PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

Special Issue on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications

Public Administration and Policy is indexed and abstracted in:
Scopus, Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), ProQuest, EBSCO, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), CrossRef, Google Scholar, WorldCat, The British Library

Public Administration and Policy

Volume 25 Number 3 2022

Special Issue on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications

Guest Editor: Stephanie Wing Lee

Contents

Editorial Preface

This is the third issue of PAP in 2022 which comprises of two parts. The first part contains articles of the special issue on "Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications". We are delighted to have Dr. Stephanie Wing Lee from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, College of Professional and Continuing Education as Guest Editor. There are six articles focusing on various aspects of teaching and learning in universities in Hong Kong, Macao and Morocco. They are written by academics and specialists in the related fields. Please refer to Dr. Lee's Introduction to the special issue for brief descriptions of each article.

For the second part, in addition to the articles of the special issue on teaching and learning, three regular articles on public administration practices in South Korea, gender-equal inheritance rights in Bangladesh, and community care services for the elderly in Hong Kong are included. A brief summary of these three articles is given below.

The first article "A behavioral approach to administrative reform: a case study of promoting proactive administration in South Korea" by Pan Suk Kim reviews how the South Korean government initiated proactive administration, what systems or mechanisms has the government utilized to promote proactive administration, what constraints the government faced in the process of administrative reform, and how it resolved them. This approach has contributed greatly to the substantial change in perception that public officials should pursue their work as actively as they can. While many countries have promoted various forms of administrative reforms, cases of behavioral innovation and proactive administration have been relatively scarce. This paper serves as a useful reference for consideration by other governments.

The second article on "Equality in contention: exploring the debates of gender-equal inheritance rights in Bangladesh" by Jinat Hossain and Ishtiaq Jamil evaluates what caused the debates and confusion in articulating a gender-equal inheritance policy in Bangladesh, and identifies the socio-political drivers and nature of the political power play that thwarted the policy's adoption. Based on a case study with in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions, the findings illustrate that the controversies between the Islamic religion and national and international policies led to serious debates and confusion about gender-equal rights of inheritance in Bangladesh. The paper will be beneficial to policy makers who seek to formulate a gender-equal policy in a developing country with a Muslim majority.

The third article on "An evaluation of community care services for the elderly in Hong Kong" by Gigi Lam analyses community care services (CCS) in terms of availability, awareness, accessibility, and acceptance, untangles the deep-seated factors underlying the CCS and provides some short-term, medium-term, and long-term recommendations. Based on a literature review on government reports, consultation papers, Legislative Council papers and academic articles from 1980 to the present, this article reveals the problems of various services such as low awareness and accessibility of day respite services, as well as the core of

the heavy reliance on the subvention model, in contrast to the adoption of the 'mixed economy of care' by residential care services.

I wish to thank Dr. Stephanie Wing Lee, Guest Editor, for inviting and editing papers for this special issue, as well as all the authors for contributing their papers to this issue and the reviewers for their critical but constructive comments in helping the authors to improve their papers. Finally, I thank Emerald and our editorial teams as well as the members of both the Asia Pacific Editorial Board and International Editorial Advisory Board for their contributions in making the successful publication of this issue possible. We hope these articles will enhance the understanding of the issues in teaching and learning in higher education and other topics on public administration and policy in Hong Kong and the Asia Pacific regions.

Peter K.W. Fong
Editor-in-Chief, PAP Journal
President, Hong Kong Public Administration Association

About the Editor-in-Chief
Professor Peter K.W. Fong, PhD (New York University), is President of Hong Kong Public Administration Association and Editor-in-Chief of PAP Journal. He teaches strategic management and supervises DBA students' dissertations of University of Wales TSD. He was appointed as Advisory/Visiting Professors by Tongji, Tsinghua, Renmin, and Tianjin Universities, Chinese University of HK and HK Poly U. He holds memberships of HK Institute of Planners & Planning Institute Australia. He was a Teaching Fellow of Judge Business School, University of Cambridge; Director of EMBA programme, HKU Business School; Associate Professor, Department of Urban Planning, HKU; Executive Vice President of City University of Macao; Honorary Professor, China Training Centre for Senior Civil Servants in Beijing; Studies Director, Civil Service Training & Development Institute, HKSAR Government; Visiting Scholar, MIT; and Consultants, the World Bank and Delta Asia Bank. Peter K.W. Fong can be contacted at: fongpeter@netvigator.com

Introduction to the special issue

My sincere gratitude goes to Professor Peter K.W. Fong, Editor-in-Chief for inviting me to serve as Guest Editor for this special issue of *Public Administration and Policy*, entitled "Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications". This issue sheds light on the hot-button issues pertinent to the higher education sector during times of uncertainty and suggests corresponding ways to overcome pressing challenges from perspectives in public policy, education, and psychology.

The first article "A study of work-integrated learning experience of hospitality and tourism management students in Guangdong under the COVID-19 pandemic" by Jing Bill Xu, Pimtong Tavitiyaman, Xinyan Zhang, and Mingfang Zhu, explores students' work-integrated learning experience, focusing on students' application of knowledge and improvement of multiple skills in work-integrated learning, their influence on positive industry image change due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and students' desired career prospect.

The second article "The differences between students' fixed and growth mindsets: a case of study tour between Hong Kong and Canada" by Carmen Sum, Yui Yip Lau, and Ivy Chan, provides an in-depth analysis of students with different mindsets and proposes the use of overseas tours and intercultural learning to foster students' growth mindset.

The third article "Effects of self-efficacy and learning environment on Hong Kong undergraduate students' academic performance in online learning" by Francis C.Y. Kuan and Stephanie Wing Lee, suggests the importance of the quality of Online Learning Physical Environment (OLPE) and Online Learning Self-efficacy (OLSE) in predicting academic performance in online learning.

The fourth article "Mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution to resolve interpersonal conflicts in Hong Kong universities" by Aaron C.K. Lau, provides insights into mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) to resolve interpersonal conflicts for undergraduate students in Hong Kong.

The fifth article "Learning to teach: cross-cultural internship teaching of a mainland Chinese Master's student in a Macao university" by Lin Luo and Yanju Shao, closely examines the cross-cultural teaching experience of a mainland Chinese Master's student who is studying education in Macao.

The sixth article "An analysis of students' satisfaction with distance learning in Moroccan universities during the COVID-19 pandemic" by Lahboub Zouiri and Fatima Ezzahra Kinani, analyzes university students' satisfaction with their distance learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally and above all, this special issue would not be possible without the insightful input from authors, constructive feedback from peer-reviewers, and excellent support from Managing Editor, Dr. Alice Te, Editor-in-Chief, Professor Peter K.W. Fong, and *Public Administration and Policy*'s editorial team.

Stephanie Wing Lee
Guest Editor

A study of work-integrated learning experience of hospitality and tourism management students in Guangdong under the COVID-19 pandemic

Jing Bill Xu, Pimtong Tavitiyaman and Xinyan Zhang
College of Professional and Continuing Education,
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR, China, and

Mingfang Zhu
Shenzhen Tourism College, Jinan University, Shenzhen, China

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to explore students' work-integrated learning experience. Particularly, students' application of knowledge and improvement of multiple skills in work-integrated learning, their influence on positive industry image change due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and students' desired career prospect were explored.

Design/methodology/approach – A questionnaire survey with valid responses from 168 undergraduate students in hospitality and tourism management was conducted in four colleges/universities in Guangdong, China in 2021. PLS-SEM method was used to analyze the data.

Findings – It was found that students' multiple skills had improved through application of knowledge in work-integrated learning. Skill improvement helped form positive industry image change and shape future career prospect. However, such positive industry image change did not impact students' career prospect directly.

Originality/value – Today, work-integrated learning has become one of the most valuable opportunities for students in hospitality and tourism management to gain industry experience. However, recent literature has largely examined the negative impacts of COVID-19, whereas few studies have examined the positive aspects of work-integrated learning.

Keywords Work-integrated learning, COVID-19, Positive industry image change, Career prospect

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Today, the hospitality and tourism (H & T) industry has suffered considerably due to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, more specifically, owing to the social distancing requirement and various prevention and quarantine measures that have been adopted in different countries (Kaushal and Srivastava, 2021). Domestic and international mobility has been affected. Meanwhile, this situation affects students' view of their study choice in H & T management, their internship/work-integrated learning (WIL), as well as their perceived future career (Joshi and Gupta, 2021). Despite the obvious negative impacts of COVID-19, limited studies have

This paper forms part of a special section Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications, guest edited by Dr Stephanie Wing Lee.

indicated that students have also held a positive image toward the industry or even optimistic career prospect in certain senses (Reichenberger and Raymond, 2021; Shah *et al.*, 2021). Unfortunately, similar academic endeavors are still scarce, particularly when related to the understanding of WIL.

Many studies have acknowledged the important role of WIL in helping students apply the knowledge and theories they have learned from classes to work situations (Bilsland *et al.*, 2020). Students are expected to improve multiple skills in real-world situations at workplaces (Kaushal and Srivastava, 2021). However, despite the existing knowledge about the connection between WIL experience in the H & T industry and students' career prospect with the expected improvement of multiple skills (Govender and Wait, 2017), few have investigated whether students have changed their perception of the industry through such experience under the COVID-19 context. Moreover, despite the negative impacts triggered by this unexpected global crisis, students' in-depth thinking and analysis toward a potential positive image change of the industry may also be somewhat generated based on the belief that the COVID-19 crisis will bring opportunities for the industry development in the future (Brouder, 2020). Therefore, our study would contribute to the literature by examining the interrelationships among students' multiple skill improvement through WIL in relation to their application of school knowledge, the positive industry image change, and desired career prospect.

Literature review
H & T work-integrated learning
With the nature of high susceptibility to extreme events (Khan *et al.*, 2021; Shah *et al.*, 2021; Zhong *et al.*, 2021), the labor market of H & T industry is heavily affected by COVID-19, causing a mass withdrawal of low-skilled and entry-level workers and the rise of technology adoption (Huang *et al.*, 2021). Cooperation among different stakeholders, especially the industry practitioners and the education institutes, is vital to the alleviation of talent outflow and unemployment issues.

To make H & T students industry-ready, an experiential learning program, WIL, has been established in higher education institutions (Nyanjom *et al.*, 2020). It offers students an opportunity to build up their capability and employability skills by merging and applying knowledge and theories that they have learned from traditional classes to real-world situations, including internships, fieldwork placements, simulations, and collaborative projects operated through industry and community connections. With support from the industry, a wide range of practical work experience and job positions has been provided. Students can absorb, learn, and apply various skills and knowledge in both breadth and depth from the allocated jobs or those that they have sourced from the market. Thus, it provides students with a valuable understanding of the industry, offers a market advantage in competitive work (Bilsland *et al.*, 2020), and offers students a long-term career aspiration (Robinson *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, WIL enhances students' confidence level and capability by equipping them with the required skills.

Multiple skills improved from application
When designing H & T program learning outcomes, it is of utmost importance that multiple skills and relevant theories are embedded so that students are able to put theory into practice during WIL/internships. According to Kaushal and Srivastava (2021), developing multiple skills for H & T workers is an effective way to help reduce layoffs and retain employees. Equipping employees with multiple skills not only enhances business performance but also fosters positive job commitment and attitudes.

As a service-oriented industry, customer-staff interaction is essential for high-quality services given to H & T guests. Staff performance and their interaction with guests can

heavily affect the customers' feedback (Losekoot *et al.*, 2018). Communication is also important in the development of colleague relationships which is conducive to positive workplace atmosphere, staff motivation, and staff morale. This becomes more important given the challenging work environment and market demands during COVID-19.

Meanwhile, language skills and service skills can also be developed and improved during H & T's WIL. Apart from English or any other local and international languages that have been acquired in the higher education institutions, WIL also provides students with exposure to professional language in the workplace, enhancing their professionalism and allowing them to communicate well with local and international guests (Sonnenschein *et al.*, 2019). Proper use of professional language can portray a positive image of a renowned H & T business. Consequently, this is considered to be crucial to business recovery and image re-building due to COVID-19.

In the context of COVID-19, H & T customers' needs and behavioral trends are ever-changing. The ability to identify the problems that guests are facing and to create a corresponding action plan to resolve them are vital. In general, problem-solving skills can be developed via placements. WIL can provide such experience and problem-based learning opportunities when confronting customer service problems and crisis management skills (Sonnenschein *et al.*, 2019). Thus, it helps students develop creative solutions to problems (Losekoot *et al.*, 2018).

Teamwork is also an essential component of soft skills that H & T students are required to learn. It facilitates the efficiency and effectiveness of peer collaboration and the distribution of the tasks in the industry. Losekoot *et al.* (2018) revealed that internships increase students' awareness of the importance of teamwork. Upon completion of practical work experience, students will realize that mutual understanding and mutual assistance between co-workers are vital.

In summary, although the knowledge, theories, and skills have been embedded in H & T programs and classes at higher education institutions, WIL is expected to provide dynamic contexts for application. It is worth noting that the meaning and scope of multiple skills required and expected in today's H & T industry have also been constantly changing and updating due to COVID-19. These changes and updates have been considered and incorporated in relevant H & T programs as well (Sigala, 2021). Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H1. The application of knowledge and theories learned from classes helps improve students' multiple skills during work-integrated learning.

Desired career prospect
Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) defined career prospect as one of the attributes that influences the perception of future opportunities and the hope for revenue that one can receive in the industry. In the H & T industry, the desired career prospect is dependent upon one's perceptions of the job which are influenced by the nature of work, social status, and work values. These are the main factors shaping staff's attitude and perception of the industry (Wan *et al.*, 2014). Profoundly, improving the employees' skills is conducive to having a skilled and qualified workforce, and this meanwhile enhances their perception of career prospect (Govender and Wait, 2017). With the development and improvement of employability skills, the experienced, skilled, and qualified staff are capable of adapting to different workplaces, forming good relationships with customers, fellow colleagues, and managers (Nguyen *et al.*, 2021). It also equips staff with the ability to work in high-skilled jobs which can bring promotion opportunities, pay rises, and social status enhancement. Consequently, skill improvement can prepare employees for competitive advantage enhancements in the labor market and as the foundation of establishing a positive

perception of career prospect. Particularly, it positively affects workers' confidence, perceived capability, and commitment to work in the industry and further facilitates effective business operation and performance (Wan *et al.*, 2014). The following hypothesis was thus proposed.

H2. A positive correlation exists between students' skill improvement through work-integrated learning and desired career prospect.

Positive (H & T) industry image change due to COVID-19

Previous literature has overwhelmingly discussed COVID-19's negative impacts on the H & T industry. They implied that the industry is sensitive and fragile, and its vulnerability is reflected in its susceptibility to various crises (Zhong *et al.*, 2021). Different crises will influence the industry development, business performance, and destination economies among others. Throughout history, various influential crises have included infectious diseases (e.g., severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)), natural disasters (e.g., earthquake or tsunami), economic crises (e.g., the financial crises of 2007 and 2008), terrorists (e.g., Iraq, Afghanistan.), and social incidents (e.g., anti-government movement) (Yang *et al.*, 2011; Rossello *et al.*, 2017; Tse *et al.*, 2018). Today, COVID-19 has severely affected the global economy and H & T industry (Gossling *et al.*, 2020). The industry has almost come to a standstill, thereby affecting both the supply and demand sides of the industry for a prolonged period of time.

Other than the negative influences, COVID-19 has positive implications to trigger industry changes and updates. For example, more technology and innovations are expected for future industry development. Hotels may consider adopting delivery robots, luggage-carrying robots, robot butlers, all-robotic staff, mobile apps, digital keys, and so on (Rai, 2017; Zhang, 2020). Meanwhile, an increasing demand exists for using augmented reality (AR) applications (Shin and Jeong, 2021) and virtual reality (VR) technologies (Yung *et al.*, 2021) in marketing practices and product development. Some of these technological adaptations and innovations may substitute part of human labor forces and may demand higher-level multiple skills of manpower for the remaining duties (Shah *et al.*, 2021). H & T organizations will offer more tailor-made training for future employees to acquire richer knowledge and higher technology literacy (Huang *et al.*, 2021; Sigala, 2021).

Furthermore, crisis management and risk prevention are other popular themes of future development (Zhong *et al.*, 2021). Given that many existing tourists and industry consumers may still be unwilling to travel or dine out due to the fear of COVID-19 and the perceived risk of infection (Zhong *et al.*, 2021), the other counterparts still retain high demand for relevant services offered in the industry. For example, hygiene and cleanliness applications may become increasingly important for future service, marketing, and management endeavors (Jiang and Wen, 2020; Majeed and Ramkissoon, 2020). Stringent health and safety measures should be incorporated into an updated crisis management plan for the efforts of prevention and preparedness.

The H & T industry has entered a transformational stage (Abbas *et al.*, 2021). The future industry should arguably develop and strengthen its sustainability policies and practices and fully utilize this chance to reshape its sustainable and socially responsible image (Orindaru *et al.*, 2021). Tsai (2021) explicitly highlighted that for many businesses and governments, using resources more effectively without increasing waste is an important sustainable development goal. Local and regional destinations, natural areas and parks, and short-haul travel with lower environmental impacts are expected to be important in tourism resilience and recovery (OECD, 2020). In addition, hotels and accommodations will strategically develop further in redesigning their products to attract environment-conscious guests and future new demands. Reduced touching has been recognized to possibly translate into "less exposure to contaminations" (Killion, 2021). Similar sustainable innovations can also be expected to be used in the food and beverage sector (Koster, 2021).

Although previous studies have also attempted to pay extra attention to the positive COVID-19 impacts that trigger industry developments and updates, whether H & T students as future industry employees, have acknowledged the positive influence and generated a positive industry image change because of their WIL or internship are issues that still await further research. Furthermore, whether this positive industry image influences students' desired career prospect needs to be investigated. Our study filled the research gap with the following two hypotheses:

H3. Skill improvement through work-integrated learning affects students' perception of positive industry image change.

H4. Positive industry image change leads to students' desired career prospect.

Conceptual framework
Finally, the conceptual framework was proposed (Figure 1). The application was hypothesized to pave the way for multiple-skill improvement because of WIL. With various skills improved, students were hypothesized to form desired career prospect as well as generate positive industry image changes due to COVID-19. Positive industry image change was also assumed to influence desired career prospect.

Methods
Measures
All measures were adopted from the literature. For example, the perceived "application" (two items) and "skill improvement" (six items) scales were adapted from Xu *et al.* (2022). They represent two important aspects of WIL experience in H & T industry. The attitude of "positive industry image change" (six items) was developed from different previous studies that have been made to understand COVID-19 and its impact on H & T industry. These studies included those of Kaushal and Srivastava (2021); Shah *et al.* (2021); Sigala (2020) and Wen *et al.* (2019). Finally, the predicting outcome is students' "desired career prospect" (ten items) in the industry, and its scale was derived from Wan *et al.* (2014). All major measures employed a seven-point Likert scale (from "1" to "7" indicating "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). Their other profile information was also collected. English was back-translated into Chinese, with advice and input from three scholars and two hospitality/tourism-related industry experts. Slight changes were further made after pilot tests involving 10 H & T degree students. The questions were uploaded to a well-known online survey platform in China: ebdan.net.
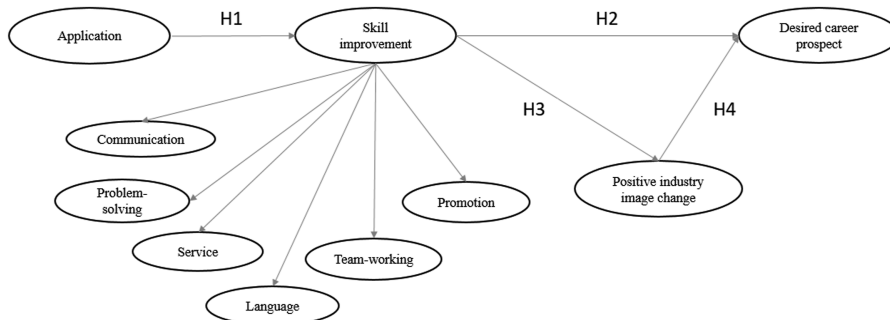
Figure 1.
Conceptual
Framework

Survey procedure
Six renowned colleges/universities in Guangdong Province, China with H & T-related majors were contacted and four agreed to support and assist the project. Another four colleges/ universities in other provinces/cities (i.e., Beijing, Shanghai, and Sichuan provinces) in China were also contacted but declined our invitation. The target population of this study was undergraduate students specializing in H & T management in China during the period of study. Purposive sampling (Teeroovengadum and Nunkoo, 2018) was adopted to satisfy the research purpose in this study. With the consent of program leaders and lecturers, the online version of survey questionnaires was created and distributed to their students who majored in hotel/hospitality, tourism, or event (conference, exhibition, etc.). The e-link of the survey was sent to different classes through the WeChat system, mainly a Chinese multi-purpose messaging and social media application. The students were informed about the background of this survey, their participation would be voluntary in nature, and their responses were treated with strict confidentiality. Thus, the survey was for research purposes only and students were free to withdraw from participation at any time.

A screening question on whether the survey respondent has completed either fully or partially an internship or work-integrated education/learning during university/college studies was asked. Those who answered "no" to this question (i.e., those who did not start their internship or did not need to fulfill internship requirements) were screened out. The remaining qualified respondents were requested to read the instructions of the questionnaire (including research objectives, how confidentiality is ensured, voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw, the time commitment for the survey, the affiliation of the research project, etc.) and provide informed consent. They were then asked to answer which specific industry sector s/he has been working for in internship or work-integrated education/learning (e.g., hotel/ accommodation, restaurant/catering, attraction/theme park, event). Based on their recall, they were asked to reflect on their learning experience, such as their obtained and improved multiple skills, their perception of the industry image change, and desired career prospect.

Data analysis
Various statistical techniques were applied to test the research objectives and hypotheses. SPSS 27 was used to explore the demographic characteristics of respondents. SmartPLS software 3.0 was adopted to analyze data using partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modeling (SEM). Given the fact that data collection is becoming more challenging today which may result in a lower response rate, smaller sample size was assumed at the end for which PLS-SEM was considered appropriate owing to its less stringent assumptions on sample size and normality (Hair *et al.*, 2016). In our study, we followed a widely adopted sample size rule, i.e., "10-times rule" (Kock and Hadaya, 2018) that the sample size determined should be greater than at least 10 times of the model links connecting to any latent variable in the research model. In our research model, the greatest number of links for a given latent variable (e.g., "desired career prospect") was expected to be 10, thus determining a minimum sample size of 100.

