

Globalization and sustainability of the community college in the Asia-Pacific region: the case of Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland

全球化與持續發展中的亞太地區社區學院：中國大陸與香港的個案

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Abstract

This paper explores the effect of globalization on the community college in China's two systems - Hong Kong and the mainland, and the extent to which globalization was resisted in the implementation of the American community college model. It also assesses the future prospects of the community colleges in these two regions, especially in terms of the values of democracy and equality that helped sustain it in the United States.

Keywords

higher education, community college, globalization, China education, associate degree, education policy

摘要

本文旨在探討在全球化的影響下，中國兩個不同制度的地區，即大陸與香港在實踐以美式社區學院為楷模的概況。同時亦評估這些社區學院在兩地區的未來發展，特別是對民主價值及平等理念等，而這些觀念向來都是美國社區學院所珍視的辦學理念。

關鍵詞

高等教育，社區學院，全球化，中國教育，副學士，教育政策

Introduction

As economic globalization - the rapid expansion and integration of global networks of trade, finance, and commerce, has overwhelmed the nation state, there have been far reaching implications for a whole range of political, social, and cultural activities affecting the lives of most people on the planet (Feathermore, 1990). Actual and perceived globalization has given rise to a number of new cultural models for the nation state to emulate and there is a whole range of international consultants and associations that take these models forward on a global scale (Meyer, 2001). These world cultural models usually espouse such universal values as the individual, community, equity and justice, and link with social movements for the environment, human rights, poverty reduction, and educational opportunity. The models have propelled the nation state, including those of developing countries, to measure their degree of modernization on the basis of international standards. Moreover, this form of global participation provides the nation state with a great deal of legitimacy. One of the main areas has been in education. As basic education becomes popularised around the globe and globalization transforms many places into knowledge economies, the pressure to expand upper secondary and tertiary education, at low cost, increases. It is in this context that community colleges (CCs) have become an attractive option.

For a number of reasons, CCs are becoming increasingly commercialised and globalized. They provide a new dimension for standardization that link it with the United States, as well as being a new model for dealing with the changes in the economy and the demand for higher education. CCs provide multinational companies, especially those from the USA, a familiar standard upon which they can base the educational qualifications for their worker recruitment. Moreover, CCs suit their business planning

strategies in developing countries, which aim to replicate the conditions during their take-off stage in the USA market several decades ago, when CCs provided skilled workers through terminal vocational programs. CCs also interlock with the rest of the educational system, which conforms to the USA 6+3+3 system. Finally, for the new cultural modelers, CCs provide support for the global principles of economic equality and opportunity - something which provides stability for the economy, and legitimacy for the nation state.

Nevertheless, the integration of CC models exported as a result of globalization, whether from the USA or elsewhere, is a complex process. CCs have to find ways to situate themselves within the unique historical, socio-cultural and national value context of the receiving economy. That is the problem of this paper. This paper is divided into the following sections: (1) Identifying the characteristics of the American community college; (2) Describing the characteristics of its exportation to China's two systems; (3) Comparing the policies that aim to adapt CCs to the Hong Kong and mainland contexts; (4) Discussing the long term sustainability of CCs in Hong Kong and China.

The Origin of the Community College: The United States of America

CCs are an American invention. The first one was established in the state of Illinois in 1901, however, it was not until after the Second World War that they spread rapidly across North America. They were considered as the pioneer and one of the major stakeholders of the current mass higher education system in the U.S. (Kerr, 1997; McLaughlin, 2001). In 2001, there are more than 1,130 CCs (970 public and 160 private) in the United States. If the count includes the branches of these colleges, there are more than 1,600 in total (Shaw and London,

2001; Yung, 2002a).

CCs and universities play different but complementary roles in the U.S.A. higher education system. CCs are recognised as important higher education institutions. One of their most distinguishing characteristics is a credit transfer system and articulation with universities. Thus, they not only provide vocationally oriented terminal courses, but also liberal education and foundation courses for undergraduates as a through-train to university after graduation from the community college. As such, students often begin their undergraduates program in CCs before transferring to universities for final completion of their degree programme. Underlying this unique characteristic of CCs has been the belief that CCs are engines of democracy - permitting the participation of all secondary school graduates at the community level, and equality - being "open" to all members of the community, regardless of age, income, gender, race or ethnicity.

