emphasis on teaching skills is also supported by the learning tradition of Chinese students. Pratt, Kelly & Wong (1999, p.246) suggest that "... *Chinese students were expected to learn the foundational knowledge in forms that reproduced or closely resembled that knowledge contained in text or delivered by the teacher*". Paine (1990) also suggests that Chinese view the "*teacher as text*", and they expect the teacher to constantly work toward better representations of the content, and toward a "*virtuoso*" performance of that knowledge. Hence teachers must be able to present the idea clearly so students can "*reproduce*" or "*closely resembled*" the materials.

In order to enhance the presentation skills, it is necessary that teachers should have good language skills. 84.4% of the students agree that *good language skills* fits the

description of an effective PTL. This is understandable as universities in Hong Kong adopt English as the medium of instruction. Unfortunately, English is not the native language for a lot of teachers and students, so communication problems are not unusual in classrooms. Hence, students prefer teachers with good language skills.

It is interesting to note that the ability to present something clearly is considered to be more important than fluency of language (mean score: 4.43 vs 4.09). This finding is also in line with the result obtained by Okoye (2008) who finds students rate *Lucid expression of ideas* much higher than *Fluency of speech*. It suggests students realized that being very fluent in one language does not grant one the ability to present well.

A majority of students (82.7%) reported that their effective PTLs have *Good subject related knowledge.* The skewness score (- 0.833) demonstrates that this is a very consistent opinion among the students. The high (4.16) mean score also indicates that this is a very important factor. This can be explained by the fact that Chinese students usually rely on their teachers to transmit knowledge and skills to them (Morris, 1996). Also, Pratt, Kelly & Wong (1999, p.246) reported that, in Hong Kong, "*Effective teachers were to be experts and, therefore, authorities in their discipline"*. Hence, only teachers who are perceived to be with "*good subject related knowledge"* can be trusted to supply "*accurate"* information.

Almost 70% (67.4%) of the surveyed students agreed that *Many years of work experience* is one of the traits of their effective PTLs. The mean score (3.77) also indicated that this factor is of intermediate importance. However, the importance of *Many years of work experience* is considerably lower than that of *Good subject related knowledge*, and this indicates that students do not emphasise from where the instructor acquires his or her knowledge as long as he or she possesses such knowledge. As such, FTLs who enter teaching profession right after graduating from graduate schools can also be accepted by students if they possess *Good subject related knowledge.*

Similarly, 72% of the students agreed that *Many years of teaching experience* is one of the traits of their effective PTLs. However, the ranking score (3.90) is much lower than that of the item *Good presentation skills.* Again, students tend to believe that the good presentation skills is not necessary acquired through the experience of working as a teacher. With proper training, even relatively inexperienced person can be a good instructor. This echoes the suggestion of Powell and Andresen (1985). In discussing the ways of improving teaching skills with the use of humour, they argued that the activity of teaching requires "*a sense of timing and an alertness to the response of the learners"*, and these are skills which can be developed through practice. Similarly, both teachers and professional performers alike should be competent in the use of voice and bodily movements and skills such as these should be part of professional development programmes for both PTLs and FTLs (Murrary and Lawerence, 1980).

In terms of Formal Qualification of a PTL, 70.4% of the surveyed students gave positive answers to the statement with *High Academic Qualification*. Similarly, 68.1%

of the students surveyed agree that the statement with *High Professional Qualification* describes the effective PTL in their mind.

When comparing those two items — *Academic qualification* and *Professional qualification*, we can conclude that more students think that *Academic qualification* is slightly important. The result is indicated by the higher mean score of the *Academic qualification* (3.77 vs. 3.73) as well as the higher percentage (70.4% vs. 68.1%) of students who gave positive answers to the question related to *Higher Academic qualification*.

In terms of **Social Desirableness**, less than half of the students surveyed indicated that *High Career Achievement* (42.2%) or *Strong Research or Publication Records* (45.2%) fits the traits of an effective PTL. The rankings of these factors are also not too high as the mean score are 3.30 and 3.37. This tends to indicate that even a person without high career achievement and a lot of research output can also be rated as an effective PTL by students; fewer students reported that *High Social Status* (20.3%) fits the description of an effective PTL - indicating that this is not an important trait for an effective PTL. The low mean score (2.88%) also supports this point. This result is in line with the findings of Miron and Segal (1978) and Okoyo (2008) which both found that students place little importance on the research and publication achievement of the instructor. This view is highly different from the traditions of the academic arena. Researchers indicated that higher education teachers (mostly FTLs) get prestige and promotion not because of his or her teaching abilities, but usually as a result of research impacts and academic positions of authority (Feldman, 1986).

Only a very small portion (29.6%) of the students surveyed indicated that the description *Good Physical Appearance* matches the traits of their effective PTLs. Also, the mean score of this factor is also relatively low (3.07), indicating that this is a relatively minor factor. This result is very different from that obtained by Felton et al (2004) which shows a strong correlation between physical attractiveness (hotness) of professors and their ratings — suggesting that students are very concerned about the "*sexiness"* of their professors.

It is possible that Chinese students tend to follow the traditional roles and hierarchy of relationship that are very pervasive in social structure of Hong Kong (and traditional Chinese) (Pratt, 1991). Teachers and students follow a hierarchy of place and duty which framed each person's role and relationship, as well as their reactions. Under this framework, students should give teachers their due respect and treat thinking of teachers as sex-objects as highly improper.

Students' Preferences related to Behaviour of a PTL

In this section, the **Relationship Oriented Behaviour** is to be discussed. This behaviour is involved in building a good relationship between students and teachers. Showing friendliness by using humour and smiling; helping students in their career or

personal problems are all the gestures that can improve relationship. Sharing one's own personal experience with students, and paying attention to students' needs, and communicating with students in and out of the class can be signs of being psychologically open to students. They can be considered as indications the teacher is not looking down upon the students - students are "*at par"* with the teacher and they are not being ignored.

Students highly rate factors related to relationship oriented behaviour. *Making the class interesting* by proper use of humour; *Shares his/her past experience in studying* and *Provides prompt reply to questions or e-mail messages*; and *Provide students with opportunity to communicate with lecturers or tutors* are all rated very highly by the students. This finding is in line with the traditional Chinese notion of a teacher. "*Effective teachers are expected to care about students as individuals, to understand their difficulties and to guide them in their learning and personal development"* (Pratt, Kelly & Wong 1999, p.247)

It is noted that students do not rate these items high for pragmatic reasons. They do not emphasise the importance of the instructors providing career and personal consulting assistance. On one hand, this may suggest that students do not expect too much from their PTLs in these areas. Being not physical available all the time, PTLs may be less effective than the more professional student counsellors in satisfying student's needs in these areas. On the other hand, it can also be interpreted as students are concerned more about the attitudes of the PTL. Students value the warmth and friendliness they experience during their interaction with the PTL much more than the actual assistance they can get from the PTL. It should be noted that the above discussion only refers to assistance in issues not related to the course materials. Data from the following section will show that students treasure opportunity in which they can get help in class.

