

Research Proposal for
Application for Admission to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Programme
In the Faculty of Education

Transplanting a university model from Hong Kong to Mainland China:
A study of the branch campus of
The Chinese University of Hong Kong in Shenzhen

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Date: 24th November 2016

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Hong Kong has the highest proportion of globally ranked research universities in one place (Postiglione 2013). From the 1980s onwards, higher education in Mainland China has undergone a series of comprehensive reforms to enhance the quality, and build world-class universities. Both Hong Kong and Mainland China's advancement in higher education can be viewed as a means of supporting economic and social development and meeting the aspirations of the public.

Moreover, cross-border higher education collaboration has proliferated. It has been highly advocated by the Chinese Mainland government. With the promulgation of the "Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools" in 2003, the State encourages Chinese institutions of higher learning to cooperate with "renowned foreign" institutions to run schools in the field of higher education (Article 3, Ministry of Education 2003). Under this regulatory framework, universities in Hong Kong are treated as "foreign" institutions. Hong Kong's universities have established various levels and forms of collaborations with their Mainland counterparts. One of the most vigorous forms of international partnership in higher education has been the setting up of branch campuses (Ziguras & McBurnie 2014).

In the next decade, engagement with the Chinese Mainland may become an increasingly influential force driving the direction of strategic development of Hong Kong's universities. This is part of the broader context of economic and social integration between the two Chinese systems. Universities in Hong Kong have the potential to play a unique role in Mainland China due to their experience with the western model of higher education in a Chinese society.

In considering whether to set up branch campuses in Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong universities tend to be more risk averse than overseas universities because the consequence of success or failure will weigh more heavily on their reputation in Mainland China. At present, two Hong Kong universities have set up campuses there, i.e. the Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College ("UIC"), and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen) ("CUHK(SZ)"). UIC has a history of ten years with around 4400 students in Zhuhai (UIC 2014), whilst

the latter has newly opened in 2014 with 313 students in Shenzhen (CUHK(SZ) 2014a).

In spite of attracting extensive media coverage and attention from the public about these campuses, especially during the student recruitment period, there is a lack of empirical researches to scrutinize how these campuses are running. In-depth case studies will contribute to the better understanding of how the western model of higher education is working in a different Chinese society.

1.2 Research Aims

This study investigates the extent to which a Hong Kong model of higher education can be transplanted from its main campus to a branch campus in Chinese Mainland. The focus will be on the transfer of its academic model in six aspects, including the curriculum, teaching methods, academic staffing, examination and student assessment system, campus culture, governance and management. The study will also explore the challenges and difficulties faced, with a view to identifying the success factors associated with the transplant.

A micro level of analysis on an individual institution is appropriate in order to provide in-depth first-hand empirical evidence. Using case study approach, the branch campus of Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) established in Shenzhen of Mainland China, *CUHK(SZ)* will be the focus of this proposed research.

The study analyses how do the following six actors or stakeholder factors shape the transfer: (1) national higher education policies, (2) local government administrative controls, (3) CUHK(SZ) senior management commitment, (4) execution of the administrators of CUHK(SZ), (5) academic staff engagement, and (6) student engagement.

1.3 Research Questions

The proposed study is guided by this primary research question: To what extent can the CUHK academic model be transplanted from its main campus to a branch campus in Mainland China?

To be more specific, the study will address the following three sub-research questions:

- (1) To what extent is the CUHK academic model (curriculum, teaching methods, academic staffing, examination and student assessment system, campus culture,

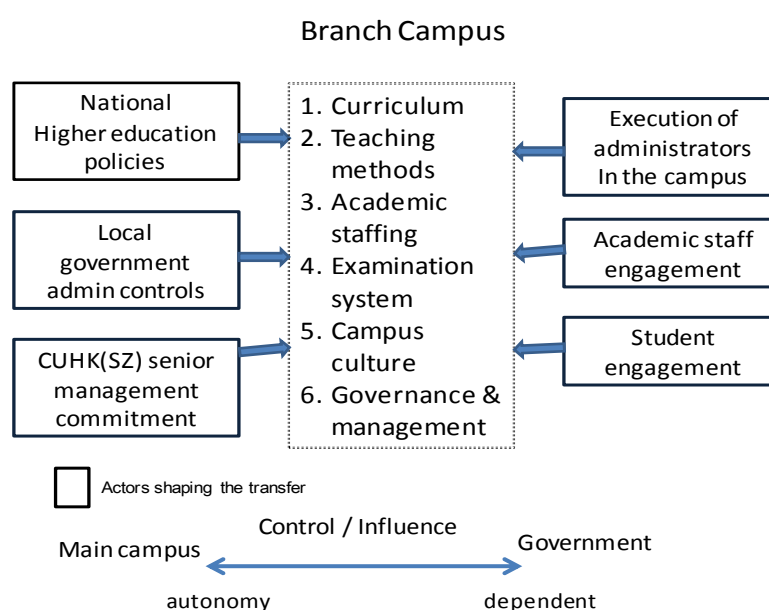
governance and management) being practised in its branch campus, CUHK(SZ)?

