

A Comparison of Singapore and Hong Kong on Their Strategies for Developing Regional Education Hubs

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Abstract

This article examines the approaches that are adopted by both Singapore and Hong Kong in developing themselves as “regional hubs of higher education” through different strategies on the development of their higher education systems, and via developing transnational higher education. The article starts off with a delineation on how the process of globalization has structurally altered the landscape of the global higher education market, upon which these changes drive both Singapore and Hong Kong to become more competitive in the global education marketplace. By examining and evaluating the recent education reforms in the two Asian city-states, the author argues that the two places have significant differences and are using rather different strategies in developing their higher education sectors, which can then reflect upon their fundamental differences in terms of the basic mindsets, underlying philosophies and style of governance of higher education by the two governments.

Keywords

Regional education hubs, internationalization of higher education, transnational higher education

The impact of globalization has caused many nation-states to rethink about their governance strategies in order to cope with the rapid social and economic changes. In recent years, new philosophies and forms of governance in nation-states have evolved in order to maintain their global competitiveness. There has been a massive proliferation of diversified policy tools and instruments, while employing the market principles, systems and mechanisms to address various public issues, all of which may render the conventional governance model inappropriate.

Similar to their western counterparts, the nation-states of Asia have launched public policy and management reforms along the line of the ideas and practices of marketization and managerialism. For instance, privatization has pretty much been a

common theme in the evolving patterns of government-business relations in such countries as Malaysia and South Korea (Gouri et al. 1991; World Bank 1995). Pressures for broad governance changes have been strong, due to the presence of influential international institutions, such as the World Bank, IMF and WTO, particularly after the Asian Financial Crisis since 1997.

Overall speaking, their preferred models of

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governance reflect the tendency of a less interventionist and arbitrary state; a strengthening of “juridical” forms of regulation, often associated with fundamental legal reforms; more decentralized forms of government, with a stronger partnership and “co-production” role for civil society groups; as well as a preference for market-like mechanisms over bureaucratic methods of service delivery (World Bank 1995). In this way, the strategies, measures and policy instruments that are being used in these Asian nation-states are basically in line with the global neo-liberal orthodoxy of pro-competition, and have thus transformed the way, by which the public sector is being managed in this part of the region (Cheung and Lee 2001; Cheung and Scott 2003; Mok and Welch 2003).

In this regard, education policy, management and governance are not immune from the growing pressures for improving service delivery, with better governance and overall performance. In order to make individual nation-states to be more competitive, schools and universities across the globe have been under tremendous pressures from both governments and the general public to restructure their education systems so as to adapt to the rapidly-changing socio-economic and socio-political environments.

While governments across the world try to further expand their higher education sector, they are also facing increasing financial constraints in meeting people’s pressing demands. In order to create more higher education opportunities, modern universities have started to change their governance paradigm by adopting the doctrines of “managerialism” and “monetarism”, featured by a freedom of choice with market mechanisms, to replace Keynesianism (Apple 2000).

Through revitalizing the role of the family and individuals within the private sector, the market and other non-state sectors are becoming more popular educational service providers in East Asia (Mok 2005a). This happens within the context of

globalization, in which recent education reforms in East Asia are mostly finance-driven, to be characterized by decentralization, privatization and better performance (Mok 2003; Chan and Mok 2001; Mok and Welch 2003; Mok 2005a; Chan and Lo 2008). Such changes are accelerated when more governments are exploring additional resources from civil society in general (Coleman 1990; Meyer and Boyd 2001).

In short, the diversification of educational services and funding providers, coupled with the revitalization of the civil society’s involvement in education, opens up new avenues for nation-states to re-invent how education is to be governed. Not surprisingly, the non-state sectors now share more power of control and influence in governing education policy and educational development. This new kind of “co-management” relationship between the state and the non-state sectors has altered the public-private partnership in the delivery of social services in general, and that of educational services in particular, in terms of the changing state-education relationship.

Hence, new coordinating efforts and modes of governance are now in urgent need (Klijn and Teisman 2003; Reeves 2003; Broadbent, Gray, and Jackson 2003). This has further suggested that the relationship between the state and other non-state actors, in terms of educational delivery and financing, has changed from a “hierarchical” type to a “network” type. A more critical and reflective analysis on their inter-relationship can help us to throw lights on the changing roles and relationships between the state and other non-state sectors in terms of educational governance.

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AS A MAJOR STRATEGY

Against an increasingly competitive global context, schools and universities across the world have been under tremendous pressures from both governments

and the general public to restructure the ways, by which they are managed, in order to adapt to the ever-changing socio-economic and socio-political environments, and to maintain individual nation-states' global competitiveness, as rightly mentioned: "globalization enters the education sector on an ideological horse, and its effects in education are largely a product of that financially driven, free-market ideology, not a clear conception for improving education" (Carnoy 2000: 50). This is particularly true when modern nation-states have to encounter reduced financial capacity in financing growing demands on higher education (Mok and Welch 2003).

It is against this kind of socio-economic context that the processes of academic capitalization in general (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004), and the pursuit of academic entrepreneurship in particular, have become increasingly popular in shaping the relationships among the different sectors of government, university, business and industry. Thus, in the context of reduced financial support from the nation-states, higher education systems across the world have attempted to generate incomes through various entrepreneurial activities (De Zilwa 2006; Marginson and Considine 2000). In this regard, marketization, managerialism and internationalization strategies and policy initiatives are becoming increasingly popular in shaping higher education governance.

Marketization basically means that the public service sectors, in terms of their service provision and delivery, operate themselves so as to cater for the market demands in a more effective and efficient manner, basing upon the market system, its principle of free competition and rules of supply and demand. Hence, the "marketization of education" refers to the running of educational goods and services within a market-oriented system based on the "free market" principle. Education reforms across the world have now been, basically, shifting toward marketization as

the new fundamental governance paradigm, in order to expand the incomes of the states (Brunner and Tillett 2005).

Thus, an increasing number of state-run universities in East Asia are now being transformed into independent legal entities to be run in a corporate manner. University presidents, or vice-chancellors, now act like chief executive officers (CEOs), with senior administrators acting as managers of corporations and enterprises, who are most concerned about maximizing returns for invested resources. By incorporating universities, market ideas, principles and mechanisms, as well as corporate management strategies and practices of the private sector, have all been adopted in improving higher education governance (Oba 2004; Mok 2005b).

In the past, academia was mainly locally-based. Prestigious universities were satisfied with their predominant positions from either a local or a regional perspective. The lack of competition has caused an elitist atmosphere in the academic circle of East Asia (Postiglione 2007; Yonezawa 2007). Nevertheless, globalization has broken down national borders and has blurred many differences among societies (Urry 1998), which has led to a systemization of world knowledge, upon which ideas, people and resources have been fused in various different ways (Denman 2000). In response to this global trend, the local academia now needs to establish linkages with the international academic communities for networking. This trend on the "internationalization" of higher education is interpreted and implemented as the part of the strategies for building "world-class universities", in achieving and surpassing international benchmarking in terms of global standards of teaching and research.

This movement gives the reason why world university league tables are now taken as a symbolic and powerful indicator to prove and advertise the standard of various universities in the marketized global education marketplace. Indeed, many of these

ranking exercises are taken seriously by many governments and universities, and particularly so in East Asia, and their influences are expanding rapidly in the academic field of the region (Mok 2007a). Meanwhile, university systems and related sectors within the region are attempting to produce their own global ranking systems.

Climbing up the world university league and reaching the “world-class” status are seen as an important step toward the “internationalization” of higher education. However, as Knight and De Wit (1995: 15) have pointed out that the “internationalization” of higher education was “the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of an institution of higher education”, with the international dimension to be introduced into higher education as “a perspective, activity or programme which introduces or integrates an international/intercultural/global outlook into the major functions of a university or college”.