Owing to the reflective research model proposed, a consistent bootstrapping method was adopted to examine both measurement and structural models (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were also tested. We followed a stringent threshold of outer model loading requirement (Henseler *et al.*, 2009); thus, any items with loading lower than 0.7 were dropped. Composite reliability should meet the requirement of 0.7 to be considered as satisfactory (Hair *et al.*, 2016). The average variances extracted (AVE) of different constructs were reported, and those greater than 0.5 were considered satisfactory to reach the convergent validity (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Concerning the discriminant validity, the HTMT (Heterotrait-monotrait) method (Henseler *et al.*, 2009) was adopted, and the threshold ratio was 0.85 (Kline, 2011) to satisfy the discriminant validity requirement.

Findings

Sample

Approximately 335 H & T degree/sub-degree students were approached based on the feedback from the program leaders or lecturers who helped distribute the survey, and 64 students turned out to be unqualified as they failed to pass the screening question of completing an internship or WIL program either completely or partially. The final sample size was 168 (Table 1) with a valid response rate of 50.1 percent. It also exceeded the expected minimum sample size of 100. Out of the 168 valid samples, 78.6 percent were female, which was considered representative of the H & T college student population (Tavitiyaman *et al.*, 2021). A total of 60.7 percent of the respondents majored in hotel/hospitality areas, followed by those who majored in tourism (25.6 percent) or event management (13.7 percent). They previously engaged in internships in a variety of sectors, including hotel/accommodation (36.3 percent), restaurant/catering (33.3 percent), event (14.3 percent), attraction/theme park (9.5 percent), travel agency (1.2 percent), and others (5.4 percent).

Measurement model

Measurement model testing was conducted with 1,000 sample bootstrapping (Table 2). Three items ("It is easy for me to find jobs directly within the H & T field", "Finding a good H & T job for me requires many social networks and relationships", "I can make more money in the H & T industry than in other sectors") with low loadings were eliminated. The other remaining items were confirmed with factor loadings higher than 0.7. The composite reliability statistics ranged from 0.928 to 0.955. The AVE figures were between 0.656 and 0.865. Thus, reliability and convergent validity for each construct turned out to be highly satisfactory as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). According to Table 3, the HTMT ratios for each pair of constructs were below 0.85. Thus, discriminant validity was also not a problem in our study.

Structural model and hypothesis testing

The final step is structural model testing (Figure 2). The SRMR statistic (SRMR = 0.079) indicated satisfactory model fit. Predictive power was assessed by referring to R square values for each dependent variable. The recommended threshold was considered as 0.2 in consumer behavior research (Hair *et al.*, 2016). In our study, the predictive power for both "positive industry image change" and "skill improvement" turned to be the highest (R square = 0.521), followed by "desired career prospect" (R square = 0.428). It eventually suggests that 42.8 percent of the

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Gender		
Male	36	21.4%
Female	132	78.6%
Major		
Hotel/hospitality	102	60.7%
Tourism	43	25.6%
Event	23	13.7%
Work-integrated learning sector		
Attraction/theme park	16	9.5%
Travel agency	2	1.2%
Hotel/accommodation	61	36.3%
Restaurant/catering	56	33.3%
Event (Conference, exhibition, etc.)	24	14.3%
Others	9	5.4%

Table 1.
Sample profile (N=168)

	Item	Loading	Composite reliability	AVE
Application	Could apply skills	0.939	**0.928**	**0.865**
	Could apply concepts/theories	0.921		
Skill improvement	Communication	0.820	**0.928**	**0.682**
	Problem-solving	0.807		
	Service	0.804		
	Language	0.846		
	Team-working	0.844		
	Promotion	0.832		
Positive industry image change (due to COVID-19)	Cost control becomes more important	0.881	**0.955**	**0.782**
	Technology is expected to be used more	0.865		
	Innovation will be adopted more	0.905		
	Crisis management becomes more important	0.810		
	Social corporate responsibility will be taken more	0.905		
	Sustainability policies and practices will be developed more	0.934		
Desired career prospect	To study H & T management at the university level is a correct investment for my career development	0.863	**0.930**	**0.656**
	I can make good money by working in the H & T industry	0.823		
	Working in the H & T industry provides me with a secure future	0.807		
	It is necessary for me to have a university degree to work in the H & T industry	0.734		
	It is easy to find my desirable job in the H & T field	0.736		
	The advantages of working in the H & T industry outweigh the disadvantages for me	0.870		
	Promotion opportunities are satisfactory to me in the H & T industry	0.825		

Table 2.
Measurement model test (1000 sample bootstrapping)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Application	Skill improvement	Positive industry image change	Desired career prospect
Application	4.52	1.39	1			
Skill improvement	5.04	1.06	0.720	1		
Positive industry image change	5.35	1.12	0.436	0.722	1	
Desired career prospect	4.37	1.20	0.771	0.653	0.464	1

Note: 7-point Likert scale

Table 3.
Discriminant validity test using Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)
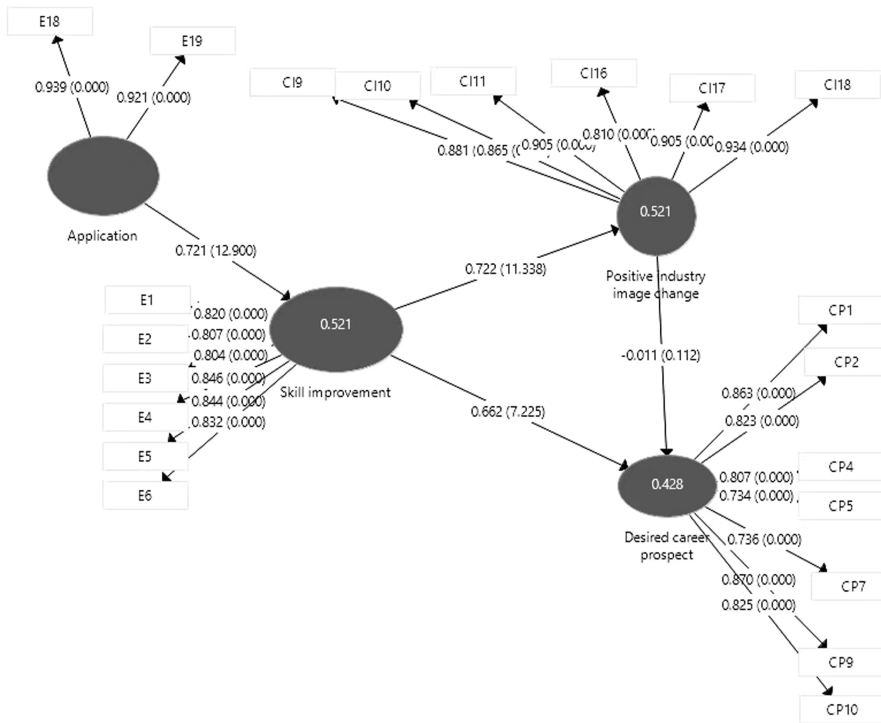
variance for the final predicting outcome (i.e., desired career prospect) could be explained in our structural model.

Subsequently, the following hypothesis testing (Table 4) was undertaken. The effect of "application" on "skill improvement" was significant (β = 0.721; t value = 12.900; p < 0.001), thus supporting H1. The relationship between "skill improvement" and "desired career prospect" was also significant (β = 0.662; t value = 7.225; p < 0.001), thus supporting H2. Moreover, the "skill improvement" was also found to exert a significant effect on "positive industry image change" (β = 0.722; t value = 11.338; p < 0.001), thus supporting H3. However, the positive relationship between "positive industry image change" and "desired career prospect" was not found (β = −0.011; t value = 0.112; p > 0.05), thus rejecting H4. A further

		Standardized coefficient	t-value	Hypothesis test result
H1	Application => Skill improvement	0.721	12.900***	Supported
H2	Skill improvement => Desired career prospect	0.662	7.225***	Supported
H3	Skill improvement => Positive industry image change	0.722	11.338***	Supported
H4	Positive industry image change => Desired career prospect	−0.011	0.112	Rejected
*** significant at .001 level				

round of f square tests was made to further supplement the path analysis. The significance values for all tests were less than 0.05 except that of the relationship concerning H4.

Discussion and implications

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the H & T sector and its higher education (Kaushal and Srivastava, 2021). This study aimed to explore students' WIL experience during the COVID-19 pandemic, its perceived influence on the change of industry image, and desired career prospect in H & T.

Based on this study, students witnessed their WIL experience during the COVID-19 pandemic on the applications of knowledge and theories learned in class. This notion is ideal because some knowledge and theories in H & T management are subjective (e.g., communication, service, and language), and hands-on work experience are particularly necessary that can directly enrich students' constructive understanding and learning.

The results further suggested that students' perceptions of the applications of learned knowledge and skills helped improve their capabilities and competence in terms of professionalism and personal development. Students have obligations to learn and improve their technical (e.g., problem-solving, service, promotion) and interpersonal (e.g., communication, languages, teamwork) skills in their WIL. This aligns with previous findings by Kaushal and Srivastava (2021) and Losekoot *et al.* (2018), that is, the H & T industry requires talents with multiple skills. Particularly, soft skills are beneficial for students over the long term, because they may or may not pursue their careers in H & T sectors. Thus, students can explore interesting areas for training during WIL to gain sufficient new knowledge and skillsets for broader job opportunities.

With sufficient work experience and training received, students indicated that their career prospect in H & T remains optimistic in many senses. In China, given the relaxation of social distancing policies and rules, customers and local tourists have traveled more, while enjoying H & T products and services. As a result, students acknowledged many changes in the work environment and the industry features during the pandemic (Shah *et al.*, 2021), accepted the steady business recovery, had a positive perception of industry change, and considered working in this sector after graduation.

When students improve their skills through WIL, a certain degree of positive industry image change is expected. During COVID-19, additional skills and innovative knowledge have been emphasized in H & T management and operations, as compared to traditional ones in the history of H & T management and operational practices. While improving skills, students can experience the ongoing positive industry changes, particularly in terms of cost control, technology adoption, crisis management, corporate social responsibility, and sustainability, that have greatly redefined the nature of today's H & T industry. These findings are similar to those of previous studies (Huang *et al.*, 2021; Sigala, 2021). For example, many organizations have followed social distancing policies and introduced new safety and hygiene measures to enhance corporate social responsibility. Technological advancement has also been implemented (e.g., kiosk counters for self-check-ins and self-check-outs for airlines and hotels). Such positive image changes and business action plans are well embraced by students.

Surprisingly, the relationship between positive industry image change and desired career prospect is insignificant, which contradicts the study findings of Shah *et al.* (2021). Many students perceived that they were facing a gloomy industry scenario, which might last for a foreseeable future, thus finding a job in the industry had not been very promising. Moreover, H & T industry situations are uncertain during the period of study, and students could be undecided regarding job hunting or future plans after graduation. Furthermore, some students may consider further study as an alternative.

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, challenges pertaining to WIL and career uncertainties will remain. Thus, other than theoretical implications, some managerial implications are also proposed. First, core theories, theories, knowledge, and soft skills are necessary to H & T students. Given that the nature of H & T businesses includes human relationships and hospitable services (Khan *et al.*, 2021), students should be able to learn, apply, correct, develop their hard and soft skills, and build competence during their undergraduate study. Once students gain substantial understanding of the nature of H & T sector, their perceived industry will change accordingly. Consequently, their career growth and development will also be optimistic.

Secondly, promoting the value of WIL as a platform to enhance skills and attract potential employees is encouraged (Losekoot *et al.*, 2018). Virtual internships with supplementary classroom learning experience can be created and designed to fit the current COVID-19 pandemic situation (Park and Jones, 2021) and help students gain sufficient knowledge and training experience during their studies. In the meantime, during WIL or internship, H & T organizations can provide other opportunities for students to improve skills such as those related to technology and innovation, crisis management, social corporate sustainability, and policies. It is believed that more uncertainties and risks may affect the H & T sector again in the foreseeable future. Thus, students or future employees should be professionally equipped in managing H & T crises.

Thirdly, to promote desired career prospect, H & T organizations can restructure job responsibilities and employment benefits to recruit potential talents and maintain career commitment, for example, offering opportunities of promotion, transfer to other properties, learning and training opportunities, and building work-life balance within the organization's culture (Wan *et al.*, 2014).

Lastly, given that the H & T industry has long been a pillar industry for many economies, including Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan city, respective governments are encouraged to line up with selected H & T programs in higher education institutes with industry players to develop a talent program to enhance students' career prospects for the benefit of industry and social sustainability. Seamless collaboration is pivotal to the revitalization of H & T economy, which can be achieved by nurturing future talents through WIL. Financial support and corresponding public policies may be a potent incentive to encourage participation.

Conclusion

Given the continuous presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the question remains whether the perturbed H & T industry has affected students' industry image change and desired career prospects. This study found that students still have a positive perception of internship experience and industry change, thereby contributing to the literature, which merely focuses on the negative impacts of COVID-19. Such a perception enables students to apply H & T knowledge and theories to improve their skill competence. Students' perceived skill improvement will lead to more desired career prospects in H & T industry.

This study has several limitations. The sample size of students was only limited to Guangdong province, China. Thus, generalization may only be applied in similar H & T programs and curriculum development. Meanwhile, given the different travel restrictions and quarantine measures among different countries, the generalizability to other settings may be reduced. During the COVID-19 situation, many companies in China could not offer normal business experiences to interns, leaving some structural relationships among concepts in this study possibly being unstable under different circumstances. Furthermore, the respondents who have work-integrated experience were invited to participate in this study, but the period of internship experience (e.g., number of hours of work experience) was not assessed. The duration of internship can affect students' perception of the industry change and career prospects. Further research can explore this phenomenon in different regions, in which the COVID-19

situation may vary in terms of severity level. Future comparison is also recommended, for example, amongst before, during, and after COVID-19, when testing variables of interest such as positive industry image change.

References

Abbas, J., Mubeen, R., Iorember, P.T., Raza, S. and Mamikulova, G. (2021), "Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on tourism: transformational potential and implications for a sustainable recovery of the travel and leisure industry", *Current Research in Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 2, pp. 1-11.

Bilsland, C., Nagy, H. and Smith, P. (2020), "Virtual internships and work-integrated learning in hospitality and tourism in a post-COVID-19 world", *International Journal of Work Integrated Learning*, Vol. 21 No. 4, pp. 425-437.

Brouder, P. (2020), "Reset redux: possible evolutionary pathways towards the transformation of tourism in a COVID-19 world", *Tourism Geographies*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 484-490.

Fornell, C. and Larcker, D.F. (1981), "Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 39-50.

Gossling, S., Scott, D. and Hall, C.M. (2020), "Pandemics, tourism and global change: a rapid assessment of COVID-19", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp. 1-20.

Govender, C.M. and Wait, M. (2017), "Work integrated learning benefits for student career prospects - mixed mode analysis", *South African Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 31 No. 5, pp. 49-64.

Hair Jr, J.F., Hult, G.T.M., Ringle, C.M. and Sarstedt, M. (2016), *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C.M. and Sinkovics, R.R. (2009), "The use of partial least squares path modeling in international marketing", *Advances in International Marketing*, Vol. 20, pp. 277-319.

Huang, A., Velsaco, E.D.L.M., Marsh, J. and Workman, H. (2021), "COVID-19 and the future of work in the hospitality industry", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 97, pp. 1-5.

Jiang, Y. and Wen, J. (2020), "Effects of COVID-19 on hotel marketing and management: a perspective article", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 32 No. 8, pp. 2563-2573.

Joshi, V.A. and Gupta, I. (2021), "Assessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on hospitality and tourism education in India and preparing for the new normal", *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, Vol. 13 No. 5, pp. 622-635.

Kaushal, V. and Srivastava, S. (2021), "Hospitality and tourism industry amid COVID-19 pandemic: perspectives on challenges and learnings from India", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 92, pp. 1-9.

Khan, A., Bibi, S., Lyu, J., Latif, A. and Lorenzo, A. (2021), "COVID-19 and sectoral employment trends: assessing resilience in the US leisure and hospitality industry", *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 24 No. 7, pp. 952-969.

Killion, C. (2021), "Sustainable hotel design in the post-pandemic era", *LODGING Magazine*, 20 April, available at: http://hdl.handle.net/10919/103809 (accessed 24 July 2021).

Kline, R.B. (2011), *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 3rd ed., Guilford Press, New York.

Kock, N. and Hadaya, P. (2018), "Minimum sample size estimation in PLS-SEM: the inverse square root and gamma-exponential methods", *Information Systems Journal*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 227-261.

Koster, S. (2021), "Sustainable innovations in the food and beverage industry during a COVID-19 crisis", Bachelor's thesis, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki.

Kusluvan, S. and Kusluvan, Z. (2000), "Perceptions and attitudes of undergraduate tourism students towards working in the tourism industry in Turkey", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 251-269.

Losekoot, E., Lasten, E., Lawson, A. and Chen, B. (2018), "The development of soft skills during internships: the hospitality student's voice", *Research in Hospitality Management*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 155-159.

Majeed, S. and Ramkissoon, H. (2020), "Health, wellness, and place attachment during and post health pandemics", *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 11, pp. 1-13.

Nguyen, I, Goh, E. and Murillo, D. (2021), "Living through the lives of hospitality students during Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) internships: an application of the critical incident technique to explore factors affecting students' WIL experience", *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, pp. 1-12, doi: 10.1080/10963758.2021.1963755.

Nyanjom, J., Goh, E. and Yang, E.C.L. (2020), "Integrating authentic assessment tasks in work integrated learning hospitality internships", *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, pp. 1-23, doi: 10.1080/13636820.2020.1841821.

OECD (2020), "Rebuilding tourism for the future: COVID-19 policy responses and recovery", available at: https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/rebuilding-tourism-for-the-future-covid-19-policy-responses-and-recovery-bced9859/ (accessed 24 July 2021).

Orindaru, A., Popescu, M.F., Alexoaei, A.P., Caescu, S.C., Florescu, M.S. and Orzan, A.O. (2021), "Tourism in a post-COVID-19 era: sustainable strategies for industry's recovery", *Sustainability*, Vol. 13 No. 12, pp. 1-22.

Park, M. and Jones, T. (2021), "Going virtual: the impact of COVID-19 on internships in tourism, events, and hospitality education", *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, Vol. 33 No. 3, pp. 176-193.

Rai, S. (2017), "Aloft hotels introduces robot butlers", *Hosteler*, 21 May, available at: https://www.hoteliermiddleeast.com/uncategorized/30638-aloft-hotels-introduces-robot-butlers (accessed 24 July 2021).

Reichenberger, I. and Raymond, E.M. (2021), "Students' perceptions of tertiary tourism education and careers during the Covid-19 pandemic", *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, pp. 1-23, doi: 10.1080/15313220.2021.1950593.

Robinson, R.N.S., Ruhanen, L. and Breakey, N.M. (2016), "Tourism and hospitality internships: influences on student career aspirations", *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 19 No. 6, pp. 513-527.

Rossello, J., Santana-Gallego, M. and Awan, W. (2017), "Infectious disease risk and international tourism demand", *Health Policy and Planning*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 538-548.

Shah, C., Chowdhury, A. and Gupta, V. (2021), "Impact of COVID-19 on tourism and hospitality students' perceptions of career opportunities and future prospects in India", *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, pp. 1-21, doi: 10.1080/15313220.2021.1924921.

Shin, H.H. and Jeong, M. (2021), "Travelers' motivations to adopt augmented reality (AR) applications in a tourism destination", *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Technology*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 389-405.

Sigala, M. (2020), "Tourism and COVID-19: impacts and implications for advancing and resetting industry and research", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 117, pp. 312-321.

Sigala, M. (2021), "Rethinking of tourism and hospitality education when nothing is normal: restart, recover, or rebuild", *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, Vol. 45 No. 5, pp. 920-923.

Sonnenschein, K., Barker, M. and Hibbins, R. (2019), "Benefits of work-integrated learning: perceptions held by Chinese international students enrolled in an Australian university and managers in the Chinese hotel industry", *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 139-148.

Tavitiyaman, P., Ren, L. and Fung, C. (2021), "Hospitality students at the online classes during COVID-19: how personality affects experience?", *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, Vol. 28, pp. 1-13.

Teeroovengadum, V. and Nunkoo, R. (2018), "Sampling design in tourism and hospitality research", Nunkoo, R. (Ed.), *Handbook of Research Methods for Tourism and Hospitality Management*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, pp. 477-488.

Tsai, M.C. (2021), "Developing a sustainability strategy for Taiwan's tourism industry after the COVID-19 pandemic", *PLoS ONE*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 1-21.

Tse, Y.K., Chung, S.H. and Pawar, K.S. (2018), "Risk perception and decision making in the supply chain: Theory and practice", *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, Vol. 118 No. 7, pp. 1322-1326.

Wan, Y.K.P., Wong, I.A. and Kong, W.H. (2014), "Student career prospect and industry commitment: the roles of industry attitude, perceived social status, and salary expectations", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 40, pp. 1-14.

Wen, H., Li, X. and Kwon, J. (2019), "Undergraduate students' attitudes toward and perceptions of hospitality careers in Mainland China", *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 159-172.

Xu, J., Chung, M., Zhang, A. and Tavitiyaman, P. (2022), "Fostering work-integrated learning in hospitality and tourism: An integration of Leximancer and students' self-reflective statement approaches", *Journal of China Tourism Research*, pp. 1-25, doi: 10.1080/19388160.2022.2047858.

Yang, W., Wang, D. and Chen, G. (2011), "Reconstruction strategies after the Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan, China", *Tourism Management*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 949-956.

Yung, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C. and Potter, L.E. (2021), "Virtual reality and tourism marketing: Conceptualizing a framework on presence, emotion, and intention", *Current Issues in Tourism*, Vol. 24 No. 11, pp. 1505-1525.

Zhang, K. (2020), "Delivery robot serves in hotel amid coronavirus outbreak", *China Daily*, 20 March, available at: https://www.chinadailyhk.com/article/125077 (accessed 24 July 2021).

Zhong, L., Sun, S., Law, R. and Li, X. (2021), "Tourism crisis management: evidence from COVID-19", *Current Issues in Tourism*, pp. 1-12, doi: 10.1080/13683500.2021.1901866.

About the authors

Jing Bill Xu, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer at College of Professional and Continuing Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His research interests focus on hospitality and tourism management, consumer behavior, destination management, etc. He has published in *Tourism Management, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, J*ournal of Vacation Marketing*, etc. Jing Bill Xu is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: bill.xu@cpce-polyu.edu.hk

Pimtong Tavitiyaman, PhD, is a Principal Lecturer at College of Professional and Continuing Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Her research interests include hotel management, destination image, smart tourism, etc. She has published in J*ournal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Tourism Management, International Journal of Hospitality Management*, etc.

Xinyan Zhang, PhD, is a Lecturer at College of Professional and Continuing Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Her research interests focus on information and communication systems, tourism management, tourism supply chain management, tourism demand forecasting, etc. She has published in *Tourism Management, International Journal of Tourism Research, Journal of China Tourism Research*, etc.

Mingfang Zhu, PhD, is a Professor at Shenzhen Tourism College, Jinan University. Her research interests focus on tourism management, destination marketing and management, tourist behavior, etc. She has published in *Tourism Management, Tourism Review*, etc.