- (2) To what extent does CUHK have the autonomy for the operation of the campus as against the forces or influences of other stakeholders?
- (3) What are the key challenges and obstacles faced in the process of transfer, how can they be resolved, and the implications for the development of branch campuses?

In exploring the transfer of academic model, a general hypothesis will be appropriate and useful to guide the study. The hypothesis is that some aspects of the academic model are easier to be transferred, whilst others tend to be more complex and subtle. The former may include the hardware in the campus, like the collegial system, whilst the latter covers a wide range of software, e.g. teaching and learning processes, campus culture, and etc. The software of academic culture and traditions is actually where Hong Kong's top universities have a competitive advantage (Fong & Postiglione 2011).

After addressing these research questions and testifying the hypothesis, the study will further identify whether there is a unique Hong Kong model of a branch campus in Chinese Mainland. If yes, this model may be replicated for other universities in Hong Kong to set up branch campuses in Mainland China. The framework of the proposed study is summarized in the following diagram.

Figure 1: Framework of the Study



Six key actors are identified to have shaped the transfer of the academic model in the Shenzhen campus. From legislative and regulatory perspectives, the first two actors, national higher education policies and local government administrative controls, will have direct impact on the governance and management of the campus, as well as the examination and student assessment systems. The third actor, CUHK(SZ) senior management's commitment, will also affect how the transfer is executed in all aspects identified, especially if obstacles arisen during the process. Without full support of top management, it will be difficult for the administrators or academic staff to push ahead.

Towards the day-to-day operation in the campus, the other three groups of stakeholders will play a vital role for the transfer. The administrators have to liaise with the education authorities in Mainland China, as well as the main campus in various areas, including curriculum, examination system, staffing, and etc. The teaching staff is on the fore-ground to deliver the teaching and learning activities, as well as shaping the campus culture. Last but not least, student engagement is essential if the transfer is to be successful.

After analysing the control or influence of the main campus as against the other key actors, in particular, the national and local government, the researcher will explore to what extent CUHK has the autonomy in transferring the six aspects of its academic model. Moreover, the challenges and difficulties during the transfer, and success factors for the transplant will be identified.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cross-border higher education

The study is built on the existing research studies on cross-border higher education, particularly in Mainland China which have caught the attention of vast number of scholars. Postiglione (2010a) argues that the rise of East Asia knowledge systems will increasingly hinge upon the speed, depth, breadth, and changing nature of border-crossing in higher education. He further observes that cross-border collaboration often being initiated as a strategy for bringing western models of higher education to weaker higher education systems (Postiglione 2010b). It is also a way towards capacity building of the developing countries (Knight 2007). This understanding is highly relevant for the relations between Hong Kong and Mainland China. For example, the

Shenzhen Municipal Government has proactively invited renowned western universities to consider setting up campuses in Shenzhen with the aim to bringing in more internationalized and innovative elements in its higher education system (Shenzhen Municipal Education Bureau 2014). It will be meaningful to further scrutinize how the western models of higher education are actually working in the local context of the “weaker” systems, which has not been fully explored in the existing literature.

Another observation of Postiglione (2010c) is that international cross-border collaboration can be motivated and initiated by either bottom-up or top-down mechanism. For the formation of branch campuses, top-down mechanism tends to be pre-dominant. For example, the setup of CUHK(SZ) can be envisaged as a response to the call from the official document, “PRC government's Framework for Development and Reform Planning for the Pearl River Delta Region from 2008 to 2020”. It clearly spells out that “Prestigious universities of Hong Kong and Macao will be encouraged to establish cooperative institutions of higher education in the Pearl River Delta.” (CUHK 2014a). Whilst the motives of establishing cross-border collaborations are important, what counts more for the future and deserves in-depth investigation will be the mechanism of how these collaborations actually operate, in order to maintain the sustainability and vitality.