Knight (2006: 18) has further indicated that “internationalization” of higher education involved both campus-based activities and cross-border initiatives with a wide diversity of activities, including:

International cooperation and development projects; institutional agreements and networks; the international/intercultural dimension of the teaching/learning process, curriculum and research; campus-based extracurricular clubs and activities; mobility of academics through exchange, field work, sabbaticals and consultancy work; recruitment of international students; student exchange programs and semesters abroad; joint/double degree programs; twinning partnerships; and branch campuses.

This statement reiterates that “internationalization” should not be limited into a dimension that only focuses on climbing up the world university league, but should target at the building of an international platform for the higher education sector.

One of the important aspects of the “internationalization” of higher education has to do with the erosions of boundaries among different educational systems across the globe. This is reflected by the rapid growth of transnational/cross-border higher education, which is “the movement of people, knowledge, programs, providers and curriculum across national or regional jurisdictional borders” (Knight 2006: 18). This emergence of cross-border education is based on the situation that higher education is now treated as a part of the tertiary industries under the framework of the “General Agreement on Trade in Service” (GATS) (Knight 2002). Consequentially, many countries in the East Asian region, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, have proactively opened up their education markets to foreign education providers in the forms of establishing off-shore campuses, running twinning programs, and so on.

Given a shared vision of promoting the two city-states as “regional hubs of higher education”, the above interpretation on the “internationalization” of higher education provides a strong rationale for the recent reforms and developments in higher education in both Singapore and Hong Kong. As advanced areas in the region, the two places have basically achieved a mission of catching up (that is, the massification of higher education), and are ready to move further ahead (that is, toward achieving “world-class status”). Thus, the “internationalization” of higher education is an opportunity that provides them with the ways to attract top personnel and institutions from across the globe to work and live in them, while boosting up their overall global competitiveness (Chan 2011).

Yet, it is noteworthy that the two city-states have adopted very different strategies in developing transnational higher education in their own territories. For Singapore, the establishment of off-shore campuses of top-notch foreign universities is a tactic used by the state in building “world-class universities” (WCUs), and has been proactively and initially invited

by its government (Lee and Gopinathan 2007). As for Hong Kong, transnational higher education is taken only as a “supplement” to the local higher education sector. While both the quality of institutions, and the forms of delivery, of transnational education are rather diverse in these two places (Chan and Lo 2007; Chan and Ng 2008a, 2008b; Huang 2006), both governments have concentrated their main efforts on establishing and promoting their higher education with a brand name of “world-class” status.

This paper primarily examines how the two city-states try to move along the direction in becoming the “regional hubs of education” within East Asia. By briefly looking into the recent higher education reforms in both Singapore and Hong Kong, the author tries to compare their similarities and differences in terms of their policy approaches and their fundamental mindsets, thereby reflecting what a “regional hub of higher education” really means to the two governments of these two cities.

EDUCATION REFORMS AND POLICY CHANGES IN EAST ASIA

As a result of the Uruguay Round negotiations, the “General Agreement on Trade in Services” (GATS) became a treaty in January 1995, for which all member nations of the WTO were its signatories. On this basis, the advent of transnational education is a phenomenon that is part and parcel of the globalization of trade in goods and services (McBurnie and Ziguras 2001), and its emergence is fuelled by the inclusion of higher education as an industry under this framework of the GATS (Knight 2002). Although a number of reasons may be provided for the internationalisation of higher education, including social, political and academic ones (Knight 2004), the fundamental reason is mainly economic in nature, and it all boils down to “the competitive rush for international students and their money” (De Vita and Case 2003: 384). A scholar quite explicitly

expresses this view by arguing that such education is driven by national economic objectives and “the dollar signs stamped on the foreheads of full fee-paying overseas students” (Matthews 2002: 377; as cited in Chan 2008).

In this way, because of its immense revenue-generating capacity as a commodity, higher education is now seen as an important knowledge industry, and also a prime instrument, for fuelling national economic competitiveness. In this regard, higher education provision has become a battleground in the international education marketplace (Gamage and Suwarnabroma 2006). In order to capture a piece of this pie, some countries are now trying to transform their own local and national higher education institutions into international higher education institutions, so as to actively compete with other global players in terms of international branding through the international university league tables. This tidal wave of globalization, and its concomitant processes of marketization and managerialism have now been sweeping across the East Asian region, and are affecting most of the countries within the region (Chan and Mok 2001; Mok and Chan 2002; Lo and Tai 2003; Mok and Tan 2004; Oba 2004; Chan 2007b; Chan and Lo 2007, 2008).

Conventionally, the education systems of both Singapore and Hong Kong can be characterized by a relatively centralized model, in which the nation-state plays a dominant role vis-à-vis the private sector (Mok and Tan 2004). While the Singapore government still continues to play a relatively heavy “interventionist role” over the past four decades, the Hong Kong government seems to be moving toward a more “neo-liberal” approach in letting the market run its own course, with as less governmental intervention as possible, under the slogan of “small government, big market”.

The higher education reforms that took place in the two cities since the 1980s have clearly demonstrated that the two governments have

subsequently introduced and promoted more private and managerial elements of competition into their higher education sectors, so as to eventually achieve their important goal of developing into “regional hubs of higher education”. Among the different strategies that they have employed, the incorporation of universities is one of those major strategies that they have in common.

Under this kind of policy context, many unprecedented changes in terms of the growing entrepreneurial culture in the higher education sectors of both Singapore and Hong Kong have been introduced. Competition has become a normal and widely accepted phenomenon among universities in the two cities, while “quality” and “accountability” are the themes commonly used in tandem with the new managerial culture. In trying to become more competitive in this globalized environment, some kind of a stratification of higher education sectors has already appeared. Quality assurance mechanisms and international benchmarking, with emphases on the monitoring of research outputs and the auditing systems of performance indicators and accountability, have become the main trend in higher education systems across the globe (Marginson 2007). This further rationalizes and justifies the importance of the international university league tables, which have now been taken as symbolic yet powerful indicators and instruments to show the standards of universities to various stakeholders in today’s competitive global education marketplace (Lynch 2006; as cited in Chan 2008).

By putting into perspective of the bigger picture that the two city-states of Singapore and Hong Kong are striving to become “regional hubs of higher education”, the present study focuses on the process of marketization of their higher education sectors. In examining and evaluating the recent education reforms in these two Asian city-states, the author tries to delineate the implications for the two governments in generating the marketized environments for their

higher education sectors, and argues that the two places are using the similar process of marketization but in a rather diverse way, upon which this can reflect their fundamental differences in their basic mindsets and underlying philosophies.

POLICY BACKGROUNDS OF SINGAPORE AND HONG KONG

Singapore

Before the 1990s, Singapore used a “state control model” to regulate its higher education sector. Under which, all matters of the universities were directly controlled and micro-managed by the Ministry of Education (MOE). By the mid-1990s, the Singapore government started to decentralize, and let the universities have more autonomy in the running of their own affairs (Mok and Tan 2004: 78-79). There has been three major stages of higher education reforms in Singapore in recent years.

The setting up of an International Academic Advisory Panel (IAAP) started the first stage, with changes in university admissions policy after its review by the MOE (1999). The second stage of higher education reforms in August 2000 saw the establishment of Singapore’s third university, the privately-owned Singapore Management University (SMU), in collaboration with the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. This founding of the SMU was a landmark in the history of Singapore’s higher education by the introduction of a different mode of governance and funding. It was subsidized by the government through providing land, campus building, regulating the tuition fees, and so on. Thus, it can actually be called as a “privately-run, publicly-funded” university (Mok and Tan 2004: 75). Intending to inject a certain degree of “internal competition” to the university sector, the Singapore government intends to make its higher education sector to become more vibrant and dynamic, by encouraging its three universities to develop their own

unique characteristics and niches (Lee and Gopinathan 2001).

The third stage of higher education reforms was closely related to the University Governance and Funding (UGF) Review, which was embarked by the MOE with a press release entitled *Greater Autonomy for NUS and NTU, Along With Greater Accountability* (MOE 2000a). Under this review, both public universities, namely the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) were given some operational autonomy, especially in terms of staff remuneration and a block budget for recurrent expenditure. The internal governance structures of the two universities were also strengthened, with their university Councils being encouraged to play a bigger role in giving inputs for strategic planning, and so on, to ensure that the universities are progressing according to their strategic plans and stipulated objectives, as well as in the overseeing of their internal quality assurance systems (Mok and Tan 2004).