The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University (1998:22) remarked that most students in the United States often attended more than one higher education institution before deciding on a most desirable programme to pursue. The merits of CCs are much due to its lower tuition fees relative to universities and the flexible credit accumulation and transfer mechanism. It thus contributes to the successful development of mass higher education in the United States of America (Dougherty, 1994; McLaughlin, 2001; Altbach, 2002; 2002a; Yung, 2002a).

One of the most significant changes that has occurred recently for CCs is the effort to recruit more international students. In fact, the proportion of international students has greatly increased. This has made some argue that CCs are becoming less community oriented. In fact, the word community has been dropped by many of these

colleges, and many have aspirations to become four-year colleges and universities. Among the other characteristics that have been attributed to the American community college are the following:

- Two year post-secondary institutions;
- Terminal programs leading to an associates degree
- Generally district administered;
- Serving the needs of the local community;
- Cooperating with local business and industry;
- Open admission for secondary school graduates;
- Providing educational opportunities to disadvantaged groups;
- Offering a credit unit system and articulation with four year colleges;
- Having vocational-technical as well as general education;
- Being attractive to commuter students;
- Relying increasingly on distance education through information technology;
- Providing part-time as well as full-time courses;
- Offering credit and non-credit courses;
- Catering to adults as well as new secondary school graduates;
- Disposed to be state or privately run; and,
- Usually charging fees that are less than those at four year universities (ACAA, 2000).

After their growth and development in the United States, the community college and/or its signature degree - the Associate degree, appeared in many other parts of the world in one form or another, including Brazil, Canada, China (Hong Kong, mainland, and Taiwan), Mexico, South Africa, and Vietnam. This paper will examine the cases of Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland.

Transplantation: The Chinese mainland

China's interest in CCs spans several decades. The starting point was initial community college cooperation between China and the U.S.A. dates back almost 20 years, when the World Bank supported a program of learning about American CCs. Sustained development began at the turn of the century, when the Ford Foundation supported the development of community college models in several parts of the country. In 2001, Madame Chen Zhili, the Minister of Education, announced that the establishment of CCs should be encouraged across China in district level cities, and that the transfer of community college graduates to university degree programs should be a future option. Similar to a number of developing countries, China has come to adapt the community college model to suit its particular development needs. Groups like the United States-China Education Foundation facilitated the introduction of community college model by providing information, expertise, internships and study tours.

The New CCs on the Chinese mainland

CCs can now be found at the district level in large cities like Beijing and Shanghai, provincial level cities like Taiyuan, prefectural cities like Nakchu, and county level cities like Shaoxing. In Shanghai, for example, the Luwan Community College has been established under the Shanghai Normal University (where there is also a research centre on China's Community College Development). Other districts in Shanghai have adapted their workers' colleges, broadcasting universities, other adult education and junior colleges to community college models. These include districts such as Jin Shan, Cheng Ning, Nan Shi, and Jie Bie and Jin An. In Beijing, there are also a number of CCs established in different districts, including Xicheng, and Shijin Shan. The Beijing United Teacher University has established a community college

sector and a district in China, the Chao Yang district, and has also established the Chaoyang Community College. Despite financial difficulties in the early development stage (they are mostly supported by resources gleaned from local communities), these institutions have become a popular adult learning place for those who are eager to pursue lifelong learning (McMurtrie, 2001; Tao, 2001).

Community College Characteristics on the mainland

Among the emerging features of the community college in China are the following:

- Origins in many other types of institutions, including workers colleges, teachers colleges, adult training institutions, as well as polytechnics formerly connected to ministries;
- District based in eastern regions of China, usually large cities;
- Mostly public, with a few private colleges;
- Non-degree;
- Both diploma and non-diploma programs;
- 2 years or 3 years in length;
- short and long term courses;
- for adults and secondary school graduates;
- mostly vocationally oriented courses;
- variable fees ;
- lacking associate degree or transfer function;
- drawing from adult population, (unemployed from state owned enterprises) and also young secondary school graduates;
- multi-purpose;
- having cooperative programs with other colleges and universities;
- provides training for the floating population and newly unemployed of state owned enterprises;

- funding from a variety of sources, including public and private funds;
- connected to local businesses;
- community driven.