2.2 International branch campuses

The establishment of international branch campuses is classified as a second wave of cross-border higher education collaboration (Knight 2011). One of the widely accepted definitions of “branch campus” is “an entity that is owned, at least in part, by a foreign education provider; operated in the name of the foreign education provider; engages in at least some face-to-face teaching; and provides access to an entire academic program that leads to a credential awarded by the foreign education provider” (C-BERT 2014).

Banks & McBurnie (2009) claim that the first foreign full university campus was opened by Monash University of Australia in Malaysia in 1996. They analyse the reason of its formation, the operational structure, legislative requirements, and quality assurance procedure of this campus. However, few discussions are made on how it compares with the main campus in Australia, and to what extent the western model of higher education is practised in the Malaysian context.

According to C-BERT (2014), the number of international branch campuses has now exceeded 200. The proliferation of these campuses within a decade has caught much attention and interest from academics, educators and mass media. There are a wide range of discussion-based articles and news reports. For empirical research studies, different perspectives have been taken.

One group of researchers has deployed institutional or organizational theory with managerial approach as the lens of investigation. For example, Wilkins & Huisman (2012) use institutional theory, to examine the motivation and decision of universities in deriving the strategies in managing the branch campuses. Shams & Huisman (2012) borrow and explore a paradigm from the strategic management literature to explain the phenomenon. Such approaches tend to treat universities more like “corporations” with ultimate goals of making profits. However, regarded more as a public good, for higher education in the context of Hong Kong and Mainland China, profits are not a relevant concern of these universities. Adopting institutional or organizational theory to explain their motives and strategies in running branch campuses may not be relevant.

Lane (2011) discusses the cultural and environmental challenges likely to be faced by the leaders of the international branch campuses. Although leaders and management decisions are instrumental, students’ voices are equally noteworthy. Taking this stance, Wood (2011) argues that the culture in the branch campuses may go beyond a replication of the main campus, but an integration of the students in the Middle East campus into the culture of the home campus in the United States. In my proposed study, campus culture is treated as one core aspect for the transfer.

Borrowing from the theories on service quality, Ahmad (2014) investigates students’ perceptions and expectations in Malaysian campuses, and quantifies their level of satisfaction on service quality. Although treating students purely as customers may not be appropriate, this quantitative research does provide an alternate angle to understand one key group of stakeholders in these campuses. Student engagement will also be treated as one key actor for the transfer in my proposed research.

Other studies analyse the factors of successes or failures in the campuses (Feng 2013, Stanfield & Wang 2012, Altbach 2010, Sidhu 2009). Latest report has explored the potential of international branch campuses emerging to a “multi-campus global university” towards its maturity (Kratochvil & Karram 2014). It is rather early to make such claim, especially in Hong Kong and Mainland China, where the number of branch campuses reflects that we are still in the infancy stage.

As the formation of branch campuses in Mainland China is a new phenomenon when compared with the rest of the world like Malaysia, Mid-East, there are relatively few local empirical research studies. Some case studies have covered Chinese campuses established by western universities, for example, Feng (2013)'s comparative analysis on the management, governance, and mission strategies of two branch campuses partnered with British universities: the University of Nottingham Ningbo China ("UNNC") and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University ("XJTLU"). Ong & Chan (2012)'s study focuses on the challenges of university governance of transnational higher education in Mainland China. The proposed study will fill the gap in existing researches through a case study on a branch campus set up by a Hong Kong university in Chinese Mainland.

2.3 Borrowing and educational transfer

Under educational policy studies, there are two major directions in the current research area on borrowing. The first group focuses on a "normative" approach by using comparison to identify the best-performing educational system, from which lessons or "best practices" should be learned and transferred. Whilst, the second group of researches adopts an "analytical" approach to explore when, why, and how borrowing occurs, and examine the impact of such imports on existing policies and power constellations (Steiner-Khamsi 2014).

Table 1. Normative versus analytical questions in policy borrowing research

(Extracted from: p.154 Steiner-Khamsi 2014)

	Normative	Analytical
"Best practices"	Which are the "best practices" that should be adopted?	Whose practices are considered "best practices"?
Dissemination	How can "best practices" be effectively disseminated?	Under which conditions is dissemination of a practice likely to occur?
Impact of lesson drawing	What has been improved as a result of policy borrowing?	Who benefits, who loses in the act of lesson drawing?