MOE's other press release, entitled *Government Accepts Recommendations on University Governance and Funding* (MOE 2000b), further allowed more autonomous power, in terms of fiscal and personnel matters, to be granted to the two public universities of NUS and NTU. The autonomization is aimed at ensuring that public funds can be used in an efficient and effective, but accountable, way. Meanwhile, through restructuring schemes and the introduction of quality audit and control, universities in Singapore have since been governed by a more-or-less "business-like" model.

Another report by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) in 2002 has spelt out the Singapore government's new vision in becoming a "global schoolhouse" (Yeo 2003), which offers "a diverse and distinctive mix of quality educational services to the world" (MTI 2002), so as to be a reminiscent of the "Boston of Asia" (Duhamel 2004). This is done by offering "a cluster of mutually reinforcing,

complementary education institutions which vary in terms of student enrolment numbers, country of origin, cultural environment, nature of activity, academic level, academic discipline/subjects, research interests and price" (MTI 2002).

The economic slant is clearly articulated by Mr. George Yeo, who was the then Minister for Trade and Industry:

Education today constitutes 3.6% of our economy. Much of this is presently generated by government subvention in the public sector. We hope that with the development of the private education market, the total education sector can grow to about 5% of the economy in the next decade or so. Our objective is to make Singapore a "Global Schoolhouse" providing educational programmes of all types and at all levels from pre-schools to post-graduate institutions, and that attracts an interesting mix of students from all over the world. (Yeo 2003)

Having reflected upon the changing university governance models, evaluated the recent new experiences from SMU, and coupled with the recommendations from the Steering Committee on the University Governance and Funding (UGF) Review, the Singapore government has thus decided to introduce the "corporatization" project in changing the governance structures of public universities by 2005 (MOE 2005).

With this background, the University Corporatization Act in 2005 has incorporated both public universities of NUS and NTU, and has fundamentally changed the landscape of the university sector in the city-state. From then onwards, universities have become university companies (as in the cases of the NUS and NTU), or a private company (as in the case of SMU), all of which are now legal entities with full autonomy. Yet, the government remains to have its full control over the higher education sector through its national policy framework of higher education (Lee and Gopinathan 2007).

Hong Kong

The higher education system in Hong Kong has

basically transformed itself into a mass higher education system during the early 1990s, and has been moving from quantity to quality, and from increasing resource inputs to enhancing effectiveness by the mid-1990s (Cheng 2001). Managerial elements were brought in to reform Hong Kong's education sector with the publication of the Education Commission (EC) *Report No. 7*. Efficiency and cost-effectiveness, together with accountability, were introduced as an integrated strategy for building a quality culture in education (EC 1997).

Recent reforms in Hong Kong's higher education are closely related to the wider context of public sector reform that started in 1989 (Cheung and Lee 2001). In the *Review of Education System Reform Proposal* published in 2000, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government pointed out that there was an urgent need to provide opportunities and an environment for Hong Kong people to develop their global skills and competencies, and to build a culturally diverse, democratic and civilized society with a global outlook to strengthen Hong Kong's competitive edge in the knowledge-based economy when facing the new challenges ahead (EC 2000). Thus, the government decided to further expand the tertiary education sector by doubling sub-degree places by 2010 (Tung 2000).

These changes were spelt out clearly by the University Grants Committee (UGC), the executive arm of the HKSAR government in planning and implementing higher education policies. Other managerial approaches were proposed and implemented, including the de-coupling of the salary pay scale of academic staff from that of the civil service in order to enhance the freedom and flexibility of institutional management; and the increasing of the proportion of public funding based on how well they fulfill their distinctive roles and missions of the various institutions (UGC 2002). Beyond this, the UGC sought to develop a differentiated yet interlocking system, in which the different institutions

are expected to operate in distinctive roles, yet work together in deep collaboration (UGC 2004a, 2004b). These policy initiatives reflected the strong role that the UGC has played in steering the degree-awarding sector of higher education.

In response to the EC's recommendations, the then Chief Executive directly addressed this issue in his 2000 policy address by asserting that "Hong Kong is ready for the global economic competition" and that a "holistic reform of education for the challenge is needed" (Tung 2000). He later further articulated the ambition of promoting Hong Kong to be "Asia's world city, on par with the role that New York plays in North America and London in Europe" in his 2004 policy address (Tung 2004; Time 2008).

Furthermore, the HKSAR government also aims to develop Hong Kong as a "regional hub of higher education" (UGC 2002, 2004; Li 2006; EDB 2007; HKIEd 2008). Herein lies the challenges and opportunities that Hong Kong will have to face in the 21st Century in order to develop it to become "Asia's World City", as well as a regional centre which could attract talents from all over the world to study, work and live there.

The Review Report of UGC in 2002 has pointed out that:

The ambition to be Asia's world city is a worthy one, but there is no doubt that realization of that vision is only possible if it is based upon the platform of a very strong education and higher education sector. There are very good reasons for that which have to do with what universities are and what makes them excellent. (UGC 2002: 1)

Nonetheless, with limited resources, the HKSAR government has to reply more on other non-state financial sources. Thus, the government has adopted indirect public policy instruments to make all publicly-funded universities to be more proactive in searching for additional funding elsewhere. Universities in Hong Kong are under pressures to perform, and to become more innovative and entrepreneurial in nature (Mok 2005b).

The above descriptions thus provide a snapshot of the recent higher education reforms and developments in both cities. In light of the global trends of marketization and managerialism, the following sections will further examine the main features in both cities' higher education sectors by showing how they have been transforming themselves along the direction, principles and practices of marketization and internationalization.

RECENT HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS IN THE TWO CITIES

Singapore

Quality assurance mechanism. Business management ideas and practices were introduced into the university sector in Singapore since the mid-1990s, in response to the quest for accountability and efficiency. Such a concept is upheld by introducing the strategies of role differentiation and quality audit and control to ensure the quality of teaching and research with a rational distribution of resources (Lee and Gopinathan 2007).

At the strategic level, the Singapore government attempts to differentiate the role of each higher education institution in order to distribute the public resources rationally. In order to capture a bigger piece of the pie for an estimated US\$ 2.2 trillion of the world education market, a policy paper entitled *Developing Singapore's Education Industry* (MTI 2002) has recommended to further develop Singapore's economic potential into a "global schoolhouse" (that is, an international, and not only a regional, education hub), comprising of a three-tiered structure (see Figure 1), namely: (1) the first-tier would comprise mainly of the elite "world-class universities" that primarily carry out cutting-edge research and development, through inviting nine top-notch "world-class universities" to establish their off-shore campuses in Singapore (Chan and Ng 2008b); (2) the second-tier would mainly consist of

the existing local universities (namely: NUS, NTU, and SMU) that form its major bedrock; and (3) the third-tier would constitute other private universities and institutions focusing on teaching and applied research.

By so doing, it helps the government to achieve a rational distribution of resources in the higher education sector for its strategic planning. Up till now, the three local universities still continue to play a predominant role in Singapore's local tertiary education as its major bedrock. With the expansion of the higher education sector as a whole, the government targeted to raise the university cohort participation rate from the current 21% to 25% by 2010 (MOE 2003), to be further expanded to 30% by 2015 (MOE 2008). Therefore, the polytechnics are also brought into the scene as part of the third-tier structure in the present system by collaborating with overseas universities to offer tertiary programs (MOE 2007).

Among them, NUS and NTU are developed as comprehensive universities, which "initiated a number of innovative programs, including the broadening of undergraduate education, the introduction of a core curriculum, collaborations with top foreign universities, and the establishment of inter-disciplinary centres" (MOE 2007), while SMU is positioned to be a business and management university which mainly offers business curriculum. These three are seen as the top-tier universities within the city-state that comprises the second-tier; while the fourth newly-established autonomous university (the Singapore University of Technology & Design), other private specialized institutions, including local branches of foreign universities, and polytechnics are all regarded as the third-tier within the system (MOE 2007).