The differences between students' fixed and growth mindsets: a case of study tour between Hong Kong and Canada

Carmen Sum, Yui-yip Lau and Ivy Chan
College of Professional and Continuing Education,
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR, China

Abstract

Purpose – The paper aims to address the gap in the literature related to students' mindsets and learning activities through investigation of the differences in students' expectations of, feelings towards, and perceptions of an overseas study tour based on their mindset. The study provides an in-depth analysis of students with different mindsets and proposes the use of overseas tours and intercultural learning to foster students' growth mindset.

Design/methodology/approach – An overseas study tour hosted by a self-financing tertiary institution in Hong Kong was selected for investigation. 13 sub-degree students participated in the study tour during the summer term in 2018. Two types of primary data – quantitative (i.e., a questionnaire survey) and qualitative (i.e., in-depth interviews) – of fixed mindset and growth mindset students were collected for analysis.

Findings – The findings indicate differences in students' expectations of, feelings towards, and perceptions of an overseas study tour depending on whether they demonstrate a fixed or growth mindset. The growth mindset students had more and higher expectations of the study tour, all of which were related to personal growth and development. The fixed mindset students did not have as much of a desire for personal development and their expectations were easily met. Both growth and fixed mindset students had positive feelings and perceptions of the tour.

Originality/value – Research on the application value of overseas study tours in helping students from self-financing tertiary institutions develop a growth mindset is scarce, and thus warrants further investigation.

Keywords Mindset, Study tour, Expectation, Perception

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Students differ significantly in terms of their abilities, intelligence, talents, and capabilities. Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck (2006) proposed two major types of student mindset: fixed and growth. Students' mindset reflects their perceptions of learning, engagement in learning, learning potential, and future study habits (Dweck, 2006; Chan *et al.*, 2020). These two groups of students behave differently when facing challenges and ongoing difficulties, which determines their success in learning. It is evident that students with a growth mindset outperform those with a fixed mindset. Chan *et al.* (2020) addressed that fixed mindset students exhibit frustration once they are concerned about the chance of failure or when dealing with challenges in the learning process. Teachers and schools are, therefore, advised to help students develop a growth mindset by establishing high standards and

HKPAA

Public Administration and Policy
Vol. 25 No. 3, 2022
pp. 235-249
Emerald Publishing Limited
1727-2645
DOI 10.1108/PAP-03-2022-0022

expectations, determining short-term and achievable goals, providing constructive and meaningful feedback, and praising students wisely. Does it follow that fixed mindset students have lower standards and expectations? How do they differ from growth mindset students? If students with different mindsets were to participate in a learning activity, would they demonstrate different expectations and perceptions of the activity?

Among different types of learning activities, business colleges typically make use of study tours as an internationalisation strategy. Study tours are unique travel opportunities for students to study abroad within a short period, usually ranging from a few days to a few weeks. The international tour programmes mainly involve different types of learning activities, from formal learning and non-formal learning to informal learning. Sun and Xu (2021) pointed out that designing a study tour using inquiry approach enables students to be travellers instead of tourists, allowing them to engage, explore, and discover more. At the same time, students can strengthen their resilience and in turn manage any stress or tension arisen from encountering challenges, failure, or unexpected outcomes during their purposive educational travel.

Students can reinforce their learned knowledge, experience different cultures, and improve their transferable skills by joining a study tour. To a certain extent, a study tour incorporates the concepts of experiential learning (Romines, 2008), providing impactful learning opportunities for students to integrate in-class learning with out-of-class experiences (Howard and Keller, 2010; Hanis-Wesson and Ji, 2020) and to change cognitive thinking and behaviours (Chieffo and Griffiths, 2004). However, organising short-term, high-quality study tour programmes poses various challenges, including those related to management, financial commitment, resources, cost effectiveness, task and activity design, and risk assessment (Hanis-Wesson and Ji, 2020). Investigating study tours by focusing on students allows educators to conduct a more comprehensive study of students' expectations, perceptions, and impressions of these tours.

In previous studies, researchers have mainly addressed students' perceptions of study tours in terms of their relevance to employability skills (Aloudat, 2017) and students' revisit intentions (Xu and Ho, 2021), cultural awareness (Scharoun, 2016), course design and planning (Katherine *et al.*, 2019), and learning assessment tasks (Coe and Smyth, 2010; Hanis-Wesson and Ji, 2020). Black *et al.* (2019) conducted a critical review of 140 empirical studies on tour guiding and highlighted that the majority of study tour research focused on theory engagement. Xu (2019) also conducted a comprehensive review of 817 studies on study tours in China. Most of these research studies mainly concentrated on curriculum design, business model, student characteristics, and study tour products. To this end, the paper aims to address the gap in the literature related to students' mindsets and learning activities through investigation of the differences in students' expectations of, feelings towards, and perceptions of an overseas study tour based on their mindset (i.e., fixed versus growth). The study provides a more in-depth analysis of students with different mindsets and proposes the use of overseas tours and intercultural learning to foster students' growth mindset.

This remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. A literature review is provided in the first section. The research methods are then detailed in the next section, followed by key research findings and discussion. Finally, the conclusion, some recommendations and future research implications are presented.

Literature review
Study tour and learning
"Higher education is increasingly internationalised" (Gilbertson *et al.*, 2021, p. 577). Study tours provide experiential learning in real-life situations (Williams and Best, 2014). Reynaud and Northcote (2011, p. 255) pointed out that "participation in study tours can be deep and lifelong". International study tours provide students with the opportunity to enjoy cultural learning between international and local students, observe the operations of foreign

businesses, enrich their marketable skills and employment characteristics, expand their horizons, and learn about the work practices of international firms (Sohal and Ritter, 1995; Cooper, 2009). In addition, they can further develop intercultural attitudes and an intercultural mentality, which are particularly important for business students (Wang *et al.*, 2009). Students have demonstrated an upward trend in international study tour participation, with tours commonly lasting only a few weeks. In particular, students' engagement in international study tour experiences has increased dramatically to 16 percent and 23 percent in the United States and Australia, respectively (Gilbertson *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, study tours integrate the notion of peer-to-peer learning and adult learning, and they are an effective means of educational development for both knowledge seekers and providers (Hainzer *et al.*, 2021). They facilitate a transformative experience that can improve participants' intellectual competence and personal lives (Chieffo and Griffiths, 2004). Through study tour programmes, higher education institutions exhibit their commitment to the international experience and flexible delivery (Hutchings *et al.*, 2002).

Study tours are usually programmed with different learning activities, which can be formal, non-formal, or informal in nature. These three types of learning activities differ in terms of what they entail, students' motivation and interest, the social context, and the assessment methods (Maarschalk, 1988; Tamir, 1990). Formal learning activities usually constitute the core activities of study tours. Lectures, class activities, and assignments are typical examples of formal learning activities. They are undertaken on campus, where the learning environment is pre-arranged. Students' motivation is typically extrinsic. Teachers are responsible for managing learning and assessment activities. Therefore, these activities are well structured and well planned. Non-formal learning activities often include business visits, social activities, and local tours. They are structured and planned by organisers with students' involvement. Assessments are not always included. They are also pre-arranged and occur off campus, and so the atmosphere is relaxing and supportive. As such, students are typically more intrinsically motivated to join these activities. Informal learning activities normally involve intimate gatherings, chit chat, and casual conservations during the journey, occurring anytime and anywhere. Students volunteer to join these activities, and so their intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in pursuing informal learning. These learning activities are spontaneous, unstructured, and led by the students themselves. No assessments are involved. The environment is supportive, relaxed, and full of enjoyment, as students usually feel happy to take part in these casual activities.

Fixed mindset and growth mindset

The concept of mindset arose in the 21st century, and it has been adopted widely in academic research since 2000 (Beatson *et al.*, 2019). According to the mindset philosophy developed by Dweck (2006), mindset exists on a continuum from 'fixed' to 'growth'. Some students have a particular mindset, either fixed or growth. However, other students may be stuck in between, which is labelled as having a mixed mindset. Findings from a study tour to Japan suggest that students' mindsets and presumptions of self-competence affect their emotional responses to and acceptance of unexpected or adverse incidents. For example, the students encountered challenges when they communicated with the locals in Japanese or when they could not get used to Japanese-style food. The reflective journals showed that the students who were more open to new experiences perceived the cultural differences as learning points and were interested in exploring further. However, the students who were characterised by a fixed mindset made more complaints and demonstrated frustration. They also continually emphasised the differences as obstacles, such as by saying "I am not being in charge of myself completely" and "I felt like everyone was staring at me". The comparison between fixed and growth mindsets is summarised in Table 1.

Fixed mindset students believe that their intelligence and talent are inner gifts, which are constant. Success is the affirmation of their inner intelligence and ability. Failure and struggle are caused by limited abilities and capabilities. Fixed mindset students think that they are smart enough and do not believe that their intelligence and talent could be further developed by any means. Therefore, they avoid failure at all costs to maintain a sense of being skilled, talented, and smart. Beatson *et al.* (2019) elaborated that fixed mindset students are concerned about outcomes, adversely influenced by barriers, and overlook possibly supportive comments or criticisms. They do not consider learning effort to be a critical means of achieving success.

Growth mindset students strive for gradual change and improvement by seeking and adopting feedback (Beatson *et al.*, 2019). They perceive difficulties and failures as learning opportunities and stepping stones that can help them perform better in the future. They believe that their intelligence and talent can be developed through persistence, good learning strategies, effort, time, experience, and advice from others. They do not worry about whether they are smart; instead, they focus on learning and development. They have ambitious goals and believe that they can achieve them if they put in extra time and effort. Growth mindset students are eager to try things and take risks. For example, they ask teachers to clarify math problems, answer questions in class even without any concrete solutions, raise 'dumb' questions, and identify problems that would push them out of their comfort zone (Character LAB, n.d.).

Research methods

An overseas study tour hosted by a private higher education institution in Hong Kong was selected for investigation. 13 sub-degree students participated in the study tour during the summer term in 2018. The quota for joining this tour was limited, and ultimately, a total of 13 Hong Kong applicants with similar academic backgrounds were selected. All of the selected candidates were expected to have outstanding academic performance (i.e., with grade point averages of at least 3.5), be engaged in various extracurricular activities, and exhibit satisfactory interview performance with strong English language proficiency. Two types of primary data were collected: quantitative and qualitative. This mixed approach aims to identify more complicated research issues and associations of the social and human world. Indeed, the mixed method can minimise ambiguous concepts and misinterpretations (Malina *et al.*, 2011). Due to ethical considerations, only some of the interviewees' personal particulars are disclosed in this study.

Quantitative data were collected via a close-ended questionnaire survey. The first part of the survey concerned the students' impressions of the tour. Impression was assessed along with various learning outcomes on a 5-point Likert scale. Means and standard deviations

Growth Mindset	Fixed Mindset
Process oriented	Result oriented
Inspired by developing and learning about oneself	Inspired by the desire to support current beliefs of oneself
Evaluates performance in relation to material mastery	Evaluates performance in relation to peers
Confidence is quick to recover	Confidence is weak
Searches for precise responses	Screens out adverse responses
Concentrates on exerting more effort with regard to failure	Concentrates on improving self-esteem with regard to failure
Source: Beatson *et al.* (2019)	

Table 1.
Comparison of fixed and growth mindsets

were calculated to analyse the students' perceptions of the tour. The second part of the survey concerned the students' mindset, for which Dweck's (2006) mindset instrument was adopted. A total score covering two aspects – intelligence and talents – was calculated for each student.

To address the research objectives, qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews. The interview questions addressed the students' expectations and perceptions of the tour, opinions of what factors contribute to intercultural learning, and ideas of how to formulate study tour programmes. An exploratory research design was adopted, and thus, content analysis was conducted to categorise the wordings and count their frequencies.

The duration of the overseas study tour was 16 days (i.e., Days 1 to 8 of the tour took place in Winnipeg and Pinawa in Manitoba, Canada, and Days 9 to 16 took place in Hong Kong). First, Canadian students served as the tour guides for the Hong Kong students, helping them understand the Canadian culture and learning environment. Then, the Hong Kong students served as the tour guides for the Canadian students, helping them explore the Hong Kong culture and learning context. In this study tour, the students were divided into four groups, and each group consisted of a combination of Hong Kong and Canadian students. As expected, long-term relationships between the students from Hong Kong and Canada were formed. They were also able to improve their understanding of the cultural differences and business contexts between geographical regions in Asia and North America. In general, the tour activities were divided into formal and non-formal tour activities, as listed in Table 2.

Findings

Participants' general information and impressions of the tour

In general, the students were happy with the overseas tour (Figures 1 and 2). Four statements to assess the students' feelings about the tour on a 5-point Likert scale were selected. All students agreed (92.31 percent Strongly Agree plus 7.69 percent Agree) that the tour was a worthwhile learning experience and that they could learn something from the formal curriculum, yielding the same mean score of 4.92 for both items. They all indicated that they would recommend the overseas tour to their fellow students. Almost all students commented that the tour was useful for their current or future studies (69.23 percent Strongly Agree plus 23.08 percent Agree). The mean scores for these two items were 4.69 and 4.62, respectively.

In addition to measuring the students' general impressions of the tour as described above, seven items were used to measure their feelings towards the tour regarding different learning outcomes on a 5-point Likert scale (Figures 3 and 4). The results were largely positive, with mean scores ranging from 4.31 to 4.92. All students agreed that this overseas study tour helped develop their global perspective, facilitated their holistic development, and deepened their knowledge of heritage, art, and culture. Of the participants, 92.31 percent agreed (61.54

Formal Tour Activities	Non-Formal Tour Activities
• Lecture classes/workshops: Air Transportation Management; Business Negotiations; Transportation and Logistics Management; Entrepreneurship and Leadership; Business and Financial Market in Hong Kong and Greater China; Retail and Marketing in a Shopping Paradise	• Technical visits: Canadian National Campus; New Flyer Industries; Hong Kong Stock Exchange; Hong Kong Museum of History; Gold Coast Hotel; Ngong Ping 360 Cable Car • Social visits: Canadian Museum for Human Rights; Assiniboine Zoo; Excursions in Pinawa; Traditional Village at the Yuen Long Area • Social-cultural activities: Dragon Boat Race; Ladies' Street; Temple Street; Tian Tan Buddha

Table 2.
List of tour activities
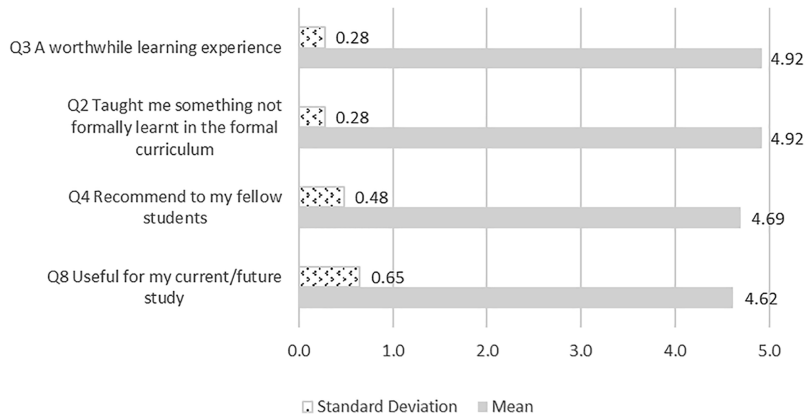
Figure 1.
Students' general
impressions of the tour
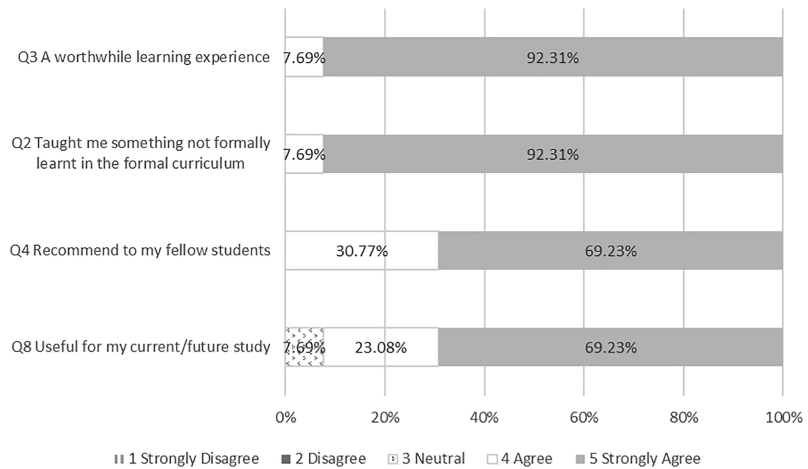
Figure 2.
Distribution of the
students' general
impressions of the tour

percent Strongly Agree plus 30.77 percent Agree) that their communication skills were strengthened as a result of joining this student activity. In addition, most of them concurred that their critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and ethical and social responsibility were enhanced. These encouraging findings confirm that international study tours can reinforce students' knowledge, facilitate cultural learning, and improve their transferable skills.

Perceived factors contributing to intercultural learning
From the students' perspective, interaction or communication was the key contributor to intercultural learning (32.43 percent), followed by class activities (18.92 percent) and visits/tours (18.92 percent). These factors align with the three main learning types: informal learning, formal learning, and non-formal learning, respectively. The results confirm the characteristics of international study tours, as discussed in the literature. More details can be found in Table 3.

Of the 13 student participants, 7 demonstrated a growth mindset (53.85 percent), 5 a mixed mindset (38.46 percent), and 1 a fixed mindset (7.69 percent). For an even comparison, we combined the students demonstrating mixed and fixed mindsets into one group.
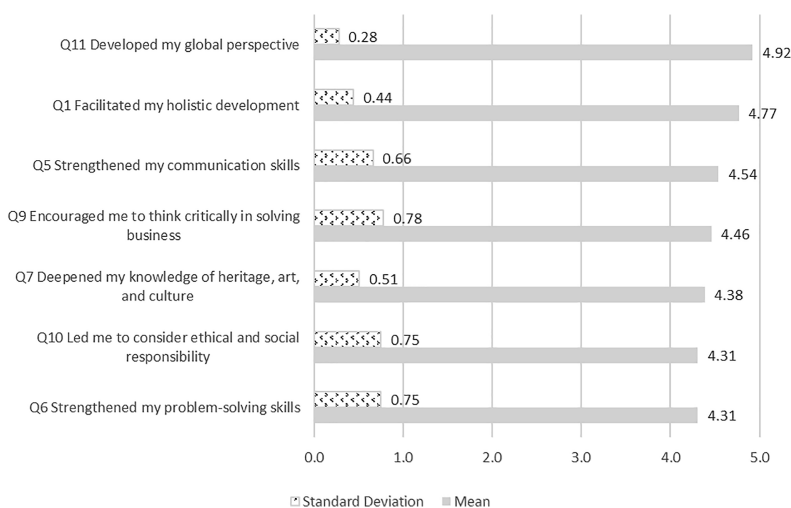
Figure 3.
Students' tour
impressions regarding
the learning outcomes
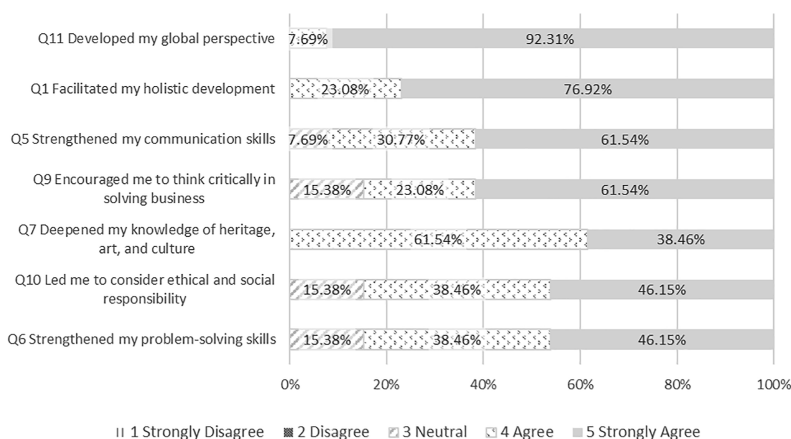
Figure 4.
Distribution of the
students' tour
impressions regarding
the learning outcomes

Types of Learning	Perceived Factors	Frequency n (%)
Formal	Class activities and workshops	**7 (18.92%)**
Non-formal	Visits or tours	**7 (18.92%)**
Non-formal	Out-of-class social activities	4 (10.81%)
Informal	Interaction or communication	**12 (32.43%)**
Informal	People	4 (10.81%)
Informal	Living with others	1 (2.70%)
Informal	Observation	1 (2.70%)
Informal	Atmosphere	1 (2.70%)
		100%

The authors classified and counted the frequency of the factors according to learning type (Table 4). The findings reveal a fascinating phenomenon. The growth mindset students adopted a balanced learning approach: formal learning (31.58 percent), non-formal learning (31.58 percent), and informal learning (36.84 percent). Thus, the importance of the three types of learning activities to these students' intercultural learning was comparable. Understanding the cultures of a country or region was not restricted to one type of learning activity. Different types of learning activities contributed to their intercultural learning.

In contrast, the fixed or mixed mindset students were biased towards the informal learning activities (66.67 percent; Table 4). As a type of formal learning, class activities were the least important factor (5.56 percent) contributing to these students' intercultural learning. Non-formal learning activities were ranked in between these two types of learning (27.78 percent). These students believed that informal learning activities play a more prominent role in intercultural education.

Students' expectations of the intercultural learning experience
Before joining the overseas study tour, the students formed some expectations of the tour programme and activities. Their expectations could be classified into two main areas: tour (16.67 percent) and self-development (83.33 percent; denoted as 'self' in Table 5). Their expectations were biased towards self-development, which was a good sign that they wanted to improve themselves after joining the tour. Most of the students hoped to experience the

Types of Learning	Perceived Factors	Fixed or Mixed Mindset n (%)		Growth Mindset n (%)	
Formal	Class activities and workshops	1 (5.56%)	**1 (5.56%)**	6 (31.58%)	**6 (31.58%)**
Non-formal	Visits or tours	4 (22.22%)		3 (15.8%)	
Non-formal	Out-of-class social activities	1 (5.56%)	**5 (27.78%)**	3 (15.8%)	**6 (31.58%)**
Informal	Interaction or communication	7 (38.9%)		5 (26.3%)	
Informal	People	3 (16.67%		1 (5.26%)	
Informal	Living with others	1 (5.56%)	**12 (66.67%)**	0 (0.00%)	**7 (36.84%)**
Informal	Observation	0 (0.00%)		1 (5.26%)	
Informal	Atmosphere	1 (5.56%)		0 (0.00%)	
			18 (100%)		**19 (100%)**

Table 4.
Students' perceived factors contributing to intercultural learning (by mindset)

Areas	Expectations	Frequency n (%)	
Tour	Longer tour duration	1 (5.56%)	**3 (16.67%)**
Tour	Having class activities or workshops	1 (5.56%)	
Tour	Having a visit (e.g., to a company)	1 (5.56%)	
Self	Experiencing the local culture, lifestyle, and economic situation	5 (27.78%)	
Self	Improving/learning interpersonal and communication skills	4 (22.22%)	
Self	Meeting new friends	3 (16.67%)	**15 (83.33%)**
Self	Boosting confidence	1 (5.56%)	
Self	Enhancing business knowledge	1 (5.56%)	
Self	More hangout time with local people	1 (5.56%)	
			18 (100%)

Table 5.
Students' expectations of the intercultural learning experience

local culture, lifestyle, and economic situation (27.78 percent), as well as to learn or improve their interpersonal and communication skills (22.22 percent). They also wanted to meet new friends (16.67 percent) after joining the tour.