When applied on the studies of branch campuses, an integration of both approaches is more appropriate. When CUHK made the decision to establish a branch campus in Shenzhen, it has a set of "best practices" that it would like to transfer to its branch campus (CUHK(SZ) 2014b), including its bilingual, multi-cultural education, collegial system and etc. How can these practices be effectively disseminated will be the focal point of interest of the proposed study. On the other hand, it is equally important to

investigate under what conditions is the dissemination of such practices likely to occur. In fact, both approaches are not exclusive.

Other scholars (Phillips & Ochs 2003) study the process of borrowing by using a Four Stages analysis, including cross-national attraction, decision, implementation, and internalization and indigenization. On the transplant of a branch campus, focus will be placed on the stage of implementation. Contextual factors of the hosting country, i.e. Mainland China, will be analysed, including philosophical, historical, cultural, social, political, economic, demographic, geographical, linguistic, administrative, and technological aspects. At Phase 1 of the research design of the proposed study (details in Session 3), a comprehensive comparison of the two higher education systems (Hong Kong and Mainland China) will be depicted.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Selection of Case

CUHK(SZ) is selected as the case of the proposed study based on three reasons. Firstly, its mother university, The Chinese University of Hong Kong is the first Hong Kong top-tiered research university to establish a branch campus in Mainland China. Before the formation of CUHK(SZ), the first joint institution between Hong Kong and Chinese Mainland is UIC formed by Beijing Normal University (“BNU”) and Hong Kong Baptist University (“BaptistU”) in Zhuhai in 2005. However, UIC is not being positioned as a “branch campus” of BaptistU, but a joint effort of both universities. Although CUHK(SZ) also has a local partnering university, the Shenzhen University (“SZU”), its relative influence is much less than BNU in the campus of UIC.

Secondly, CUHK has the deepest linkage with Chinese Mainland ever since its formation in 1963. One of its missions is to combine tradition with modernity, and to bring together China and the West. Since the late 70’s, CUHK has been partnering with Mainland institutions in research projects and in offering joint programmes. CUHK has been deepening its educational and research involvements in Chinese Mainland and planning to further expand its presence through a number of new initiatives. Setting up the branch campus in Shenzhen hence becomes a logical step forward in this endeavour (CUHK 2014b).

CUHK(SZ)’s educational philosophy is to nurture talents of future graduates who have global vision, committed to integrate China and the West, through bilingual and

multicultural student education, and its collegial system for pastoral care and whole-person development (CUHK(SZ) 2014b).

Thirdly, as the Research Assistant of a Public Policy Research Project on the “Hong Kong-Guangdong University Partnership: Toward regional integration of higher education in South China”, I have conducted interviews with administrators and managers of CUHK in charge of their Mainland China Office and Shenzhen Development Office. Moreover, as Honorary Secretary of Hong Kong Public Administration Association, I have acquaintances with government officials and senior management of universities. The relationship built up will enable me to conduct field work for the case study of their branch campus in Shenzhen more effectively.

The background information of CUHK(SZ) is summarized as follows: it has obtained the formal approval from Ministry of Education in March 2014. To comply with the legal requirement, its local partner is SZU. Positioned as an extension arm or branch campus of CUHK, CUHK(SZ)’s vision is to become a first-class research university regionally, nationally and internationally. With focus on providing research-based teaching, it has obtained approval by CUHK Senate for 23 undergraduate degree programmes from 3 schools, namely, Management & Economics, Science & Engineering, Humanities & Social Sciences (CUHK 2014b).

In the academic year of 2014, CUHK(SZ) has admitted 313 undergraduates in School of Management and Economics (“SME”) offering 3 major areas: Marketing and Communication, Global Business Studies and Economics. Other professional programmes, e.g. Accounting, Risk Management, Insurance and Actuarial Science will be offered in 2016. Next, The School of Science and Engineering will begin to admit undergrads in 2015, offering two major areas: Design & Manufacturing Engineering and Computer & Information Engineering, and another four majors from 2016: Physics, Mathematics, Biomedical Science & Engineering, and Genomics & Biomedical Informatics (CUHK(SZ) 2014c).

The students are admitted from 17 provinces/cities. The graduates will be awarded both the CUHK(SZ) Graduation Certificate, plus the CUHK Degree. Following CUHK, the instruction media is bilingual of both Chinese and English. For teaching, CUHK(SZ) emphasizes that its teaching quality is on par with that of CUHK. While the appointment of teaching faculties will be offered under CUHK(SZ), the salaries will reach international standards. According to the Vacancy Notice for Professors, appointments will normally be made on contract basis for up to 3 years initially, leading

to longer-term appointment or tenure later subject to mutual agreement. Exceptionally, appointment with tenure can be offered forthwith to candidates of proven ability (CUHK(SZ) 2014a). The execution of these practices in the academic staffing will be verified in the proposed study.