Apart from role differentiation, the Singapore government has strengthened its accountability framework of introducing its three important components, namely: (1) a policy agreement between

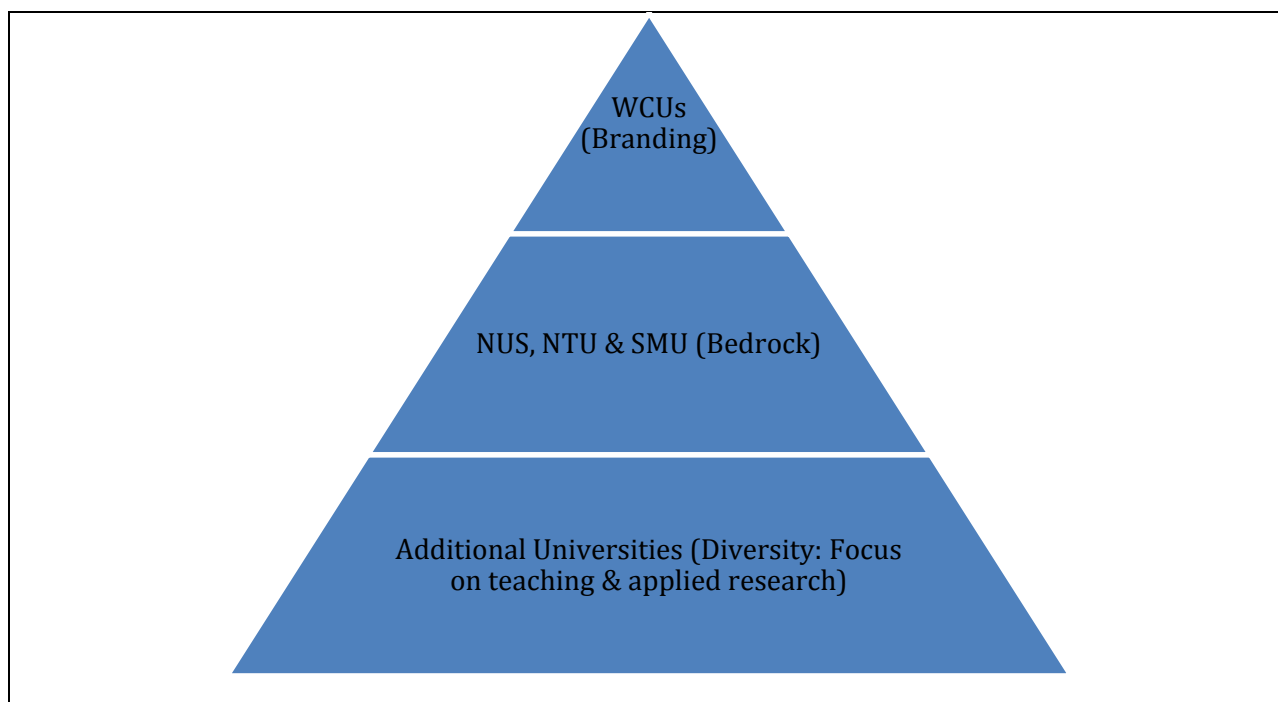


Figure 1. The Envisaged Three-Tier Structure of Higher Education in Singapore. Source: Olds (2007).

each university and the MOE; (2) a performance agreement embedded within each of the policy agreement between each university and the MOE; and (3) a quality assurance mechanism of the Quality Assurance Framework for Universities (QAFU) by the MOE. Furthermore, to execute the auditing process, MOE sets up an external panel called Higher Education Quality Assurance Unit (HEQAU) to evaluate and validate the universities' self-assessments against their institutional goals and performance targets. Accordingly, the universities would develop their own performance indicators used in QAFU.

This would then be followed by external challenge and validation. An external Review Panel would visit the university and conduct wide-ranging consultations with management, internal quality assurance managers, academic staff, student, and external stakeholders. Finally, as for a feedback and development stage, the university would report about what it has learnt from

the auditing exercise (Lee and Gopinathan 2007: 117-122; as cited in MOE 2001). Along with a Research Quality Review Panel (RQRP) to audit each university's research quality once every five years, the whole quality assurance mechanism was introduced, and became embedded in Singapore's higher education through the restructuring of the sector's landscape by implementing regular auditing exercises.

Corporatizing public universities. The Singapore government has comprehensively reviewed the university sector's landscape in 2003. The report entitled *Restructuring the University Sector: More Opportunities, Better Quality* has indicated the government's will to restructure the developmental landscape of the university sector by developing NUS and NTU into comprehensive universities, while maintaining SMU's niche for focusing on business management. This restructuring exercise basically follows the logic of assigning stratified missions to individual institutions so as to maximize the

effectiveness on the utilization of public resources. It also shows the need to retain limited scale of inter-university competition, as “managed” competition is seen as a conducive way to improve the quality of Singapore’s higher education (Lee and Gopinathan 2007: 130), and so the government decided to further autonomize the university sector, in terms of finance and governance, through the policy of corporatization.

Previously, universities are regarded as an extended arm of the government. However, when it first planned to build the third university (i.e., SMU) in following the US model, the government recognized that it really wants a more flexible model, which can cope with the highly dynamic global environment. Thus, it started to have the idea of incorporating the public universities. Thus, the MOE has been watching over the development and operation of SMU’s corporatized model very closely since its establishment. When such a model is seen to be successful, it is further promoted to the other two public comprehensive universities (Fieldwork Notes at SMU 2007; Fieldwork Notes at SMU 2008). This is the rationale behind the “corporatization project” of public universities in Singapore. The government hopes that incorporation would cultivate “a greater sense of ownership among the larger university community, ... (which) ... will help to engender a mindset change and instill a greater sense of pride among the key university’s stakeholders” so that consequently, “they will be encouraged to play a more active role in charting the future, and shaping the unique culture and identity of their universities” (MOE 2005: 46).

NUS and NTU, the two publicly-funded comprehensive universities, have been transformed from statutory boards to university companies since the promulgation of the University Corporatization Act in 2005, while SMU was founded as a private company right at the beginning in 2000. Being incorporated, universities were made further

autonomous as “not-for-profit” companies, in order that the governing Councils and the senior management might take on greater responsibilities for key decisions. After their becoming “autonomous universities”, the MOE expects that NUS, NTU, and SMU will have greater flexibilities in deciding their internal affairs, such as their governance, budget utilization, tuition fees and admission requirements, such that these flexibilities will enable them to differentiate among themselves, and to pursue their own strategies in bringing about the most optimal outcomes for their stakeholders (MOE 2005).

Attention is drawn to the balance between the role differentiation, on the one hand, and competition, on the other hand, among the different institutions. Although each institution is assigned a role in the university system, this project of corporatization encourages institutions to brand themselves differently. This has brought on a much higher intensity for marketing strategies while competing with each other in the newly-emerging higher education market (Chan 2009). SMU, for example, is pursuing an advantageous position among the business schools in Singapore, given the fact that it is being positioned as a business management institution right from the start (Fieldwork Notes at SMU 2007; Fieldwork Notes at SMU 2008). In fact, such a positioning is reflected by its hardware settings. The campus of SMU is located right in the Central Business District (CBD), while its buildings look very much like commercial ones. It can thus be said that SMU has successfully built its own image of a very “business-like” university.

The story of SMU rationalizes the recent actions of corporatization within the context of the policy on role differentiation and associated missions. It is a way to prevent higher education institutions from becoming static in their developments, despite the fact that they are required to follow an agreed role in the sector. In fact, the relationship between the government and university has been clearly stated in the *University Governance and Funding (UGF)*

Review Report which says:

Even as we seek to devolve greater autonomy to NUS, NTU and SMU, we remain mindful that our universities are vital national institutions and they have a public obligation to fulfill... Hence, we need to ensure that our universities' missions remain firmly aligned with our national strategic objectives. At the same time, our Steering Committee proposes that the Minister for Education appoint the university Council members. In addition, the Steering Committee recommends that an enhanced accountability framework for universities be introduced, comprising the existing Quality Assurance Framework for Universities (QAFU), and the proposed Policy and Performance Agreements between MOE and each university. (MOE 2005; as cited in Mok 2007: 10)

Overall speaking, the relationship between the universities and the MOE has become more of a contractual one under the above-mentioned circumstances.