After dividing the students into two main groups based on mindset, it was surprising that the growth mindset students did not mention any tour-related expectations. Instead, their expectations were strongly related to their self-development (Table 6). Experiencing the local culture, lifestyle, and economic situation (55.56 percent) was the dominant expectation. The second was learning or improving their interpersonal and communication skills (22.22 percent). The remaining included meeting new friends (11.11 percent), enhancing their business knowledge (11.11 percent), and getting more time to hang out with local people (11.11percent).

The expectations of the fixed or mixed mindset students differed (Table 6), with 33.33 percent of the expectations related to the tour programme and the remaining 66.66 percent related to their personal development. They had three main expectations of the tour programme, including a longer tour duration, having class activities or workshops, and having company visits. Their expectations regarding personal development were more or less the same as those of the growth mindset students, but more evenly spread across the different aspects.

Students' satisfaction with the intercultural learning experience
According to Table 7, the students generally reported that their expectations were met (76.92 percent), particularly through different activities: interaction or communication, class activities, visits, and living in a hostel. Overall, the tour programme was well received. Only a few of the students believed that it could be improved. They mentioned that the duration of

Areas	Expectations	Fixed or Mixed Mindset n (%)		Growth Mindset n (%)	
Tour	Longer tour duration	1 (11.11%)		0 (0.00%)	
Tour	Having class activities or workshops	1 (11.11%)	3 (33.33%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Tour	Having a visit (e.g., to a company)	1 (11.11%)		0 (0.00%)	
Self	Experiencing the local culture, lifestyle, and economic situation	1 (11.11%)		5 (55.56%)	
Self	Improving/learning interpersonal and communication skills	2 (22.22%)	6 (66.67%)	2 (22.22%)	9 (100.00%)
Self	Meeting new friends	2 (22.22%)		1 (11.11%)	
Self	Boosting confidence	1 (11.11%)		0 (0.00%)	
Self	Enhancing business knowledge	0 (0.00%)		1 (11.11%)	
Self	More hangout time with local people	0 (0.00%)		1 (11.11%)	
			9 (100%)		9 (100%)

Table 6.
Students' expectations of the intercultural learning experience (by mindset)

Expectation Gaps	Frequency n (%)	Combined Frequency n (%)
Expectations not met	2 (15.38%)	
Expectations in between met and not met[1]	1 (7.69%)	3 (23.08%)
Expectations met	8 (61.54%)	
Exceeded expectations	2 (15.28%)	10 (76.92%)
		13 (100%)
[1]Some areas met expectations, whereas some did not		

Table 7.
The gap between students' perceptions and expectations

the tour could be longer. Furthermore, they would have preferred having more time to interact with local students and to experience the local culture. They even sought the opportunity to visit the local students' homes and enjoy a meal with their family members.

As shown in Table 8, almost all of the fixed or mixed mindset students felt that their expectations were met or exceeded (83.33 percent). One student commented that the experience was great, but the duration of the tour was a bit short. Thus, his/her expectation was in between being met and not met. If the students were given more days to hang out with the local people, they would have had more time to experience the local culture.

Two of the growth mindset students felt that their expectations were not met (28.57 percent; Table 8). As mentioned, they preferred more interaction time with the local students, such as through social activities, home visits, and dinner with local families. They enjoyed staying with the local students and people, and more time would have allowed them to experience the local cultures and customs more profoundly.

Students' perceptions of the intercultural learning experience
The overseas study tour was a good experience for the students, as shown in Table 9. Their perceptions of the tour were mostly positive (89.47 percent), and they described the experience as a learning opportunity. The tour experience was perceived as great, meaningful, interesting, satisfactory, unforgettable, treasurable, beneficial, and helpful.

The distribution of positive and negative wordings between the two groups of students was similar without significant discrepancies. However, the growth mindset students used expressions to describe their tour experiences (Table 10). They used nine types of wording, whereas the fixed or mixed mindset students only used five types of wording. Thus, the growth mindset students used 1.8 times more types of wordings than those with a fixed or mixed mindset.

Expectation Gaps	Fixed or Mixed Mindset n (%)		Growth Mindset n (%)	
Expectations not met	0 (0.00%)		2 (28.57%)	
Expectations in between met and not met[1]	1 (16.67%)	**1 (16.67%)**	0 (0.00%)	**2 (28.57%)**
Expectations met	4 (66.67%)		4 (57.14%)	
Exceeded expectations	1 (16.67%)	**5 (83.33%)**	1 (14.29%)	**5 (71.43%)**
		6 (100%)		**7 (100%)**

[1]Some areas met expectations, whereas some did not

Table 8.
The gap between students' perceptions and expectations (by mindset)

Category	Perception	Frequency n (%)	Combined Frequency n (%)
Negative	Insufficient time	2 (10.53%)	**2 (10.53%)**
Positive	Learning opportunity	5 (26.32%)	
Positive	Great experience	3 (15.78%)	
Positive	Meaningful experience	2 (10.53%)	
Positive	Interesting experience	2 (10.53%)	
Positive	Satisfactory experience	1 (5.26%)	**17 (89.47%)**
Positive	Unforgettable experience	1 (5.26%)	
Positive	Treasurable experience	1 (5.26%)	
Positive	Beneficial experience	1 (5.26%)	
Positive	Helpful to students	1 (5.26%)	
			19 (100%)

Table 9.
Students' perceptions of the intercultural learning experience

Discussion
An exploratory study was conducted to investigate the differences in students' expectations of, feelings towards, and perceptions of an intercultural learning tour based on whether students demonstrated a fixed or growth mindset. Making use of content analysis of the focus group interviews, some variations among students demonstrating different mindset types were identified (Table 11).

Fixed or mixed mindset students
The fixed or mixed mindset students believed that their intelligence and talents were innate gifts. This group of students tended to rely on limited approaches to accelerate their intercultural learning. They thought that informal learning activities were more critical to their intercultural learning. Interaction and communication with local students were the key to facilitating their learning of the local culture and customs.

Their expectations of the intercultural learning experience were slightly different. They did not have as much of a desire for personal development as the growth mindset students. They focused on both the tour and personal development. Their intention to develop their intelligence and talents was not high, which marked the difference in their mindset and learning behaviours.

Their perception of the overseas study tour was positive, but the wordings they chose were not diversified. The learning impacts on fixed mindset students are relatively shallow. In total, they used five types of wording to describe the intercultural learning experience,

Category	Perception	Fixed or Mixed Mindset n (%)		Growth Mindset n (%)	
Negative	Insufficient time	1 (12.50%)	**1 (12.50%)**	1 (9.09%)	**1 (9.09%)**
Positive	Learning opportunity	3 (37.5%)		2 (18.18%)	
Positive	Great experience	1 (12.50%)		2 (18.18%)	
Positive	Meaningful experience	2 (25.00%)		0 (0.00%)	
Positive	Interesting experience	1 (12.50%)		1 (9.09%)	
Positive	Satisfactory experience	0 (0.00%)	**7 (87.50%)**	1 (9.09%)	**10 (90.91%)**
Positive	Unforgettable experience	0 (0.00%)		1 (9.09%)	
Positive	Treasurable experience	0 (0.00%)		1 (9.09%)	
Positive	Beneficial experience	0 (0.00%)		1 (9.09%)	
Positive	Helpful to students	0 (0.00%)		1 (9.09%)	
			8 (100%)		**11 (100%)**

Table 10.
Students' perceptions of the intercultural learning experience (by mindset)

	Fixed or Mixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
Types of Learning Activities Contributing to Intercultural Learning	• Limited • Biased to informal learning	• Diversified • Balance among the three types of learning activities (informal, non-formal, and formal learning)
Expectations of the Intercultural Learning Experience	• Focused on both the tour programme and personal development	• Strong desire for personal development
Perceptions of the Intercultural Learning Experience	• Mostly positive • Used fewer descriptors to express their learning experiences	• Largely positive • Used more types of wording to describe their learning experiences

Table 11.
Differences between the fixed/mixed mindset and the growth mindset

which were fewer than the number of wording types (nine) used by the growth mindset students. The most frequently mentioned descriptor was 'a learning opportunity', and the second was 'a meaningful experience'. Most of them also reported their expectations as being met. Some of their expectations were related to the tour (e.g., meeting new friends) and the planning of the tour (e.g., visiting different companies). It was, therefore, not surprising that their expectations were easily met.

Growth mindset students
The growth mindset students tended to adopt a more balanced approach to intercultural learning. They pointed out various types of tour activities, which could be categorised into formal learning, non-formal learning, and informal learning. Their learning approaches were more diversified. They applied various learning methods to understand the culture, customs, and business situations of the host country and regions. Using different approaches to learning knowledge and skills greatly benefitted the students. They could comprehend each issue or challenge from various perspectives, thereby enhancing their understanding. Ultimately, they could articulate their experience in depth, compare or challenge what they knew or learned, then assimilate and create new knowledge on global awareness, and set themselves up for greater achievements in the future. For example, the students were able to compare and evaluate the different perceptions of car ownership in Canada and Hong Kong when they engaged in informal activities. According to one student, "Canadians consider a car to be a necessity, but Hong Kong people consider a car to be a luxury".

Their expectations of the intercultural learning experience were more personal than those of the fixed or mixed mindset students. They sought self-development through joining the tour, particularly by experiencing the local culture, lifestyle, and economic situation, as well as by improving their interpersonal and communication skills. They did not mention any tour-related expectations. They had a stronger desire to develop themselves and aimed to pursue self-development, growth, and positive change. Study tours were considered a critical means of enhancing their transferable skills, their exposure to different cultures and business situations, and their business knowledge. However, their expectations were not met to the same extent as those of the fixed or mixed mindset students. It could be argued that they had higher or more expectations, such that they intended to learn more and experience more during the tour.

When asked about their perceptions of intercultural learning, the growth mindset students gave more positive expressions. They also used more types of wordings than the other group of students. Their learning attitudes and behaviours might have played a significant role here.

Conclusion and recommendations
The study provides an in-depth analysis of students' mindsets. Intercultural learning through well-planned overseas study tours can be used to foster students' growth mindset. First, organisers or schools should include three types of activities in their tour programmes: formal learning, non-formal learning, and informal learning. The activities must be balanced to allow students to experience the culture, develop transferable skills, and strengthen their learned knowledge. Formal learning activities could include lectures, workshops, and class activities. The main objective of these activities is to reinforce their knowledge and develop transferable skills. Formal interaction opportunities among students, teachers, and even local people could be arranged, such as case discussion and sharing, consultation with teachers and practitioners, and project-based learning. Non-formal activities could be visits to any local companies and tourist attractions for educational purposes. To facilitate informal learning,

arrangements could be made for students to stay in a hostel. In addition, more social gathering time could be incorporated between the formal and informal activities to facilitate interaction and communication among students. The organisers could also organise team competitions throughout the tour.

Second, organisers should help students set proper expectations of overseas study tours. Personal growth and development must be emphasised if they join a tour. All participants should attend a pre-tour workshop. In the workshop, they should be directed to set personal goals related to various transferable skills. They could be divided into teams and create strategies for achieving their individual goals together. During the study tour, they should be required to report their progress and make plans to improve if needed. After the tour, they should be invited to reflect on their goal achievement. Through this type of learning, students could set reasonable goals and expectations of the tour in terms of their personal development. They could also do so for the improvement of their learning attitudes and behaviours.

Third, previous tour participants could share their tour experiences during the pre-tour workshop. The tour experiences of previous participants might cultivate future cohorts' self-development awareness and lifelong learning intention. They could be role models and serve to inspire future participants to set their goals and plans for personal development, lifelong learning, and intercultural learning. Learning through peers is compelling, as it is easier for students to communicate among themselves. Students should be invited to share their study tour experience with the next cohort of students. Teaching others is at the highest level of the learning pyramid. This would help further embed positive learning attitudes, behaviours, and ambitious goals in their mind.

Future research directions

This paper was limited to one study tour with 13 participants. Future research could investigate more study tours and involve more participants to derive a more representative sample to further inform the study tour and mindset literature.

Second, this study adopted an exploratory study method with in-depth analysis. In future, descriptive research could be conducted to measure study tour participants' achievement of expectations and goals. A pre-tour survey could be conducted in which students are required to indicate the skills they want to acquire. After the tour, they could self-rate each skill they have learned. Statistical tests could then be performed to measure changes and improvements in their personal development.

Third, the research focus was on study tours. Other learning activities could be investigated to determine how teachers and schools can utilise them to foster a growth mindset among students. Having a growth mindset can help students face and fulfil the demands of an increasingly globalised and interconnected world (Cole, 2018). Researchers could also explore the possible role of exchange programmes, leadership training programmes, student mentoring programmes, and other learning activities in driving a growth mindset among students. In addition, a theoretical framework of educational tourism could be developed to contribute to destination marketing and learning pedagogy. This would advance interdisciplinary research between the education and tourism management disciplines.

Fourth, sub-degree students were the target participants. In future, we may consider conducting a comparative study between sub-degree and degree students to generalise the findings.

Fifth, owing to the study design, it was impossible to make causal inferences on the relationship between incumbent mindset attributes and intended learning outcomes. As such, a longitudinal follow-up study utilising structural equation modelling will be conducted to test and evaluate multivariate casual relationships.

Sixth, content analysis was conducted to analyse the data. In order to enrich interview findings in future studies, grounded theory via thematic analysis can be used.

References

Aloudat, A.S. (2017), "Undergraduate students' perceptions of a tour-guiding career", *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 333-344.

Beatson, N.J., Berg, D.A.G. and Smith, J.K. (2019), "The Sheldon effect: fixed mindset does not always mean fragile confidence", *Accounting Education*, Vol. 28 No. 5, pp. 532-552.

Black, R., Weiler, B. and Chen, H. (2019), "Exploring theoretical engagement in empirical tour guiding research and scholarship 1980-2016: a critical review", *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 95-113.

Chan, I., Lau, Y.Y. and Lee, W.S.W. (2020), "Adoption of knowledge creation model in team-based project to support student engagement", *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, Vol. 14 No. 11, pp. 1-15.

Character LAB. (n.d), "Growth mindset", available at: https://www.characterlab.org/growth-mindset/ (accessed 9 June 2020).

Chieffo, L. and Griffiths, L. (2004), "Large-scale assessment of student attitudes after a short-term study abroad program", *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 165-177.

Coe, N.M. and Smyth, F.M. (2010), "Students as tour guides: innovation in fieldwork assessment", *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 125-139.

Cole, D.R. (2018), "Individuation, vitalism and space in the overseas study tour", *Higher Education Research & Development*, Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 241-253.

Cooper, V.A. (2009), "Inter-cultural student interaction in post-graduate business and information technology programs: the potentialities of global study tours", *Higher Education Research & Development*, Vol. 28 No. 6, pp. 557-570.

Dweck, C. (2006), *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Random House, New York, NY.

Gilbertson, A., Parris-Piper, N. and Robertson, N. (2021), "Decolonising the study tour: an ethnography of a student internship with a new Delhi NGO", *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Vol. 42 No. 5, pp. 577-593.

Hainzer, K., O'Mullan, C., Bugajim, C. and Brown, P.H. (2021), "Farmer to farmer education: learnings from an international study tour", *Development in Practice*, Vol. 31 No. 5, pp. 665-675.

Hanis-Wesson, R. and Ji, K. (2020), "Students' perceptions of an interdisciplinary global study tour: uncovering inexplicit employability skills", *Higher Education Research & Development*, Vol. 39 No. 4, pp. 657-671.

Howard, K. and Keller, B. (2010), "Business school study tours: a case study", *International Educator*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 44-47.

Hutchings, K., Jackson, P. and McEllister, R. (2002), "Exploiting the links between theory and practice: developing students' cross-cultural understanding through an international study tour to China", *Higher Education Research & Development*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 55-71.

Katherine, E., Jennifer, S., Glenn, M., Paul, H. and Cassandra, A. (2019), "Learning to teach in the field: five professors tell how running an overseas study tour improved their classroom teaching", *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 169-189.

Maarschalk, J. (1988), "Scientific literacy and informal science teaching", *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 135-146.

Malina, M.A., Norreklit, H.S.O. and Selto, F.H. (2011), "Lessons learned: advantages and disadvantages of mixed method research", *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 59-71.

Reynaud, D. and Northcote, M. (2011), "Have passport, will learn: history study tours and student learning and development", *Research and Development in Higher Education*, Vol. 34, pp. 253-262.

Romines, F.D. (2008), "Georgia redcoat band tour of China: student perceptions", *Journal of Band Research*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 76-91.

Scharoun, L. (2016), "Short-term study tours as a driver for increasing domestic student mobility in order to generate global work-ready students and cultural exchange in Asia Pacific", *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, Vol. 20 No. 2-3, pp. 83-89.

Sohal, A.S. and Ritter, M. (1995), "Manufacturing best practices: observations from study tours to Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan", *Benchmarking for Quality Management & Technology*, Vol. 2 No. 4, pp. 4-14.

Sun, F.P. and Xu, T.Z. (2021), "The study tour in China: an emerging mode for practical education", *Sustainability*, Vol. 13, pp. 11969-11983.

Tamir, P. (1990), "Factors associated with the relationship between formal, informal, and nonformal science learning", *The Journal of Environmental Education*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 34-42.

Wang, J., Peyvandi, A. and Moghaddam, J.M. (2009), "Impact of short study abroad programs on students' diversity attitude", *International Review of Business Research Papers*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 349-357.

Williams, K.M. and Best, G. (2014), "Short study tours abroad: internationalizing business curricula", *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 240-259.

Xu, J.B. and Ho, P.S.Y. (2021), "Whether educational tourism can help destination marketing? An investigation of college students' study tour experiences, destination associations and revisit intentions", *Tourism Recreation Research*, pp. 1-16, doi: 10.1080/02508281.2021.1972723.

Xu, L. (2019), "The review and prospect of the research on study tour in China", *Creative Education Studies*, Vol. 7 No. 5, pp. 529-535.

About the authors
Carmen Sum, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer at the College of Professional and Continuing Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Her academic expertise includes services marketing, customer relationship management, consumer behaviours, student engagement, and education. Her work has been published in *Accounting Research Journal, Journal of Happiness Studies,* and other professional journals.

Yui-yip Lau, EdD, MSc, BSc, FSLTA, CMILT, is a Lecturer at the College of Professional and Continuing Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His academic expertise covers supply chain management, climate change, regional studies, cruise, and higher education. He has published over 240 research papers in international journals and professional magazines, contributed 10 book chapters, 2 books and presented many papers in international leading conferences. He has collaborated with scholars from over 20 countries and regions across five continents on research projects, and has secured over HK$10 million research grants. Yui-yip Lau is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: yuiyip.lau@cpce-polyu.edu.hk

Ivy Chan is a Senior Lecturer at the College of Continuing and Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She received her PhD from The University of Hong Kong. Her research interests include knowledge management, student learning, engagement, and higher education. Her work has been published in academic journals, such as *Communications of ACM, International Journal of Knowledge Management, Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, Asia Pacific Journal of Health Management*.

Effects of self-efficacy and learning environment on Hong Kong undergraduate students' academic performance in online learning

Francis C.Y. Kuan and Stephanie Wing Lee
College of Professional and Continuing Education,
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR, China

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to illustrate the importance of the quality of Online Learning Physical Environment (OLPE) and Online Learning Self-efficacy (OLSE) in predicting academic performance in online learning, which was the primary mode of teaching during the outbreak of COVID-19 in Hong Kong. Policy recommendations were made based on the findings from a psychological perspective.

Design/methodology/approach – Responses from 104 Hong Kong undergraduate students were collected through a questionnaire survey. Data were analysed using multiple linear regression, simple linear regression, and Pearson correlation.

Findings – Despite the fact that OLSE showed no significant direct effect on academic performance in online learning, OLSE was positively correlated with and predictive of OLPE, while OLPE was positively correlated with and predictive of online learning performance. The findings indicated that undergraduate students from low-income families tended to have less superior academic performance, which was associated with poorer OLPE and OLSE.

Originality/value – The findings suggested that in order to alleviate learning inequality in online learning, policy makers may allocate funding to enhance OLPE and OLSE of undergraduate students from low-income families.

Keywords COVID-19, Online Learning Physical Environment (OLPE), Online Learning Self-efficacy (OLSE), Education, Hong Kong

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

It is a prevalent idea that students' academic performance and external resources are correlated. However, self-efficacy is also a crucial factor influencing one's academic performance. A vast number of studies have indicated the influence of self-efficacy on academic performance (Cheng and Chiou, 2010; Davis, 2009; Fang, 2014; Hannon, 2014; Jung, 2013; Obrentz, 2012). Despite this, few studies have investigated the association between Online Learning Physical Environment (OLPE) and Online Learning Self-Efficacy (OLSE). During COVID-19, the majority of face-to-face teaching has been replaced by online learning,

This paper forms part of a special section Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications, guest edited by Dr Stephanie Wing Lee.

thus requiring a re-evaluation of the relationships that are known in the past by the traditional teaching context.

In this study, OLPE is defined as students' physical surroundings, such as lighting, air quality, noise level, and ambient temperature. Compared to academic performance, less attention has been placed on the physical environment. However, the quality of OLPE impacts on students' physiology, e.g., noise could impair students' attention span and encoding process which are critical for effective learning (Braat-Eggen *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, studies have indicated that lighting optimization plays a crucial role in the ideal study environment (Kudo *et al.*, 2019; Oselumese, 2016). All in all, self-efficacy has been suggested to be predictive of academic performance. It is plausible that OLPE impacts on OLSE as students' physical experience may affect the formation of OLSE mastery experience. Mastery experience refers to students' appraisal of their online learning experience, which could be positive or negative depending on the experience (Bandura, 1997). In addition, the physical disturbance may negatively affect students' online learning, which in turns undermines students' mastery experience and OLSE. Nowadays, online learning mostly takes place at students' home, which may vary to a large extent depending on students' economic status. Compared to other students, those from underprivileged families may be less satisfied with their online learning experience, hence negatively affecting OLSE and academic performance.

