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Comparisons of Undergraduate Business Administration Education in Greater Bay Area, China

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ABSTRACT

Business administration education plays an important part in supporting the development of business industry and ensuring the ongoing supply of qualified human resources to meet the demanding industry requirements. However, the dramatic growth of the economy has not been accompanied by an adequate response from the education system. It is therefore, necessary to review the existing business administration programs. This paper will make a comparison of the current undergraduate programs in Business Administration in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in the six dimensions: curriculum and instruction; strategic planning; administrative management; faculty; student achievements; and resources. Suggestions for the further development of Business Administration programs in the bay area will then be proposed.

1. Introduction

The business prosperity of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao Greater Bay Area develops with the increasing emphasis on technology and cross-culturalization. To achieve this growth, it is most important to develop the next generation of business professionals with sufficient and effective knowledge and skills to ensure sustainable growth. In this situation, business Administration Education is of vital importance, as human resource development is critical to the success of business in many markets. Only by optimizing the teaching quality of Business Administration majors, can we meet the ever-increasing demands for qualified professionals in business. However, the current Business Administration education fails to meet the rapid development of the business world and there is an urgent need to reform the current programs. To

draw on experience of the existing educational program will be a very effective way to seek for improvement. Both Hong Kong and Macao are well-developed economic areas, where Business Administration education is already matured in many ways. These three regions now are in a tighter connection because of the newly promoted concept of "Greater Bay Area".

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area) includes three main regions: the nine municipalities in Guangdong Province: Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing; Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), and the Macao Special Administrative Region (Macao SAR). The strategic development of Greater Bay Area involved cooperation and communication of different fields of these regions, and that would

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include the education sectors. As indicated in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, cooperation and development in education sector in the Greater Bay Area should be strongly encouraged. This plan places emphasis on cooperation and mutual development of higher education of the bay area. To achieve this, it will be beneficial to first look at higher education in the Greater Bay Area from a holistic point of view.

2. Overview of Higher Education in the Greater Bay Area

Hong Kong, Macao and Guangdong are rich in higher education resources. There are 151 general universities in Guangdong province, among which 64 are at the undergraduate level (including Chinese-foreign cooperative universities). However, overall, high-quality higher education resources are scarce. Although Hong Kong is a small city, it has abundant higher education resources and several high-level universities. Macao, with the smallest area among the three regions, is a typical micro society. Its higher education scale is small and its higher education resources are correspondingly limited.

The following table shows the distribution of universities in the greater bay area. From the perspective of geographical location, high-level universities in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao greater bay area are mainly distributed in 4 core cities, Hong Kong, Macao, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Guangzhou has the largest number of university of 36, followed by Hong Kong and Macao, with 13 and 10 respectively. On the contrary, 7 central cities, such as Zhuhai, Zhongshan, Jiangmen, Foshan, Zhaoqing, Dongguan and Huizhou, are relatively deficient in high-level universities. The overall level is not high, hence, it is difficult to support the huge demand of local economic and social development of human resources, technology, and intellectual resources.

Table 1. Distribution of universities in the greater bay area

No.	City	Number of universities
1	Dongguan	3
2	Foshan	2
3	Guangzhou	36
4	Huizhou	1
5	Jiangmen	1
6	Shenzhen	4
7	Zhaoqing	2
8	Zhongshan	1

9	Zhuhai	4
10	HKSAR	13
11	Macao SAR	10
Total	Greater bay area	77

Source: <http://xxpt.gdedu.gov.cn>

2.1 Higher Education in Hong Kong

Hong Kong offers high quality, diverse and flexible access to higher education, represented by the eight universities funded by the education grants committee: the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Lingnan University, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong Baptist University, City University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong University of Education.

The rapid expansion of the scale of Hong Kong’s higher education has not led to a sharp decline in the quality of higher education. Hong Kong’s higher education has achieved overall improvement and development in talent cultivation, scientific research and social services, which are mainly reflected in the steady improvement in the quality and employment rate of graduates, the rapid development of scientific research and the rapid rise of university rankings. The following table shows the rankings of the major universities in Hong Kong in 2018.