Factors working in favour of community college development on the mainland

Several factors contribute to the recent increase in demand for CCs in China, and make them a viable alternative for China's development needs. New options are needed for the increasing number of secondary school graduates, who constitute about half of the age group nationally and close to 70 percent in Beijing and Shanghai. Of those who apply to regular institutions of higher education (including degree and sub-degree programs), only half get admitted. For those who do not get admitted, the CCs could provide an affordable alternative.

Although places in higher education have been expanding at a rapid rate (from 4 percent of the age group in 1994 to 15 percent in 2005), it is difficult to provide quality four-year degrees to keep pace with the demand. By focussing on the first two years of higher education, CCs have a better chance of ensuring a quality program of study.

The growth of market forces in China's rapidly expanding economy is creating the need for tertiary educational institutions that can produce skilled technicians to support technological and industrial development. The current three-year specialized colleges were wed to the planned economy and have been slow to make the transition to the new market economy. CCs are noted for their flexibility in adapting to changing economic conditions. As the industrial sector grows, there is increasing demand for a number of sub-specialism and technical programs to complement the university programs.

In fact, almost half of the total enrolments of

institutions of higher learning in China are students in the program of 2 or 3-year length. Yet, the employment rate for undergraduates right after graduation is far better than that for 2 or 3-year length programs, which are slower in adapting to market demands than CCs.

Due to swift economic change, many students leave post-secondary school without long term marketable skills. China Education Daily reported that post secondary vocational education "has been disappointing". The difficulty of predicting what job skills will be needed has led educators to take a greater interest in the benefits of CCs in offering post-secondary vocational-technical education. World Trade Organization (WTO) membership will create a further demand for tertiary education graduates that can help China compete in the global economy. Community college models are viewed as being able to improve China's chances of competing by minimizing dislocations in the labour market caused in the initial period of China's WTO membership.

Within China, CCs can also be found in both Hong Kong and Taiwan. This not only means that they may be well suited for Chinese societies, but also that these institutions survive well in the rough and tumbling East Asian economic environment. Community-oriented education has already taken root in China, though this is usually non-formal adult education, leading to a credential, and catering to a variety of needs, including health care, social work, rehabilitation, pre-natal care, activities for seniors, basic job skills, etc. CCs are seen as incorporating this kind of education together with degree/diploma studies.

There are other reasons as well.

- Many prospering regions are looking to open universities to prevent the outflow of talent and to add status to their communities.
- Educational reforms and market forces have

propelled both regular and adult institutions of higher education to recruit fee-paying students.

Two-year post-secondary colleges could meet part of that demand.

- Families are willing to invest more of their savings. Savings for education is the fastest growing sector of consumer spending by urban residents, and is increasing at an average rate of about 20 % annually, which is higher than the 7 % put aside for housing.
- Banks are willing to support the establishment of new CCs.
- Market economy increases demand for a wide range of short-time courses.
- Much financial responsibility of community college is borne at the local level.
- CCs cater to a variety of needs, including youth activities, health care, social work, rehabilitation, pre-natal care, activities for seniors, basic job skills, etc.

The provision of CCs can also help solve some unique socio-economic problems that arise in the framework of the national development of China.

- a. CCs can accommodate students of the rural regions who are rejected by universities due to accentuated regional difficulties.
- b. Community college models could also provide an opportunity for the large xiagang (unemployed) population to retool and find employment. This population group comprises less than 10 percent of the relevant age group. The xiagang population may be well served by non-degree short-term training aimed at getting individuals back into the labour market as quickly as possible.
- c. County or township based vocational-technical

education centres could provide a poverty alleviation measure to help poor rural workers, including women and disadvantaged groups, to gain skills which will make them competitive in the new market-driven environment. These institutions also have the potential to help those indigenous inhabitants of the western region of the country improve their standard of living and maintain their dignity amid the influx of skilled migrant workers from the eastern regions of the country. Community vocational and technical education centres in poor western regions would also help to decrease the dropout rate in poor rural primary schools by providing the incentive to gain access to vocational-technical skills after finishing primary school.

The development of urban community college models in China can provide useful support for community education in rural areas, as well as provide an alternative model in urban areas during the period of transition to mass higher education.