The Governing Board of CUHK(SZ) is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of CUHK, Professor Joseph Sung. The Board comprises of 16 members, 8 respectively nominated by CUHK & SZU. The President, Professor Xu Yangsheng also comes from CUHK. It appears that the power influence of SZU on the top level is not prominent, and reflects that it works more like a branch campus of CUHK, rather than a “joint” institute of CUHK and SZU. Governance and management in the campus will be a key aspect for study in the proposed research.

3.2 Overview of Research Design

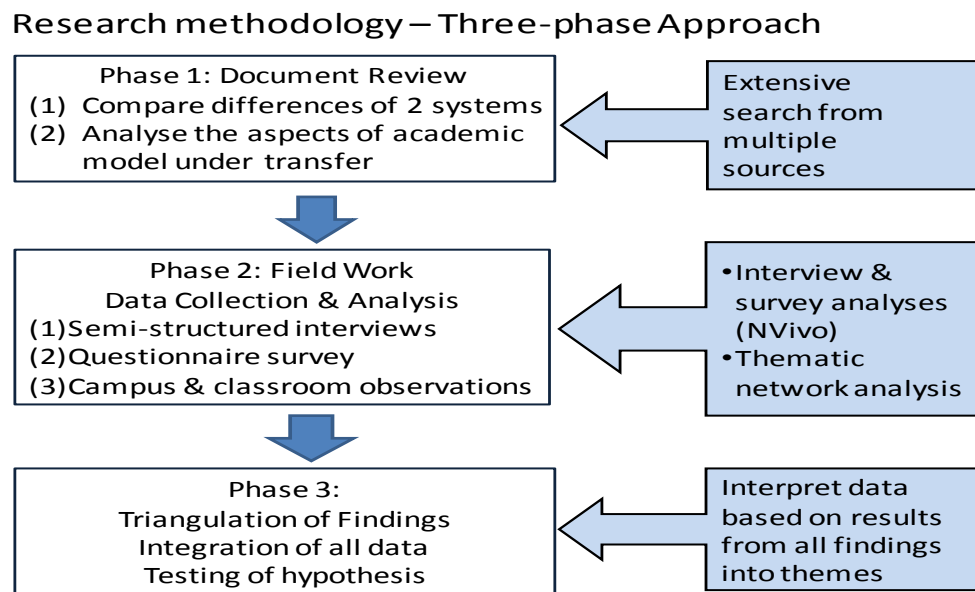
Case study approach with qualitative research methods is adopted in this proposed study. This research methodology is appropriate as it allows researcher to use “a variety of sources, a variety of types of data and a variety of research methods as part of the investigation” (Denscombe 2010, 131). It is particularly relevant in this study because the focus is a complex sociological and cultural phenomenon on the extent to which the academic model of Hong Kong higher education be transferred in its branch campus.

A three-phase approach will be employed. Phase 1 is to conduct a comprehensive document review with two objectives. Firstly, to have a detailed comparison of the differences between the higher education systems in Hong Kong and Mainland China within the contextual environment; secondly, to obtain all relevant data for the following six aspects in the academic model under transplant, namely, the curriculum, the teaching methods, academic staffing, examination and student assessment system, campus culture, and governance and management.

Phase 2 is the field work on data collection and analysis. It includes semi-structured interviews with CUHK(SZ)’s senior management, administrators, teachers and students, a questionnaire survey on students, as well as campus and classroom observations. Phase 3 is the triangulation of findings of all data collected from the above research methods, then followed by analysis and conclusions.

The research design is summarized in the following diagram.

Figure 2: Overview of the proposed research design



3.3 Phase 1: Document review

In Phase 1, a comprehensive document review will be conducted. It covers scholarly researches on the development of cross-border higher education and branch campuses in Mainland China. Research reports from various organizations, e.g. World Bank, Asia Development Bank, OECD, UNESCO, and etc. will be reviewed.

Moreover, in order to keep abreast of the policy context in Hong Kong and Mainland China, government reports and policies documents will be studied. The published documents, media news and websites of various universities will be viewed so as to obtain the most updated information. To quote an example, in June 2014, a Sino-foreign Cooperative University Union was formed by six universities in Chinese Mainland (Sharma 2014). CUHK(SZ) is one of them. Others include Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, University of Nottingham Ningbo, New York University Shanghai, Duke Kunshan University, Wenzhou-Kean University. The Union has the mission to enhance their influence over the reform and development of higher education in Mainland China. New initiatives or directives from the government may emerge.

