A Pedagogical Framework of Business Education for the Knowledge-based Economy: The Hong Kong Experience
1. **purpose of the paper**

- To describe the current university education reform in 2012
- To present a pedagogical framework of business education for the *Knowledge-based Economy* (KBE) in the context of Hong Kong as a Special Administration Region of China.
2. **Introduction**

- The global economy has undergone significant changes in recent years.
- One of the key features of the changes is the increasing importance of knowledge in all sectors of economic activities.
- Hong Kong is also moving rapidly into a knowledge-based economy, and its education system has evolved to keep pace with global trends.
- Unlike many modern metropolitan areas, Hong Kong is small and densely populated.
2. Introduction continues

- In mid-2013, the population in Hong Kong was 7.188 million while the total land area was 1,104 square kilometers.
- The GDP was US$259 billion (HK$2,022.2 billion) and per capital GDP was US$37,859 (HK$295,303).
- Service industries are the foundation of the Hong Kong economy.
- Over 88 per cent of the 3.87 million working population was employed in various service occupations including wholesale, retail, import and export, transport, storage, communications, financing, insurance, real estate, business services, social and personal services (Hong Kong: The facts, June, 2014).
2. Introduction continues

- In the “Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015” of the World Economic Forum measuring national competitiveness covering 144 economies, Hong Kong was described as:
  - Featured in the top 10 since 2012, HKSAR retains its 7th position.
  - In order to enhance its competitiveness, HKG must improve on higher education (22nd) and innovation (26th, down three places this year).
  - In the latter category, the quality of its research institution (32nd, down one) and the limited availability of scientists and engineers (36th, down four) remain the two issues to be addressed.
2. **Introduction continues**

- In building a truly innovation-driven economy, HKG can rely on its high degree of technological readiness (5th).

- As an unofficial member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Hong Kong is innovation driven.

- However, as mentioned in the Global Competitiveness Report, HKG must improve on higher education and innovation as both ratings were near the bottom third of the 35 developed economies listed.
3. The Education System and Policies that shape university education in Hong Kong

• A knowledge-based economy (KBE) is characterized by the trends towards greater dependence on knowledge, information and high skill levels and the increasing need for ready access to all of these by the business and public sectors.

• Knowledge is applied through the skills of individuals. Intellectual capital is a critical asset and human resources development is one of the strategic thrusts for sustainable development.
3. The Education System and Policies that Shape University Education in Hong Kong continues

- Believing that education is the building block of human resources development, the Hong Kong Government is committed to investing in education.

- Government expenditure on education in 2012-13 amounted to US$9.97 billion, representing a ratio of 3.8% of GDP.

- The Hong Kong Government subsidizes education at all levels. Starting from 2008/09, school-age children are provided with 12 years of free education covering primary school students to senior secondary school students.

- This expansion aimed at building a solid foundation for the knowledge-based and innovation-driven economy.
The higher government expenditure on education in 2008-09 was mainly attributable to the establishment of the Research Endowment Fund of $18.0 billion to strengthen the research capacity of the higher education institutions and nurture more research talents.
3. The Education System and Policies that Shape University Education in Hong Kong continues

• The levels of knowledge and skills in the population of an economy are highly related to their educational attainment.


• In the knowledge driven society nowadays, people in general are keen to better equip themselves and thus the number of individuals with higher education is expanding.

• In Hong Kong, the proportion of the population aged 15 and over with post-secondary education attainment increased from 20.7% in 2002 to 27.7% in 2012.
3. The Education System and Policies that Shape University Education in Hong Kong continues

• As a knowledgeable labor force is the thrust for enhancing competitiveness and sustaining economic development, there has been a progressive upward shift in the educational level of the labor force in Hong Kong over the past decade.

• The proportion of labor force with post-secondary education (i.e. having attended non-degree/degree/postgraduate courses) went up from 26.3% in 2002 to 34.3% in 2012.

• In a nutshell, development of human resources essentially comprises education, skill training and retraining, lifelong learning and sourcing of global talent.

• This demands that need to instill the spirit of continuing learning, an integral part of a learning economy into the Hong Kong people.
4. Are universities teaching the skills needed to a knowledge-based economy?

Two responses to this question:

1. Of course!

2. That’s not my job!
5. **The Characteristics of knowledge-based workers**

1. The nature of their work tends to change over time, in response to market, regulatory changes, technological developments and thus the knowledge base of their work tends to change rapidly.

2. They are digitally competent; a key component.

3. They play many roles: marketer, designer, salesperson, accountant/business manager, technical support for example.

4. They need to keep on learning to stay on top in their work.

5. Above all, they need to be flexible, to adapt to rapidly changing conditions around them.
6. The skills required in a knowledge-based economy

1. Communication skills
2. The ability to learn independently
3. Ethics and responsibility
4. Teamwork and flexibility
5. Thinking skills
6. Digital skills
7. Knowledge management
7. The new undergraduate education landscape in Hong Kong since the 2012 education reform

1. Education in Hong Kong is largely modelled on the UK education system. The education sector in Hong Kong is overseen by the Education Bureau and the Social Welfare Department.

2. In 2004, the Hong Kong government announced after a long process of consultation that higher education undergraduate degrees would be increased from three to four years and that secondary education would be reduced from seven to six years, starting in the fall of 2012.