The following paragraphs cover the **Task Oriented Behaviour** of a PTL that is directly related to the task environment of the class. The behaviour affects the teaching process—the approach, the system, the routines and the techniques used. The behaviour may also affect the practical consequence - the student can pass or complete the course. Actually, it is more like the teaching system adopted by the instructor. This system is not necessarily personalized and it can be copied by other instructors, if necessary.

The three items that are rated very highly are related directly to the teaching process. 91.5% of the students agree that their effective PTLs tend to *Apply updated real life examples in teaching.* The most important function of updated real life examples is that they reduce anxiety and empower students (Willett & Singer, 1992). The example links concepts to something that are familiar to students and it helps them in understanding the theories. Research shows that students are more likely to retain the knowledge gained through familiar examples (Muweesi, 2009). Using real life examples also makes the teaching more "*alive"* and "*accessible"* (Hoffmann, n.d.).

About 87% students indicated that the two factors: *Spends additional time after class on helping students, Give students chance to speak and to ask questions in class* match closely to the behaviour of their effective lecturers. It can be observed that both items are linked to the assistance that are related directly to the learning process— students can ask for helps from the PTL, both during and after class, if they need any clarification or explanation. This finding is in line with the traditional expectation of teacher described by Pratt, Kelly & Wong (1999, p.247) "*... effective teachers are often characterized as having a close, protective relationship with students, similar to that of a coach or even a parent"*. Effective teachers should always be there to help the needed students.

77.3% of the students reported that an effective PTL is willing to "*modify course content to suit the needs/interest of students"*. The rating score of 3.94 also indicates that this factor is considered to be quite important by students. This finding is in agreement with the study of Pratt, Kelly & Wong (1999, p.246) in university students of Hong Kong. They find that an effective teacher is expected to "*...have a comprehensive knowledge of their field and be able to adjust that knowledge to the circumstance of teaching"*. Specifically, an effective teacher should "*...be thoroughly prepared and organized for lectures, and able to manipulate the structures of the content to fit the level of their students*." It is expected that the expert (the teacher) should be able to adjust their teaching and the content of the course to fit the students.

It is interesting to find that items that are commonly believed to be important are deemphasized by the students. Behaviour that tends to make the course easier is not commonly observed behaviour of an PTL who is considered as effective: *Gives Tips or hints for examination or test* (3.81); *Gives easy pass* (3.54) and *Conducts class in Cantonese* (3.41) — indicating that the students are not so concerned about passing the course and obtaining the credit that they will accept anything ("*alms"*) from the instructor. On one hand, it could be interpreted as the chance of students who fail a course in the self-financing institution is not very high (usually not more than 10%), and hence students do not worry much about it. On the other hand, it can also be explained as students do not treasure an easy pass. According to Goal Setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2005), they are motivated by a more challenging goal — learning the materials and then attempt passing the course with their own efforts and abilities.

Finally, students do not link their effective PTLs to two items that are emphasized by university administrators: *Uses new teaching approach* (3.66) and *Applies information technology in teaching* (3.25). This is in conflict with the idea of Oblinger (2005) who suggests that students from the "*net generation"* should embrace learning environment that are fully supported by information technology. It is possible that either the instructors in Hong Kong are not as well vested with information technology as their students so they tend to use less information technology in their teaching. Or the students in Hong Kong tend to be more passive, they will wait for an explanation from their professor rather than "*Google"* for an answer.

Summary

A ranked list of the traits and behaviour of an effective PTL is presented in Exhibit A. The top ranking items are those selected by a high percentage of students for being highly associated with an effective PTL. Data from this section can be used to answer **Research Question One** "***What are the preferred traits (Formal qualifications, Social desirableness, and Teaching related competences) of an effective PTL?"*** The following **traits** are indicated by a high percentage of students for being associated with PTLs whom students consider as effective:

! Good Presentation Skills;

! Good Subject-related Knowledge; and

! Good Language Skills

Similarly, data can also be used to answer **Research Question Two** "***What are the preferred behaviour (Relationship related behaviour and Task related behaviour) of an effective PTL?"*** The following types of **behaviour** are indicated by a high percentage of students for being associated with PTLs whom students consider as effective:

! Applying updated real-life example in teaching;

! Make the class interesting;

! Share his/her past experience in studying;

! Provide prompt reply to questions or e-mail messages;

! Give students chance to speak and to ask questions in class;

! Spend additional time after class on helping students;

! Encourage students to study;

! Provide students with opportunity to communicate with lecturers or tutors; and

! Modify course content to suit the needs/interest of the students

Conclusions and recommendations

The results based on the mean score yield a list of characteristics of preferred PTL. The top listed characteristics in this list are mostly related to teaching activity such as good presentation skills and good subject related knowledge of the PTL. The result is found to match with the result obtained from the pilot study (Poon, 2008), indicating a good reliability of the result.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have several significant implications for policy makers, university administrators, and faculty members.

Recommendations related to Traits of PTLs

1. University administrators should realize that different criteria should be used to select or evaluate FTLs and PTLs. The job of FTLs and PTLs are different and criteria that are used by universities like The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (2003) to evaluate teachers in general may not be transferrable to PTLs. For example, all lecturers should "Communicate clearly with students" and "Mark work diligently and fairly, and give useful feedback to students". However, as most of the PTLs have other obligations during their non-teaching hours, it is much more difficult for PTLs to "Be available, and approachable, for consultations by students". By the same token, PTLs are usually not invited to serve on committees or other administrative functions (Monroe & Denman, 1991). Hence it will be difficult for them to perform well "*...in subject/programme development and administration"* and "*Anticipates and takes a proactive role in meeting changing conditions so as to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning"*.

2. In choosing a proper PTL, university administrators should not believe that *high academic qualification* and *high professional qualification* are necessary and sufficient conditions for an effective lecturer, as students only find loose connection between these factors and an effective PTL. University administrators should also reconsider their emphasis on social desirableness factors like *high social status*, *high career achievement* and *high research activity*. Students do not perceive these to be important, and it may not affect their decision in choosing a desirable institution.

3. The lecturer's teaching related competences are very important. Students emphasize the ability of the instructor to organize and transmit the information to them. Researchers like Okoye (2008) and Sander et al (2000) have long suggested that teaching skills is important to teacher in general. University administrators should use it as part of the selection criteria in recruitment for both FTLs and PTLs. University management should also consider providing more training for the PTLs who are less experienced in this area.