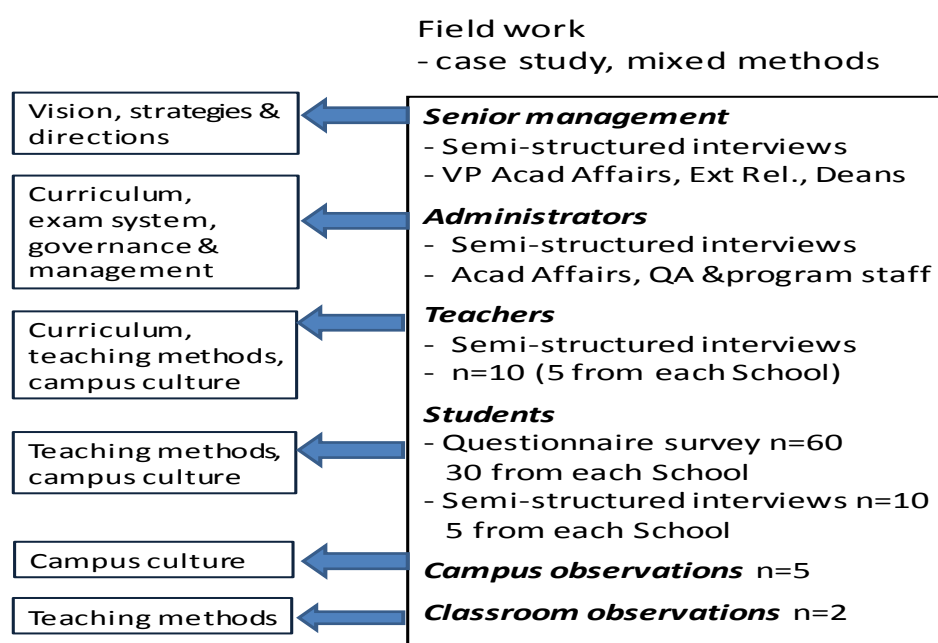
As the outcome of document review, there will be a comprehensive comparison of the two higher education systems of Hong Kong and Mainland China, as well as the details of the six aspects of the academic model of CUHK to be transplanted. Besides

serving as background information, documents will be used to triangulate the data collected from questionnaire survey, interviews and observations in the next phase. For example, bilingual education is highly advocated in the official document of CUHK(SZ). Through findings from questionnaire survey, student interviews, campus and classroom observations, the researcher will investigate whether students actually have the opportunities and experiences to use both Chinese and English language in their class and campus activities, as well as their level of engagement in using both languages.

3.4 Phase 2: Field work: data collection and analysis

Field work will be conducted by three methods: semi-structured interviews, questionnaire survey, and observations (campus and classroom), as shown in the following diagram.

Figure 3: Proposed field work



3.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

(a) Senior management

As an in-depth case study, interviews are to be conducted at different levels in the campus of CUHK(SZ), covering senior management, administrators, teachers and

students. Senior management team assumes a key role in spearheading the development of the campus. Semi-structured interviews will be arranged with Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs, External Affairs, and Deans of both schools (School of Management & Economics, and School of Science & Engineering). Each interview will last for around 45 minutes, and be audio recorded with prior permission from the interviewees so that transcript can be prepared. With the network I built up with CUHK, it is foreseen that the interviews can be arranged without difficulties.

The objective of the interviews is to solicit senior management's views on the vision, mission and strategies of the branch campus or schools, in relation to the mission of transplanting the CUHK model in its campus. In interviewing the VP Academic Affairs, some possible questions are: To what extent do you think CUHK(SZ) has the autonomy in academic affairs, e.g. in offering your programmes? To what extent have you considered the view of the educational authorities in Mainland China? Are the examination and student assessment system identical with that of the main campus in Hong Kong? For Deans of the Schools, some possible questions are: How do you select and design the curriculum to be taught in your School? Are the teaching methods identical with that of the main campus?

(b) Administrators

To address the research question of the extent to which the academic model can be transferred, administrators in CUHK(SZ) are the key informants. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with staff in charge of academic affairs, including programme development and administration, quality control and etc. Each interview will last for around 45 minutes, and be audio recorded with prior permission from the interviewees. With the prior endorsement from the senior management of the campus on this study, the chance of setting up the interviews is high.