What institutions have the potential to adopt community college models? Former workers colleges and higher specialized colleges under various ministries are candidates. Some have already converted to three-year vocational and technical colleges. China's middle level specialized secondary schools (zhongzhuan) were formerly under the authority of respective ministries (health, railroads, post and telecommunications, etc.), but they will increasingly come under the local education bureaus. As regular upper secondary education in urban areas becomes more popularized and the content of the secondary vocational colleges (zhigao) becomes less vocationally oriented, these institutions can begin to upgrade their programs to post-secondary level. Some

have already begun to do so, and are entering into arrangements with universities to strengthen their programs. They would benefit from adapting community college characteristics as China moves toward mass higher education. Thus, as China moves forward on mass higher education, a number of the current forms of educational institutions may transit to community college models. These include the traditional higher specialized colleges (dazhuan), and their more recent counterpart – vocational technical colleges (gaodeng zhiye jishu xueyuan). Other educational institutions may also adapt community college characteristics, including popularly run (minban) colleges and adult/continuing divisions of universities (daxue chengren jinxiu xueyuan), as well as some secondary institutions in the process of being upgraded, such as middle level specialized colleges (zhongzhuan) and upper secondary vocational schools (zhiye jishu gaozhong). Prefecture and county level vocational education centres (zhiye jiaoyu zhongxin) may also do the same.

Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government saw human resources as the cornerstone of a knowledge-based economy and that investment in education would help upgrade Hong Kong people. Between

1996/1997 and 2003/2004, the recurrent expenditure on education rose by 38.4% to \$46.8 billion representing 23.4% of government's expenditure. In 2004/2005, education would continue to attract substantial government investment, with an estimated recurrent expenditure of \$49.2 billion. Globalization and communication technologies have become prevalent and will affect government policies on education (HKCAA, 2004).

The proposal for establishing CCs was initiated by the Education Commission in “Education Blueprint for the 21st Century”, while accommodating the existing institution (Education Commission, 1999:22). The immediate result of the proposal was the establishment of several CCs in early 2000, offering mainly Associate degree programs. In less than five months, several CCs were established by the University of Hong Kong (HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education -- Community College), the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU International College), the Chinese University of Hong Kong respectively to offer Associate degree programs (Yung, 2002a; 2002b; Shen and Sodusta, 2002). From 2000 to 2004, the self-financing accredited Associate degree sector has expanded dramatically in terms of number and diversity of programs and course providers, as referred by Table one to four.

Table 1: Number of institutions offering full-time accredited self-financing post-secondary programs

Academic year	No. of institutions offering full-time accredited self-financing post-secondary programs	Bachelor degree (%)	Higher diploma (%)	Associate degree (%)	Total no. of full-time accredited self-financing post-secondary programs (100%)
2001/02	11	3 (7.3%)	22 (54%)	16 (39%)	41 (100%)
2002/03	16	7 (8.3%)	31 (37%)	46 (55%)	84 (100%)
2003/04	20	11 (9%)	38 (31%)	74 (60%)	123 (100%)
2004/05	20	26 (13%)	81 (41%)	92 (46%)	199 (100%)

Source: EMB (2005a)

Table 2: Number of institutions offering full-time accredited self-financing AD programs

Academic year	No. of institutions offering full-time accredited self-financing AD programs	Associate degree	AD programs as a share of all full-time accredited self-financing post-secondary programs	Total no. of full-time accredited self-financing post-secondary programs
2001/02	7	16	39%	41
2002/03	12	46	55%	84
2003/04	15	74	60%	123
2004/05	15	92	46%	199

Source: EMB (2005a)

Table 3: Number of student places of full-time accredited post-secondary programs for fresh intake

	Sub-degree programs				Bachelor's degree programs	
	Funding mode				UGC-funded programs	Total for all Bachelor's degree programs#
	UGC-funded	Other publicly-funded programs	Self-financing programs	Total for all sub-degree programs		
2000/01	4,070	2,859	2,468	9,397	14,500	14,601
2001/02	4,241	2,967	5,951	13,159	14,500	14,827
2002/03	4,342	4,169	7,752	16,263	14,500	15,080
2003/04	4,218	5,309	10,032	19,559	14,500	15,544
2004/05	4,163	5,228	16,362	25,753	14,500	16,506

includes UGC-funded, other publicly-funded and self-financing programs

Source: EMB (2005d, Annex I) <http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?langno=1&nodeID=2479>**Table 4: Enrolment figures of full-time accredited post-secondary programs for fresh intake**