4. Students also show strong preference for a lecturer who has the ability to make the class interesting, and the proper use of humour which can be an effective way to create such an interest. While these skills can be improved through practice (Powell and Andersen, 1985), PTLs have less access to these practices than FTLs. Policy makers of professional training programmes for instructors should also consider adding presentation or staging skills (Murray and Lawrence, 1980) to the training and development programme.

Recommendations related to Behaviour of PTLs

1. University administrators should reconsider the emphasis they place on new teaching approach or new technologies. According to the study of Sander et al (2000), university students prefer interactive lectures and group-based activities. This tends to suggest that students may prefer FTLs just because more diversified teaching approaches are more commonly adopted by FTLs (Lei, 2007). In the current study, items related to Teaching style like *applying new teaching approach* or even *applying IT* are of lesser importance to students.

2. PTLs should ensure that their own teaching effectiveness matches the demand they place on the students. Even though Cavanaugh (2006) finds that PTLs give higher grades to students than FTLs even after accounting for many alternative explanations for grade differences, *Easiness of the course* is not of prime importance. Students surveyed in this case actually want to learn something from the course. Students are ready to accept challenges as long as they perceive that the lecturer is effective in "*transmitting"* the knowledge to them.

3. Lecturers should try to accommodate the needs of their students by being prepared to share with them *experience in learning*, spending *additional time* with their students and, providing *reply promptly to their mails*. Applying *updated real life examples* in teaching will help to increase a student's interests for the course. PTLs who are also holding employment in the commercial fields will have more chance to accumulate *updated real life examples* than the FTLs. Lecturers should also know that students emphasize the *approachability* of a lecturer. Students indicate their desire to receive *career and psychological consultation* from their lecturers.

4. While students desire for opportunity to communicate with the lecturers, PTL is generally more difficult to contact than FTLs. Management of the self-financing institutes should consider establishing some mechanism that can facilitate interactions between PTLs and students. For example, allotting office space for PTLs or even pay them for non-teaching hours when students can contact them either in their offices or through telephone or internet for formal and informal interaction, and this should be beneficial to the school and students.

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Don't Hide Our Students' Competencies: The Importance to Establish the Hidden Competence

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Abstract

By reviewing the previous literature, this study integrated two main competence models from Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005) and Kim and Park (2014) to analyze the perceived acquired competencies and inadequate competencies from the view of graduating students of self-financing institutions. Three focus groups with participants from three main self-financing institutions in Hong Kong were conducted. Content analysis was adopted to identify the acquired or perceived inadequate competencies. Results showed that most of the competencies acquired are categorized as observed competence, which is easily learnt and useful for job performance. However, the perceived insufficient competence lies in the hidden aspect, for example, motivation and professionalism. These are difficult to acquire but very critical to sustain one's career and job success. In view of this, some feasible recommendations were provided for the education policy makers or senior management of self-financing institutions to reform the current design of the programme curriculum.

Keywords: competence, self-financing institutions, graduating students

Introduction

As one of the six priority industries, the higher education sector in Hong Kong plays a critical role to maintain and increase the quality of human capital and competitiveness. Since 2000, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has further supported the development of the self-financing post-secondary sector, evident by the booming self-financing local continuing education institutions in the city (EDB, 2006). More than a decade of hard work and enthusiasm in response to the 2000 Policy Address, it is time to consider the likely outcomes of this sector in terms of quality enhancement, learning experience, recognition, articulation opportunities and employability.

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With the focus on employability, more attention is given to key competencies as desirable outcomes of higher education. Indeed, the notion of competency-based training is becoming popular among policymakers as it fits well within the policy discourses of employability and lifelong learning (Boahin, Eggink and Hofman, 2013). This study attempts to shed light on Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005)'s typology of competence (in terms of cognitive competence; meta competence; functional competence; and social competence) to examine two research questions: 1) from the graduating student's perspective, what are the key competencies of self-financed students in Hong Kong? 2) what are the inadequate competencies identified from the perspectives of graduating students and previous literatures?

Hong Kong Context and Self-Financing Institutions

Hong Kong Context and Lifelong Learning

Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China back in 1997 has undergone rapid changes in its education system, particularly the promotion of lifelong education, the changes in regulatory framework, and the introduction of the Qualifications Framework (QF). Since 2000, the Policy Address aims to change the secondary school system to 6-year pattern to all students (i.e. 12 years of free and compulsory education), and follow by a 4-year degree, known as the 3+3+4 reforms (Lee, Cribbin and Lee, 2011). Thus, the last A-level cohort of HKAL examinations was in 2012 and there will be a double cohort in the universities in 2012-15 (Cribbin, 2011).

Lifelong learning is a modern phenomenon. It is defined as the "ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated" pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons (Department of Education and Science, 2000). Learning can no longer be divided into a place and time to acquire knowledge (school) and a place and time to apply the knowledge acquired (the workplace) (Fischer, 2000). There are many reasons for the increased market demand for higher education courses, such as, the enhancement of social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development, as well as, self-sustainability, competitiveness and employability (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). To meet the huge market demand, many lifelong learners either go overseas to study or seek part-time study opportunities within the Hong Kong context due to the limited and restricted number of university places.

As an open, laissez-faire economy, Hong Kong government played a rather passive role before mid-1990s in the support of lifelong education (Lee et al., 2011). There was some public funding to universities for the provisions made in the Extra-Mural Departments and Vocational Training Council (VTC) to provide lifelong education opportunities (Lee et al., 2011). With the objective of enabling 60% of senior school leavers to receive post-secondary education by 2010, substantial changes have been made to the Hong Kong's post-secondary education sector with an increase in self-financing post-secondary opportunities with the expansion of many self-financed institutions with acronyms, such as, HKU SPACE (Hong Kong University), SCOPE (City University), SPEED (Polytechnic University), SCE (Baptist University), SCS (Chinese University), LIFE (Lingnan University) and the like (Lee et al., 2011). These institutions have provided wider choices of progression pathways for school leavers.

Notwithstanding the self-financing nature of the sector, the Government has been asked to play a more proactive role like setting ground rules (Review of the Post-Secondary Education Sector, 2008). Indeed, many self-financing institutions are in partnership with overseas institutions, so there was an increasing element of government regulation in the sector. Since 1998, there was the requirement of the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance (CAP. 493) and the operation of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) and the Joint Quality Review Committee (i.e., JQRC, for the UGC funded sector), as well as the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (CAP. 592) (QF) and the associated Qualifications Register (QR) having the impact to regulate lifelong learning in Hong Kong (Lee et al., 2011).