Diversification of tertiary education providers. As the Singapore government aims to develop itself to be a "regional higher education hub", it has tactically and strategically invited "world-class" and "reputable" universities from abroad to set up their own Asian off-shore campuses in the city since the mid-1990s. Two foreign business schools, namely: the "INstitut Européen d'ADministration des Affaires (INSEAD or European Institute of Business Administration), and the Graduate School of Business-University of Chicago, were the first in setting up their off-shore branches in Singapore.

INSEAD is an international business school offering postgraduate programs in management, including MBA, Executive MBA and Ph.D. It has campuses in Singapore and France, and one school's centre in Abu Dhabi. The Asian campus in Singapore shares the equivalent status with the European campus in France; and they are "fully connected". Accordingly, there are 34 permanent faculty members and around 81 administrative and research staff working in the Singapore campus (INSEAD 2007).

The Graduate School of Business-University of

Chicago provides postgraduate courses in business management, and its campus in Singapore offers the same programs as those of its own campus in Chicago. In addition, the Asian program allows students to study in the Chicago and Barcelona campuses with an objective of providing the students with a wider global network across the world. In 2005, there are around 84 students enrolled in the Asian campus, including top executives from 15 countries throughout Asia, like Japan, China, India and Australia; while some of them are from the US and Europe (Shanmugaratnam 2005; as cited in Mok 2007b; Chan and Ng 2008a: 496-497).

The development of transnational higher education in Singapore is tactically and strategically taken as a way to "internationalize" its higher education sector and to pursue the status of a "world-class" brand-name eventually. However, these actions themselves have also diversified the provisions of higher education, thereby bringing in a combination of public and private, as well as foreign and domestic mixtures, in the higher education sector of the city-state. In this regard, the new governance model as promulgated by the Singapore government seems to be better suited to the new circumstances of the global competitive environment (Chan 2011; Chan and Ng 2008b).

Hong Kong

Each of the government-funded public universities in Hong Kong has its own Ordinance when it was first enacted in the legislature, which allows its status to be established as an independent legal entity. Under the Ordinance, each of the universities can set up its own University Council (just like the Board of Governors or Directors of a corporation), its Senate, Management Board, and other administrative departments, such that each of the institutions is running as an independent and autonomous legal entity in enhancing its own academic freedom and flexibility of institutional management, under the general guiding principles and parameters as set out by the UGC. It is in this sense

that the universities in Hong Kong have pretty much been incorporated right at the very beginning of their formal establishments (Chan 2009).

Quality assurance mechanism. Developing the entrepreneurial culture of higher education involves a shift toward a more bureaucratic and managerial accountability in universities, to replace the traditional type of professional accountability, with regulation on assessing “input-process-output” to be widely adopted by bureaucrats to uphold accountability (Chan 2002; Burke 2005). In Hong Kong, the imposition of a quality assurance system with an emphasis on role differentiation is seen as a means of regulation in the higher education sector.

A funding methodology, in which resource allocation was linked to the performance of each individual university, has started since 1991. The application of three methods to inform funding has been used to achieve this major objective (Chan 2007a), namely:

(1) Research Assessment Exercise (RAEs)—four rounds of RAEs were carried out in 1993, 1996, 1999 and 2006 respectively. In the assessment, the number of active researchers and the quality of research outputs in each “cost centre” were used as indicators for resource allocation. Active researchers referred to the faculty members in a “cost centre” with research output above the threshold set by the UGC, and the quality of research outputs was based only on the quantity of articles published in international peer-reviewed journals;

(2) Teaching and Learning Quality Process Reviews (TLQPRs)—two rounds of TLQPRs were carried out in 1997 and 2003 respectively, both of which mainly focused on the teaching and learning processes in the individual higher educational institutions (HEIs). To carry out the reviews, special Review Panels visited each of the HEIs in order to meet with academic staff, students, and senior administrators, so as to get a comprehensive and all-rounded picture of the institutions. After evaluating

the institutions with specific sets of criteria, feedback in the forms of comments and suggestions were given, with areas of improvement to be recommended, by the Review Panels;

(3) Management Reviews (MRs)—the first and only MR was carried out in-between 1998-2000. Similar to TLQPRs, special Review Panels of MRs visited the HEIs and interviewed the academic and administrative staff, together with student ambassadors. The interviews are qualitatively-based, and focused on such areas as academic and research administration, strategic planning, resource allocation, implementation of various plans, students support services, the usage of information technology, etc. The MR focuses on the management affairs of universities and was perceived as a “value-for-money” audit.

The UGC is mainly responsible for funding local universities, in terms of both recurrent grants and capital grants. As a major part of the government funding, the recurrent grants are to be determined basing upon a funding methodology that has been developed by the UGC (2005), which comprises of the four main components:

- (1) Teaching (about 68%);
- (2) Research (about 20%);
- (3) Performance- and role-related (about 10%);
- (4) Professional activity (about 2%).

As a whole, the quality assurance mechanism, while helping the government to inform funding, also serves as the carrot-and-stick to set up benchmarks for all universities to measure up to their standards, in order to improve their overall public accountability.

The UGC released a report in 2004, entitled *Hong Kong Higher Education: To Make a Difference, To Move With the Times*, in making a clear distinction on the role differentiations of the universities by providing them with different role statements and missions. In this process, only two universities, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), were considered as comprehensive universities, while the other six

public universities (namely: the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the City University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Baptist University, the Lingnan University of Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Institute of Education) all have their own specific roles and missions to play and perform (UGC 2004a). Beyond this, the UGC also seeks for developing a role-driven, yet deeply collaborative system (or a differentiated, yet interlocking system) of higher education in which each institution has its own role and mission, while at the same time being committed to extensive and deep collaboration with other institutions, in order that the whole system can sustain a greater variety of program-offerings at a higher level of quality with improved efficiency (UGC 2004b).

In addition, education as a public service is required to be publicly accountable. Accountability becomes a general value in legitimatizing the empowerment of the government through the various processes of marketization, corporatization and privatization. This argument can be supported by the increased role of the UGC in steering the different matters of role differentiations among institutions, institutional integration, and performance- and role-related funding mechanism. In this way, all public universities need to gain public funding via achieving good performance, and in accomplishing their specific roles and missions. This pitching in for funding means that there is a keen inter-institutional competition for public resources, with the emergence and formation of an “internal market” within the higher education sector.

This role differentiation, indeed, functions as a continuous sanction in upholding bureaucratic and managerial accountability. This shows that, although the UGC is not involved in the day-to-day operations of universities, it still plays a strong role in reinventing the landscape of tertiary education through quality assurance and resource allocation. This implies

that, while more managerial control and autonomy would be devolved from the government to the universities, on the one hand, it will also emphasize the trend for increasing public accountability and responsibility from the universities, on the other hand. This is, indeed, a clear reflection of the managerial and entrepreneurial approach toward the new relationship between the government and the higher education sector.

A diversified funding base. After the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, the local higher educational institutions (HEIs) are obliged to raise additional funding through various channels in response to budget cuts. Meanwhile, HEIs experience pressures from the government to demonstrate maximum outputs from the resources and inputs given to them. Thus, both the public and government demands have heightened the request for accountability and cost-effectiveness on these institutions. Hence, the ideas of cost-effectiveness and “value for money” have become an integral part of the new managerial doctrines, which help to generate a corporate and entrepreneurial competitive culture in the higher education sector. These are implemented in terms of new financial strategies, by which Hong Kong’s universities have attempted to diversify their financial sources in three main, among other, areas, namely: the adoption of the user-pays principle, the commercialisation of research outputs, and the mobilisation of the community’s resources.