Table 2. World University Rankings of the key universities in Hong Kong

Name of University	World University Rankings (2018)		
	THE	QS	US News
the University of Hong Kong	40	26	109
the Chinese University of Hong Kong	58	46	148
the Hong Kong university of science and technology	44	30	152
City University of Hong Kong	119	49	186
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	182	95	234

Source: Sun, B.C. & Xu, N. (2018). Hong Kong’s Quality Assurance measures and policy experiences of building “World-class Universities”. Tsinghua Journal of Education

2.2 Higher Education in Macao

There are ten degree-conferencing institutions of higher education in Macao: The university of Macau, Macao Polytechnic Institute, Institute of Tourism, Macao Security Forces Higher School, City University of Macau, St. Joseph’s University, Macao Mirror Lake Nursing School, Macao University of Science and Technology, Macao Institute of Management and Institute of Chinese and Western Innovation. Due to historical reasons, the devel-

opment of higher education in Macao is relatively slow and the overall level is not high. However, the University of Macau, Macao University of Science and Technology and Macao Polytechnic Institute have achieved rapid development in recent years, especially the establishment of Hengqin campus of the University of Macau provides a new opportunity for its development.

2.3 Higher Education in Nine Municipalities in Guangdong Province

From the specific situation of higher education resources in 11 cities in the greater bay area of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, Guangzhou has the most abundant high-quality higher education resources among the nine cities in the mainland. Apart from Shenzhen University, the key universities and key disciplines in the construction of high-level universities in Guangdong province are all located in Guangzhou, and the national “double first-class” universities are all located in Guangzhou. At the same time, Guangzhou has set up Chinese-foreign cooperative schools. Higher education in Shenzhen is in the process of accelerating development. Shenzhen University has been included in the first-class discipline construction universities in Guangdong province, and South China University of Technology is one of the high-level science and engineering construction universities in Guangdong province. In addition, the cooperation between Shenzhen and foreign countries and Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan has also developed. Foshan University of Science and Technology in Foshan and Dongguan University of Technology in Dongguan are among the construction of high-level science and technology universities in Guangdong province, and Dongguan University of Technology has set up Chinese-foreign cooperative educational institutions with foreign universities. Zhuhai has attracted two Chinese-foreign cooperative schools. Although there are colleges and universities in Huizhou, Zhongshan, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing, the number of colleges and universities is low.

3. Framework for Measuring the Quality of Educational Programs

Though there are abundant theoretical discussions and research about Business Administration Education in China, Hong Kong and Macao respectively, few studies are found to discuss about the similarities and differences of undergraduate Business Administration educational programs offered by different universities in these three regions: Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. This study aims to discuss strengths and weaknesses of undergrad-

uate Business Administration programs in Greater Bay Area in the following six finalized dimensions, curriculum and instruction; faculty; strategic planning; administrative management; student achievements; and resources (see Figure 1).

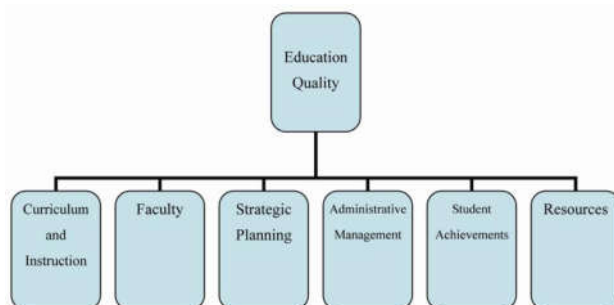


Figure 1. Framework for measuring the quality of educational programs

Source: Adopted from Horng, Teng and Baum (2009).

On the basis of two famous evaluation models: Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) and Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA), a framework for measuring the quality of educational programs was proposed by Horng, Teng and Baum (2009). CIPP was developed by Stufflebeam (2000), and it is an instrument to conduct and report evaluations in academic services. It enables policy makers to understand the process and context in the educational phenomenon. MBNQA, on the other hand, is a quality award model frequently used in the business sector, and focuses on customer satisfaction and the promotion of performance excellence (Meyer & Collier, 2001). In 2004, education criteria based on the MBNQA were established. Combining these two evaluation models and other evaluation criteria in renowned accreditation systems, for example, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in the UK (an independent body responsible for monitoring the standards of student achievement and the quality of the student learning experience in UK higher education), Horng, Teng and Baum (2009) finalized six dimensions in evaluating quality in education programs. The six dimensions are: curriculum and instruction; faculty; strategic planning; administrative management; student achievements; and resources. The following table shows the explanations of each dimension.

Table 3. Explanations of the 6 dimensions of the quality framework

Dimension	Explanations of the dimension
Curriculum and instruction	Design of curriculum, teaching and learning
Faculty	Teachers' quality and performance

Strategic planning	Institutes' vision, mission, aims and objectives
Administrative management	Administrative leadership and student management
Student achievements	Students and graduates' performance
Resources	Variety and management of training facilities

4. Comparisons of Undergraduate Business Administration Education

Business Administration Education has been developed rapidly over the last 40 years along with the prosperity of business world in China. According to Xie and Hu (2011), the first school to offer Business Administration education was University of International Business and Economics, which was established in 1983. The number of universities providing Business Administration education has increased exponentially over the past 35 years. However, the supply of human resources from existing institutions cannot meet the increasing needs for the industry. As Bao and Zhu (2008) pointed out, there is a contradiction between the characteristics that trade requires for students and talent-cultivation mode set by higher educational system. The situations in each dimension can be summarized as follows:

4.1 Curriculum and Instruction

In the study of comparing Business Administration education in China and abroad, Xie and Hu (2011) presented a review of the Business Administration education in China. They pointed out that there was a big discrepancy between supply and demand in terms of quality personnel. The biggest problem is curriculum design, and graduates from business education institutes and vocational training schools cannot meet industry needs and demands. In another study, Zhang & Wu (2004) indicated that there was a gap between what was taught and the realities of the industry itself. In China, many programs of Business Administration Education are dominated by non-business courses like foreign languages. However, Business Administration is highly specialized. By teaching students general knowledge in management or business, but not specialized industry-related skills or know-how, students are not likely to meet the special requirements of the industry. According to Han (2004), business administration education is too broad and too general, and it cannot subdivide the professional talent cultivation according to the market demand. As a result, the business graduates are not truly employable and fail to meet the market demand.

Huang & Chen (2011) also pointed out that there are problems such as theory detached from practice in the

curriculum design of undergraduate Business Administration education. When planning the curriculum, education institutes pay more attention on the theoretical concepts and knowledge rather than skill development. As Lam and Xiao (2000) pointed out, the curriculum in institutes in Mainland China emphasized more the classroom instruction and de-emphasized skill development. Practical training is not getting enough attention at most universities and is only required in the last year of students' study and lasts for only a short amount of time. As a result, students have very little laboratory experience before they enter the industry. Hong Kong, in this case, has more reasonable and practical curriculum design, as students are encouraged to experience a certain period of practical training at the end of every module.

4.2 Strategic Planning

The recklessly expansion of Business Administration Education programs in China has contributed to the degradation of the overall quality of Business Administration Education in China. Such rapid expansion led to scatterings of educational input and duplicate investment. Many Business Administration Education programs are not qualified, and do not have long term goals and strategic planning for their sustainable development. In contrast, the setting standards of teaching objectives and education level in Hong Kong and Macao are more in line with international standards. As developed areas, Hong Kong and Macao' Business Administration education is characterized with eastern and western philosophy. Because Hong Kong and Macao received foreign education and culture earlier, there were many foreign-funded enterprises and profound cultural influence, which provided favorable historical conditions for the cultivation of international talents. With international vision, Macao's business education inclines to western higher education system and level in teaching, scientific research and management (Wu & Hu, 2014). In Guangdong area, the level of internationalization is not high. For example, the proportion of bilingual courses is fairly low, and the proportion of teachers with overseas education background is not high. According to a study of Li (2018), the proportion of overseas education teachers in Hong Kong and Macao is about 5%, while that in Guangdong is only 2%.

4.3 Faculty

Lacking of qualified educators is another problem confronting Business Administration education in mainland China. According to Cai and Xiong (2018), teaching staff in undergraduate colleges in mainland China are lacking

industry experience or academic qualification. Some of the teachers do not have educational background in business, some other educators who hold related degree in Business Administration, however, do not have any working experience in the industry and have no ideas about the various industry practices (Cai & Xiong, 2018). On the other hand, because of the restrictions of education policy in China, experts from the industry are not likely to hold teaching position at universities, as they do not have the education qualification and research achievement. In Hong Kong, however, quality of the teaching staff is generally much higher. According to Sun and Xu (2018), because of high salary and superior scientific research conditions, universities in Hong Kong attracts many world-class professors, who have in-depth understanding of related industry, which directly influence the quality of education in this region. The following table shows the distribution of international professoriate staff in the University of Hong Kong, one of the most prestigious university in this region.

Table 4. Distribution of International Professoriate Staff (Based on Nationality)

Region	Headcount	%
Mainland China	239	36.3%
Other Asian Countries	98	14.9%
Australia and New Zealand	52	7.9%
European Countries	126	19.1%
North American Countries	140	21.2%
Others (e.g. Central and South America, African Countries)	4	0.6%
All	659	100%

Source: <http://www.cpaohku.hk/qstats/staff-profiles>

4.4 Resources

Business administration programs in China have been experiencing a lot of issues, and one of the big challenges is the scattering of resources (Yin & Wang, 2015). For some institutes, they do not have the necessary resources to cater for the teaching and training needs. Financial investment made to the teaching and training facilities is very limited, because the budget is tight and the cost of constructing related teaching laboratories is relatively higher compared with other disciplines.