The lifelong education system can be categorized as a 'fourth estate', a distinct sector in addition to the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of education. Particularly, the establishment of the QF is an important aspect in recognizing qualified programmes in response to market demand. The QF is a seven-level hierarchy of qualifications against which individual academic, vocational and continuing education programmes will be benchmarked (Review of the Post-Secondary Education Sector, 2008). The establishment of the QF helps to define any programmes by level plus credit and title. This information is available on the Qualifications Register in order to give learners and consumers a clearer picture as to the credibility, depth and breadth of the individual programmes.

The heart of benchmarking qualifications against the QF and the establishments of regulations is quality. This is an area of public interest and concern following the rapid development of the sector in the last decade. Quality is not a new concept and it is part of the academic tradition. It is the outside world that now emphasizes the need for attention to quality, and it is the relationship between higher education and society which has changed (Vroeijenstijn, 1995).

Qualifications recognized under the HKQF are outcome-based and not confined to academic attainment. The seven-level hierarchy provides benchmarks for determining the level of complexity and difficulty of individual competencies (Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, 2014). In the academic aspect, the outcome standards of qualifications are based on the knowledge and skills a person possesses, and set by scholars. As mentioned, the HKQF has seven levels where level 1 is the lowest and level 7 is the highest. A set of generic level descriptors (GLD) have been considered as the outcome characteristic of each level. There are four dimensions in the GLD to depict the generic complexity, demand and challenges at each QF level, namely,

knowledge and intellectual skills; process; application, autonomy and accountability; and communications, IT skills and numeracy (Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, 2014). In the vocational aspect, the outcome standards of qualifications are set by individual industries. Indeed, 18 Hong Kong industries have joined HKQF in order to develop specification of competency standards (SCSs), that is, the key competency requirements and outcome standards of different industries (Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, 2014). Industries should always play an active and pivotal role in developing, maintaining and updating the SCSs to keep abreast of the latest manpower requirements and to meet the full range of education and training needs of the industry (Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, 2014). The SCS consists of competency standards of different levels in relation to industry-specific knowledge, professional skills and soft skills required for performing different job functions of the industry (Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, 2014). It is aimed that SCS will be practical and competence-based to meet the industry needs, as well as to facilitate the ongoing implementation of the Qualifications Framework (Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, 2014).

Based on the GLD (academic aspect) and SCS (vocational aspect), each industry could better formulate a list of competencies for the practitioners of the industry. It is hoped that individual learners could have a clear and unified guide for drawing up their learning progress, either vertically by pursuing learning in a particular professional area with specialized skills (e.g. banking) or horizontally by learning diverse skills in their own profession (Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, 2014). It is worth noting that the academic and vocational education needs to emphasize on developing competencies and capabilities rather than qualifications in assessing the quality of programmes (Boahin et al., 2013). Developing these competencies and capabilities are believed to strengthen the link between post-secondary programmes and the labour market, and thus, assist students to acquire employable skills (Biemans, Nieuwenhuis, Poell, Mulder and Wesselink, 2004). It is believed that self-financed institutions must design programmes in a holistic manner and emphasize the knowledge base of practice to better prepare students for future employment (Boahin et.al., 2013).

Self-Financing Institutions and Competencies

As mentioned earlier, the introduction of the new '3+3+4' academic structure has provided the impetus and opportunity for tertiary institutions, especially the self-financed institutions. Indeed, the post-secondary participation rate for senior secondary graduates had increased substantially from 33% in 2001/01 to 66% in 2005/06 academic year (EDB, 2006). This participation rate was levelled off in 2006/07 academic year, and it maintains at slightly above 60% (EDB, 2006).

Based on a Hong Kong survey on opinions of employers on major aspects of performance of post-secondary programme graduates in 2010, there were nine major aspects of performance to track the quality of graduates, in terms of language proficiency, numerical competency, information technology literacy, analytical and problem-solving abilities, work attitude, interpersonal skills, management skills, technical skills, and knowledge of current affairs and business issues, self-learning ability and self-esteem (CSG, 2010). Generally, 72% of employers were satisfied with the overall performance of 2010 graduates (CSG, 2010). However, employers commented graduates to improve on their language abilities; interpersonal and management skills. Others commented the need for graduates to be more open to criticism and advice from colleagues; have more common sense and knowledge of current affairs; and improvements in attitude in terms of more willingness to take responsibilities, make commitments and being more enthusiastic about their work, and take more initiative at work (CSG, 2010).

This study is primarily focused on self-financing local top-up degrees' students and their competencies that could impact the preparedness of these graduating students for employability in the knowledge-intensive workplace. Indeed, graduate employability becomes a core objective for government and a performance indicator for higher education institutions (Tymon, 2013). By following such an economic ideology of higher education, it is wise for self-financing institutions to consider the competencies central to the concept of employability.

Literature Review

What is "Competence"?

Competence has been defined in many different ways (e.g., Boyatzis, 1982; Kirschner, Van Vilsteren, Hummel, & Wigman, 1997; Baughman, Brumm, & Mickelson, 2012; Horton, 2000), and many previous researchers have viewed this term as a fuzzy concept (Jackson & Chapman, 2012; Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). Norris (1991) also maintained that competence is a "tacit understanding" (p. 332) and "the practical has become shrouded in theoretical confusion" (p. 332). In order to provide better understanding and definition of the word "competence", we begin with the origin of this word, followed by a discussion of different definitions, and suggest an integrated framework for measuring competence of graduating students after reviewing two major competence models.

Block (1978) suggested that competence was originated from the work of White (1959) and Inkeles (1966, 1968). White's conception of competence came from two ideas. The first one is about the biological predisposition of the people to be proactive instead of reactive to the environment. Therefore, competence refers to the innate potential of the people to make changes in order to be effective in the environment. The second idea concerns with two aspects: on one hand, people will manipulate the environment successfully through one's motor and intellectual skills. On the other hand, we can effectively master the environment in the process, so we can acquire the feelings of "self-efficacy" or "self-confidence".

According to Inkeles (1966, 1968), there are also two ideas. The first idea is about

the interaction between the environment and people. In view of the different types of environment researched by Inkeles (1966), competence reflects people's capacity to interact effectively in the socially ascribed, self-selected and self-developed environments (Block, 1978). The second idea of competence is that it reflects our particular set of psychomotor, cognitive, and affective skills to effectively interact with various environments.

Generally, the conceptions of competence provided by White and Inkeles are similar. Firstly, environment is an important context in which people's competence can interact, and even interact with it effectively. Secondly, White's (1959) conception further denotes the importance of people's innate potential to change the environment we are facing.