OLSE is defined as students' appraisal of their technological literacy in online learning rather than the level of technological literacy they achieved, e.g., how well the students consider themselves to operate online learning platforms and how efficient they communicate in a virtual environment subjectively.

Self-efficacy and academic performance in online learning

A plethora of studies have suggested that self-efficacy is positively correlated with academic performance (Cheng and Chiou, 2010; Davis, 2009; Fang, 2014; Hannon, 2014; Jung, 2013; Obrentz, 2012). Self-efficacy is a concept originated from social cognitive theory. It refers to one's belief in their ability to reach a particular level of performance on a specific task (Bandura, 1997). In learning, the self-efficacy mechanism assumes that students with higher academic self-efficacy are more motivated to learn. Therefore, they often attain higher academic achievement (Huang, 2012). Moreover, assuming all learners are equal in terms of knowledge, those who have higher academic self-efficacy tend to outperform those without, as they are motivated to actively engage in activities that would be conducive to the attainment of academic goals. Furthermore, a meta-analysis has shown that higher academic self-efficacy consistently fosters academic performance, which can be enhanced by various means (Talsma *et al.*, 2018). In this research, the idea of self-efficacy is adapted to the context of online learning, which refers to students' belief in their technological literacy, such as coping with technical issues, navigation, and communication. The adapted self-efficacy concept is known as Online Learning Self-Efficacy (OLSE). Aristovnik *et al.* (2020) suggested that students' lack of technological literacy prevented them excelling, illustrating the relationship between OLSE and academic performance in online learning.

Quality of online learning physical environment

By reviewing different aspects of physical environment in online learning, related knowledge may be applied to policy recommendations. Moreover, OLPE and OLSE influence the quality and appraisal of students' online learning experience which constitute their OLSE mastery experience. According to Realyvásquez-Vargas *et al.* (2020), online learning is a new teaching model that has subjected students to different levels of lighting, noise, ambient temperature, and air quality. The difference between such environmental elements may cause cognitive discomfort and distraction. On the other hand, those with favorable environmental conditions

may have an advantage over other students. Since these environmental factors have been shown to impact on academic performance, it is plausible that such impacts extend to students' OLSE. For instance, without proper lighting, students may suffer from shorter attention spans and worsened memory retention (Chellappa *et al.*, 2014), causing frustration. This in turn negatively affects mastery experience, which is one of the building blocks of self-efficacy.

Lighting
Tanner and Langford (2002) indicated that the quality of lighting improves productivity and performance in an online learning environment. Quality lighting enables students to see the surroundings clearly, which would improve their concentration (Sleegers *et al.*, 2012), thus resulting in better performance and class participation. Furthermore, quality lighting provides visual comfort and prevents other physiological discomfort, such as strained eyes and headaches which may impact on one's attention span. It is common for students to suffer from mental fatigue in an overly dim or bright environment (Smolders and de Kort, 2014). Moreover, learning is a taxing task which requires much cognitive processing including executive functions and memory retention (Chellappa *et al.*, 2014).

Noise
Noise could negatively influence learning effectiveness, as it affects students' ability to hear clearly. Research shows that noise induces disruption to listening comprehension and speech perception during classes. Such disruptions are harmful to students' performance on auditory tasks, such as listening in class as well as taking part in online verbal discussions (Klatte *et al.*, 2013). Irrelevant sound effect (ISE) refers to situations where the noise may not be loud, but the noise continuously varies in pitch, intensity, and frequency, which is characteristic of household noise. ISE negatively affects learning by impairing working memory and interfering with the encoding process during class. Nonauditory tasks such as revision or taking an exam are also affected, as such tasks taps into the cognitive domains of encoding, retrieval, and short-term memory (Monteiro *et al.*, 2018; Schlittmeier *et al.*, 2012).

Ambient temperature and air quality
Students' performance on cognitive tasks depends on their body temperature, which is influenced by the ambient temperature to a great extent. Uncomfortable temperatures alter physicochemical conditions and impair cognitive performance in students (Goodman *et al.*, 2018). Chang and Kajakaite (2019) investigated into the temperature range conducive to the enhancement of cognitive performance on tasks which evaluate logical reasoning, verbal ability, and executive functions, resembling those in classroom situations. Results showed that males and females performed better at lower temperatures and higher temperatures, respectively. Furthermore, Abbasi *et al.* (2019) found that with every 1 degree Celsius increase in temperature from 22 degrees Celsius, task accuracy decreased on varying levels depending on workload. Moreover, regarding air quality, Künn *et al.*, (2019) indicated that PM2.5 and CO_2 concentrations were negatively associated with cognitive performance. With higher levels of PM2.5, brain oxygen level is decreased and hence impairs cognitive performance.

Existing policies supporting undergraduates in online learning context
In Hong Kong, two types of institutions offer undergraduate programmes: the University Grants Committee (UGC) funded universities and self-financing institutions. According to UGC (2020), in response to COVID-19, UGC allocated 50 million HKD to UGC-funded universities for enhancing student's support services. The funding encompassed a wide range of initiatives. For instance, holding activities over the internet such as psychological counselling and virtual career fairs. Also, the funding covered special arrangements and support for students with special

educational needs (SEN). Xiong *et al.* (2021) identified the top 5 online learning problems faced by university students. 60 percent of students found it difficult to self-discipline; 56 percent considered the learning atmosphere to be poor; 54 percent suffered from eye fatigue; and 50 percent complained about the unstable Internet connection. Such results imply that UGC's initiatives may not have effectively addressed the problems. Moreover, another limitation is that the funding only benefited students of UGC-funded universities, while no substantial financial assistance was allocated to any self-financing institutions.

Research gap

Despite extensive studies investigating the effects of environmental factors on physiology and self-efficacy respectively, the association between the effects of environmental factors and development of self-efficacy is seldom studied. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, as most of the learning process takes place in a non-classroom environment which is vastly different from the traditional classroom setting, it would thus be meaningful to further investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance in an online learning environment. In addition, little is known about the correlational and predictive relationships among self-efficacy, academic performance, and environment in the context of OLPE model.

Research objectives

This study aimed to:

(1) Elucidate the relationships among online learning physical environment (OLPE), online learning self-efficacy (OLSE), and online learning academic performance;

(2) Evaluate OLPE and OLSE as predictors of online learning academic performance; and

(3) Suggest viable options for the Hong Kong government to improve OLPE and OLSE of students.

Hypotheses

(1) Hypothesis 1 (H1): Higher OLPE and OLSE are associated with better academic performance.

(2) Hypothesis 2 (H2): Higher OLSE predicts better academic performance.

(3) Hypothesis 3 (H3): Higher OLPE predicts higher OLSE.

Methodology

104 valid responses from participants fulfilling the following criteria were recruited: i) Online learning was the mode of teaching for at least 90 percent of classes during the past two semesters; ii) Participants attended online classes in the same environment at least 90 percent of the time; iii) Participants were current students from Higher Diploma (HD), Associate Degree (AD), or Bachelor's degree programmes in Hong Kong.

Measures

Online learning physical environment (OLPE). The Questionnaire of Effects from Online Classes (QEOC) (Realyvásquez-Vargas *et al.*, 2020) and two additional questions on the conditions of electronic device and network were used to measure OLPE. The scale consisted of

three dimensions of the online learning physical environment, including lighting, noise, and temperature, with 3 questions for each domain. Along with the two additional questions, a total of 11 items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. OLPE has been shown to be satisfactory in terms of internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.821) and convergent validity (Average variance extracted measure for temperature: 0.795; Lighting: 0.691; Noise: 0.731).

Online learning self-efficacy (OLSE). The Online Learning Self-Efficacy Scale (OLSES) of Zimmerman and Kulikowich (2016) was adopted. It is a 21-item questionnaire with 5-point Likert scale, with questions on online learning experience of the students, students' appraisal of their OLSE related experience pertaining to three aspects of self-efficacy. OLSES has been demonstrated to have high internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.987).

Academic performance (AP). As a measure of academic performance, respondents are asked to provide their average GPA for the last two consecutive online semesters. Since the maximum attainable GPA scores varied from 4.0 to 4.3 for different institutions, scores were transformed into z-scores for standardization.

Data collection. The questionnaire consisted of the scales of OLPE and OLSE. Convenience sampling was employed by collecting responses via online forums.

Data analysis. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression, simple linear regression, and correlation via Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.

Findings

Correlation analysis of OLPE, OLSE and online academic performance

Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1. Regarding correlation, two pairs of variables were found to be significantly and positively correlated. (1): OLE and OLSE ($r = 0.428$, $p = <.001$); (2): OLSE and standardized GPA (online learning academic performance) ($r = 0.282$, $p = .004$) (Table 2).

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Standardized GPA	.0525	.86264	104
Online learning physical environment	3.8844	.68136	104
Online learning self-efficacy	3.8883	.52566	104

Table 1.
Descriptive statistics of correlation

Correlations

		Standardized GPA	Online learning physical environment	Online learning self-efficacy
Standardized GPA	Pearson Correlation	1	.120	.282[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.226	.004
	N	104	104	104
Online learning physical environment	Pearson Correlation	.120	1	.428[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.226		.000
	N	104	104	104
Online learning self-efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.282[**]	.428[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.000	
	N	104	104	104
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Table 2.
Correlations table of OLPE, OLSE and online academic performance

Multiple linear regression with OLPE and OLSE as predictors of online academic performance

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to construct a model to predict online learning academic performance with OLPE and OLSE. A significant regression equation was found (F(2, 101) = 4.368, p = .015), with an R^2 of .08.

Only online learning self-efficacy was significantly predictive of academic performance (β = 0.464, p = <.01). However, the quality of the student's online learning physical environment was not significant (p = .991). Therefore, OLPE was excluded and a simple linear regression was conducted instead.

Therefore, H1 was rejected. OLPE was not associated with academic performance (r = 0.120, p = 0.120). OLPE and OLSE may not be jointly predictive of academic performance.

Simple linear regression with OLSE as predictor of online academic performance

With OLSE as the only predictor of online academic performance, a significant regression equation was found (F(1, 102) = 8.822, p = .004). OLSE was significantly predictive of AP (β = 0.463, p = <.001), also, the model had an R^2 of .08. The model accounted for 8 percent of the variation of AP. In other words, students' 8 percent change in academic performance could be attributed to OLSE (Tables 3 and 4).

As shown in Table 5, OLSE was significantly predictive of online academic performance (β = 0.463, p = <.001). *Standardized GPA = -1.748+0.463*Online Learning self-efficacy*. Therefore, H2 was accepted.

To explore further, OLPE was chosen as the predictor of OLSE in another single linear regression analysis.

Simple linear regression with only OLPE as the predictor to OLSE

Regarding the regression model of OLPE as the predictor to OLSE, OLPE is significantly predictive to OLSE (β = 2.605, p = <.001). The model has an R^2 of .183 (Table 6). It implies that the model accounts for 18.3 percent of the variation of OLSE, which is a relatively high

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.282[a]	.080	.071	.83164	.080	8.822	1	102	.004	1.588

a. Predictors: (Constant), Online learning self-efficacy
b. Dependent Variable: Standardized GPA

Table 3. Model summary of simple linear regression (OLSE to predict online learning academic performance)

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.102	1	6.102	8.822	.004[b]
	Residual	70.545	102	.692		
	Total	76.647	103			

a. Dependent Variable: Standardized GPA
b. Predictors: (Constant), Online learning self-efficacy

Table 4. Analysis of variance for simple linear regression (OLSE predicting online learning academic performance)

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	TOLPErance	VIF
1 (Constant)	-1.748	.612		-2.858	.005	-2.961	-.535					
Online learning self-efficacy	.463	.156	.282	2.970	.004	.154	.772	.282	.282	.282	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Standardized GPA

Table 5.
Coefficients table of
simple linear
regression

figure in social science research, also for a regression model with only one predictor (Itaoka, 2012). To further explain, 18.3 percent change in students OLSE can be attributed to OLPE.

With OLPE as the only predictor to OLSE. A significant regression equation was found (F(1, 102) = 22.891, p = < .001), also with an R2 of .183 (Tables 6 and 7).

As can be seen from Table 8, OLPE is significantly predictive to OLSE (β = 2.605, p = <.001)., the model is *OLSE = 2.605+0.350*OLPE*. Therefore, H3 is accepted.

Discussion

Relationship of OLSE and online learning academic performance

This study elucidated the relationships among OLPE, OLSE, and academic performance. Furthermore, OLPE and OLSE were identified as significant predictors of online academic performance (Figure 1 and Table 3). However, the regression model with OLPE and OLSE as independent variables had lower predictive power. One explanation is that there are other more influential independent variables not included in this study. According to Robbins *et al.* (2004), achievement motivation directs and energizes the student's behaviour for achievement. It has a multifactorial construct that is similar to self-efficacy, which consists of the students' values, objectives, motivational beliefs, and achievement motives (Wigfield *et al.*, 2016). It has been shown that achievement motivation explained 9 percent of variance of first-year GPA scores. Another potential variable is personality (Noftle and Robins, 2007), with a significantly positive correlation between Big Five conscientiousness domain and GPA.

OLSE is a rather novel concept which comprises three types of self-efficacy, including learning in the online environment, time management, and electronic literacy in the online learning context where studying becomes more self-directed (Zimmerman and Kulikowich, 2016). Self-efficacy of learning in the online environment facilitates academic performance with regard to the concept of mastery experience. OLSE consists of questions regarding students' satisfaction toward their online learning experience, such as whether they could navigate online courses efficiently and communicate effectively with teachers and students.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
						Change Statistics				
1	.428[a]	.183	.175	.47738	.183	22.891	1	102	.000	1.844

a. Predictors: (Constant), Online learning physical environment(
b. Dependent Variable: Online learning self-efficacy

Table 6. Model summary of simple linear regression (only OLPE as predictor to OLSE)

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.217	1	5.217	22.891	.000[b]
	Residual	23.245	102	.228		
	Total	28.461	103			

a. Dependent Variable: Online learning self-efficacy
b. Predictors: (Constant), Online learning physical environment

Table 7. Analysis of variance of simple linear regression (only OLPE as predictor to OLSE)

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients				95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	TOLPErance	VIF
1 (Constant)	2.605	.272		9.571	.000		2.065	3.145					
Online learning physical environment	.330	.069	.428	4.784	.000		.193	.467	.428	.428	.428	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Online learning self-efficacy

Table 8.
Coefficients of simple
linear regression (only
OLPE as predictor
to OLSE)

Moreover, the relationship between AP and OLSE is mutually facilitating rather than one-way (Talsma *et al.*, 2018). It is clear that AP is associated with learning effort and OLSE. Therefore, a positive appraisal of AP reinforces students' mastery experience. Despite the fact that the potential causal relationship and its direction pertaining to OLSE and AP are still debatable (Pajares and Usher, 2008), it has been suggested that an upward spiral exists (Salanova *et al.*, 2006).

Relationship of OLPE and OLSE
OLPE and OLSE affect students' cognition that determines their online learning performance. As discussed in the literature review, lighting, noise, ambient temperature, and air quality of the OLPE, all impact on one's cognitive functions and online learning performance, which in turn affect mastery experience and facilitation of OLSE. To supplement, Al horr *et al.* (2016) discussed how lighting and window view could affect mood, stress, and ultimately task performance, suggesting that effective lighting results in positive mood and stress relief.

Policy recommendations
The need for quality OLPE
As discussed, the quality of OLPE affects formation of OLSE through altering cognitive performance for mastery experience, with OLSE correlated with academic performance. Hong Kong in 2018 was reported with an all-time high Gini coefficient of 0.539 (Oxfam Hong Kong, 2018), suggesting a serious wealth gap, with an average living space per person of 13.3 m2 (Transport and Housing Bureau of Hong Kong, 2019). Such figures imply that most of the undergraduates in Hong Kong may not have access to quality OLPE, suggesting a form of educational inequality, which is worsening amid COVID-19. According to Xiong *et al.* (2021), 58 percent of the survey respondents experienced a decrease in learning efficiency and academic performance under online learning settings. They found several environmental factors that are unfavorable to a quality OLPE which also impacted the academic performance. Students with less economic resources and limited living space are more susceptible to noise problems, which negatively affect concentration in class. This in turn negatively affects effective learning, i.e., resulting in failure to comprehend and encode class content, leading to impairment of OLSE.

Policy recommendation for improving OLPE and OLSE
This study proposes two alternatives to face-to-face teaching in response to the pandemic situation. The first alternative focuses on improving the OLPE and OLSE at home, while the second focuses on improving public online learning space.

Regarding visual health, the government may design a public education program to promote visual health care awareness for all students. At the beginning of the program, students should be briefed with visual health care knowledge then to introduce a set of exercises recommended by Sano *et al.* (2018), such as crunches, sit-ups, and squats. The design of Sano's exercise program yielded a significant decrease in the participants' dry eye
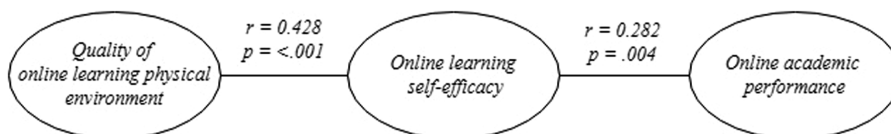

Figure 1.
The model of correlations

symptoms. To supplement the program, blue-light shield may be given to the students by the government. Furthermore, the government may advise on the recommended OLPE lighting, e.g., acceptable light intensity and color temperature. For air conditioning, a subsidy for electricity consumption could be arranged for the students on a means-tested principle during summer.

One of the constituting factors of OLSE is electronic literacy self-efficacy. Concerning the responses of OLSE scales, the students who scored high can utilize their electronic devices to fulfil learning objectives. However, a survey conducted by The Chinese University of Hong Kong (2020) found prevalent difficulties among undergraduates as 58 percent of the respondents reported technical issues. Moreover, 49 percent of the respondents complained about internet connection stability in another survey (Xiong *et al.*, 2021). According to the Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) (2021), in Hong Kong, up to August 2021, near 300,000 registered residential dial-up access lines are equal to or greater than 1 Mbps and less than 100 Mbps. Such inferior bandwidth is commonly used by households with lower economic status as the optical fiber is inaccessible. Students who are using 8Mbps or lower bandwidth may be unable to enjoy smooth streaming for effective class participation. This in turn may negatively affect OLSE, rendering such students at a disadvantage compared to other students without such problems.

The government may provide financial support for the students to improve their internet bandwidth below 8 Mbps. If optical fiber installation is not possible for some cases, providing a 4G LTE router that can receive mobile signals for accessing the internet could be a viable option. To alleviate the hardware problem, the government may consider extending the "Bring Your Own Device" policy to UGC and Non-UGC undergraduate students or provide means-tested reimbursement. Finally, it is important to improve digital literacy of both students and teachers for effective online learning experience, with government financial assistance supporting such initiatives.

The second alternative would be to construct a public online learning space (POLS) with quality OLPE which promotes OLSE. The government may consider allocating spaces for the undergraduates to learn in a quality environment. For instance, according to the Research office of the Legislative Council Secretariat (2019), the vacancy rate of private flatted factories in 2018 was 6.3 percent, providing 16.4 million square meters of space that the government may utilize for developing quality OLPE and ensuring OLSE development of students. Moreover, the government may temporarily revamp Hong Kong's community halls for quality OLPE. Indoor public learning space could be subdivided into soundproof cubicles, fitted with tools for online learning such as noise-cancelling headphones, microphone, video camera, and high bandwidth Internet connection.

Conclusion
This study elucidated the relationships among OLPE, OLSE, and academic performance. Furthermore, OLPE and OLSE were identified as significant predictors of online academic performance. The findings suggested positive associations among OLPE, OLSE, and online academic performance. This study proposes ways to alleviate educational inequality which is further exacerbated by the pandemic.

This study has some limitations. First, the effect size of the regression models may be increased by including other relevant independent variables. Second, owing to the study design, casual interferences cannot be drawn. Lastly, the policy recommendations are based on data collected in the early stage of the pandemic, which may not be entirely applicable to current pandemic situation in Hong Kong.

References

Abbasi, A., Motamedzadeh, M., Aliabadi, M., Golmohammadi, R. and Tapak, L. (2019), "The impact of indoor air temperature on the executive functions of human brain and the physiological responses of body", *Health Promotion Perspectives*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 55-64.

Al horr, Y., Arif, M., Katafygiotou, M., Mazroei, A., Kaushik, A. and Elsarrag, E. (2016), "Impact of indoor environmental quality on occupant well-being and comfort: a review of the literature", *International Journal of Sustainable Built Environment*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 1-11.

Aristovnik, A., Keržič, D., Ravšelj, D., Tomaževič, N. and Umek, L. (2020), "Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on life of higher education students: a global perspective", *Sustainability*, Vol. 12 No. 20, pp. 1-16, doi: 10.3390/su12208438.

Bandura, A. (1997), *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, W. H. Freeman and Company, New York, NY.

Braat-Eggen, P.E., van Heijst, A., Hornikx, M. and Kohlrausch, A. (2017), "Noise disturbance in open-plan study environments: a field study on noise sources, student tasks and room acoustic parameters", *Ergonomics*, Vol. 60 No. 9, pp. 1297-1314.

Chang, T. and Kajackaite, A. (2019), "Battle for the thermostat: gender and the effect of temperature on cognitive performance", *PLOS ONE*, Vol. 14 No. 5, pp. 1-10, e0216362.

Chellappa, S., Ly, J., Meyer, C., Balteau, E., Degueldre, C., Luxen, A. and Phillips, C. *et al.* (2014), "Photic memory for executive brain responses", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 111 No. 16, pp. 6087-6091.

Cheng, P.Y. and Chiou, W.B. (2010), "Achievement, attributions, self-efficacy, and goal setting by accounting undergraduates", *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 106 No. 1, pp. 54-64, doi: 10.2466/PR0.106.1.54-64.

Davis, M.M. (2009), "An exploration of factors affecting the academic success of students in a college quantitative business course", doctoral dissertation, Florida Atlantic University, Florida.

Fang, N. (2014), "Correlation between students' motivated strategies for learning and academic achievement in an engineering dynamics course", *Global Journal of Engineering Education*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 6-12.

Goodman, J., Hurwitz, M., Park, J. and Smith, J. (2018), "Heat and Learning", *SSRN Electronic Journal*, pp. 1-60, doi:10.2139/ssrn.3180724.

Hannon, B. (2014), "Predicting college success: the relative contributions of five social/ personality factors, five cognitive/learning factors, and SAT scores", *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 4, pp. 46-58.

Huang, C. (2012), "Gender differences in academic self-efficacy: a meta-analysis", *European Journal of Psychology of Education,* Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 1-35.

Itaoka, K. (2012), "Regression and interpretation low R-squared", Mizuho Information & Research Institute, Inc., available at: https://ieaghg.org/docs/General_Docs/3rd_SRN/Kenshi_Itaoka_RegressionInterpretationSECURED.pdf (accessed 22 May 2021).

