

A Brief Analysis on Features of Integration Development of Hong Kong's Higher Education

Mingfu Wang, Zhaolin Jiang

Abstract: The paper analyzes the higher education in Hong Kong, which is greatly influenced by Great Britain because of a long period of colony and its first university being established according to the British model. After the Second World War, Hong Kong's higher education went through the first development peak in the fifties and sixties and the second one from the mid eighties to the present day. Especially in the second peak, Hong Kong's higher education showed the tendency of integration development and the features are obvious. Studying the phenomenon is of great significance, not only to the research of the British model of higher education but also to the development of higher education in the Asian-Pacific area and rest of the world.

Keywords: Hong Kong; higher education; integration development; UGC

The authors briefly analyzes the higher education in Hong Kong is greatly influenced by Great Britain because of a long period of colony and its first university was established according to the British model. After the Second World War, Hong Kong's higher education went through the first development peak in the fifties and sixties and the second one from the mid eighties to the present. Especially in the second peak Hong Kong's higher education showed the tendency of integration development and the features are obvious.

I. The Basic Situations of Higher Education Development in Hong Kong

The higher education in Hong Kong originated from the school of Western medicine. In the end of the 19th century when establishing universities in Great Britain were in the ascendant, as a British colony, Hong Kong was also involved. As a result,

the Hong Kong Government put forward the program of changing the famous school of Western medicine into a university and analyzed advantages and the disadvantages. In 1911, University Regulations of Hong Kong were issued: symbolizing the formal establishment of a university, and it was the first institute of higher education in Hong Kong. Thereafter, Hong Kong's higher education entered into the gradual development of the primary stage. In the 1950s, Hong Kong's higher education met the first development peak: not only were the numbers of enrolled students steadily increasing but also more than ten colleges and universities were founded. E.g. Xinya College, Chongji College, Allied University etc. In 1963, Hong Kong Chinese University was founded and composed of the three mentioned above. Till the mid of 1980s, the development of Hong Kong's higher education was inharmonious with the demands of its economy. Hong Kong's higher education, howev-

Ming fu Wang, Senior researcher, works in Linyi Normal University, 276005. E-mail: zzb@lytu.edu.cn;
Zhao lin Jiang, Professor, works in Linyi Normal University, 276005. E-mail: wsc@lytu.edu.cn.

er, made a great progress. One of the most important factors is related with Hong Kong's social status of colony; for the British government had such a stipulation that said only one university could be established in a colony. From the late years of 1980s up to today, two factors suggest Hong Kong's higher education will enter into the second development peak and make steps into the new times of integration development. Considering the enrollment rate of fresh university students for Bachelor degrees from colleges and performing arts colleges granted by UGC, from 1981 to 1984 only 2.2%~2.5% young people of the right age (aged 17 to 20) could enter eight universities. However, from 1984 to 1994, the number dramatically increased from 2.5% to 15%; and in the one year between 1995 to 1996 it rapidly increased to 18.4%. Up to now the enrollment rate of freshmen in Hong Kong's higher education is over 18%, but the gross enrollment rate is 50%.

The rapid increase of the gross enrollment rate only reflects an aspect of Hong Kong's higher education in the recent 20 years, but the integration development embodies developing features, meanwhile the integration development is also an important means for the fast development in the second peak of Hong Kong's higher education.

II. The Features of Higher Education Development in Hong Kong

The integration development of Hong Kong's higher education means the integration operation in the process of development, namely, the coordinative campaigns in the policy stipulation for legislation, supervision and grants, in the planning for the structure, orientation, model and different levels, and in the strategic operation for academic degrees, courses, subjects and finance. We will analyze the main features of integration operation of Hong Kong's higher education from the following aspects.

1. The core function of University Grants Committee (UGC)

Hong Kong University Grants Committee

(UGC) was founded in October, 1965, and it is a non-government organization existing between universities and the government that has been operated according to the principles, operation models and procedures of British University Grants Committee and its exact functions as follows: (1) Make an appropriation and supervised of the use of funds. UGC offers the government many pieces of proper suggestions on making an appropriation and supervises the use of funds according to the number of students to be enrolled, fostering goals and granted courses ratified by the government. (2) Carry out quality guarantees and supervise education qualities. (3) Offer colleges and universities suggestions on international academic levels and regulations, and supervise the academic levels of colleges and universities. (4) Supply strategic ideas and opinions, and decide on and carry them out. At present, universities granted by UGC have increased to eight and they are just for the better colleges and universities in the structure of Hong Kong's higher education. Therefore, the granted guidance of UGC decides the future of the four-year colleges and universities and at the same time settles the future of the overall development of Hong Kong's higher education. Considering the functions, UGC is principally a go-between organization and it doesn't have the administrative functions, but its authorities are concerned about every aspect of colleges and universities mentioned above, due to this, the organization plays a core role in Hong Kong's higher education.