	Sub-degree programs				Bachelor's degree programs	
	Funding mode				UGC-funded programs	Total for all Bachelor's degree programs#
	UGC-funded	Other publicly-funded programs	Self-financing programs	Total for all sub-degree programs		
2000/01	3,878	2,968	2,621	9,467	14,433	14,537
2001/02	4,356	3,278	5,546	13,180	14,575	14,950
2002/03	4,771	4,852	6,832	16,455	14,829	15,541
2003/04	4,824	5,964	8,317	19,105	14,639	15,784
2004/05	4,287	5,526	17,077	26,890	14,728	16,181

includes UGC-funded, other publicly-funded and self-financing programs

Source: EMB (2005d, Annex II) <http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?langno=1&nodeID=2479>

Following the Annual Policy Address (Tung, 2000:22) by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government that within ten years, 60% of the senior secondary school leavers will receive tertiary education, more CCs began to mushroom (Table

2). This policy on establishing more CCs aims to develop a diversified higher education system, widen students' choice and encourage healthy competition (EMB, 2000: 10). One of the methods by which the government expects to make post-secondary education accessible to 60% of

the relevant age group by 2010 is to encourage the wider participation of private providers by offering subsidies to students in approved courses and loans and grants for equipment and building. Many private providers have taken up the challenge to offer a wide variety of courses particularly at the lower points of entry which are most in demand (HKCAA, 2004).

In order to speed up the launching of Associate

degrees in Hong Kong, most of the current CCs and Associate degree providers are established on the basis of existing School/Division of further and continuing education of the degree granting institutions. Some of those independently operated CCs are still undergoing the planning and development stage. By 2004/05, a total of 20 institutions are offering 199 Associate degree programs (see Table 5-7).

Table 5: Type of Full-time Accredited Self-financing Programs by Institutions for Academic Year 2004/05 -

Institution	Associate degree ^[3]	Higher diploma ^[4]	Bachelor degree	Total
Caritas Bianchi College of Careers	3	--	--	3
Caritas Francis Hsu College	5	4	--	9
Chu Hai Post Secondary College	1	--	7	8
City University of Hong Kong	10	--	--	10
Hang Seng School of Commerce	1	--	--	1
Hong Kong Baptist University	14	--	--	14
Hong Kong College of Technology	--	8	--	8
Hong Kong Institute of Technology	3	--	5	8
Hong Kong Shue Yan College	--	4	7	11
Lingnan University	16	--	--	16
Po Leung Kuk Community College of Hong Kong	2	--	--	2
The Art School, Hong Kong Arts Centre	--	2	--	2
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	8	13	--	21
The Church of Christ in China Kung Lee College	--	1	--	1
Hong Kong Institute of Education	4	--	--	4
The Hong Kong Learning Community College	1	--	--	1
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	13	--	--	13
The Open University of Hong Kong	5	--	7	12
The University of Hong Kong	6	14	--	20
Vocational Training Council	--	35	--	35
Total	92	81	26	199

Remarks:

- [1] The provisional figures, as provided by respective institutions, show the position as at 30 November 2004.
- [2] The counting for the no. of programs is according to the no. of final awards (reaching Associate degree / Higher diploma level) granted by institution.
- [3] 'Associate degree' includes 'Pre-Associate degree programs', 'Foundation diploma programs', and 'Associate degree programs'.
- [4] Higher diploma' includes 'Higher diploma programs', 'Honours diploma programs' and 'Professional diploma programs'.
- [5] This table does not include programs with 'Post-F.7' entry qualifications and top-up Degree programs.