Based on these ideas, a lot of different definitions were developed by numerous researchers. These different definitions are also reflected in the adoption from different countries. In the United Kingdom, competence refers to the functional and occupational approach. Thus, it can be defined as the actions, behaviors, and skills to perform the tasks and activities in the jobs within an occupation at the expected level of standards required by the employment (Horton, 2000; MSC, 1986). However, in the United States of America, the definition of competence focuses on the disposition or the characteristics of the people, allowing them to have superior performance and high motivation (White, 1959; McGuire & Garavan, 2001; Dubois & Rothwell, 2004). Precisely speaking, competence is defined as the underlying characteristics of people that are causally related to effective or superior performance in a job, which can generalize across situations and endure for a long period of time (Boyatzis, 1982; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). The focal point in these definitions from the two countries is different. In the UK, the focus is about superior performance or the proficiency of the tasks but not the people, whereas in the USA, the focus is on the ability or cognitive perspective of learning of the people instead of their output (Boahin & Hofman, 2014). However, both of these dimensions only look at one aspect of competence, either on the performance of the tasks or the people's disposition or ability.

In Europe, the definition of competence refers to the ability and capacity of the individuals to perform the tasks and fulfill the roles at the expected level of standards in a given situation (Biemans, Nieuwenhuis, Poell, Mulder, & Wesselink, 2004; Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005; Mulder, Weigel, & Collins, 2006). This definition integrates the practical and theoretical knowledge possessed by an individual, together with the personal and social qualities within a broadly defined occupational field (Brockmann, Clarke, Mehout, & Winch, 2008; Boahin & Hofman, 2014). Thus, this can reflect the multi-dimensional aspect of competence rather than only one dimension as reflected in the UK and the USA studies.

To conclude from the foregoing definitions, we would like to adopt a more encompassing definition of competence, thus, it can be defined as "the ability to perform activities or tasks in a given occupation to the required standards...[it] is also expressed as a function of three components namely: skills, knowledge and attitudes or behaviors that enable successful job performance" (Boahin & Hofman, 2014, pp. 82-83).

Recently, some discussions on competence focus on the demand and supply side. Demand side refers to what competencies required from the employment's point of view, thus, people need to concern the needs of the employers (Baughman, et al., 2012; Ennis, 2008). This is consistent with the conceptions from White (1959) and Inkeles (1966, 1968) in terms of the fulfillment and interaction with the environment successfully. Apart from the demand side, competency models can also be used by the supply side of the labour market, such as the students and workers, to discuss how they possess or equip with certain competencies to achieve the job requirements (Ennis, 2008). The majority of previous research has focused on these two areas, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the previous literature on the focus of competencies

Demand Side	Supply Side	Both
Ryan, Spencer, & Bernhard (2012) Jackson & Chapman (2012) Kim & Park (2014) Sandwith (1993) Spencer & Spencer (1993) Agut, Grau, & Peiro (2003) Perdue, Ninemeiner, & Woods (2000, 2002) Zehrer & Mossenlechner (2009)	Baughman, Brumm, & Mickelson (2012) English, Manton, Sami, & Dubey (2012) Schaeper (2009) Boyatzis, Stubbs, & Taylor (2002) Horng & Lu (2006) Warn & Tranter (2001)	Weisz (1999) Andrews & Higson (2008)

Models of Competence

Previous researchers tried to come up with different models to analyze the competence in view of the insufficiency of one-dimensional frameworks of competence. Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005) provided a framework to discuss the typology of competence. From their framework, competence can be categorized into four types, namely, cognitive competence, functional competence, social competence, and meta competence under two axes, namely conceptual versus operational and occupational versus personal (See Figure 1). These categorizations reflect the different aspects focused in the UK, the USA, and the Europe, that is, combining the one-dimensional aspect of competence into a multi-dimensional framework in discussing the term.

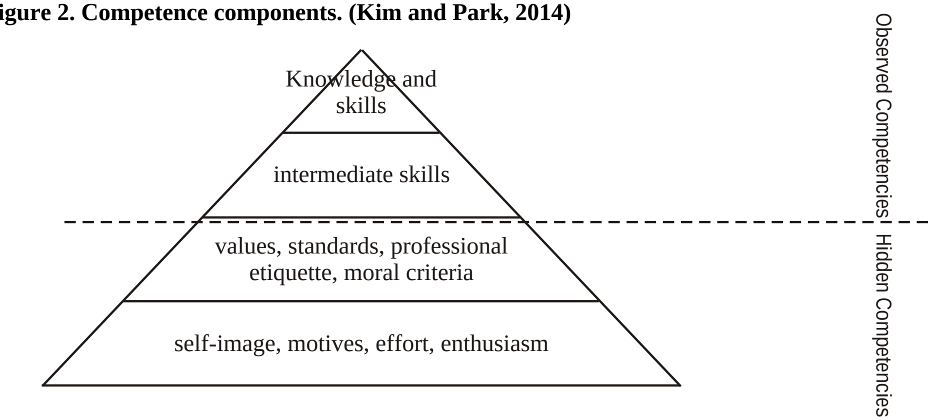
Figure 1. Typology of competence (Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005)

	Occupational	Personal
Conceptual	Cognitive competence (e.g., knowledge and understanding)	Meta competence (e.g., learning to learn)
Operational	Functional competence (e.g., psychomotor and applied skills)	Social competence (e.g., behaviors and attitudes)

Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005) argued that cognitive, functional and social competences are universal and consistent with the multi-dimensional approach as adopted by the European countries (e.g., Biemans et al., 2004; Mulder et al., 2006). These three competences also reflected the training aspects of KSA (knowledge, skills and attitudes). It is quite different for meta competence since it is concerned with the acquisition of the other substantive competences (Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). Some examples of meta competence include self-awareness, compassion, commitment, etc. (Regehr, Anstice, Bogo, Lim, & Donovan, 2012; Nilsson & Ellstrom, 2012). Thus, these can allow students to move towards the goals and fulfill the requirements and standards of the work tasks.

Another model was discussed by Kim and Park (2014) in their discussion of the competences required of airline cabin crew members. They focused on two major distinctions, namely, hidden competencies and observed competencies, and based on these two aspects, four different categories emerged (Figure 2)

Figure 2. Competence components. (Kim and Park, 2014)



The bottom of the pyramid presents the hidden competences, describing the innate human characteristics, such as motivation, effort, values, moral criteria, etc. These personal characteristics provide the important motivational factors for the consistent superior performance of the employees (Bergenhenegouwen, ten Horn, & Mooijman, 1996). Those observed competences, such as technical skills and abilities necessary to perform the job tasks (Mirabile, 1997) are situated at the top of the pyramid in Figure 2. They are important for the employees to achieve high job performance (Hoffmann, 1999; McClelland, 1973; McLegan, 1997; Mirabile, 1997).

Integrated Model for Competence

Our argument to competence is that on one hand, we cannot focus on one-dimensional aspect of competence only, so we need to adopt a multi-dimensional framework. However, on the other hand, focusing on the observed competencies is not comprehensive enough to analyze the graduating student competencies, and thus, both innate or hidden competencies and observed competencies should not be ignored. In this regard, we try to integrate both models discussed above. Figure 3 shows our integrated model to analyze the graduating student competencies.