3. This change is commonly referred to as ‘3+3+4’. The total number of spaces in tertiary education was also increased.
7. The new undergraduate education landscape in Hong Kong since the 2012 education reform

4. These changes are seen by many as a major shift in educational philosophy, as they shift the focus of education from specialisation to a more holistic approach to learning.

5. The universities in Hong Kong have used this unprecedented opportunity to revisit and critically reflect on the undergraduate business curriculum, which had previously been bound by the goal of meeting the accreditation requirements.
7. The new undergraduate education landscape in Hong Kong since the 2012 education reform

6. The distinctive features of the new curriculum include interdisciplinary inquiry, multidisciplinary collaboration, enquiry into multiple contexts, diverse learning experiences, multiple forms of learning and assessment, engagement with local and global communities, and the development of civic and moral values.

7. Specifically, the new programme requirements have four major components: the core curriculum requirements, which are common for all students irrespective of their majors, the required courses for the major disciplines, the required languages and free electives.
# Distribution of credits in the 4-year undergraduate accounting curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>No. of credits</th>
<th>% of total no. of credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two-tier model of the core curriculum</strong></td>
<td>Four common core courses</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seven courses from five clusters</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major discipline</strong></td>
<td>Foundation core courses</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business function courses</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accounting stream courses</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capstone course</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language and communication related courses</strong></td>
<td>Six language and communication related courses</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Free electives</strong></td>
<td>Six courses chosen from all of the courses offered by any</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>department in the university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total no. of required credits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Features: Base Broadening

- Free elective courses
- Language and communication related courses
- Major Discipline course
- Common core and cluster courses
Features: Double Majoring, Minoring, Specialization

Examples: A&F, BA & Law
7. The new undergraduate education landscape in Hong Kong since the 2012 education reform

8. Throughout the last decade, an outcome based approach (OBA) to learning has been the trend among universities in Hong Kong since the University Grants Committee (UGC) set up a task force on the OBA in 2007.

9. The new curriculum still uses the OBA while it also emphasizes activity-based experiential learning.

10. To ensure that students understand the connection between their actions and the wider world, civic engagement has been made a graduation requirement in the four-year undergraduate curriculum.

Example 1: Experiential Learning; the missing piece of jigsaw
Experiential Learning in Business Education

• *Experiential learning is learning through reflection on doing, which is often contrasted with rote or didactic learning.*

• *Often related to action learning, adventure learning and service learning.*

• *In business school, internship, and job-shadowing are examples*

• *Contribute significantly to the student’s overall understanding of the real-time environment.*

• *As higher education continues to adapt to new expectations from students, experiential learning in business and accounting programs has become more important.*
Features: David Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model (Modified)
Kolb states that to gain genuine knowledge from an experience, certain abilities are required:

1. The learner must be willing to be actively involved in the experience.
2. The learner must be able to reflect on the experience.
3. The learner must possess and use analytical skills to conceptualize the experience; and
4. The learner must possess decision making and problem solving skills in order to use the new ideas gained from the experience.
Implementation of Experiential Learning:

1. Experiential learning can exist without a teacher as the mechanism of experiential learning is the learner’s reflection on experiences using analytic skills.

2. However, a teacher (a “facilitator”) may improve the likelihood of experiential learning occurring.

3. Jacobson and Ruddy building on Kolb’s 4-stage model and Pfeiffer and Jones’s 5-stage model, took these theoretical framework and created a simple practical questioning model for facilitators to use in promoting critical reflection in experiential learning.
Implementation of Experiential Learning:

Their “5 Questions” model is as follows:

1. Did you notice…?
2. Why did that happen?
3. Does that happen in life?
4. Why does that happen?
5. How can you use that?

These questions are posed by the facilitator after an experience, and gradually lead the group towards a critical reflection on their experience, and an understanding of how they can apply the learning to their own life.
Experiential Learning Linking Accounting Academic Learning to the Real Business World

Real Business External Environment

Practice and Problems

Experiential Learning: linkage

Academic content
Conclusion

1. The Hong Kong education system recently underwent a major reform with the introduction of the ‘3+3+4’ scheme, with three years of junior secondary education, three years of senior secondary education and a four-year undergraduate university programme.

2. In addition to the structural changes, the curriculum has also been fundamentally reformed. Although each university has the autonomy to define and build its own curriculum, the general trend has been toward developing a more multidisciplinary approach in which students are required to take more general education subjects and are encouraged to combine subjects from different faculties.
Conclusion continues

3. As a result, the new undergraduate curriculum has been designed to develop well-rounded graduates who have a high level of professional competence, social and national responsibility, and a global outlook.

4. With terms of the new undergraduate business curriculum, another significant innovation is the inclusion of ‘experiential learning’ and ‘civic engagement’ activities that require students to tackle real world problems.

5. While ethics has become an essential element in the business programme, the curriculum reform has also provided a natural ground for business educators to assess the most effective ways of integrating business ethics into undergraduate business programmes.
References


- Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, “Hong Kong as a Knowledge-based Economy: A Statistical Perspective”, 2013.

- Information Services Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, “Hong Kong: The Facts”, 2014.

The End

THANK YOU