Jung, K.R. (2013), "The mediational effect of academic self-discipline (ASD) between academic self-efficacy (ASE) and college GPA", doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minnesota.

Klatte, M., Bergström, K. and Lachmann, T. (2013), "Does noise affect learning? A short review on noise effects on cognitive performance in children", *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 4 pp. 1-6, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00578.

Kudo, Y., Shonchoy, A.S. and Takahashi, K. (2019), "Can solar lanterns improve youth academic performance? Experimental evidence from Bangladesh", *The World Bank Economic Review*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 436-460.

Künn, S., Palacios, J. and Pestel, N. (2019), "Indoor air quality and cognitive performance", *SSRN Electronic Journal*, pp. 1-46, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3460848.

Monteiro, R., Tomé, D., Neves, P., Silva, D. and Rodrigues, M. A. (2018), "The interactive effect of occupational noise on attention and short-term memory: a pilot study", *Noise & health*, Vol. 20 No. 96, pp. 190-198.

Noftle, E. and Robins, R. (2007), "Personality predictors of academic outcomes: big five correlates of GPA and SAT scores", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 93 No. 1, pp. 116-130.

Obrentz, S.B. (2012), "Predictors of science success: the impact of motivation and learning strategies on college chemistry performance", doctoral dissertation, Georgia State University, Georgia.

Office of the Communications Authority (2021), "Statistics on access lines of Internet service subscriptions in Hong Kong", available at: https://data.gov.hk/en-data/dataset/hk-ofca-ofca-ofca-dataset-5/resource/02b94325-1b7b-4635-99b8-99b0a8fe67a6 (accessed 22 October 2021).

Oselumese, I.B. (2016), "Environmental influence on students' academic performance in secondary school", *International Journal of Fundamental Psychology and Social Sciences*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 10-14.

Oxfam Hong Kong (2018), "Hong Kong inequality report", Oxfam, available at: https://www.oxfam.org.hk/tc/f/news_and_publication/16372/Oxfam_inequality%20report_Eng_FINAL.pdf (accessed 24 May 2021).

Pajares, F. and Usher, E.L. (2008), "Self-efficacy, motivation, and achievement in school from the perspective of reciprocal determinism", *Advances in Motivation and Achievement*, Vol. 15, pp. 391-423.

Realyvásquez-Vargas, A., Maldonado-Macías, A., Arredondo-Soto, K., Baez-Lopez, Y., Carrillo-Gutiérrez, T. and Hernández-Escobedo, G. (2020), "The impact of environmental factors on academic performance of university students taking online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic in Mexico", *Sustainability*, Vol. 12 No. 21, pp. 1-22.

Research office of Legislative Council Secretariat (2019), "Development statistical highlights: industrial buildings in Hong Kong", available at: https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1819issh30-industrial-buildings-in-hong-kong-20190816-e.pdf (accessed 15 May 2021).

Robbins, S., Lauver, K., Le, H., Davis, D., Langley, R. and Carlstrom, A. (2004), "Do psychosocial and study skill factors predict college outcomes? A meta-analysis", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 130 No. 2, pp. 261-288.

Salanova, M., Bakker, A. and Llorens, S. (2006), "Flow at work: evidence for an upward spiral of personal and organizational resources", *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 1-22.

Sano, K., Kawashima, M., Takechi, S., Mimura, M. and Tsubota, K. (2018), "Exercise program improved subjective dry eye symptoms for office workers", *Clinical Ophthalmology*, Vol. 12, pp. 307-311.

Schlittmeier, S., Weißgerber, T., Kerber, S., Fastl, H. and Hellbrück, J. (2012), "Algorithmic modeling of the irrelevant sound effect (ISE) by the hearing sensation fluctuation strength", *Attention, Perception, & Psychophysics*, Vol. 74 No. 1, pp. 194-203.

Sleegers, P., MoOLPEnaar, N., Galetzka, M., Pruyn, A., Sarroukh, B. and van der Zande, B. (2012), 'Lighting affects students' concentration positively: findings from three Dutch studies", *Lighting Research & Technology*, Vol. 45 No. 2, pp. 159-175.

Smolders, K. and de Kort, Y. (2014), "Bright light and mental fatigue: effects on alertness, vitality, performance and physiological arousal", *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 39, pp. 77-91.

Talsma, K., Schüz, B., Schwarzer, R. and Norris, K. (2018), "I believe, therefore I achieve (and vice versa): a meta-analytic cross-lagged panel analysis of self-efficacy and academic performance", *Learning and Individual Differences*, Vol. 61, pp. 136-150.

Tanner, C. and Langford, A. (2002), "The importance of interior design elements as they relate to student outcomes", available at: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED478177.pdf (accessed 18 May 2021).

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (2020), "Report for student survey on learning experience with zoom", available at: https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/clear/prodev/Report-Student_survey.pdf (accessed 18 May 2021).

Transport and Housing Bureau of Hong Kong (2019), "Housing in figures 2019", available at: https://www.thb.gov.hk/eng/psp/publications/housing/HIF2019.pdf (accessed 18 May 2021).

University Grants Committee (UGC) (2020), "UGC supports universities to strengthen student support services amidst pandemic", available at: https://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/ugc/about/press_speech_other/press/2020/pr16112020.html (accessed 17 May 2021).

Wigfield, A., Tonks, S. and Klauda, S.L. (2016), "Expectancy-value theory", Wentzel, K.R. and Miele, D.B. (Eds), *Handbook of Motivation in School*, Routledge, New York, NY, pp. 55-74.

Xiong, W., Jiang, J. and Mok, K. (2021), "Hong Kong University students' online learning experiences under the Covid-19 pandemic", *HEPI*, available at: https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2020/08/03/hong-kong-university-students-online-learning-experiences-under-the-covid-19-pandemic/ (accessed 12 May 2021).

Zimmerman, W. and Kulikowich, J. (2016), "Online Learning Self-Efficacy in students with and without online learning experience", *American Journal of Distance Education*, Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 180-191.

About the authors
Francis C.Y. Kuan obtained his Bachelor of Social Sciences in Psychology degree from School of Professional Education and Executive Development, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His research interests lie primarily in the areas of educational psychology, learning environment, interaction between environmental setting and work performance, and application of psychological concepts in public policy. Francis C.Y. Kuan is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: franciskuan1812@gmail.com

Stephanie Wing Lee, PhD (HKU), is Associate Head of Division of Social Sciences, Humanities and Design, College of Professional and Continuing Education, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She is an experienced researcher in Health Psychology and Epidemiology with publications in peer-reviewed journals and books. Her teaching interests include mental health and well-being, psychology of learning and teaching, personality development, and consumer psychology.

Mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution to resolve interpersonal conflicts in Hong Kong universities

Aaron C.K. Lau

The Hong Kong Mediation Society, Hong Kong SAR, China

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to provide insight into mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) to resolve interpersonal conflicts for undergraduate students in Hong Kong.

Design/methodology/approach – Mixed methods research approach was utilised to examine university students' understanding of dispute resolution at their respective universities in Hong Kong, and factors that may influence their decision to utilize ADR on campus.

Findings – The tendency for university students in Hong Kong to voice criticisms was low due to: (1) unawareness of proper grievance channels; and (2) fear of potential academic retribution from the institution. This may be the result of inadequate promotion and transparency in the existing higher education dispute resolution framework. Academic staff acknowledged the limitation of the existing closed-door dispute resolution system and the need for an alternative conflict management system which emphasises on restoration of harmony in the university community.

Originality/value – As there is a lack of study focusing on ADR practices in Hong Kong universities, this paper provides insight into the feasibility of integrating ADR into the existing dispute resolution processes in resolving interpersonal conflicts at universities in Hong Kong.

Keywords Higher education, Conflict management, Dispute resolution, Mediation, ADR, Interpersonal dispute, Hong Kong

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

As the nature and structure of a university promote freedom of expression and the coexistence of opposing views, academia may at times become a hotbed of discontent. Though university disputes are not commonly publicized, tension among students or between students and academic staff may not be uncommon. Given that interpersonal conflicts are considered inevitable due to incompatibility of interest among different stakeholders in higher education institutions (Isabu, 2017), most universities have established channels aimed to resolve interpersonal conflicts within their institution. One such approach is the establishment of office of the ombudsperson, which provides an independent, impartial body for students, scholars, and administrative personnel to address interpersonal disputes (The University of British Columbia, 2020).

Even though university ombudspersons are independent and impartial individuals, their powers are limited by the Laws of the University (LoU) and their interventions are often confined to recommendations rather than resolutions. As such, many higher education institutions have increasingly promoted mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism to complement the existing ombudsperson system.

Research on ADR at universities in Hong Kong

While universities in Hong Kong are of no exception to interpersonal conflicts, preliminary research seems to indicate that ombudsperson services are not available. Despite the fact that student affairs offices of respective universities are responsible for handling interpersonal disputes involving students and staff, procedural names tend to comprise of terminology not easily recognized by those unfamiliar to dispute resolution processes. Table 1 illustrates the names of complaint procedure and its handling channels at various universities in Hong Kong.

Considering that administrators in higher education tend to perceive conflicts as problematic (Watson *et al.*, 2017), the use of inexplicit procedural names exemplifies such perception. When accessibility to dispute resolution and filing procedures are challenging and tedious, such hindrance in the dispute resolution process would further escalate emotions between disputants. Consequently, this may aggravate student-academic staff relationships and complicate matters.

The common dispute resolution procedure implemented at universities in Hong Kong follows a similar structure. When a student encountered an interpersonal dispute and wished to file a complaint, it would be handled by the corresponding academic staff. While universities encourage students to discuss the matter directly with the individual concerned, complaints may be forwarded to the next level of management. Most universities' dispute resolution protocol also dictates that the person handling the complaint should make every reasonable attempt to resolve the complaint through informal resolution channel and escalation to formal procedures should be avoided unless all informal remedial actions has been exhausted (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2021). Similar strategies are also implemented in dispute resolution procedural guidelines of other universities in Hong Kong.

Name of Universities	Procedural Names	Handling Channels
The University of Hong Kong (HKU)	Resolution of the Grievances of Students	Centre of Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS)
The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CU)	Procedures for Dealing with Students Complaints	Office of Student Affairs
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST)	Arbitration and Grievances	Dean of Students' Office
The Polytechnic University of Hong Kong (PolyU)	Grievances Committee	Student Affairs Office
City University of Hong Kong (CityU)	Student Complaints Procedure	Office of the Vice-President (Student Affairs)
Baptist University of Hong Kong (HKBU)	Student Grievances Procedure	Office of Student Affairs
The Education University of Hong Kong (EduHK)	Procedure for Resolving Student Grievances	Student Affairs Office
Lingnan University (LU)	Procedure in the Handling of Discrimination Cases	Equal Opportunities Committee

Table 1.
Complaint Procedural Names and Handling Channels at Universities in Hong Kong

Should complaints fail to be resolved informally at the departmental level, students may lodge their complaint through formal procedures. This includes the submission of a formal written complaint explaining the dispute to the Program Director or Faculty Dean. Once a formal complaint has been filed, the dispute resolution will go through rigorous procedures and may be raised to the attention of Vice-Chancellor depending on the gravity of the situation. The Vice-Chancellor may continue to adopt informal mechanism, referral to outside bodies such as the police, Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), or the Chairman of the grievances panel (The University of Hong Kong, 2021). Figure 1 shows the procedural steps outlined by the Resolution of the Grievances of Students at the University of Hong Kong.

Despite the fact that complaints are to be resolved fairly in a manner acceptable to all parties (The University of Hong Kong, 2021), the lack of ombudsing at universities in Hong Kong may have prevented students to reach a mutually agreeable resolution with their institution. In addition, as highlighted by most university dispute resolution guidelines, complaints have the tendency to be resolved by members within the institution. As such, impartiality is difficult to maintain as the members handling these complaints work within the jurisdiction of the university and are bounded by LoU.

The lack of control from disputing parties after a complaint has entered the formal phase may further strain student-academic staff relationships. Though formal procedure is considered as a last resort when informal channels have failed, the inflexibility to re-engage in informal resolution process after formal channel has been initiated would impede disputing parties from determining the outcome. Taking into account that third parties such as
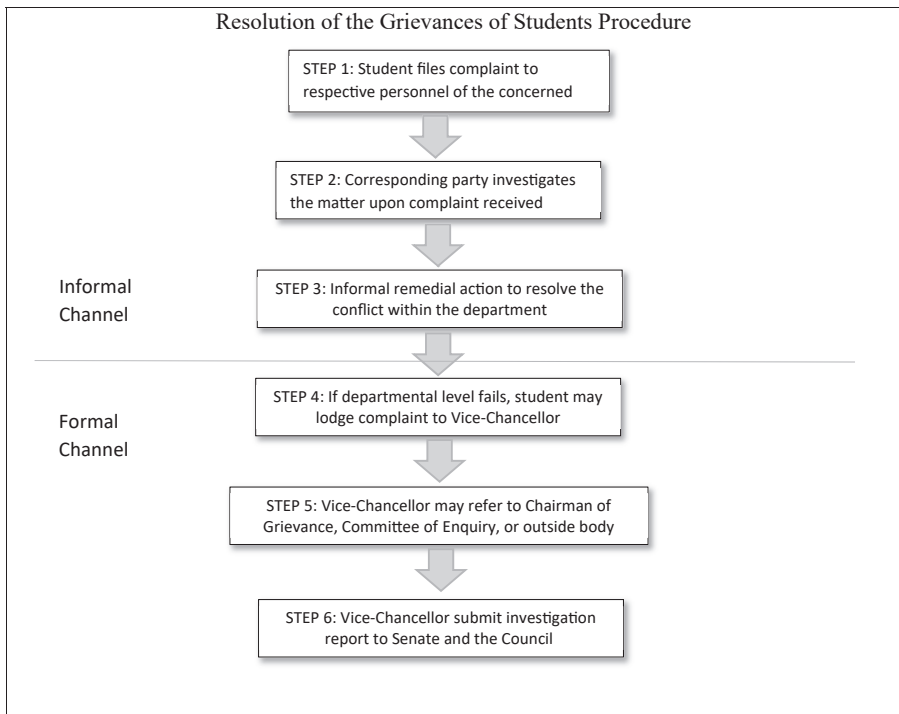

Figure 1.
Resolution of the Grievances of Students Procedure
Source: The University of Hong Kong (2021)

members of the grievance committee would become decision makers for the resolution, settlements imposed may not necessarily address the needs, concerns, and interests of the disputants.

Another function of formal dispute resolution is to provide institutions the means to determine the final outcome of the conflict by cross-examining evidence presented by disputants. Even though such "fault-finding" mechanism could expedite the process in reaching a settlement, such method may not necessarily place the disputants in a "win-lose" situation. If the dispute consists of sensitive information, full disclosure of particulars regarding the incident may place both disputants as "losers". Furthermore, such competitiveness during the dispute resolution process may affect morale within the academic community.

As such, many higher education institutions have increasingly promoted mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism to complement the existing ombudsing system. Where ombudsing recommendations are often perceived as reactive, mediation is capable of shifting conflict to consent under the premise that people desire to live in harmony. When conflicting issues arise, interpersonal relationships are endangered and those involved would be put into a state of uncertainty. In such circumstances, mediation is to re-establish legitimacy between disputants by constructing a negotiation platform committed to provide fair treatment and fair outcome (Patton, 2005). As disputants are empowered by the principle of self-determination, power imbalances will be addressed, and parties are able to engage in discussions to reach mutually satisfying resolutions. The Cognitive Mediation Theory (Lazarus, 1991) also highlighted how concessions are appraised when assessments of situation (Stimuli) and its meaning (Cognitive), were assessed (Mediate). This leads to realization of Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) and Worst Alternative to Negotiated Agreement (WATNA) through "reality check", a procedure commonly used in mediations.

According to Greco Morasso (2011), mediation is a preferred dispute resolution approach in higher education for its argumentative, intrinsic, and extrinsic reasons. From an argumentative perspective, mediation facilitates parties' understanding of context in terms of institutional and interpersonal relations. This is vital for accurate analytical reconstruction of the dispute, allowing parties the opportunity to view the disputed incident holistically and evaluate their argumentative position realistically. As the comprehension of the dispute deepens, disputants would critically reflect upon the opposition's arguments, evaluate their own stance, and recognize their uncertainty (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004).

In relation to intrinsic benefits, mediators are nominated by disputing parties directly to help them find a resolution to their conflict. This strikes a sharp contrast with ombudspersons who are appointed by institutions to intervene in conflicts but disputing parties cannot be in direct control over the outcome. Therefore, decisions on conflict resolution (ADR) would be made by external parties and not by the disputants themselves.

Greco Morasso (2011) has also found extrinsic benefits outside the scope of dispute resolution strategy. Mediation in schools has encouraged students to disclose their concerns to academic staff, which in turn improved their ability to refine student policies. Conflict resolution education (CRE) programs focused on educating students about constructive approach to managing disputes in school has also expedited the establishment of peer mediation on campuses (Compton, 2002).

Research gap
ADR has been integrated into the Hong Kong Judiciary system for over a decade. While ADR is often used to resolve disputes in the commercial sector, there is a lack of research on its application in the Hong Kong higher education sector. As such, this paper aims to explore the

feasibility of integrating ADR into the existing conflict management system in resolving interpersonal conflicts, i.e., discrepancies on expectation of academic results between students and faculties, at universities in Hong Kong.

Objectives
The research objectives of this study are:

1. To determine whether the incorporation of an independent dispute resolution program at universities in Hong Kong is feasible.

2. To evaluate the significance of mediation as a mechanism to resolve interpersonal conflicts for university students and staff in these institutions.

3. To suggest ways to improve the existing dispute resolution system employed by these institutions and enriching the campus life of university students and staff in Hong Kong.

Research methodology
Mixed methods research approach was adopted, using survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview to gather undergraduate students' understanding of dispute resolution mechanism currently implemented at their respective universities in Hong Kong. Factors that may influence their decision to utilize ADR on campus were also noted.

As participation was voluntary, reaching for eligible participants was a challenge. To overcome such issue, the snowball sampling technique was used. Though snowball sampling was susceptible to sampling bias, respondent-driven sampling (RDS) was incorporated to compensate for such non-random selection. Through such sampling technique, thirty-six university students and four academic staff have responded to the survey and the interview. While majority of the students were from the same university (16 out of 36), five interviews were conducted with students from different universities. Meanwhile, three academic staff from different universities have participated in both survey and interview.

The researcher designed and distributed a survey to undergraduate students who were studying in universities in Hong Kong. Participants were also encouraged to distribute the questionnaire to their peers who fulfilled the selection criteria. Students who had experienced interpersonal dispute on campus and engaged in dispute resolution process offered by their universities were invited for an interview. Interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions to allow further discussion on research topic. To ensure a balanced research, identical survey and interview procedures were conducted with academic staff to illustrate their perspective views towards ADR in universities in Hong Kong.

To enhance the validity and reliability of collected data, an experienced mediator conducted the interviews. The benefit of performing interviews by an experienced mediator was the ability to inquire sensitive issues from participants. Since mediators are trained facilitators and are experienced in identifying underlying interests, such arrangement would provide insightful observations for the research.

Findings
ADR from the perspective of university students
According to research findings (see Appendix A - Summary of University Student Survey), students were either unfamiliar with the dispute resolution program offered at their universities or were unaware of the procedures needed should grievance arise (30 out of 36 students). While there was generally good understanding of mediation as a "process where an

impartial person help disputing parties communicate and resolve their issue without
providing solutions or suggestions" (25 out of 36 students), some perceived the process as
"someone (who) helps others resolve dispute by providing suggestions or solutions" (9 out of
26). The perception of accessibility to professional dispute resolution on campus was also low.
Considering that majority of the students were unfamiliar with the dispute resolution
program offered at their university, most students were unsure (26 out of 28) whether
professional conflict handlers performed such program.

Accessibility to dispute resolution has impacted the likelihood of raising concerns to
academic staff. In one of the interviews, one of the students claimed that experience told her
that filling complaints were cumbersome and provided no immediate result. When asked how
her experience may be improved, she wished better guidelines were provided for students to
raise their concerns.

Disclosure of interpersonal dispute to the institution
When students were provided a scenario where an interpersonal conflict with another
student had happened and that communication between the students had broken down, more
than half of the participants (20 out of 36) "would not escalate" their dispute to academic staff
to resolve the situation. While a fraction of the students would raise their concern to the
course lecturer (8 out of 36) or program leader (6 out of 36), escalation to department
management (2 out of 36) was unlikely. In this scenario, no student escalated the conflict to
faculty management level. Meanwhile, when students were provided a similar situation, only
that the conflict was with a lecturer, half (18 out of 36) of the students would raise their
concern to the program leader. However, few would raise their concern to department
management (6 out of 36), and rarely to faculty management (3 out of 36). Many (9 out of 36)
would continue to stay silent and not escalate the situation (9 out of 36).

The change in settings helped explore the perception of interpersonal conflict among
students at universities in Hong Kong. While the tendency of disclosing interpersonal dispute
to academic staff was low when conflict was between students, trend analysis has suggested
that students were generally unwilling to escalate the situation beyond program leaders.
From a hierarchal perspective, program leaders held supervisory positions within the
program and were often academic advisors to students. As such, program leaders tend to
have built rapport with most students within their program.

Upon interviewing selected students, one of the students claimed that interpersonal
conflict was rather common during group projects, especially when students were selected to
work with those whom they have previously not worked with. As there were tendencies of
free riders, such behavior would create tension within the group. However, escalation to
academic staff was minimum as most students would choose to tolerate free riders until they
could choose to work with someone else in the new semester. The identity of free riders would
be circulated among students to assist others from working with these students in the new
semester.

While conflicts between students were not commonly escalated to academic staff,
escalation to program leaders was deemed acceptable when dispute involved course
lecturers. However, escalation to program leader was circumstantial. According to some
students, disclosure of the incident would depend on their rapport with the program leader. If
the program leader is perceived fair and just, the likelihood for disclosure would increase.
When asked how relationship with academic staff affected tendency of disclosure,
respondents believed that academic staff were in power and have the ability to interfere
with academic results should they retaliate.

Most interview participants, however, expressed that their dispute with an academic staff
was due to "miscommunication" and were "independent incident". When asked whether

relationship has reconciled after complaint, students who had not escalated were generally on good terms with their lecturers. As for those who had escalated their concern, they were unable to comment as they no longer participated in the disputants' classes.

Prospect of mediation to resolve interpersonal dispute on campus
Given that participants of the student survey generally understood what mediation was, the idea of implementing such ADR mechanism into the existing grievance system is welcomed. Of the thirty-six respondents, more than half of the students (21 out of 36) would participate in mediation should such option was available when interpersonal conflict arose. While the majority of the remaining participants (14 out of 36) choose "maybe", only 1 participant rejected mediation as an ADR. However, explanation for such decision was unavailable as that participant opted not to participate in follow-up interview (see Appendix A).