Figure 3. Integrated model for analyzing student competencies

	Occupational	Personal
Conceptual	***Observed competence*** Cognitive competence (e.g., knowledge and understanding, etc.)	***Hidden competence*** Meta competence (e.g., learning to learn, motives, enthusiasm, values, etc.)
Operational	***Observed competence*** Functional competence (e.g., psychomotor and applied skills, etc.)	***Observed competence*** Social competence (e.g., behaviors and attitudes, etc.)

Developing on the framework suggested by Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005), in order to ensure the effectiveness at the levels of occupation and individual (i.e., person), so both conceptual and operational types of competences are required. However, with reference to the framework from Kim and Park (2014), the observed competencies refer to the skills, knowledge and abilities, etc. to perform the job better. In such a case, cognitive competence, functional competence and social competence can be categorized to the observed part of competence. These competencies are easily to be trained and learned (Kim & Park, 2014). In order to sustain the successful performance and provide motivation to the people continuously in performing the job well, the hidden competence is required, which refer to the meta competence. This allows individuals to keep motivating themselves to improve and sustain the success in the jobs.

Method

Qualitative research method is adopted as it allows the researchers to have the advantage of understanding latent, underlying, or non-obvious issues (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Moreover, qualitative data emphasizes people's 'lived experience,' which is suitable for locating the meanings that people place on the events and processes. Focus groups were applied to gauge the underlying information from the respondents regarding our research questions.

Data Collection and Analysis

Based on the convenience sampling method, altogether, three focus groups were conducted in this study, consisting of four to nine participants in each focus group. The participants were the graduating students selected from three different self-financing tertiary education institutions in Hong Kong in order to examine the acquired skills and knowledge of the participants during their studies in higher education contexts. We believe that using this sampling method to select graduating students and schools is appropriate since qualitative methods are commonly described as 'purposive' (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). Thus, as long as appropriate informants are selected

based on their personal experience or knowledge related to our research question, this would be sufficient.

During the focus groups, semi-structured interview techniques were utilized to enable all participants to respond to the same set of questions. Participants can hear the responses of others so as to make additional comments beyond their own original responses when they hear what other participants say. As Patton (2002) mentioned, the advantage of using focus group can allow participants not to agree with each other or reach any kind of consensus, nor is it necessary for people to disagree. The major objective is to get information with good quality in this situation based on participants' own world of view when facing with other's view from the other contexts.

The pre-developed questions for the focus groups were prepared and follow-up probes were asked by the first and the second authors, who acted as the facilitators for those three focus groups. All of the questions emphasized the individual's experiences of making the transition from higher education to employment, aiming for enhancing career success; and thus, two major areas are addressed to gain insights from the participants. Firstly, this study tended to examine the perceived competencies of participants that can be acquired in their tertiary education studies. Secondly, participants were asked questions about the acquisition of the competencies through current programme curriculum of the institutions, as well as suggestions on the design of programme curriculum in the development of required competences of graduating students. Examples of the focus group interviews are shown below.

1. What kind of competencies (i.e., skills, knowledge, attitudes or motivations) do you expect to acquire or develop before graduation?
2. What factors do you find important in the curriculum design in order to develop students' competencies?
3. What are the competencies can you develop and cultivate from the current curriculum of your programme of study in your institution?
4. What is your ideal curriculum design for the development of students' competencies?
5. What are the things that can be changed in the current curriculum of your institution in order to enhance employability?

Each focus group interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and was tape-recorded. The focus group interviews were conducted in Cantonese, and have then been transcribed into standard written Chinese for data analysis. Selected code transcripts are also translated into English prior to transcription. At different points in the focus groups, the two facilitators checked in with participants to ensure accurate understanding of their views (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each participant received HK$70 voucher as a compensation for their time.

To analyze the data collected from the focus groups, we reviewed the transcripts and identified the competencies that the participants mentioned. After that, we gave labels and names for that competencies or descriptions mentioned by the participants. We then categorize these competencies based on the integrated model of competence (see Figure 3) concluded from the previous literature in order to show what area(s) is/are insufficient from the graduating students from the self-financing institutions.

Profile of Participants

The three focus group interviews were conducted in April 2014, consisting of four to nine participants in each group from three different self-financing tertiary education institutions in Hong Kong. Profile of participants in each focus group is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Profile of participants

Focus Group	Participant Code	Programme of Study of Participants	Gender
Focus Group 1	Participant 1	Hospitality Management	Male
	Participant 2	Hospitality Management	Female
	Participant 3	Hospitality Management	Male
	Participant 4	Hospitality Management	Female
	Participant 5	Hospitality Management	Female
Focus Group 2	Participant 6	Travel Industry Management	Female
	Participant 7	Travel Industry Management	Female
	Participant 8	Travel Industry Management	Female
	Participant 9	Retails and Service Management	Female
	Participant 10	Retails and Service Management	Male
	Participant 11	Retails and Service Management	Male
	Participant 12	Retails and Service Management	Female
	Participant 13	Retails and Service Management	Female
	Participant 14	Retails and Service Management	Female
Focus Group 3	Participant 15	Finance	Male
	Participant 16	Finance	Male
	Participant 17	Finance	Male
	Participant 18	Management	Female

Findings

After the analysis and with the review of the integrated model of competence, the graduating student's perceived competencies and inadequate competencies were able to be identified based on two main themes (i.e., observed and hidden competence) and four sub-themes (i.e., cognitive, social, functional, and meta competence).

Observed Competence — Cognitive Competence

Participants mentioned that they have good acquisition of conceptual knowledge

and ideas from the curriculum in their institutions. They know how to explain different theories and concepts from the textbooks:

> I found the course called leadership is very practical because I can apply what I have learnt in terms of theories and concepts to real world situation. (Participant 8, Focus group 2)

Observed Competence — Social Competence

From the curriculum design, many participants mentioned that they can improve their patience and teamwork. They know how to work with people, especially from group projects. Encountering with different types of teammates, they can also learn to polish their emotional intelligence. Some of the quotes from the participants were listed below:

> I learnt how to manage my ***EQ*** and be ***patient*** when doing group projects with my teammates. We learnt how to work with others. (Participant 2, Focus group 1)

> My ***interpersonal skill*** can be developed by conducting group projects and group assignments. Also, I learnt how to communicate with group members which helped to acquire high level of ***communication skills***. These kinds of skills can be learned from teachers as well. (Participant 15, Focus group 3)