In line with the fee-charging principle, local universities and their commercial extensions have started to run various kinds of distance-learning courses, conversion courses, commissioned courses and continuing education programs at different levels on a commercial basis, either by themselves, or in collaboration with overseas universities, or with the private sector. In this way, these actions helped to further facilitate the emergence and growth of the new education market, and will lead toward the commercialization of courses in order to cater for the

new market demands.

In addition, universities in Hong Kong are also engaging in the commercialisation of their research outputs so as to generate new sources of revenue. Universities are eager to commercialize and commodify their research outputs, and to expand on their commercial and business arms and activities. These dynamics of “academic capitalization” promote an ideological transformation in which knowledge and education is now being seen more as a commodity, the schools and universities as “value-adding” production units, while the parents and employers are to be seen as both consumers and customers respectively in the education marketplace (Chan 2000, 2002).

Fund raising has become a widely accepted way of gaining new financial resources by local universities through their active engagements in seeking social donations from private enterprises, social organisations and individual philanthropists. In fact, the Matching Grant Scheme introduced since 2003 was a move by the government to encourage the universities to generate revenues from alternative sources and sectors outside of government funding. For instance, the University of Hong Kong has received HK\$ 1 billion of donation from the Li Ka Shing Foundation in order to fund the university’s Faculty of Medicine (Ming Pao May 26, 2005).

Diversification of tertiary education providers. After an overall review of the education system in Hong Kong by the Education Commission in 2000, the then Chief Executive of the HKSAR government had called for the doubling of available places at the tertiary level in his Annual Policy Address, such that 60 percent of secondary school leavers would be able to receive tertiary education by 2010. “In achieving this target, the government will facilitate tertiary institutions, private enterprises and other organizations to provide options other than the traditional sixth form education, such as professional diploma courses and sub-degree courses” (Tung 2000: 23). This quotation implies that privatization, as an

efficient way to diversify the higher education sector in allowing students more freedom of choice, will be a likely trend with the expected rapid growth of self-financed associate degree programs by community colleges (Lo and Tai 2003). In fact, a few community colleges have been newly-established for recent years in offering associate degree and pre-associate degree programs in the local newly-emerging tertiary education marketplace.

It was in 2009 that educational services has been put into the Chief Executive’s Annual Policy Address as one of the six newly-focused industries, instead of the four traditional pillar industries of financial services, tourism, trading and logistics, and professional services (Tsang 2009: 11-12). It was back in 2007 that the Chief Executive has begun to recognize the significance of developing “a vibrant international school sector to underpin our aspiration to be a global metropolis and fortify our status as a regional education hub” (Tsang 2007: 15), and that several measures were proposed, including the increase of land supply for international schools and the relaxation of immigration policy, the loosening of employment restrictions before and after graduation, and so on, in order to start building up the “soft and hard base” for an education hub.

In terms of the “internationalization” of local higher education, the government believes that the existing eight publicly-funded institutions can be the prime engines for this goal (Chan 2011). Four out of the eight publicly-funded institutions have been listed as the top 200 world universities (as according to *The Thames Higher Education Supplement 2011*), and so this kind of achievement becomes a strong impetus for the HKSAR government to allow the local institutions to freely develop themselves. Due to the fact that the world university league tables have certain powers and authorities in judging the quality and ranking of the institutions, and their levels of internationalization, and so the local institutions have now been internationally recognized for their efforts and

achievements. Hence, in the eyes of the HKSAR government, the current development of the local higher education should be well preserved, and that the government should only act as a supporting role, instead of a leading one.

Most recently, there are signs that more newly-established private universities would soon be established in order to cater for the great demands for higher education from the youth population within the Pearl River Delta region of the nearby Guangdong province of the Mainland, including Shenzhen, and not just for the local Hong Kong population. The recent example is that HKU will become the first university in Hong Kong to set up an off-shore branch-campus just across the border, in cooperation with the Shenzhen Municipal Government. Professor Tsui Lap-chee, the President of the University of Hong Kong, claims that the whole project will be privately-run and will not be supported by public funds. At the same time, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong have also shown their intentions to set up off-shore branch-campuses in Shenzhen and Tongguan respectively (Oriental Daily February 22, 2010: A24; Sing Tao Daily February 24, 2010: A1; Apple Daily March 8, 2010: A16).

By now, universities are required to compete with each other and thus tend to reform their curricula in accordance to the market needs, with vocational subjects to become more popular in demands. To increase their competitiveness, universities are starting to revise their program structures to cater for more international student exchange programs, internship programs and double degree programs, among other ways. These curriculum changes have given students more choices, and can thus attract more students with diverse needs and expectations. All these changes are considered as some sort of marketization, which represents a move from the traditional teacher-oriented paradigm to a learner-oriented one (Mok 2005a).

At the same time, the government stopped funding all taught postgraduate programs, and so local universities will have to run these programs on a self-financing basis. Furthermore, in order to generate more incomes and resources from the wider public, the universities are also starting to offer more self-financing top-up degree programs, in order to cater for the newly-expanding demands of those associate degree graduates coming from the new sector of community colleges. All these new current developments are changing the overall landscape of the tertiary education sector in Hong Kong, which was used to be characterized by a strong state dominance with a tiny private sector.

However, the recent tertiary education reforms have provided some rooms for the emergence of the private sector in higher education. The newly-approved Shue Yan University, the first private university in Hong Kong, in 2007 was such a case in point. Clearly, the government has indicated its interest in exploring the private, or non-state sector as alternative sources in running tertiary education (Tung 2000). But, since there is a long history of public dominance in education, Hong Kong society has yet to develop a culture that will allow the private sector to become an important part of the tertiary educational service provider in the marketplace. Hence, this initial stage in the process of privatization of higher education in Hong Kong is still characterized by some kind of a “public-aided” approach.

In view of its current development, the tertiary education sector in Hong Kong seems to be splitting up into two parts by the government: the first part is the “conventional sector”, which is basically the UGC-funded institutions which are mainly responsible for developing research and development areas in “Centres of Excellence”, as well as for the training of both undergraduate and research postgraduate students; while the second part is the newly-emerging sector, which mainly offers sub-degree programs and continuing education. While the Hong Kong

government takes the former part as “the core” of its higher education sector and retains a strong steering role in it, the latter part is being regarded as a “supplementary part” and thus feels much more liberal and relaxed toward it.

Thus, with the rapid expansion of self-financing top-up degree programs, as well as other sub-degree and continuing education programs in recent years, this has further diversified the provisions of tertiary education in Hong Kong. Consequently, a newly-emerging higher education market has slowly formed. Basically, any institutions, whether local or overseas, may enter into the Hong Kong market if they want to, and the government provides a free market in this part without much interference, neither does it support any of the foreign higher educational providers entering into the territory (Chan and Ng 2008a: 490-494). Such a “laissez-faire” attitude is supported by the government leaders’ mindset and underlying philosophy in the effectiveness of the market mechanism, believing in the notion that “the market knows the best”.

If seen in this light, it is argued here that some kind of a three-tiered structure in Hong Kong’s higher education sector (see Figure 2), similar to but not the same as that of Singapore, may be slowly evolving, such that within the UGC-funded institutions (that is, “the core” part), the four universities that were ranked among the top 200 in the world (as according to *The Thames Higher Education Supplement 2011*), together with the remaining ones, will probably form the first-tier, with the other newly-established private universities and community colleges to be formed as the second-tier; while the newly-emerging “supplementary part” of other private colleges will probably form the third-tier of this new structural formation in the making.

However, considering the HKSAR government’s retreat in its financial commitments in taught postgraduate and sub-degree levels of tertiary education after the Asian Financial Crisis, together

with the local institutions’ eagerness in building further collaborations with foreign partners, it is believed that the introduction of transnational higher education in Hong Kong, which is a further addition to the newly-emerging “supplementary part” of the higher education sector, is a strategic move to develop Hong Kong to be a “regional hub of higher education” and is basically seen as instrumentally “profit-seeking” investments (Yang 2006; Chan and Ng 2008b).