The objective of the interviews is to explore to what extent CUHK(SZ) has control or autonomy on the three core aspects of the academic model: curriculum, examination and student assessment, and governance and management. Possible questions are: When you are developing the curriculum of a course, what factors will you consider? Does it need to be filed, reviewed or approved by any educational authorities in Mainland China? For quality control of your course, are there any administrative measures or controls required by the educational authorities?

(c) Teachers

It is important to solicit and examine the views and experiences of teaching staff as they are the key actors in shaping the transfer. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 10 teachers, 5 from each of the two Schools, so as to have equal representation. Each interview will last for around 45 minutes and be audio recorded with prior permission. To recruit the teaching faculties, email will be sent to the administrators requesting the permission for contact.

The focuses will be the transfer of curriculum, teaching methods, and campus culture. For example, some possible questions are: In your teaching and class activities, do you normally use both English and Chinese when interacting with your students? What are the difficulties or obstacles faced (if any)? The interviews are to be conducted after the completion of the questionnaire survey on students (details in Session 3.4.2). It will provide opportunities to explore the issues highlighted from the findings of the survey. For example, if the students experience certain difficulties in the teaching method, the teachers' opinion will be sought on whether they see similar problems.

(d) Students

After completion of the questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 10 students. Purposeful sampling will be used to ensure equal representation from both Schools. Students will be openly recruited to participate in this individual interview through the student affairs office. Each interview will last around 45 minutes, to be conducted in the campus by their mother tongue. All interviews will be audio recorded with consent from the participants for preparation of transcripts.

The objective of the interviews is to allow the students to elaborate their experiences and perceptions of the teaching methods and campus culture, so as to understand the extent of transfer. For example, possible questions are: What do you think is the educational philosophy in this university? Have you participated in any multi-cultural activities in your class, campus or college functions? The interviews will be conducted after the completion of the questionnaire survey so that it will provide opportunities to have more in-depth understanding on issues identified from the survey.

Content analysis of all interview records will be organized into themes, categories and sub-categories in the development of the conceptual framework under the six aspects of the academic model to be studied. Qualitative data analysis software, *NVivo*

(NVivo 10), will be employed to apply codes to all transcripts collected, for generation of interpretative themes. Through thematic network analysis, a visual map will be produced.

3.4.2 Questionnaire Survey

As key stakeholders and actors shaping the transplant in the campus, a questionnaire survey will be carried out on students in CUHK(SZ). The target number of respondents is 60 students. It is projected that in the academic year of 2015/6, at least another 300 undergraduate students will be admitted, making a total student population of over 600. Purposeful sampling will be employed to ensure equal representation from the two academic disciplines. Before conducting the full survey, a pilot run will be carried out to test the questions from the respondents.

Participants will be openly recruited in the campus through the student affairs office of CUHK(SZ). It will be feasible as prior consensus will be sought from the senior management through the relationship established with them. To ensure anonymity, ease of operation and standardization of information, the students will complete the survey through an online platform, e.g. www.surveymonkey.com.

The questionnaire survey will consist of approximately 20 questions. The first session will collect independent variables on the background characteristics of the students. This will include demographic data, e.g. gender, age, nationality, province/city, rural/urban background, academic route to university, e.g. Gaokao, discipline of study, current year studying, e.g. Year 1 or Year 2. The second session will ask the respondents to indicate their relative agreement or disagreement to some statements with a five-point Likert scale, i.e. strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree (Wiersma 1995).

To address the first research question, the statements will be in 3 groups: (1) curriculum; (2) teaching methods; (3) campus culture (adapted from Ahmad 2014). Some examples of the statements in the respective groups are:

- (1) The programme is preparing me with vision in a global economy (curriculum);
- (2) My lecturers have used both Chinese and English language effectively to facilitate my learning (teaching methods); and
- (3) The campus provides exposure and learning experience of international culture (campus culture).

The ratings of the students will be analysed in order to understand to what extent the transfer of curriculum, teaching methods, campus culture have been taken place in the campus, as perceived by the students.

3.4.3 Campus and classroom observations

Campus observation will be conducted at various stages of the study in order to collect ethnographical data of the campus culture. At least 5 observations will be carried out in public areas, like the Commons, restaurants, cafes and etc. Communicating with the students and teachers in the campus will also facilitate the understanding of the campus culture. The researcher will also attend public lectures or seminars organized by CUHK(SZ) so as to observe the behaviours of the students. All observations will be recorded in details through writing notes.