Observed Competence — Functional Competence

According to the results, functional competence appears to be the most mentioned aspect. Many participants responded that language used in class, critical thinking and problem solving skills can be obtained through different group projects or assessment items embedded in the curriculum. They also mentioned that time management was quite important for them to learn and they were able to develop this particular competence through the intensive study schedule and their commitment in different part-time jobs, extra-curricular activities, and normal classes. Some of the quotes are listed below:

> ***Language*** is very important and speaking fluent languages, such as Mandarin and English, are of great help when finding a good job. (Participant 12, Focus group 2)

> I believe that I trained myself to be more critical because I learn ***critical thinking skills*** in most of the classes in this institution. (Participant 1, Focus group 1)

> By doing group projects with my teammates, it helped me to acquire ***problem solving skills***. (Participant 14, Focus group 2)

> I think the curriculum design helps me to develop ***creativity***, because I can think of many different ideas when doing assignments and projects. (Participant 7, Focus group 2)

We should take ***initiatives*** in the workplace; we should be able to communicate with employers and other employees effectively. (Participant 17, Focus group 3)

They also mentioned that the practical experience in their own profession was not sufficient, despite of abundant knowledge in theories and concepts captured in terms of the cognitive competence. One of the quotes was shown below:

I found the programme I am studying is too high end with many theories but less practical experience which is in fact ***lack of practicality*** in the programme. (Participant 4, Focus group 1)

Hidden Competence — Meta Competence

According to the findings from the 3 focus groups, only two competencies, namely, independent learning and initiative were cultivated and developed from the current curriculum.

Studying in this institution helps me to train myself to be an ***independent learner***. Lecturers help me to think independently during the class by raising logical and critical questions. (Participant 9, Focus group 2)

In fact, I think, we, as students ***need to have initiatives***! You can't hide up yourself in the 4-year university's study, so you have to develop a sense to be more proactive. (Participant 8, Focus group 2)

Comparing with other types of competences (i.e., three types of observed competencies), hidden meta competence seems to be insufficient as mentioned by the participants. For example, some of them said that they are lacking of enthusiasm in their profession and sense of professionalism, self-confidence, etc.

I think we are kind of ***lacking of enthusiasm and professionalism***, and I hope the School would develop more courses or programmes to strengthen these parts. (Participant 13, Focus group 2)

It's not easy to build up ***self-confidence***; however, if you would develop your self-confidence, you can establish a sense of achievement. In fact, self-confidence can be gained by having a good teacher. (Participant 15, Focus group 3)

It is suggested that the School should deliver ***more career talks*** so that students would increase their self-confidence when looking for jobs after graduation. (Participant 3, Focus group 1)

Figure 4 shows the already-acquired competencies summarized from the findings above.

Figure 4. Summary of findings of already-acquired competencies

	Occupational	Personal
Conceptual	***Observed competence*** Cognitive competence (1. Theories and concepts 2. Application of theories and concepts to real world situation)	***Hidden competence*** Meta competence (1. Independent learner 2. Initiative)
Operational	***Observed competence*** Functional competence (1. Problem solving skills 2. Critical thinking skills 3. Time management)	***Observed competence*** Social competence (1. Interpersonal skills 2. Communication skills 3. Emotional intelligence)

However, there are still many inadequate competencies mentioned by the participants that they need to acquire but cannot fulfill their needs. In addition to other competencies suggested in the previous literature (e.g., Ryan et al., 2012; Schaeper, 2009; Weisz, 1999), Table 3 summarizes the competencies which the education policy makers should pay attention to.

Table 3. Summary of the inadequate competencies

Observed			Hidden
Cognitive	**Social**	**Functional**	**Meta**
	Conflict Management	Practical experience Third language skills	Enthusiasm Professionalism Self-confidence Persistence Positive mindset Integrity/honesty Self-motivated Maturity Learning to learn

Discussion

By adopting the integrated model of competence suggested in the literature section, the observed competencies refer to the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour which enable individuals to achieve high job performance. The observed competencies including cognitive, functional and social are found to be significant from the participants' perspectives which can be acquired in their tertiary education studies in Hong Kong so as to increase employability or help them succeed in their career. The participants also described how they were able to adapt and apply these competencies learnt in education to their employment. The hidden competence refers to the meta competence which allows people to keep motivating oneself, and improving career success. However, it appears that participants are lacking of the hidden competence, but that should be very critical to sustain career success.

Cognitive Competency

Based on the findings, participants perceived that understanding of theories and concepts is fundamental to increase their academic knowledge so as to develop their cognitive competencies. In addition, application of theories and concepts to real life situation is found to be significant, help prepare graduates to the workforce in the service-oriented industry. The findings are consistent with Ryan et al.'s (2012) findings, in which cognitive competence can help improve business unit profitability. However, participants viewed that the programme design of self-financing tertiary education institutions are short of practicality, because many subjects in the programme curriculum are 'management' based, such that students are lacking the practical knowledge before graduation. Knowing how to apply on paper is totally different from having proficiency in applying in real practices. This seems to be the insufficiency in the current curriculum of Hong Kong self-financing institutions.

Social Competence

Participants addressed that the importance of emotional intelligence, interpersonal and communication skills strengthen the development of social competence. These competencies can be gradually polished through the participants' studies in the self-financing tertiary education institutions in Hong Kong. Continuous assessments of subjects, specifically group projects and assignments, enable participants to construct their social competencies. Opportunities to participate in different extra-curricular activities also allow them to cultivate the way to interact with people. These positive behaviors and attitudes enhance employability, leading to career success of students. The findings are also confirmed by Kim and Park (2014) and Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005).

Functional Competence

In the focus group interviews, participants agreed that functional competence can be acquired in their studies in self-financing tertiary education institutions and can also be gained by having a good teacher. As the working environment tends to be dynamic and competitive, graduating students should be equipped to be ready in the workforce, such that skills and techniques of critical thinking, language capability, interpersonal, problem solving and time management are necessary to increase competitiveness to achieve high job performance. These are the immediate job skills which are very important for the graduating students to perform well (Kim & Park, 2014). Functional competence is categorized under occupational and operational aspects (Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005), and thus, this type of competence can surely allow graduating students to achieve high quality of performance.

Meta (Hidden) Competence

As mentioned by Bergenhenegouwen et al., (1996), motivation and values are important motivational factors to increase and sustain superior performance of

employees. However, participants appeared to be lack of meta competence in this study, or they expected that the school should take an active approach in the cultivation of meta competence towards graduating students. From graduating student's perspectives, the schools seemed to "ignore" or "skip" the competencies of self-confidence, professionalism and enthusiasm. Establishing hidden competence is important for both students and employers. Litzenberg and Schneider (1987) asked the agribusiness employers to rank the relative importance competencies managers sought in new employees in a national survey. Based on the survey results, Litzenberg and Schneider (1987) concluded that educators must address the development of enthusiasm and professionalism. Fleming, Martin, Hughes, and Zinn (2009) also examined that students should develop the hidden competence in the areas of learning to learn, self-confidence, relationship building as well as teamwork and cooperation to increase the likelihood of graduate employment.