According to interview results, participants generally appreciate mediation as a dispute resolution mechanism because the process promised 1) impartiality, 2) confidentiality, and 3) voluntarily. By referring to the participant who have raised the issue to academic staff in hopes of seeking third party assistance, the impartiality of a mediator would provide student and staff a platform for genuine dialog. Since mediators are perceived to be fair and would listen to both sides of the dispute, students and staff would be able to share their thoughts without being judged or criticized. Disputant would also be able to take advantage of such session to convey their needs, interests, and concerns. This would pave way for reconciliation of relationship between students and academic staff and improvements to student wellbeing on campus.

Confidentiality was also appreciated by participants as it provided a sense of anonymity to those who have decided to raise their concern to academic staff and beyond. The idea of anonymity would not only encourage social justice in education, but also remove the possibility of identification which may cause unequal treatment of students. As such, if universities fail to protect complainants, students would never raise their concerns and universities, according to participants, will never improve.

As such, confidentiality is an important aspect in dispute resolution and should be safeguarded in order to facilitate disclosure of information between participants (Brown, 1991) that may otherwise be used against them. In this case, students who raised their concern in hopes of remedying their situation. While confidentiality is not absolute, such as criminal acts (Gray, 1998), it provides parties the peace of mind to express their concerns and needs otherwise inconvenient to disclose in public.

Since mediation is a voluntary process where disputing parties may participate by choice, interviewees perceive such arrangement beneficial as they are not bounded to resolve the situation by external forces. As participants are empowered by the principle of self-determination, possible power imbalances between students and academic staff may be addressed. By constructing a negotiation platform committed to provide fair treatment and fair outcome (Patton, 2005), it would encourage constructive discussion between disputants to resolve the situation and motivate them to be responsible for the disputed outcome (Goldberg, 2007).

Therefore, based upon the feedback from the student survey and subsequent interviews, university students in general considered mediation as an effective tool to resolve interpersonal conflicts on campus (28 out of 36). In addition, many (27 out of 36) would recommend mediation to their friends if they encountered interpersonal dispute on campus.

ADR from the perspective of university academic staff
Responses from the academic staff survey were reviewed to identify perception tendencies of academic staff regarding on dispute resolution (see Appendix B Summary of University

Academic Staff Survey). Academic staff were also invited to the interviews as their knowledge of the dispute resolution program implemented at their respective higher education institution would provide insight into this research.

Comprehension of dispute resolution program available on campus
According to the survey results, academic staff were rather unfamiliar (3 out of 4) with the dispute resolution program offered at their respective university. Further clarification with academic staff pointed out that they were not complaint handlers thus unable to fully comment on the dispute resolution program. While all participants have good understanding of mediation as a "process where an impartial person help disputing parties communicate and resolve their issue without providing solutions or suggestions", perception of accessibility to professional dispute resolution on campus was mixed. Participants were also unsure whether such program was performed by professional conflict handlers.

During interviews, academic staff explained that a dispute resolution program had been in place, but knowledge of such grievance system was limited as they were not part of the grievance panel. However, they claimed that course lecturers should be the first point of contact if students wanted to raise any concern. Should the matter concerned required escalation, it would be forwarded to program leader. The dispute resolution program is a tier-based system and if a dispute can be resolved at a certain level, it will not be escalated.

Observation of confidentiality and impartiality in dispute resolution
While institutions have protocols to protect the anonymity of individuals who filed for complaints, and the importance of maintaining confidentiality as well as impartiality were understood by academic staff, most participants (3 out of 4) were aware of interpersonal disputes that happened within their department. Be that as it may, this does not mean that the identity of complainant was jeopardized. According to the interviewees, universities have strict policies in regard to the protection of privacy and the rule of confidentiality is observed in compliance with local laws. When inquired about the circumstances where identity disclosure is required, the participants highlighted that only when there are serious violations of university policies.

Although participants emphasized the importance of confidentiality and impartiality when handling disputes, further investigation has revealed that academic staff have various interpretation on impartiality and conflict of interest. While impartiality is generally understood as "no conflict of interest" or "not (in) favor (of) any parties under dispute" (see Appendix B). The interpretation and application of informal and formal dispute resolution was also indecisive. While some considered complaints filed verbally or email between students and course lecturers should be considered informal, others considered all forms of complaint should be treated as formal. When participants were asked to clarify such discrepancy, they reinstated that the disputes are treated on a case-by-case basis and individual experience may influence interpretation.

Criterial considered as favorable dispute resolution outcome on campus
Given the fact that professional dispute training was not always offered to academic staff, dispute handling appeared to be dependent on personal attributes such as experience, value, ethics, and attitude. When participants are invited to present their views on what constitutes as favorable dispute resolution outcome in higher education institutions, various suggestions have transpired. While one of the participants suggested a favorable outcome should consist of a mutually agreed solution between parties that is fair and constructive, another participant considered a resolution that is drawn by abiding to institutional regulation and laws would be optimal.

Such ambiguity among academic staff in defining a favorable dispute resolution outcome may haphazardly create unnecessary tension to an already heated dispute, further escalating the situation. In addition, participants claimed that members of dispute resolution panel or grievance committee are nominated from the pool of academic and administration staff. While participants have emphasized such arrangement was intended to perform functions similar to a jury, the nature of such closed-door dispute resolution system is disciplinary-focused rather than reconciliation. Such practices, therefore, may reinforced students' tendency to not raise their concerns to academic staff as filing a dispute may, in their opinion, have devastating results to their academic life.

Prospect of mediation to resolve interpersonal conflicts on campus
According to the survey, the majority of the participants (3 out of 4) did not envision mediation would become a trend in resolving interpersonal disputes in universities. As they believe the existing protocol is sufficient for academic staff to resolve interpersonal disputes informally, changing the policy lacks both urgency and cost effectiveness. In addition, the current complaint handling practices, as suggested by one of the participants, emphasized on resolving dispute at lower level. As such, unless the complaint is serious, most academic staff have the experience to handle the majority of issues raised by students.

Despite the fact that academic staff did not recognise the need to implement mediation on campus, they acknowledged the limitations of the existing dispute resolution system. Considering members of the dispute resolution panel or grievance committee are nominated from the pool of academic and administration staff, the lack of professional training on dispute resolution may jeopardize impartiality in determining the outcome. In other words, the current dispute resolution system is designed as a linear procedure where disputing parties would not be able to reengage "informal" dispute resolution to resolve the situation once formal proceeding has been initiated.

Implications
The findings in the previous section have provided an overview on the existing dispute resolution program currently implemented at universities in Hong Kong. While sample size of respondents who took part in the research may not be representative, they have offered insight into the feasibility of mediation as an ADR to resolve interpersonal conflicts for university students in Hong Kong.

According to the findings, most higher education institutions in Hong Kong have implemented various dispute resolution channels to handle conflicts on campus. However, the majority of its students as well as academic staff were unaware of these programs nor its processes. Although the study has found that conflict between students and academic staff was minimal, and utilization of both informal and formal dispute resolution channel was low, the occurrence of interpersonal dispute could not be discredited. Incidentally, feedback from the survey and interviews suggested that students choose not to voice their criticisms to academic staff due to unawareness of proper channels. Despite the fact that such processes were outlined in university student handbooks (The University of Hong Kong, 2021), they were not promoted. Students, therefore, would not participate in campus dispute programs due to unfamiliarity to the processes, which in turn would delay resolutions.

Students' hesitation in disclosing interpersonal disputes to institutions were also due in part to fear of potential academic retribution. The perception of students being disadvantaged when interpersonal disputes occur on campus (Miles, 1967) is related to power dynamics within the higher education institution. Such common belief is compounded by the lack of transparency in higher education dispute resolutions and professional training

on dispute handling. While academic staff were provided with procedures on handling disputes, interpretation and application of informal and formal dispute resolution was dependent on personal attributes. Members of dispute resolution panel or grievance committee were also nominated from the pool of academic and administration staff, and without proper conflict handling experiences, discrepancies in dispute resolution would reinforce the vicious cycle of misconception where students were disadvantaged in the education system. When students avoid raising concerns, institutions would be unaware of their dissatisfaction. As a result, this impedes improvements through conflict resolution. However, as divergence between institution policies and student needs increases, conflict ensues.

Studies revealed the establishment of student unions and other student-based associations have influenced the distribution of power in student-teacher relationships. As the performance of academic staff is based on their teaching quality, their ability to inspire students to learn and achieve learning outcomes is paramount. In addition, students can provide feedback on teachers to the institution through the student evaluation mechanism. As such, building rapport with students and creating a positive learning environment are critical. Due to lack of awareness and transparency in the dispute resolution program, students may potentially disclose their discontent on the Internet. Such activity is undesirable due to circulation of allegations before investigation and it may jeopardize confidentiality and impartiality of the grievance panel and unfair to disputing parties involved. Public trust, institution reputation, and morale of staff would also be undermined.

Despite the fact that academic staff participated in the research did not recognise the need to implement mediation on campus, such response may be due to the perception of changes in the bureaucratic system is perceived as problematic and should be avoided (Watson *et al.*, 2017), which has long been rooted in higher education. Their acknowledgement on the limitations of the existing disciplinary-focused, closed-door dispute resolution system as well as the lack of resource allocation to dispute resolution training further promotes the need for an alternative conflict management system that emphasises on restoration of harmony in the university community.

Recommendations

As general awareness of the existing dispute resolution system in universities is low, promotion of its availability and means to access such resource is essential. Feedback from research participants has also conveyed the importance of training members of staff in the institution on conflict handling. Coaching of mediation skills, such as active listening and paraphrasing (reframing), can encourage issues to be resolved at student-teacher level. Such mediation training can significantly reduce miscommunication, thus avoiding unnecessary escalation of disputes due to frustrations.

In addition, promotion and education of students on the use of proper channels to raise concerns will ensure confidentiality of parties involved, thus providing a constructive platform for consensus building towards resolving the dispute. This will also proactively prevent instances such as circulation of allegations on social media due to discontent, thus safeguarding public trust, institution reputation, and morale of staff within the campus community.

Transparency in the dispute resolution mechanism should be enhanced in order to maintain consistency in informal and formal resolution practices. This may include allocation of both monetary and human resources on professional dispute resolution training. By equipping academic and frontline staff with the skills needed to handle interpersonal conflict, escalation of dispute to higher level can be minimized.

In regard to the current closed-door, disciplinary-focused dispute resolution system, implementation of an independent dispute resolution body such as mediation would be

beneficial. While impartiality can be ensured, the ability to receive recommendation on the existing resolution of grievances may improve the wellbeing of academics. In addition, mediation as an independent body can provide disputants a means to reengage informal dispute resolution to resolve the situation after formal proceeding has been initiated.

Advocating a multidisciplinary approach in dispute resolution involving relevant stakeholders within the higher education organization can promote social justice in the academic community. To further the cause, promotion of peer mediation through student affairs, along with the integration of counselors and social workers, can foster student wellbeing within the campus community while preserving reputation and relationships of disputing parties involved. This may also provide an alternative resolution channel for milder non-disciplinary disputes, which would significantly reduce the workload of academic staff members who are currently the first responders to student conflicts.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this research was accessibility to the target population. As this research utilized the snowball sampling technique to recruit, this technique was prone to sampling bias and researchers would have limited control over its sample size. This study employed a small sample size which may have compromised the power and representativeness. Considering this research involved the disclosure of sensitive information such as ones' personal details and conflict experiences, the lack of face-to-face interaction over the semester has severely hampered the means to recruit participants.

The low participation rate may be attributed to cultural factors (Hofstede, 1991). Since most student participants in this research are ethnically Chinese, their lack of willingness to resolve interpersonal conflicts may be associated with high risk avoidance observed in Chinese societies (Bond and Lee, 1981). As such, students may opt not to complicate matters by remaining silent. Therefore, having access to data from culturally diversified target population will improve generalizability of findings.

Conclusion

Given that the number of respondents may be insufficient to provide a representative view, this research has provided a glimpse of the limitations the existing dispute resolution system. In general, university students in Hong Kong were unfamiliar with the dispute resolution offered by their universities. While efforts by institutions have been made to implement "informal" dispute resolution channels in handling interpersonal conflicts, the lack of knowledge in terms of accessibility and processes has significantly hampered its effectiveness.

While mediation is not openly promoted to university students as an ADR mechanism to resolve interpersonal conflicts at universities in Hong Kong, academic staff were entrusted with discretional power by respective institutions to handle student conflicts. Although such "informal" dispute resolution has been exercised, this research has revealed that the lack of professional training has resulted in discrepancies on the interpretation and application of such "informal" dispute resolution. While one may consider complaints filed verbally as informal, another may view all forms of complaints as formal. Such practices have significant impact on students and further confirm their misconceptions that students are disadvantaged in the education system (Miles, 1967) and raising concerns or criticisms may expose themselves to untenable situations (Jamieson and Thomas, 1974).

The effectiveness of mediation as a tool to resolve interpersonal conflict at universities in Hong Kong is debatable. While university students welcome the concept of an impartial dispute resolution body to be integrated into the campus system, academic staff members

do not recognise it as an effective tool. However, such response may be due to the perception of changes in the bureaucratic system as problematic and should be avoided (Watson *et al.*, 2017). Their acknowledgement of the limitations of the existing dispute resolution system, however, may invite the need for an alternative conflict management system that emphasises on restoration of harmony in the university community. Considering that mediation has long been incorporated in other universities around the world, and that "informal" dispute resolution processes has already been exercised, the incorporation of mediation into existing dispute resolution mechanism at universities in Hong Kong would be invaluable.

References

Bond, M.H. and Lee, P.W.H. (1981), "Face saving in Chinese culture: a discussion and experimental study of Hong Kong students", King, A.C. and Lee, R.L. (Eds), *Social Life and Development in Hong Kong*, The Chinese University Press, Hong Kong, pp. 289-303.

Brown, K.L. (1991), "Confidentiality in mediation: status and implications", *Journal of Dispute Resolution,* Vol. 1991 No. 2, pp. 308-334.

Compton, R. (2002), "Discovering the promise of curriculum integration: the National Curriculum Integration Project", *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 447-464.

Goldberg, S. (2007), *Dispute Resolution: Negotiation, Mediation, and Other Processes* (5th Ed.), Wolters Kluwer Law and Business/Aspen, Austin.

Gray, O.V. (1998), "Protecting the confidentiality of communication in mediations", *Osgoode Hall Law Journal,* Vol. 36 No. 4, pp. 668-702.

Greco Morasso, S. (2011), *Argumentation in Dispute Mediation: A Reasonable Way to Handle Conflict* (Argumentation in context; v. 3), John Benjamins Pub, Amsterdam, Philadelphia.

Hofstede, G. (1991), *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind,* McGraw-Hill, London.

Isabu, M.O. (2017), "Cause and management of school related conflict", *African Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 148-151.

Jamieson, D.W. and Thomas, K.W. (1974), "Power and conflict in the student-teacher relationship", *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 321-336.

Lazarus, R.S. (1991), "Cognition and motivation in emotion", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 46 No. 4, pp. 352-367.

Miles, M.B. (1967), "Some properties of schools as social systems", Watson, G. (Ed.), *Change in School Systems*, Cooperative Project for Educational Development, National Training Laboratories, Washington, DC, pp. 1-30.

Patton, B. (2005), "Negotiation", Moffitt, M. and Bordone, R.C. (Eds), *The handbook of dispute resolution*, op. cit., Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, pp. 279-303.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (2021), "Procedures for dealing with student complaints", available at: http://www.res.cuhk.edu.hk/images/content/general_information/procedures_for_dealing_with_student_complaints/ENG_Procedures-for-Dealing-with-Student-Complaints_20210709.pdf (accessed 10 July 2021).

The University of British Columbia (2020), "Who we are?", Office of the Ombudsperson for Students, available at: https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca/who-we-are/ (accessed 10 July 2021).

The University of Hong Kong (2021), "Procedures for the resolution of the grievances of students", *Undergraduate Handbook*, The University of Hong Kong.

Van Eemeren, F.H. and Grootendorst, R. (2004), *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation: The Pragma-dialectical Account*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Watson, N.T., Watson, K.L. and Stanley, C.A. (2017), *Conflict Management and Dialogue in Higher Education*, Information Age Publishing, Inc, Charlotte, NC.

Appendix A. Summary of University Students Survey

Questions	Responses
1) Were you familiar with the dispute resolution program or resolution of grievances offered by your university?	Yes – 6 No – 30
2) Have you heard of 'Mediation' before?	Yes – 32 No – 4
3) What is your understanding on 'Mediation'?	
- A process where someone help others resolve dispute by providing suggestion or solution.	9
- A process where an impartial person help disputing parties communicate and resolve their issue based without providing solution or suggestion.	25
- No Idea	2
5) From your understanding, are mediations in your university performed by professional mediators?	Yes – 6 No – 2 Not Sure – 28
6) Assuming you have an interpersonal conflict with a student and communication has breakdown, who will you first reach out to resolve the situation?	Course Lecturer – 8 Program Leader – 6 Department Administrator – 2 Will Not Escalate – 20
7) Assuming you have an interpersonal conflict with a lecturer and communication has breakdown, who will you first reach out to resolve the situation?	Course Lecturer – 18 Program Leader – 6 Department Administrator – 3 Will Not Escalate – 9
8) Assuming you have an interpersonal conflict on campus and your university offers mediation as an alternative dispute resolution program, will you participate?	Yes – 21 No – 1 Maybe - 14
9) Have you been involved with a dispute that involves another member (student or staff) during your studies in the university?	Yes – 8 No – 28
10) Was your dispute related to a fellow student or a staff in the university?	Student – 3 Staff – 5
11) Have you participated in campus dispute resolution programs offered by the university?	Yes – 7 No – 1
12) Was the mediation process able to resolve the dispute?	No – 1
13) If the mediation was able to resolve the dispute, in your opinion, what are the factors that made it successful?	No Response as Q12 Yes = 0
14) If you have not participated in campus dispute resolution programs, what may be the reasons	
- Dispute Resolution Program is Unavailable	5
- Fear of complication or possible retaliation	1
- Filing Complaint is cumbersome and provide no immediate result.	2
15) If the mediation was unable to resolve the dispute, in your opinion, what do you wish to improve?	
- Ability to nominate mediators from other institutions	5
- Ability to schedule for additional mediation sessions	2
- Ability to pursue other forms of alternative dispute resolution (e.g. minitrial)	2
16) If the dispute was unable to be resolved at a faculty level, will you pursue the case to higher disciplinary body, such as the vice-chancellor?	Yes – 4 No – 4
17) Would you consider mediation as an effective tool to resolve interpersonal conflicts in universities?	Yes – 28 No – 8
18) Would you recommend your friends to mediate if they encounter interpersonal dispute on campus?	Yes – 27 No – 9
19) Do you know anyone who has also experienced interpersonal dispute at a university in Hong Kong?	Yes – 9 No - 27

Note: Q4 omitted due to numbering error, Q20 to Q22 are invitation to interview questions.

Appendix B. Summary of University Academic Staff Survey

Questions	Responses
1) Are you familiar with the dispute resolution program or resolution of grievances offered in your university?	Yes – 1 No – 3
2) Have you heard of 'Mediation' before?	Yes – 1 No – 1
3) What is your understanding on 'Mediation'?	
- A process where an impartial person help disputing parties communicate and resolve their issue based without providing solution or suggestion.	4
4) Is mediation available or promoted in your university as a means to resolve interpersonal disputes on campus?	Yes – 1 No – 2 Not Sure – 1
5) From your understanding, are mediations in your university performed by professional mediators?	Yes – 1 No – 1 Not Sure – 2
6) Have you or member of staff in your department / faculty been trained on mediation techniques?	Yes – 1 No – 3
7) To the best of your knowledge, has interpersonal dispute (student or staff) occurred in your department / faculty?	Yes – 3 Not Sure – 1
8) Have you handled a dispute that involves another member (student or staff) in your university?	Yes – 3 No – 1
9) Was the dispute related to a student or a staff in your university?	Student – 2 Staff – 2
10) Are there protocols to protect the anonymity of individuals who filed for complaint?	Yes – 3 No – 1
11) Is the dispute handled through the mediation process?	Yes – 1 No – 3
12) If the mediation was able to resolve the dispute, in your opinion, what are the factors that made it successful?	
Flexibility and control over the settlement	
13) Was the existing dispute resolution mechanism able to resolve the dispute?	Yes – 2 No – 1
14) Are you comfortable with the existing dispute resolution mechanism?	Yes – 2 No – 1
15) In your opinion, what may be the limitations to the existing dispute resolution mechanism?	
- The panel members may lack relevant knowledge or experience in handling such matters.	
- Process not transparent, power difference between students, teachers and faculty	
16) If mediation is available in your university, would you consider it as an effective tool for resolving interpersonal conflicts?	Yes – 2 No – 1
17) What is your understanding in regard to confidentiality?	
- Personal particulars of the parties under dispute should not be disclosed to unrelated parties.	
- Privacy and respect to the complainant	
18) What is your understanding in regard to impartiality?	
- The mechanism and members of the grievance committee should not favor any parties under dispute.	
- No conflict of interest, not favoring a particular party	
- Never really achievable especially within a school setting	
19) What is your understanding in regard to conflict of interest?	
- Have presumptions over or even vested interests with either or both of the stakeholders	
- When a person derives personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity	
20) In your opinion, what criteria are considered favorable outcome in regard to dispute resolution?	
- When both parties come to a consensus regarding a mutually agreed solution that is fair and constructive	
- According to laws and institutional regulations, parties under dispute have the chance to present their evidence and views before final decision.	
21) In your opinion, would mediation become a trend in resolving interpersonal dispute in universities?	Yes – 1 No – 3
22) Would you like to further assist in our research by participating in the follow-up interview?	Yes – 3 No – 1

About the author
Aaron C.K. Lau is an accredited mediator in Hong Kong and the president of the Hong Kong Mediation Society. He obtained his Bachelor of Social Sciences from the School of Professional Education and Executive Development, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He also received his Master of Education degree from the University of Hong Kong. Being an advocate for Alternative Dispute Resolution, his research interests are on educational psychology, positive psychology, conflict management, and application of non-adversarial dispute resolution through consensus building. Aaron C.K. Lau can be contacted at: aaroncklau@outlook.com

Learning to teach: cross-cultural internship teaching of a mainland Chinese Master's student in a Macao university

Lin Luo

Faculty of Education, City University of Macau, Macao SAR, China, and

Yanju Shao

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, City University of Macau, Macao SAR, China

Abstract

Purpose – This paper examines the cross-cultural internship teaching experience of a mainland Chinese student of a Master's program on adult education in a Macao university.

Design/methodology/approach – Using autobiography, the data were collected from the teaching journals, biographical notes, and deep reflections of the student teacher, tracking the whole process of cross-cultural internship teaching. The data were analyzed in a grounded way, by scrutinizing the process to overcome the difficulties and challenges encountered in the two-month internship teaching period.

