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

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

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

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

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

HK Education System, Before 2012

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

HK Education System, After 2012

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

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

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

- Current literature
- Institutional materials (admissions web-sites)
- Participants’ (co-authors’) observations (teachers, students; local, international)
## Research: Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UGC-FUNDED UNIVERSITIES</th>
<th>UNI-AFFILIATED COLLEGES</th>
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<tr>
<td>University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>HKU SPACE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong University of Science and Tech</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>INDEPENDENT COLLEGES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lingnan University</td>
<td>Caritas Institute of Higher Edu</td>
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<td>Hang Seng Management School</td>
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**UGC-FUNDED UNIVERSITIES**

- University of Hong Kong
- Hong Kong University of Science and Tech
- Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Lingnan University

**PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES**

- Open University of Hong Kong

**INDEPENDENT COLLEGES**

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

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

**UGC-FUNDED and PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES**

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

**Qualities:**
- Leadership
- Communicative Skills
- Creativity
- Interactivity

**UNI-AFFILIATED COLLEGES**

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

**Qualities:**
- Less important
- Second chance – mature students

**INDEPENDENT COLLEGES**

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

UGC-FUNDED UNIVERSITIES

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

UNI-AFFILIATED & INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

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

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

“First come-First served”

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

**UGC-FUNDED UNIVERSITIES**

- Highest scores = scholarships
- "First Choice"
- Follow-up interviews
- Focus group discussions

**UNI-AFFILIATED & INDEPENDENT COLLEGES**

- Interviews (with second chance)
- Immediate offers at the recruitment sites

**PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES**

- More flexible
# Findings: Admission Notifications

## UGC-FUNDED UNIVERSITIES
- Can be immediate
- January – August (some in December)
- JUPAS main round – early August and confirm - by end August
- Mainland China - July
- Appeal to HK Examinations and Assessment Authority

## UNI-AFFILIATED & INDEPENDENT COLLEGES
- No specific schedules
- Self-financing/ongoing process

## PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES
- More flexible
## Findings: Race or Balance?

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<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>No rankings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rankings vs. Fairness</td>
<td>No competitiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scores vs. Personal Qualities</td>
<td>Emphasis on professional skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasingly, leadership predispositions</td>
<td>Social responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced messaging of expectations</td>
<td>Self-financing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing scholarships and self-financing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encouraging ambitious students with disabilities</td>
<td>Disability students are cautioned about facility capacities</td>
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Dilemmas and Further Research

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

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

- **Admission numbers** vs. **employability** results

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

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

Corresponding author:

Anatoly Oleksiyenko (paoleks@hku.hk)