2. The scientific and reasonable mechanism of appropriation makes sure the integration development of Hong Kong's higher education. The governmental appropriation is the main source of funds to operate colleges and universities, although all of them carry out the policy of collecting tuitions. This is showed in the total routine income of the eight universities granted by UGC from 1994 to 1995. In this year, the total amount of funds granted to the eight colleges and universities by the government added up to 7,628,000,000 HK dollars; research subsidy

260,000,000 HK dollars; tuition income 1,726,000,000 HK dollars; donation and other incomes 1,022,000,000 HK dollars. The subsidy owned by UGC is divided into the routine and the non-routine, the former is mainly used to subsidize the teaching and research activities of colleges and universities; and the latter for the rebuilding, expansion, repair of the basic projects, which is usually done once a year. From 1998 to 2001 the government subsidized 40,000,000,000 HK dollars to the eight colleges and universities.

The strict systems of appropriation avoid any waste of universities' funds; it not only improves the benefits but also ensures the scientific ness and rationality of universities' subjects' construction, specialty establishments, scale development and etc.

3. The coordinative action among the government, UGC and universities has set up the reasonable systems of higher education. The government offers universities' development good environments. The government gives the macro guidance and control to colleges and universities by means of academic assessment, appropriation, registration, and etc. Every college and university must follow academic norms and accept related academic assessments. Some of the professional colleges are combined and changed into universities due to the governmental influence. And some adjust their subject structures on their own and raise the levels on the whole and become universities. Some have a very good beginning and seek for excellence, and in a short period of time become universities, the best example is Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Hong Kong's higher education has established reasonable systems of structure and its reasons are as follows: First, considering types of colleges and universities, universities of research, universities of technological development and colleges of applied technology have all realized that technological talents are mutually exchanged in the fields of fostering theoretical research, technological development and application. Among colleges and universities of science

and technology, from privately-established colleges and universities to professional colleges of education, university of technology, City University, university of science and technology, all of them have clear levels and strongly interactive systems of education. Secondly, considering university-running characteristics: the modes of university-running are versatile, they are run by the government, churches, communities or private people. Thirdly, considering subjects, colleges and universities can be divided into comprehensive, science, commerce, normal and technical ones with many or single subject. Fourthly, a considering courses of teaching; they include many models of full-time, part-time, research, completing courses. In this system of education, every college and university has its own orientation, responsibility, mutual coordination and cooperative development, and bears the burden of developing Hong Kong's higher education together.

4. The integrated academic assessment and the awarding system of academic degrees allow Hong Kong's higher to maintain a high quality in the process of fast development. Generally speaking, in the process of popularizing the higher education, the decrease of higher education quality can't be avoidable because the enrolment expansion has permitted the admission qualifications to be low and the educational funds are also insufficient. Hong Kong's higher education is not greatly influenced. The main reasons are as follows: The scale of expansion of Hong Kong's higher education is relatively proper, the educational investment has increased over time and, the system of collecting tuition is carried out, so the problem of short educational funds is basically solved. In addition, Hong Kong has strict norms and mechanism of academic assessment. Besides UGC mentioned above, in 1990 the establishment of Hong Kong Academic Assessment Bureau symbolized the perfection of the academic assessment mechanism. This organization has been able to design on its own, to assess Hong Kong's academic courses and to carry out the system of academic degrees in accordance

with Hong Kong's reality and develop the graduates education. Hong Kong has set up the independent institute of academic assessment, so Hong Kong's higher education has been widely recognized; it also reflects the quality and credibility of Hong Kong's higher education from another aspect.

5. The new tendency of Hong Kong's higher education is to mutually complement resources, to display advantages together, and to seek for excellence. In order to deal with the competitive situations of universities between South China and Hong Kong, in order to also face the international competition and in order to particularly make sure that Hong Kong's higher education has an important international status and plays an important role in commerce, social science and technological innovation in Hong Kong and abroad, in 1990s Hong Kong Government put forward the program of "The Center of Excellent Subjects". UGC suggests that the related measures should be soon carried out to promote the program to be put into effect. For example, universities employ the internationally well-known leaders of subjects, offer enough funds and increase the number of overseas students for graduate admission. So every university provides new academic degrees and goals of new subjects that are fit for its own features under the guidance of marketing. The eight colleges and universities granted by UGC bear the burden of seeking for excellence, and the other colleges and universities take the responsibilities of popularizing the education.