DISCUSSION

The Singapore government is now also developing into a public-private mix mode. Its government has launched the university endowment fund as early as in 1991 to diversify the sources of university funding. NUS and NTU had to raise an additional S\$ 250 million on their own, to add on to an initial S\$ 250 million, in order to match up with another S\$ 500 million of start-up endowment funds from the government, thus making a total of S\$ 1 billion within a five-year period (Gopinathan and Morris 1997). SMU, as a private company, is funded by the government in the forms of supporting its campus buildings and various facilities, as well as in parts of its operating budget. The university, however, is required to raise its own endowment fund, while tuition fee is another main source of its financial arrangements (Fieldwork Notes at SMU 2007; Fieldwork Notes at SMU 2008).

Meanwhile, universities also set up spin-off companies to earn extra financial resources. NUS, for example, established its enterprise in 2001 as a university-level cluster to provide an entrepreneurial and innovative dimension to education and research. Its mission is “to be an agent of change, to promote the spirit of innovation and enterprise within the NUS community, and to generate value from university resources through experiential education, industry engagement and partnerships and entrepreneurship support” (NUS 2007).

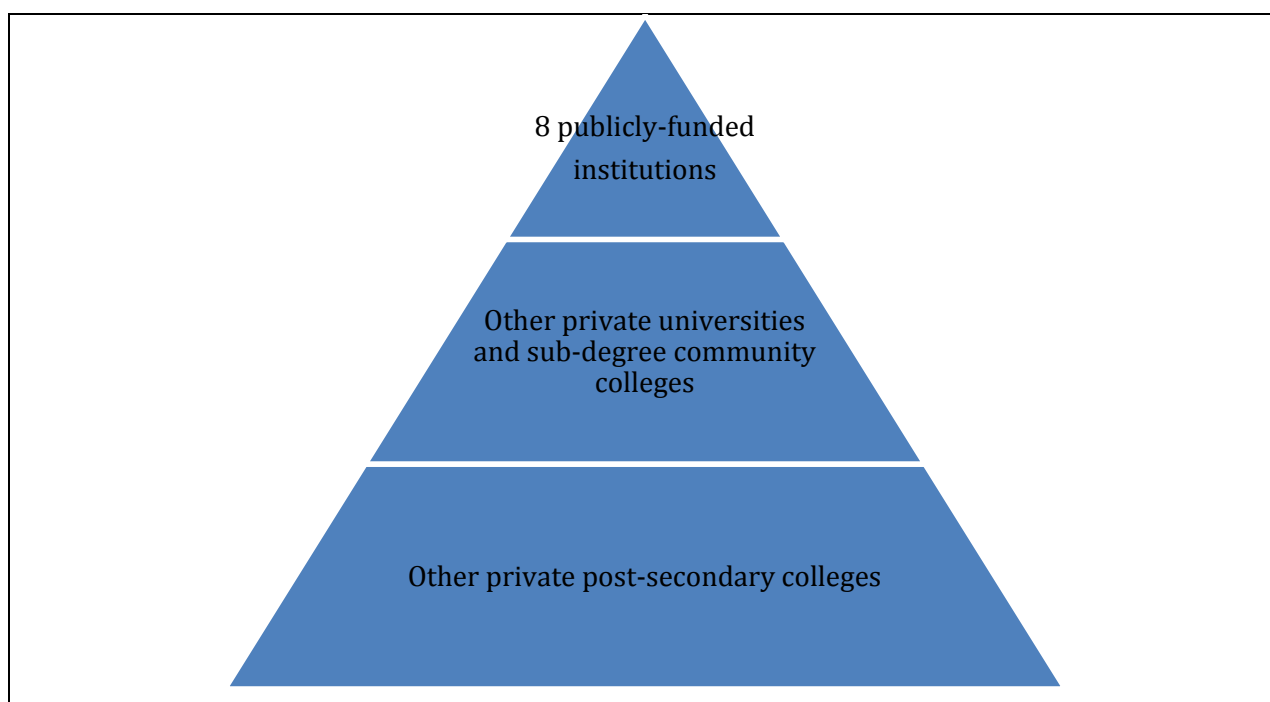


Figure 2. The Possible Future Scenario of a Three-Tier Structure of Higher Education in Hong Kong.

The corporatization of higher education in Singapore, with a different rationale to that of Hong Kong, is not primarily taken as a way to generate additional funding, though the NUS and NTU as university companies are required to achieve their missions and objectives within the limits of financial resources available to them. Financial constraints have never been a key consideration when planning for the future development of their higher education, judging from the speeches of their government officials. Instead, they repeatedly stress the importance of imposing innovation and diversity in higher education so as to nurture students to become creative and innovative talents (Shanmugarantnam 2005; Goh 2005; as cited in Ng 2007).

Yet it is to be realized that incorporation, together with decentralization and marketization, do not necessarily lead to a decline of the role of the state in the higher education sector. In contrast, the adoption of “business-like” model may provide new and

rational means to strengthen state’s control in university governance. Both the two governments, for example, have strengthened their quality assurance mechanisms in order to make universities more accountable and efficient. Hence, the RAE, TLQPR and MR exercises as implemented by the UGC in Hong Kong, as well as the QAFU as exercised by the HEQAU and the RQRP in Singapore, basically serve the same purpose of assuring the quality of teaching and research of the universities, and have them to be publicly accountable. But, more importantly, they are taken as efficient instruments of the carrot-and-stick to drive the universities in developing toward the roles and missions that both governments want to see happened.

In this sense, these strengthened quality assurance mechanisms enable both governments to “govern at a distance” in a more decentralized governance setting (Jayasuriya 2005: 24). While the two governments do share a similar role in terms of the stratification of

their higher education sectors, it also reflects upon their different views and perspectives of their own roles as the “funder” of higher education.

The HKSAR government has clearly indicated its interest in exploring the private or non-state sectors as alternative sources in the running of tertiary education. But, since there is a long history of public dominance in higher education, Hong Kong society has yet to develop a culture that would allow the private sector to become an important part of the higher educational service provider in the higher education marketplace. Hence, the HKSAR government has adopted a “public-aided approach” to transform the higher education landscape from a public dominance to a public-private mix. The adoption of the fee-charging and user-pays principles, as well as the development of universities’ partnerships with business/industry and their commercial arms, can all be regarded as the ways for the university sector to generate new financial sources.

In contrast, the generation of non-state sector inputs is set as a major goal, when the then Chief Executive of Hong Kong called for the further expansion and reform of the tertiary education sector back in 2000 (Tung 2000). Such an argument has been empirically supported with evidence as shown by the two governments’ reactions toward the problems of financial stringency and resource shortage after the Asian Financial Crisis. While the HKSAR government has continuously reduced the recurrent grants for its tertiary education sector since the late 1990s to mid-2000s, the Singapore government has, instead, subsequently increased its recurrent expenditures on its higher education sector (Singapore Department of Statistics 2001).

In view of these divided standpoints, it can be seen that these very much reflect the different mindsets of the two governments. On the one hand, for the leaders of Singapore, the incorporation reforms would merely mean a rational instrument to streamline the higher education sector under the strong competitive tide of

globalization. Quality control would be the primary consideration in the progress of granting autonomous power. Hence, in keeping the higher education sector regulated through a more “business-like” model, it helps to achieve the dual goals of “autonomy and accountability” through the process of re-regulation. Furthermore, this strategic move by the government, in introducing a competitive culture and environment into Singapore’s higher education sector is to set the scene for its future development as a “regional higher education hub”. Seen in this light, the “corporatization project” is one of the major strategic moves that its government tries to empower its internal stakeholders, including its university administrators, academics, students and parents alike, to get ready for a very competitive external global environment of the 21st century. In this way, the higher education reform helps to set a stage for the state, the private sector, and its wider population to become more competitive in this era of globalization.