Classroom observation is a useful tool to understand how the teaching and learning activities have actually taken place. It provides a way to triangulate the data collected through questionnaire survey and interviews on the theme of teaching methods. Prior consensus will be obtained with the teaching faculties in order to conduct the classroom observation. Two classroom observations will be arranged, one from each School.

3.5 Phase 3: Triangulations of Findings

In order to answer the three research questions, the study will analyse documentary information, field notes from observations, interview transcripts, and results of questionnaire survey. Data analyses will be interlaced with data collection and interactive decisions be made at different points of the study in order to proceed in a data driven course of direction within the boundaries of the study.

For all individual interviews (with students, teachers, administrators and senior management), conversations will be audio recorded. Field notes from observations will be written. The data collected from these interviews and observations, together with the results of questionnaire survey will be organized and validated through a triangulation process. This is a process where information and relevant data are checked and verified on the case being investigated. Triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). After analysing the wide range of data collected, putting them into separate themes and categories, with the help of qualitative data analysis software, conclusions can be

drawn.

To this end, this final stage of analysis will shed light on the three key research questions: (1) To what extent is the CUHK academic model being practised in CUHK(SZ)? (2) To what extent does CUHK have the control and autonomy for the transplant as against the forces or influences of other stakeholders? (3) What are the key challenges and obstacles faced in the process of transfer, how can they be resolved, and the implications for the development of branch campuses? It will also be able to testify the general hypothesis that some aspects of the higher education system are easier to transfer than others.

4. Significance of the Research

At present, only two Hong Kong universities have established campuses in Mainland China. With great emphasis of the Central government in uplifting the standard of higher education, along with the strong pull from the provincial and local governments (e.g. Shenzhen Municipal Education Bureau), Hong Kong's universities have the potential for expansion in Mainland China. The quality and standard of Hong Kong universities are highly praised with their good reputation built up in the past decades. They are highly welcome to set up campus in Chinese Mainland.

With the proliferation of international campus branches in the last decade, there are case studies focused on factors of successes or failures of the branch campuses (Altbach 2010, Sidhu 2009). They are mostly examples of universities in the western countries entering the eastern world (Feng 2013). There is a scarcity of investigation through in-depth case study of a Hong Kong university establishing branch campus in Mainland China. With the special ties between Hong Kong and its motherland, it is meaningful to have first-hand understanding to identify whether there is a unique Hong Kong model which may be different from the western theory of cross-border partnership. Their experience and success of integrating the western model of higher education in a Chinese Mainland may lead to the formation of a new model of cross-border collaboration.

Moreover, for educational practices, the study will identify whether there are best practices of academic model, and under what conditions can they be disseminated in Mainland China. The researcher will further identify the success factors of the transplant. These experiences may be considered for replication by other universities in

Hong Kong to set up branch campuses in Mainland China.

To summarize, the significance of the research are three-folded: firstly, theoretically, based on the findings from the case study, it will explore whether there is a unique Hong Kong model of higher education in establishing branch campuses in Mainland China. Secondly, for educational practices, it will identify the best practices of the academic model and how can they be disseminated in Mainland China with adaptations in the local contexts. Thirdly, from policy angle, through identifying the success factors of the transplant of the campus, lessons can be learnt by other universities in Hong Kong to set up branch campuses in Chinese Mainland. The anticipated impacts will be to inform policy review of both China and Hong Kong governments in fostering deeper cross-border higher education cooperation or integration for the next decade.

5. Research Limitations

The research will focus on one campus only and will not be used to generalize for a conclusion valid for other universities in Hong Kong. Secondly, the timing of the study may be another limitation as the campus is newly opened, admitted 313 students for the academic year of 2014, and thus teething problems may exist. However, it will still have some commonalities and provide implications for other universities who have the interest to engage in establishing branch campuses in China.

At present, as the Research Assistant of a Public Policy Research Project on the “Hong Kong-Guangdong University Partnership: Toward regional integration of higher education in South China”, I have interviewed senior management, administrators and academic staff from various universities in Hong Kong and Mainland China. I have also obtained background information and have understandings on the aims and strategies of the Hong Kong universities towards Mainland China. These will inform and guide my proposed research.

Moreover, with my capacity as Honorary Secretary of Hong Kong Public Administration Association, I have established good network with the government officials and senior management of universities, which will facilitate my fieldwork. As Associate Editor and Business Manager of the *Policy Administration and Policy – An Asia-Pacific Journal*, I have the research knowledge, capability and leadership skills to pursue the proposed study.

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