In the process of seeking for excellence, the cultivated taste and the influence of Hong Kong's higher education have been promoted again, and the influence of brand universities continuously expands. For example, Asia Weekly issued the top 20 of Asian best universities in 1999; three from Hong Kong, but none from the continent of China. In 2002, the global universities ranked, Hong Kong University and Hong Kong Institute of Technology ranking first. In 2003 the courses for EMBA in the Commercial School of Hong Kong Institute of Technology ranked ninth in

the world. In 2004, China top 10 universities of World University list of 2003 was issued by The Research Institute of Higher Education in Shanghai Jiaotong University, among which Taiwan had two universities, the Continent of China and Hong Kong having four universities each.

III. The Understanding of Integration Development of Hong Kong's Higher Education

The operation of integration development of Hong Kong's higher education presents the features that are excluded in the above-mentioned contents. The pluralistic operations of colleges and universities, the market fostering, the target realization of entering the community center and serving the community and the uniform educational system and academic degrees have all been completed in the process of integration operation. In a word, the integration and development forms the most outstanding features of the development of Hong Kong's Higher Education.

The way to the integration development of Hong Kong's higher education is not accidental because the first important factor is the objective demand of the economic development to the cultural education. The 20 has been an important transitional period of economy. Under the guidance of the market-oriented economy, Hong Kong's higher education unconsciously leads to the coordination and the cooperation by the ways of subject adjustment, college combination, brand promotion and service for community. Secondly, from the analysis of political factors, Hong Kong, a British colony, was changed into a China's special administrative district with the policy of one nation, with two political systems when it returned to China. Hong Kong's politics, economy, culture and ideas were greatly affected and its higher education faced the fiercely competitive pressure from home and abroad. On the other hand, because of the change of political background, the government's interference to the education became active, so it was very convenient for the integration development of Hong Kong's

higher education. Thirdly, from the internal parts of colleges and universities, the same problems met by Hong Kong's colleges and universities are to blend with markets and to gain more resources to deal with the competition. In order to solve this, problem the way of cooperative development is the best choice. The better management and operation mechanism is also an important factor for the integration development of Hong Kong's higher education. It mainly shows that UGC acts as the role of go-between between universities and the government and it is a buffer mechanism of contradictories going on between universities and the government. The operation of this mechanism urges the eight colleges and universities to be integrated. Hong Kong's academic mechanism leads all kinds of colleges and universities to realize their role, quality, goal orientations from the more extensive fields. At last Hong Kong's higher education takes on the situations of harmonious, mutual integration development.

The successful operation of integration development of Hong Kong's higher education is of great significance. First, it proves the advancement and the extensive adaptability of management models of British higher education. Hong Kong's higher education has not much changed, and it still belongs to British models, although it has experienced two historical periods of British colony and China's Special Administrative District in the recent 20 years. UGC plays a core role in the integration development of Hong Kong's higher education, and it fully proves that it is still advanced with the idea of establishing a buffer mechanism between universities and the government. UGC in Great Britain and British Commonwealth has been cancelled, but it works well in Hong Kong and its achievements have received worldwide attention, so it is worth studying this phenomenon.

Second, the pursuit of excellence and the outstanding achievements of setting up uniform universities by the operation way of integration of Hong Kong's higher education have a great significance to the countries and regions that have poor higher education in Asia and in the world. Third, the way to the integration development of Hong Kong's higher education makes colleges and universities of different levels and types have a clear orientation and target, and realize the overall and coordinative development.

The integration development of Hong Kong's higher education should be distinguishably understood. The integration operation has left Hong Kong's higher education real problems, for example, it is doubtful to the uniform three-year schooling system comparing with the uniform four-year schooling system adopted internationally, it is not in coincidence with other countries. Now the problem is under salvation. In addition, the higher education blended in communities and markets has also brought about a new problem, the uncertainty of Hong Kong's economy makes the plan of students' admission and the establishment of subjects changeable, therefore, the change can be negative for the academic development of universities.

References:

- [1] LIU Hong-yi. LIU Jia. *Towards the International Higher Education-----A General Research of Hong Kong's and Shenzhen's Higher Education*. Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004
- [2] FENG Zeng-jin. *The Education of Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Taiwan in the New Century*. Beijing: The Education Press of People, 2003
- [3] PAN Mao-yuan. *A Hundred Years' Higher Education*. Guangzhou: Guangdong Higher Education Press, 2003