<http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?langno=1&nodeID=2479>

Source: EMB (2005d, Annex II)

Table 6: Enrolments in sub-degree programs by the Federation for Continuing Education’s member institutions in 2001/02

	HKU	HKBU	Caritas	CUHK	LU	PolyU	VTC	CityU	OCHK	HKUST	HKIED	Total
	SPACE	SCE	CAHES	SCE	LIFE	HKCC SPEED	CPD	SCOPE	LiPACE	OCPE	CPE	
No. of Programs	170	30	33	104	3	5	20	84	54	12	63	569
Student Headcounts	22,826	5,181	5,428	10,084	350	561	3,222	4,661	10,433	241	1,860	64,847
Full-time Equivalent	8,653	3,753	5,417	3,483	290	374	735	1,252	803	57	885	25,702

Source: EMB (2005d, Annex II)

Table 7: Enrolments in sub-degree programs by the Federation for Continuing Education’s member institutions in 2002/03

	HKU	HKBU	Caritas	CUHK	LU	PolyU	VTC	CityU	OCHK	HKUST	HKIED	Total
	SPACE	SCE	CAHES	SCE	LIFE	HKCC SPEED	CPD	SCOPE	LiPACE	OCPE	CPE	
No. of Programs	198	47	75	115	10	4	21	132	30	17	136	785
Student Headcounts	24,388	7,306	6,218	9,888	780	1,211	2,696	6,336	12,306	461	3,466	75,056
Full-time Equivalent	9,252	4,490	5,819	3,001	662	1,018	1,422	1,862	849	76	1517	29,968

Source: EMB (2005d, Annex II)

Comparative Adaptation and Long Term Sustainability:

Hong Kong and the mainland

Finance

MAINLAND: Finance of higher education is always a key factor in deciding the size and shape of an institution. In China, as a developing country, the central government’s budget allocation for education is relatively small (less than 3 percent of GNP and less than 10 percent of government expenditure). Their main challenge for CCs is to maintain quality programs at low cost. CCs development in big cities like Shanghai, Beijing and Taiyuan received some support from their wealthy municipal governments. Yet, in China, regional disparity has been rather serious. Financing of CCs in underdeveloped western provinces remains an issue for further exploration. Cooperation with foreign universities would potentially result in further improvement of

teaching quality and curriculum, which in turn would boost the reputation of the college and increase the demand for places. Investment from various local sectors is expected to follow.

HONG KONG: One of the main objectives of developing CCs in Hong Kong is to develop a diversified, multi-channel, multi-layer higher education system. The ultimate aim is to promote the idea of learning society in Hong Kong. The operation of CCs in Hong Kong is basically self-financed by providers. However, the HKSAR government has adopted several policy measures to encourage and support providers.

They include:-

1. The HKSAR government has set up a 5 billion dollar foundation fund. Providers can apply for loans (with a maximum repayment period of 10 years) from the fund to pay for the cost of the building or rental of college premises.
2. Means tested and non-means tested loans are

available for needy students.

3. The government has allocated 10 million dollars for community college providers for course

accreditation.

4. Pending on needs, the government will provide free land for building of community college.

Table Eight: Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students

Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students Summary Statistics			
	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005 (as at 31.1.2005)
Eligible student enrolment	17,480*	17,819*	23,978*
No. of applications received	5,706 (6,194#)	7,478 (7,751#)	12,634 (12,647#)
No. of applications completed	5,706 (6,194#)	7,478 (7,751#)	9,310 (9,323#)
No. of successful applications	3,547 (3,547#)	4,780 (4,780#)	6,924 (6,933#)
No. of applicants offered grant	1,283 (1,288#)	2,045 (2,046#)	2,898 (2,898#)
No. of applicants accepted grant	1,281	2,044	2,623
No. of applicants offered loan	3,016 (3,391#)	3,687 (3,912#)	4,026 (4,035#)
No. of applicants accepted loan	2,266	2,736	2,393
Average amount of assistance	\$28,831	\$31,110	\$29,494
Average grant	\$40,101	\$41,375	\$40,057
Average loan	\$22,459	\$23,442	\$21,892
Total amount of grant			
- offered	\$51.41m	\$84.62m	\$116.08m
- accepted	\$51.37m	\$84.57m	\$105.90m
Total amount of loan			
- offered	\$60.83m	\$77.44m	\$88.14m
- accepted	\$50.89m	\$64.14m	\$60.30m

include Hong Kong Shue Yan College's continuing students who are also covered by the Student Finance Assistance Scheme.

include applications of Hong Kong Shue Yan College's Continuing students who opted for the Student Finance Assistance Scheme.

Source: EMB (2005d)

Further education opportunities for students

MAINLAND: The success of CCs development depends greatly on the accreditation of the programs offered and the recognition of the credentials. In China, the Ministry of Education of the central government has had authority over all academic programs, however, this authority is becoming decentralized to the provincial and municipals levels. Nevertheless, credentialing and program quality are still key issues.