4.5 Student Achievement

According to a study made by Ma (2016), the industry were not satisfied with the overall performance of business graduates. Students are considered to be fastidious

but incompetent, lacking of industry experiences or realistic expectation of the real working environment. They cannot work independently when they start working. Another problem facing the graduates is they are lacking the communication skills, especially English language abilities, which are crucial to students' development in the industry (Leong & Li, 2010). This problem is more pressing in Hong Kong and Macau, where business is highly internationalized.

4.6 Administrative Management

The management level of a university largely depends on the overall quality of the management talents, especially the leadership. Administrative management is crucial to the development of universities, but in many universities in mainland China, the administrative management system has exposed many problems, affecting and restricting the healthy and sustainable development of universities. Hong Kong's universities have a relatively streamlined internal management structure. For example, teaching, scientific research, personnel management and logistics in the University of Hong Kong are all under the leadership of the provost, which enables the provost system to better coordinate and handle all aspects of the university's central work. Furthermore, this system also greatly saves administrative resources and improves the efficiency of management. Compared with the university of Hong Kong, there are many administrative and executive institutions in mainland' universities, which causes problems in coordinating in work, and the responsibilities of different departments are not clear (Cai, 2013). If efforts are made to integrate departments and streamline institutions, it will certainly be of great benefit to improve the efficiency of university management.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The paper compares Business Administration education in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, in terms of six dimensions, i.e. curriculum and instruction; faculty; strategic planning; student achievements; administrative management; and resources. The results show that Business Administration education in these three regions differs in many dimensions and is facing a lot of challenges. In order to achieve higher quality in Business Administration programme, endeavour should be made in the following areas:

5.1 To Examine Curriculum Design of Business Administration Programs

The need for continuously updating and sustaining the

curriculum design for business administration programs is a profound reality for any region in the world, but especially important for the Greater Bay Area due to the substantial investments being contributed to economic growth and development. At present, the curriculum of business administration major is jointly formulated by academia and education officials, without taking into account the demand for labor in the industry, and graduates cannot meet the demand of the industry. However, industry experts' opinion is extremely important in identifying the necessary knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics that will contribute to an effective economic development and growth in the region. Therefore, in the course design process, the participation of industry experts is needed and more research studies should be conducted to find out the requirement of the industry. In addition, practical training should be attached more importance than classroom lectures in universities, which equip students with necessary practical skills and help them well-prepared for the workplace after graduation.

In the process of curriculum and education configuration, the professional course teaching of business administration should be infiltrated into the innovative education, and training courses with innovative education should be set up to actively cultivate students' innovative ability. On the other hand, educators and course designers should broaden the internationalization of business administration courses and introduce internationalization of the teaching plan and innovation theory.

5.2 To Build up Qualified Faculty

Given that most teachers in Guang Dong areas have no industry experience, industry training should be provided on a monthly or yearly basis. In addition, schools should invite industry experts as guest lecturers and even offer some internship courses, helping students to bridge the gap between expectations and reality. More staff with international background should be included in the faculty. To build an international teaching staff is an important condition to realize the international standard of business administration education. In this way, a large number of innovative talents with global vision and international competitiveness could be cultivated.

5.3 To Strengthen Interaction with the Industry and Build up Strict Accreditation Criteria

Universities that offer business administration programs should develop close relationships with industry practices. They should offer tailor-made training programs and participating in consultancy and management of various

firms. At the same time, as shown above, many business administration programs are not qualified regarding quality of instructors, facilities and curriculum. Therefore, for assessing schools offering business administration programs, stricter accreditation system should be set up, as accreditation system has a very important role to play in ensuring the quality of such programs.

5.4 To Strengthen Cooperation and Exchange

Universities in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao can sign inter-university agreements to promote the joint training of talents, scientific research and academic exchanges, establish research centers or cooperative laboratories, and establish and improve relevant incentive and evaluation mechanisms for higher education cooperation. At the same time, the government can assist promoting the exchange of teachers, the relatively free flow students, and to promote mutual recognition of academic qualifications and credits, and jointly hold various educational activities.

Efforts should be made to integrate the needs of Guangdong areas with the strengths of Hong Kong and Macao, and achieve joint development.

6. Conclusion

Overall, improving the quality of Business Administration education is the goal for students, parents, educators, and many other stakeholders. Only by optimizing the quality of our Business Administration program can we provide more qualified human resources to meet the increasing demand of business. To make a comparative study of Business Administration education in the three regions of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and find out the strengths and weaknesses of their education programs can help to improve their quality of Business Administration education. More importantly, educators from these three regions can draw on the experience of their counterparts and seek improvement and ways to reform their current education programs. The business industry then, ultimately, would benefit from the reform and changes that would contribute to the cultivation of Business Administration talents.

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