On the other hand, with the Hong Kong leaders’ mentality, the corporatization of higher education would mean the maximisation of “value for money” and cost-effectiveness in the higher education sector. “Academic entrepreneurship” (Leydsdorff and Etzkowitz 2001), therefore, has been upheld by its leaders in order to transform the governance framework of the higher education sector into that of the business sector, which has been underpinned by the “neo-liberal” ideology and philosophy. Thus, with the slogan of “small government, big market”, the state is using this “corporatization project” as the major strategic move to help the business sector to grow and thrive, in the name of providing more equal opportunities for its local population in receiving tertiary education.

The argument by the author that, different local agendas have been implemented by employing similar global reform approaches, has been further supported by looking more deeply into the underlying differences behind the attitudes and mindsets of the

two governments during the process of introducing overseas higher educational providers into their higher education sectors.

In Singapore, the government proactively involves in this newly-emerging part of higher education by linking up this “corporatization project” with the other strategic plans on the “internationalization of higher education” and the building of “world-class universities”, in order to achieve its ultimate goal of becoming a “regional higher education hub”. Thus, the number and the kind of institutions entering into Singapore’s higher education market has been extremely limited, selective, and tightly controlled under strict government scrutiny. Only those regarded as world-renowned universities would be invited to set up their branches in the city-state, while the government would close down those campuses seen to be “under-performed”. The closure of the Division of Biomedical Sciences of Johns Hopkins University in Singapore in 2006 was such a case in point to demonstrate the strong government position on this matter (Lee and Gopinathan 2007: 128), showing that its government has wilfully set up the scene in a very well-controlled situation.

The HKSAR government, however, tends to see this newly-emerging transnational higher education as only a “supplementary part” of its holistic picture on the higher education landscape, and thus leave it pretty much to the market to decide on its future existence and modes of delivery, while the major universities that have been funded by the UGC still continue to remain as the “core” part of its higher education sector, and upon which the government will continue to take a much closer look with stringent scrutiny. In this regard, the HKSAR government itself seems not too keen in forcefully determining the future growth and direction of its tertiary education through its “let-it-be” policy, while leaving the business sector to play out its own way.

After all, the emergence of cross-border education is fuelled by the inclusion of higher education as an

industry under the framework of the “General Agreement on Trade in Service” (GATS) (Knight 2002). As a consequence, many countries in the region, such as Hong Kong and Singapore, have actively opened their education markets to foreign education providers for them to establish off-shore campuses, implement twinning programmes and so on (Chan and Ng 2008a: 489; Chan and Ng 2008b). It is in this sense that the introduction of transnational higher education in the Hong Kong scene only serves as an incentive that the government uses to fuel its economic competitiveness within the region, in the name of providing more equal opportunity and accessibility of tertiary education for its population.

In sum, both governments in the two places push universities to move toward a more business-like model through corporatization. The HKSAR government has generated a corporatized environment for education by introducing quality control through market and private elements, while the Singapore government adopted a more thorough approach by corporatizing the public universities through legislation. Nevertheless, despite of their similar agendas, these incorporated practices of the two cities do not necessarily reflect that they have the same governing visions and missions. Indeed, present discussions have strongly and empirically reflected that different models of local dimensions and interpretations have been used in adopting the global practices, thus projecting different values into their governance systems and behaviours as a consequence.

Turning to the government’s role in its relationship with university, it is believed that the university governance in the two Asian cities is influenced by the emergent trend of “managerialism”, by which the newly-granted institutional “autonomy” is offset by the requirements of upholding public “accountability”. Thus, the fostering of “autonomy” does not necessarily mean an empowerment of the academics, but instead it can be the establishment of a more “de-centred” site of governance allowing the

government to “govern at a distance” (Jayasuriya 2005: 24). In this sense, the term “centralized decentralization” would adequately describe the constitutional changes in the state-university relationship. In distinguishing the divided governing visions in the two places, it can be said that the Singapore government adopts a much more “thoroughly-regulating approach” to drive the development of its higher education sector, while the Hong Kong government has adopted a “public-aided approach” to transform its higher education landscape from a public dominance mode to one of a public-private mix.

In the case of Singapore, innovation and diversity are supported within some assigned areas, though “autonomy” is highlighted and stressed, and it is realized that each part of the higher education sector is well directed by the government. As a professor from NUS said, “the government will change what it does not like. It can change things informally, though there is a formal system. At the same time, university leaders are close friends of government, and they would work within the parameters as set out” (Fieldwork Notes at NUS 2007; Fieldwork Notes at NUS 2008).

The cases in point have thus reflected the fundamental differences in the mindsets and underlying philosophies that were held by the two governments of the two cities concerning their governance of the higher education sector. By putting the above-mentioned discussions together, it is quite clear that both higher education systems of Singapore and Hong Kong have been affected, in one way or another, by the various policies and strategies of marketization and managerialism.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, five major observations can be revealed from the present study:

Firstly, the processes of marketization and

managerialism of higher education in the two city-states took on rather different approaches, due to the fact that their overall developmental strategies of aspiring to be “regional hubs of higher education” are based upon very different mindsets, in terms of governance of higher education. On the one hand, the HKSAR government officials took on a more “neo-liberal” policy approach in managing the higher education sector, by allowing the market forces to play a much greater role in provision and financing, while the government mainly plays the roles of “facilitator and moderator”. On the other hand, the Singapore government officials saw themselves to be playing a major role in terms of provision, regulation and financing of the higher education sector, within a much more managed and regulated market by the state so as to boost up its overall competitiveness in becoming a “regional hub of higher education”;

Secondly, in providing the necessary policy frameworks for their further developments as “regional hubs of higher education”, the two governments need to strategize and diversify their higher education sectors in order to bring about further economic development in the long-run, in the name of the “knowledge-based economy”. The “internationalization” of the higher education sector, together with cross-border higher education, have all zeroed in for this game of global competition, such that all will have to be compared and matched with quantifiable performance indicators, and to be finally epitomized in the league tables of universities across the whole world, in the name of international benchmarking;

Thirdly, under this strong tide of marketization and managerialism in higher education, the universities in these two places have perceived themselves as “business enterprises”, and have to adopt business ideas, principles and mechanisms in their management, marketing and other ways of doing business. Thus, their administrators will have to be more sensitive to the changing market needs, and try to differentiate themselves from others through

various mission statements, appraisal and auditing mechanisms, strategic plans, marketing strategies, public relations and so on; while academics in the universities do feel the pressures to become more accountable and transparent, both professionally and managerially, in terms of their research and publication outputs, consultancies, evaluations of their teaching performances, involvements in various community and voluntary services, and so on. Characteristics such as performance-based merit system, marketization and managerialism are important indications of this new paradigm of governance model;

Fourthly, the Singapore experience tends to work better for the benefits of the whole community by empowering its internal stakeholders, including its university administrators, academics, students and parents alike, so as to get ready for a very competitive external global environment of the 21st century. In this way, its higher education reform helps to set a stage for the state, the private sector, and its wider population to become more competitive in this era of globalization, while that of Hong Kong is mainly to help with the business sector to grow and thrive, in the name of providing more equal opportunities for its local population in receiving tertiary education;

Finally, the higher education sectors in these two places are now facing much more pressures and competitions from their counterparts in the global marketplace of higher education. Hence, different higher education stakeholders, including governments, higher educational institutions, academic professionals, student bodies, and so on, all are now expected to respond to these changing demands and circumstances proactively and strategically, in order to increase one's own competitiveness and to be at the cutting-edge. In this way, some kind of a stratification of the higher education sector has slowly evolved, such that institutions of lesser status are trying hard to rise up in the international league tables, while institutions of long-standing are now also trying hard to further

demonstrate their overall competitiveness by exhibiting the so-called "world-class" attributes in order to win out in this game of global competition.

Marketization, in association with quality assurance, market principles and practices, and managerial elements, has become an important theme for reforming the higher education sectors in both Singapore and Hong Kong. It is obvious that ideologies, like neo-liberalism and managerialism, do function tremendously in shaping and directing the implementation of higher education reforms, and they will most probably continue to be the key governing philosophies in the two cities for many years to come.

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