The recognition for community college education among the people in China will take some years. Many parents and students still regard community college as a channel for vocational or technical education, which is usually a second choice to university education. Much of

this holds true for Hong Kong as well. Moreover, both regions have yet to develop the essential credit transfer system to open up a path for further education opportunities for community college students.

HONG KONG: In Hong Kong, the HKSAR government has introduced the following measures with regard to the course accreditation and recognition of credentials.

1. The recognition of Associate degrees of community college as an equivalent to Higher diploma in the appointment of civil servants or non civil service contract employees.
2. Most universities in Hong Kong have already announced that outstanding graduates of Associate

degree programs of community college will be eligible for admission to their relevant 2nd year university degree programs.

3. Most CCs or Associate degree providers have bridged up with overseas universities or colleges which will provide channel for further education for their graduates.

Community college in Hong Kong has a good take off. The number of Associate degree places has expanded from 3,790 in the initial year to 9,270 in 2002. Many students have come to regard community college as a transition for further opportunities rather than terminal with no prospect. However, many university programs will still not recognize graduates of CCs and will either not accept them for transfer or will accept them without granting them the right to transfer the credits they already earned.

Quality assurance

MAINLAND: In China, there is no official authority to oversee the matter of quality assurance of community college, though there is authority to check on the quality of credentialed programs of study. Opening CCs to market forces may result in some quality improvement if monitored and renovated. Teacher salaries are still relatively low. Time and dedication directly affect the quality of education. Hence quality is and will remain a major issue. It could be an impediment to further development of not only community college but of higher education as a whole in China. Nevertheless, major efforts are being made to deal with the matter on the mainland (OECD 2001).

In Hong Kong, the launching of Associate degree, as the other degrees, requires the approval of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation. Yet, the approval given is based on an assessment on campus facilities and course content. Little has been done on assessing the course delivery process. While some of the

providers of community college are inexperienced ones, most of the community college courses are staffed by part-time teaching staff. The public concern for quality assurance is understandable. On the one hand, the HKSAR government openly expects both the providers and the market force operate their quality assurance mechanism, it has already been recommended in the Higher education review 2002 that the setting up of a Further Education Council is essential for foreseeing all matters relating to quality assurance.

HONG KONG: What remains a common concern is the issue of quality assurance which will be dealt with in the next section. At present, this is done by the providers under the monitoring of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA). The HKSAR government's most recent recommendation in the Higher Education Review 2002 is the establishment of a Further Education Council to overlook all matters relating to quality assurance of courses offered by community colleges (UGC, 2002). Until 2005, this suggestion has not been adopted.

Conclusion

Several features characterize the resistance and adaptation to the globalization of CCs in Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland. First, there has been a greater degree of interest at an earlier stage in CCs in mainland China than in Hong Kong. The reason for this is that the Hong Kong system was too closely wed to the British system and therefore, there was little room for American innovations like the community college within the Hong Kong education system. Knowledge about CCs was thin, and illustrated by the fact that American visitors would often be told that Hong Kong's polytechnic was equivalent to American CCs. Hong Kong was much more concerned with gaining recognition for its sub-degree programs from bodies in England than from other countries.

In the case of mainland China, there was an early interest in CCs, especially in the early 1980s during the period of almost blind worship of American higher education. However, by the late 1990s there was a degree of resistance to CCs because of the Americanness of the institution. It took another 10 years, just before entrance to WTO, that the ministry of Education formally recognized and encouraged CCs. However, rather than making the choice to abandon the dazhuan model for the community college model, the government took a position in which both types of institutions were given a chance to thrive, with the view that time would tell which type of institution would be most suitable. Also, with the WTO challenge ahead, it was not viewed as strategic to reject the community college model without exploring its possibilities. Finally, rather than beginning by standardizing the characteristics of the community college, the mainlanders began with a flexible definition that emphasizes the multi-functional nature (*duoyanghua*) of its CCs and their adaptability to community needs and finance, including cost sharing and exploring options. The details about community college parameters have been kept intentionally vague in China to permit more time for experimentation, before their defined role within the larger system becomes more fixed.