Suggestions on the Design of Programme Curriculum and Suggestions to Education Policy Makers

In order to increase graduating students' competencies, particularly in the establishment of meta competence, some suggestions are made. First of all, more career talks are suggested by the participants in order for them to learn skills and knowledge in relation to job interview so as to enhance self-confidence. Institutions should consider strengthening the function of career services to provide high quality career support to graduating students. Hirschy et al. (2011) also argues that high performing career services office should also work with employers seeking candidates through CV or placement file referral services, on-campus interviews and career fairs with additional services of resume assistance, individual career counseling, and mock interviews. Preparation well before the interview, polished interviewing skills, and attractive resume design can allow the graduating students to succeed in getting the job offer.

Secondly, though some subjects such as management-related subjects are very much based on concepts and theories, the programme should be designed to be more vocational and practical so that students can acquire the practical knowledge through the programme curriculum of the institutions for the development of functional competence. Enhancing the use of experiential learning can help to apply knowledge and acquire the hands-on experience. For example, participants mentioned that the effectiveness of learning in the "Leadership" course can be improved through encouraging the students to participate in case competitions or organizing co-op programmes or work-integrated schemes (Weisz, 1999) so that it can help them to bridge the gap between concepts and practical experience. Moreover, these types of programmes can also help to develop their professionalism as students are already in the workplace, commit their time and knowledge to their professions.

Thirdly, reforming the teaching approaches to be more interactive can help students learn in a positive way so that they are more willing to learn. Loeb (2014) addresses the contribution of teachers' interaction to the arena outside the classroom which helps boost students' confidence in their ability; thus, the ways to strengthen student-teacher interaction should be examined to benefit students studying at the self-financing institutions. In addition, allowing students to lead the discussion of a topic amongst their fellow classmates can also increase the hidden competence of students by means of the establishment of initiatives and enthusiasm. By inviting the executives or experienced practitioners from their field of profession can help to arouse their professionalism and let them gain a sense of the real work environment. This can also wake them up to develop the required competencies from the workplace.

Finally, the established curriculum has incorporated two basic languages, namely, English and Mandarin. It is suggested that the education policy makers can create possible opportunities to allow students from self-financing tertiary education institutions to learn more different languages to enhance their career success. It is because foreign language learning has always mirrored the ongoing economic and political development of the countries, such as China, Russia, Korea and Indonesia (Tollefson, 2012). Promoting dual languages or even more than two languages can foster students' readiness in knowledge-based economy and globalized society (Castro et al., 2011).

This study tries to provide a direct understanding for the education policy makers as to how effective is the current curriculum of self-financing institutions in developing graduating students' competencies. Some important findings, such as the inadequacy of the development of meta competence, can provide valuable implications to them in designing the programme curriculum. However, limitations are also realized and future research directions are suggested. First of all, this study mainly focuses on the supply side, that is, the competencies acquired from students' perceptions. If we do not understand what the demand is, the students will not be able to get the job offer as well. Therefore, future study should try to compare the gap between the current competencies acquired by the students and the required competencies from the employers. Then, implications will be more promising.

Secondly, three focus group interviews may not be enough to ensure that all possible themes related to competencies have been identified. Conducting additional focus groups could expand the data and potentially create more complete understanding of the competencies. Apart from conducting focus groups, applying critical incident method may also be a good way to create a more exhaustive list of themes for competence.

Conclusion

By looking at competence from a multi-dimensional perspective, this study offers a lens for the education policy makers or senior management of the self-financing institutions to evaluate whether the existing programme structure and curriculum can fit with the "knowledge economy" or globalized society. The findings of this study show that our self-financing graduating students are strong in conceptual, social and

functional competencies, which are categorized as the observed competence while their meta competencies are inadequate. This particular competence is hidden in nature but of high importance to sustain career and job success. Therefore, education policy makers should pay more attention to develop a goal-oriented curriculum in the establishment of this hidden competence in order to provide more preferred candidates for the Hong Kong society.

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HKPAA 香港公共行政學會

HONG KONG PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ASSOCIATION

Introduction

Since first established in 1990, Hong Kong Public Administration Association is committed to the promotion of excellence in the study and practice of public administration. We have, in close collaboration with local universities as well as counterparts overseas, aroused keen interest in the pursuit of best practices in public affairs. These shall remain our goals in future.

Objectives

1. To enhance the quality of practice and teaching of public administration in Hong Kong;
2. To provide a forum for the identification and discussion of public administration issues; and
3. To stimulate discussion and to increase public understanding on issues of importance and relevance to public administration.

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* Admission of application is subject to the approval of Executive Committee and formal notification to the applicant will be confirmed upon acceptance. (Full time student's annual subscription fee is HK$150).

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Notes to Contributors

Public Administration and Policy — An Asia-Pacific Journal is a semi-annual refereed journal jointly sponsored by the Hong Kong Public Administration Association and SPEED, Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The Journal is devoted to the integration of the theories and practice of public administration and management, with special emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region. *Public Administration and Policy* provides a forum for the exchange of information and ideas between practitioners and scholars on a broad range of public policy issues, and the pattern of governance in the region. In view of major changes taking place in the realm of public administration and policy, the Journal seeks to play a useful role in contributing to the improvement of public services by highlighting issues, problems and solutions through efficient and innovative management of public services. *Public Administration and Policy* also published review of recently published books that are of significance to public administration and/or the area covered by the scope of the Journal.

Contributions are solicited on issues and ideas related to public administration and management, policy and public affairs in Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China and the Asia-Pacific region in general. Articles submitted to *Public Administration and Policy* should be original contributions, and should not be under consideration for any other publication at the same time. The length of articles should be between 4,000 and 7,000 words, although longer contributions may be accepted if the submission justifies it. Shorter articles from practitioners may be acceptable and these will be grouped under the **Forum** section. The Journal shall have the copyright for material published in *Public Administration and Policy*.

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Dahl, R. (1947). "The Science of Public Administration: Three Problems", *Public Administration Review*, 7, 1-11.

Lane, J. E. (1993). *The Public Sector: Models and Approaches*, Sage, London.

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Prospective contributors are advised to consult the Notes to Contributors before preparing submissions. Manuscripts, books for review, and editorial correspondence, should be sent to Editor-in-Chief, Professor Peter K.W. Fong (email: peterfong@chuhai.edu.hk). Enquiries and subscriptions should be sent to the Associate Editor / Business Manager, Ms Alice Y.C. Te (email: aliceteyc@yahoo.com.hk) or GPO Box No. 3350, Hong Kong.

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