A Case Study of the Articulation and Employment Opportunities of Hong Kong Associate Degree Graduates

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2011
Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I, Tsui Wing Yiu, hereby certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Date: 31st December, 2011.
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Abstract

Higher education in Hong Kong has undergone major transformation over the past decade, responding to forces of globalisation, an increasingly knowledge-driven economy and international competitiveness. One significant development has been the growth in community colleges offering self-financed sub-degree programs, in particular the Associate Degree (AD). However, to date, little is known to of the experiences of AD graduates in terms of their articulation and employment prospects and their perceptions of the value of AD programs. This thesis explores how Hong Kong’s self-financed post-secondary education sector has served to connect the New Senior Secondary (NSS) system with higher education and the significant parts played by both internal credit transfer and broader market forces.

This thesis is a qualitative case study of the perspectives of students, parents, teachers, employers and senior administrators of community colleges. It takes a rich, multi-perspectival approach consisting of semi-structured interviews, policy history, document analysis and recent evaluations of the AD program in Hong Kong in order to identify patterns of experience associated with articulation to higher education and employment post-graduation.

The study argues that government policy, the economic situation and institutional and personal factors, such as learner engagement, play an important role in affecting AD graduates’ futures. This has implications for public and private managers in relation to quality improvement in the current sub-degree offerings in Hong Kong. The significance of the present study is that it provides qualitative cross-referencing to future developments at this transitional stage from the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and the A-Level (HKAL) examinations to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) examination and from community colleges to private universities. The findings from the study have implications for the transfer of AD programs from the traditional education system (HKCEE and HKAL) to the NSS system, marking a progressive shift towards privatisation in Hong Kong higher education.
Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AACC</td>
<td>American Association of Community Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATS</td>
<td>Credit Accumulation and Transfer System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCU</td>
<td>Community College of City University</td>
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<td>CEUs</td>
<td>Continuing Education Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMI</td>
<td>Chinese as Medium of Instruction</td>
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<td>CSB</td>
<td>Civil Service Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>CU-TWGH CC</td>
<td>Chinese University Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Community College (In Hong Kong, the short form is: CUTW CC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDB</td>
<td>Education Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMI</td>
<td>English as Medium of Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCE</td>
<td>Federation for Continuing Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFC</td>
<td>Global Financial Crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>HD</td>
<td>Higher Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKCAA</td>
<td>Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (Renamed the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, HKCAAVQ, in 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKCEE</td>
<td>Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination</td>
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<tr>
<td>HKDSE</td>
<td>Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKEAA</td>
<td>Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKSAR</td>
<td>Hong Kong Special Administrative Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKU-SPACE CC</td>
<td>The University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKU-SPACE PLK CC</td>
<td>The University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education Po Leung Kuk Community College</td>
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<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>International English Language Testing System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVE</td>
<td>Institute of Vocational Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>JQRC</td>
<td>Joint Quality Review Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>JUPAS</td>
<td>Joint University Programs Admissions System</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSS</td>
<td>New Senior Secondary</td>
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<tr>
<td>QF</td>
<td>Qualifications Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>SFC</td>
<td>Scottish Funding Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPEED (Poly U)</td>
<td>The School of Professional Education and Executive Development of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCAS</td>
<td>Universities and Colleges Admissions Service</td>
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<td>UGC</td>
<td>University Grants Committee</td>
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<td>VTC</td>
<td>Vocational Training Council</td>
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