Hong Kong's importation of CCs resembles that on the mainland in the sense that its importation of community college models acted as a way to deal with the growing of demands for higher education, however, Hong Kong accepted the idea of CCs less questionably, including the institutionalisation of the Associate degree. The prestige of CCs sustained in Hong Kong for this very reason, and also because they began by situating themselves within established universities. Nevertheless, the Hong Kong case was much more of an importation than an adaptation. For example, while CCs in Hong Kong

are less community driven and rooted in community development as their counterparts in mainland China, the name community college was maintained; despite the fact that they fit more closely with the junior colleges.

Policy Suggestions:

Mainland

1. Efforts could be made to form partnerships between community college, municipal governments and banks for loans to launch new programs and for credit facilities to be provided for the development of new community colleges.
2. To support students, a financial scheme of loans and other aid could be provided so no one will be deprived of higher education opportunity due to financial reasons.
3. An accreditation council for community college programs could be set up to monitor the quality of community college programs, to ensure credentials offered meet international benchmark and assure proper recognition of the credentials in China as well as overseas.
4. Mechanism similar to credit accumulation and transfer scheme could be provided to open up more further education opportunities for graduates of CCs. The scheme should be flexible enough to allow students to enrol at any time of their own need.

Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, there also remains room for further development. First, a closer economic and cultural connection is developed between Hong Kong and China under the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), which was effective from January, 2004 (Trade and Industry Department, 2004). Following the development, the "Memorandum of Understanding

between the mainland and Hong Kong on Mutual Recognition of Academic Degrees in Higher Education” was signed in July 2004. These provide fresh opportunities for the CCs to foster closer ties with the mainland in areas of mutual interests such as opening CC’s branch campuses in China and offering more exchange and joint research programs. There are notable examples such as, HKU SPACE launched a teaching centre in Shanghai in 2004; HKBU’CC will operate a new campus in Zhuhai with Beijing Normal University in Sept, 2005; HKPolyU has established four training bases in Hangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Xi’an, offering internationalized executive training programs in these major cities since 1998. A study on export potential of Hong Kong’s education services conducted by The Hong Kong Trade Development Council (2005) concluded that aspiration to study higher education is very high on the mainland. Among 3,223 senior secondary students who responded to the questionnaire survey, 40%, 30% and 23% of them wish to attain the educational level of Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degrees respectively, and 3% of them wish to attain diploma only. The study also showed that Hong Kong’s higher education has the strength of possessing three important unique elements: an international component, Chinese cultures and the Hong Kong factor. Other critical success factors for exports of Hong Kong higher education to the mainland include international interface and exchange, academic excellence, quality assurance, Western management and good education visions, educational exports identical to home provision, and real involvement of Hong Kong academics. It was projected that non-local students can generate a profit of HK\$1,280 million for Hong Kong when the policy is fully implemented. Corresponding to the new development, in May 2005, EMB announced that CCs in Hong Kong can admit mainland students who wish to pursue Associate degrees. The first batch of Chinese

mainland students is expected to enroll in CCs in Hong Kong in September 2005. This further strengthens the economic and cultural ties between the two places. As such, it is the right time for the HKSAR government to seriously consider a formal student visa policy for students of mainland and nearby regions.

Second, it is hoped that a detailed quality assurance plan could be formulated and devised by the new Further Education Council. So far, only the HKSAR government as the largest employer body in Hong Kong has openly announced its recognition for the qualification of Associate degrees offered by the CCs. The response of the other employers in the labour market is still not known. More liaison work should be done with potential employers to solicit their recognition for these credentials to boost popular acceptance.

Currently, the only objective of the community college remains to be the provision of an Associate degree to graduates. This has not lived up with the real essence of a community college as in the western system. In U.S.A., CCs operate to serve the needs of its local community. Though some people regard Hong Kong as a simple community, it in fact is a rather heterogeneous community. As CCs flourish, it should be our long term objective to develop them into institutions serving local district needs.

Finally, the main factor responsible for the development of CCs in the United States was the belief that these institutions were engines of democracy and equality of opportunity. There is resistance or apathy toward this aspect of community college development in the United States. The driving force in Hong Kong has been the possibility that CCs may be the answer to the need to expand post-secondary places without much cost to government, and for China it has been to provide districts to meet the increasingly diverse needs of their own economic development.

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