Findings – Three key themes were identified: (a) constructing relationship with mentor teacher as the key condition; (b) classroom interaction as an important influencing factor; (c) professional identity as the result of the learning-to-teach process. Furthermore, this paper reveals an adaptation process during the internship, where the student teacher went through three phases, namely, novice anxiety, adjustment, and ability acquisition.

Originality/value – This paper's analysis on the internship teaching experience reflecting practical issues in the process has extended the literature of academic adaptation in internship learning of non-local students. Based on this cross-cultural student case under the unique mainland China-Macao cross-border context, some suggestions are provided for university policy makers and educators in Macao.

Keywords Cross-cultural internship teaching, Student teacher, Academic adaptation, Macao SAR

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The past few decades have witnessed enormous growths in the number of international students in higher education in the context of education globalization. Mainland Chinese students consist of the leading share of international students at higher education institutions globally (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2017). The destinations for studying abroad have also displayed a transition from western countries to East Asian regions (Ghazarian, 2014). In recent years, Hong Kong and Macao, the two Special Administrative Regions of the People's Republic of China (PRC), due to their hybrid social and cultural natures, have attracted an increasing number of mainland Chinese students (Bodycott, 2009; Li and Bray, 2007). They differ a lot from mainland China in language, laws, and educational systems (Li and Bray, 2007). Most existing

This paper forms part of a special section Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications, guest edited by Dr Stephanie Wing Lee.

studies have suggested that mainland students studying in the two regions may confront with various academic challenges, because of language barriers, cultural gaps, and different teaching patterns (Trent and DeCoursey, 2011; Benson, 2012; Cheung, 2013; Zhang, 2019). Besides normal coursework, internship turns to be another academic challenge. However, research about this issue is scarce.

This article focuses on an educational internship experience of a mainland Chinese student studying in Macao. The guiding research question is: How the student teacher adapted to the non-local teaching context? The study will explore what adaptation difficulties the student teacher encountered and how she overcame them. This inquiry helps better understand the mechanism and significance of the cross-cultural internship teaching, especially for non-local students.

Background
Mainland Chinese students in Macao
There has been a growing trend of international students choosing Macao for their tertiary education in the last decade. In the academic year 2018/2019, the number of non-local students (foreign students, Hong Kong students, and mainland Chinese students) exceeded that of local students enrolled in Macao higher education institutions. It even displayed an upward trend in the academic year 2019/2020 (Figure 1). Moreover, the number of mainland students always occupies the largest proportion (Education and Youth Development Bureau, 2020), and turns to be the main source of enrollments in Macao universities.

Macao was ruled by Portugal until its sovereignty returned to China in 1999, with the implementation of 'One Country, Two Systems' policy. The complexity in language is one of distinguishing features in Macao society. Although Chinese is recognized as one of official languages, mainland students may still feel a sense of isolation because of the spoken dialect used in Macao (Zhang, 2019). Most local people speak Cantonese in their daily life, which is totally different from Mandarin. Linguistic challenge also appears in the course instruction, involving English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Portuguese (Zhang, 2019). Besides, Macao's higher education institutions recruit a great number of non-local academic staffs worldwide (Hao, 2016), which also strengthens the linguistic complexity in teaching. In this study, the
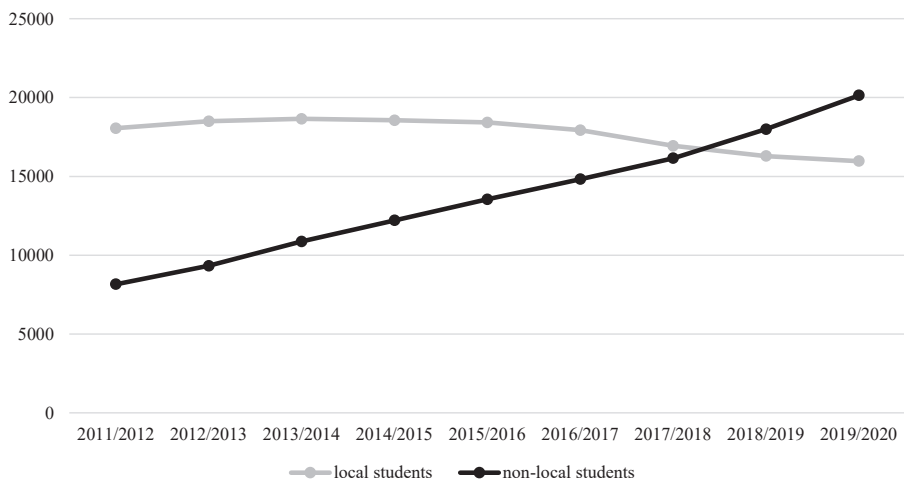

Figure 1.
Number of Local and Non-local Students studying in Macao Higher Education Institutions, 2011/2012-2019/2020
Source: Education and Youth Development Bureau (2020)

student teacher comes from mainland China. She also confronted potential cultural collisions. The internship happened to be cross-cultural teaching.

Practical courses in Macao higher education
Different from Hong Kong, which has been recognized as an international higher education hub (Cheng *et al.*, 2011), the tertiary education system in Macao is often labeled as less advanced (Bray, 2015). The University of East Asia (UEA) was founded in 1981, as the first modern university in Macao. In 1988, the Macao Government purchased UEA and renamed it as the University of Macau (UM). After the sovereignty of Macao returning to PRC, the Macao government expanded higher education dramatically (Bray, 2015). Both public and private sections experienced rapid developments (Lau and Yuen, 2013).

Curriculum setting in Macao's higher education institutions went through a series of reforms, from a vocational education model to a more comprehensive system (Hao, 2016). Based on this transition, many universities set practical courses within different disciplines, to enhance professional training. In general, UM, Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), and City University of Macau (CityU), all set practical courses in the field of education, business, hospitality and tourism management. Students need to do teaching practice, management internship, or service practice. In this paper, the research takes place in an educational internship, which is set within a Master's course in education at CityU.

Literature review
Adaptation of mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong
Academic adaptation refers to a dynamic and interactive process between the students and the academic context, including interpersonal relations in education, educational activities, and educational space (Anderson,1994). International students may confront more academic challenges, because of cultural differences and shortages of support from instructors and peers (Ramsay *et al.*, 1999). There have been many studies examining the adaptation experience of mainland students studying in Hong Kong. Cheung (2013) concluded four major adaptation challenges that mainland Chinese students encounter in Hong Kong: language, academic, socio-cultural and financial adjustments. Furthermore, limited language proficiency in Cantonese often makes mainland students feel hard to integrate into the local student community (Yu and Zhang, 2016). The student-centered education model in Hong Kong also influences mainland Chinse students' adaptation to their academic context (Vyas and Yu, 2018). Additionally, social-cultural discrepancies take place in class interactions. For example, mainland students may feel confused by Cantonese local slangs mentioned by their classmates (Cheung, 2013).

Inspired by these studies, this research focuses on adaptation problems of mainland Chinese students in Macao and attempts to extend the literature in this aspect. The specific academic adaptation refers to the process that the student teacher gradually adapted to the Macao teaching context to complete the educational internship. It draws on the problems in the cross-cultural internship teaching.

Internship challenges for non-local students
Practice or internship emphasizes the acquisition of practical skills. Some studies have pointed that internship is particularly challenging for non-local students (Barlow *et al.*, 2010; Barton *et al.*, 2015; Quezada, 2004). Specifically, Barlow *et al.* (2010) reported a serious of academic problems that cross-border students faced, for example, shortage of practical knowledge and local resources in an EU-Canada social work exchanging program. Focusing on international students who conduct teacher education practice in an Australian university, Barton *et al.* (2015) revealed difficulties in professional learning and handling the relationship

with mentor teachers. Similar cases also happen to Chinese international students. For example, Spooner-Lane *et al.* (2009) stated that most Chinese students suffer from language barriers, culture differences, and tense relationship with their supervising mentors, when they joined internship teaching in Australian schools. Trent and DeCoursey (2011) also found that mainland Chinese students felt highly challenging in adaptation to local education system when they conducted internship teaching in Hong Kong.

Based on the above review, this study aims to examine the cross-cultural teaching experience of a mainland Chinese student studying in Macao. Emphasis will be put on the learn-to-teach process within an internship course, to analyze the process of adaptation in a cross-cultural context.

Research method
Autobiography
Autobiography is a form of narrative inquiry that explores and gives a reflective insight to personal experience within the social and cultural context (Kim, 2015). The method of autobiography examines the dynamic personal experience and makes meaningful connections between one's past and present encounters to track the changing process (Watson, 2007).

In this study, the authors are the student teacher and the mentor teacher respectively. The student teacher is a second-year Master's student majoring in Education from mainland China. In the second year of the Master's program, she decided to choose an elective course to do teaching internship and hope to gain helpful practical knowledge in teaching. Before that, she had little teaching experience, only learnt some theoretical knowledge in teaching. The mentor teacher also comes from mainland China but has studied in Hong Kong and worked in Macao for more than ten years. Her responsibility includes guiding the student teacher to do the teaching practice and evaluating the teaching performance. Based on the practices and personal experiences, autobiography allows the two authors to find out what happened in the teaching internship.

Internship course
This elective course is set for second-year Master's students, which requires students to undertake two-month internship teaching. After a discussion between the mentor and the student teacher, the internship plan is arranged within a general study course, named *Special Topics in Social Science*, for two classes of sophomores (40 students in total) majoring in international tourism and hotel management. They were basically local students. In this internship, Mandarin was adopted as the medium of instruction.

As a traditional way of teaching internship, apprenticeship was practiced throughout this cross-cultural internship to keep providing guidance. Before the formal teaching, the student teacher made instructional observations and rehearsals. In the teaching process, the student teacher did instructions independently. After each teaching sessions, the mentor often gave feedback and suggestions for improvement. This internship was conducted within eight teaching sessions.

Data collection
In order to increase the integrity of data interpretation, diversified data is needed to enhance trustworthiness of data (N.G. Fielding and J.L. Fielding, 1986). This study collected autobiographical data from teaching journals, reflection reports, and further discussion with the mentor, which took place continually in the internship. Specifically, the teaching journals and reflection notes recorded the teaching notes, questions, suggestions and evaluations from the mentor in each teaching session. It also recorded the acquisition and summary of failure

as well as success in the teaching process. In addition, regular discussions between the student teacher and the mentor teacher were conducted, focusing on specific questions emerged in the teaching process. Major themes were explored and identified from these data sources, and all these original data were recorded in Chinese.

Data analysis
The coding procedure of this study consists of open coding, focused coding and theoretical coding. All the codes were shaped with techniques, such as memo writing, constant comparisons and saturation (Charmaz, 2008). First, line-by-line open coding was conducted to analyze the data from the teaching journals and biographical notes. It concentrates on the guiding question of the adaptation process in a cross-cultural internship teaching. Two specific questions guided the coding process, "What are the main academic difficulties of the participants?" and "How do they resolve them?".

Second, the focused coding was conducted by identifying the most significant and frequent codes to do further explanation and categorization (Charmaz, 2006). In this step, three key themes emerged: constructing relationship with mentor teacher as the key condition, classroom interaction as the crucial influencing factor, and professional identity as the result of the experience (Figure 2). Further inquiries went to how the student teacher dealt with challenges in building relationship with the mentor teacher, communicating with local students, and constructing the professional identity. Hence, an in-depth discussion between the student teacher and the mentor teacher were also conducted to locate appropriate codes.

Third, a chronological coding system was constructed to form reasonable categories and concepts to explain the process of adaptation in this internship (Figure 3). The whole internship teaching was divided into three periods: the beginning stage (preparations before teaching and the first as well as the second teaching session), the middle stage (the third to the sixth teaching session), and the ending stage (the seventh to the eighth teaching session). Then, theoretical saturation was used to ensure no new categories, properties or theoretical insights would be yielded (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, a theoretical model was generated. During the coding and analysis process, trustworthiness was guaranteed through member checking (DePoy and Gitlin, 2005), whereby the mentor checked the interpretations of data again.

Findings
This study reported three themes at different periods of the teaching internship, namely, constructing relationship with mentor, making classroom interaction, forming teacher professional identity. Furthermore, an adaptation process, including novice anxiety,

Key themes	Main codes		
a- Constructing relationship with mentor	a1- learn from the mentor a4- continuous adjustment a7- fixed pattern in teaching	a2- just follow instructions a5- gain confidence a8- introduce Macao to me	a3- overdependence a6- more independent
b- Classroom interaction	b1- possible problems b4- Macao students are different b7- local culture-based discussion session	b2- whisper in Cantonese b5- hard to build a closer relationship b8- collective responses are acceptable	b3- a failed invitation b6- identified culture differences
c- Professional identity	c1-look like a student c4- gain recognition to be a teacher c7- applied what had learned	c2- an outsider c5- self-reflection on being a teacher c8- master the professional knowledge	c3- learn like a student, teach like a teacher c6- know more about Macao c9- gain understanding of local culture

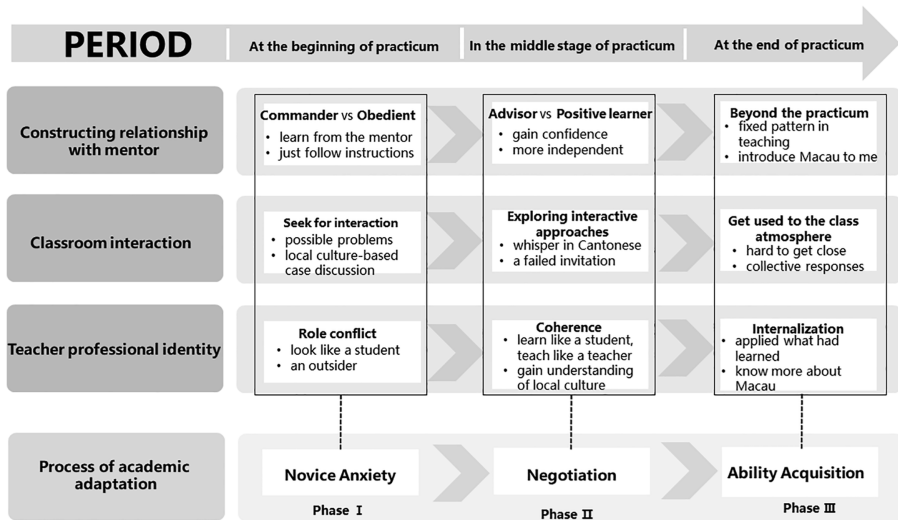Figure 2.
Key themes generated from codes

Figure 3.
An adaptation process in the internship teaching

negotiation, and ability acquisition, was also detected. Figure 3 shows this process and illustrates the categories and concepts within a chronological coding system.

(1) Constructing relationship with mentor

As the mentor-guided learning mechanism worked through the internship teaching, building a mentorship is the first academic challenge for the student teacher to handle. The mentor teacher, as a role model, influenced the student teacher in many aspects, including attitudes, beliefs and teaching styles.

In the beginning: commander vs obedient

Learning from the mentor is the first step for the novice teacher. Before formal teaching, classroom observation was conducted to learn how the mentor taught. The student teacher took notes about useful teaching skills and tried to follow the mentor's teaching behaviors:

> I found that when my mentor wants to have communication with the students, she often walks into the student group. So, I also tried to invite students to answer my questions at my first class, as my mentor did.

Because of limited teaching experience, the mentor teacher set several rehearsal sessions to help the student teacher adapt to the teaching environment. After finishing the teaching rehearsal, the mentor always gave prompt feedback and suggestions. Specific guidance of each teaching session was shared to avoid mistakes. From this perspective, the student teacher took the mentor as an authority.

In the middle stage: advisor vs positive learner

Moving to the real teaching context, some changes happened to this relationship. When each class ended, the mentor continually put forward immediate evaluation to the teaching performance. Sometimes, positive evaluations and recommendations made the student teacher gain more confidence in teaching, as written:

> The teacher's recognition of my teaching allows me to believe that I can do better. Everything is getting better. I feel not so worried as the beginning.

Periodical communications between the mentor and the student teacher relieved the student teacher's anxiety. More confidence inspired her to develop a more positive attitude. After completing several teaching sessions, the student teacher gradually mastered the professional skills and learnt to control the teaching pace. At the same time, the mentor reduced detailed instructions but made more orientations for improvements. The student teacher became more independent:

> I started to know what to do in each step. When preparing lessons, I was no longer as confused as I was in the beginning. And my mentor canceled some basic guidance, instead providing more useful suggestions to improve my teaching performance. Then I can make some adjustments in the next teaching session.

During this period, the mentor changed her role from a commander to an advisor. The student teacher became more autonomous and self-driven in this process.

In the end: beyond teaching
When the practice moved to the later stage, the student teacher gained a more fixed pattern created by herself. As the student teacher wrote:

> In the later stage, I think I have already found the fixed pattern of how to teach, from course design to instruction. Although the topic of each class is different, the teaching procedures and the mindset to handle the practice are similar.

The mentor also evaluated the student teacher as below:

> You have learnt how to design the teaching content in a good framework and developed your own teaching methods.

Hence, in the later period of the internship teaching, the student teacher used verified methods to build a very personal teaching style responding to the cross-cultural context. Meanwhile, the mentor and the student teacher started to share many local things related to Macao. For a cross-border student, this communication provided an alternative access to get close to the local culture. As the student teacher recorded:

> After participating in the internship teaching, my mentor teacher told me a lot about Macao, including the local education system, social norms, characteristics of local students, even famous local restaurants. She is more like a native member leading me to the local community.

The mentor teacher works as a mediator transiting between the two cultures to help the student teacher deal with the cultural gaps. In the later period of the internship teaching, the mentor shared less feedback in teaching, but more care in daily life. The communications between the mentor and the student teacher become more diverse.

(2) Classroom interaction
In this study, the internship teaching took place in a real cross-cultural teaching context, so classroom interaction was particularly important. The findings pointed out that the student teacher suffered largely from cultural problems, such as language barriers and sociocultural differences. How the student teacher coped with these problems became very crucial.

In the beginning: seeking for interaction
In the beginning, it was very hard to explore communications with local students. The student teacher tried to integrate into the student group, but felt stressed with the

unfamiliar environment. Besides, the student teacher realized that she and those local students have different cultural backgrounds. It largely increased difficulties in integrating into the new environment. The teaching journal has been written:

> Before the first class, I was worried about how to communicate with local students. I am from mainland China and cannot speak Cantonese. When the local students talk with each other, I cannot understand.

Additionally, the mentor also expressed similar concerns:

> My concern is that the students would not care about you. They may think you are just a student, with little prestige from their perspective.

Before starting the first class, both the student teacher and the mentor seriously considered the issue of class interaction. The mentor suggested appropriate group study for more intensive engagements. However, another emerging problem is the content for discussions. In the first rehearsal session, the mentor pointed out that it involved too less Macao culture but too much about northern parts of mainland China:

> The phenomenon mentioned in the discussion session is well-known in mainland, but may not have been heard in Macao.

This case helped the student teacher understand that inadequate understanding of local culture may cause confusions in the class discussion. The student teacher gradually grasped how to explore interactions with suitable topics and cases.

In the middle stage: exploring interactive approaches
The efforts to facilitate class discussion helped the student teacher gain more responses in class, as recorded:

> When I shared a case happening in Macao, the students no longer lowered their heads but looked at the PowerPoint. Sometimes, they even really discussed with their classmates.

A followed by problem emerged when the student teacher asked someone to share. Most of the students tended to discuss or whisper with their classmates, but few were willing to share individually:

> Most of them enjoyed discussing with classmates in group. But when I tried to invite someone to talk about their ideas, they seemed to refuse.

Moreover, local students discussed with their classmates in Cantonese. Although they may respond to teachers in Mandarin, few of them were willing to speak in Mandarin. This created an embarrassed situation in the class:

> Even I walked to the student group and invited one student to share, he still refused me. This is very different from my personal learning experience. In mainland, when the teacher invites a student to answer, it seems that you must say something even though you do not have the right answer. No one refuses teachers' invitation.

A failed invitation made the student teacher realized different student characteristics and learning styles in Macao.

In the end: making alternative interactions
Based on this phenomenon, the student teacher adjusted herself to adapt to the particular class atmosphere. In order to better understand what local students said, the mentor helped to translate instantly for the student teacher. The student teacher also changed her way to interact. More often, she asked questions and waited for collective responses:

Since then, I did not invite students to express individually, instead, waited for their collective responses. Someone who wanted to say something just speak out casually. The informal feedback made the class atmosphere turn to be more active.

In this way, the student teacher gradually adapted more causal and relaxing class atmosphere. It became an alternative way to push possible interactions.

(3) Teacher professional identity
In this study, teacher professional identity represents the student teacher's self-image in the internship teaching. Specifically, the key question "how the student teacher viewed her role as a teacher in the internship?" guided the analysis of the formation of professional identity in different periods.

In the beginning: role conflicts
In the beginning, the student teacher struggled with the role transition. Limited professional experience often made her feel embarrassed. In the first teaching rehearsal, the student teacher behaved much more like a student. The mentor evaluated this:

> You looked more like giving a presentation to do report. As a teacher, you need to communicate with your students confidently.

Meanwhile, the mentor also reminded the student teacher about the professional dressing code, which may help build the professional figure as a teacher. Additionally, the student teacher worried about possible psychological distance with the local students. Specific outsider experience explained how cross-cultural context hindered the construction of the professional identity:

> Even I am a teacher, I can feel that I am still not one of them, especially feeling alienated when they talk in Cantonese.

In this phase, potential divergence with the Macao local culture led to a sense of isolation. It thereby resulted in the student teacher's self-doubt on her teacher identity.

In the middle stage: coherence
In the mid-internship, the student teacher gradually initiated a self-regulated mode of teaching. The positive interaction with local students boosted her confidence. When the student teacher can maintain active interactions with students, she gradually recognized the identity of being a teacher:

> When these students responded to me, I can feel that I am like a real teacher.

After each teaching session, the student teacher continually learned subject knowledge. The process of preparing the discussion session about Macao issues provided her a chance to know more about the local society. The mentor commented:

> The student teacher has great progress in collecting information about local society. She knows more about the city. It can stimulate more communications with students.

In this process, the cultural gaps were gradually narrowed, which helped relieve the negative influence on her teacher professional identity. Diverse identities tended to go to be coherent.

In the end: internalization
At the end of internship teaching, the student teacher gradually turned to be more mature in teaching and largely constructed teacher identity for her. In addition, the student teacher applied what she had learnt from the internship to her academic work:

This internship teaching really benefits me a lot, not only in obtaining teaching knowledge, but also in my academic study. When I prepared for teaching, I learnt how to search literature and sort data, which did help a lot in my thesis writing.

The student teacher also admitted that this internship experience allowed her to have further understanding of Macao. In sum, what she learnt from the internship teaching benefits her learning more in academic and in practice.

(4) Adaptation process in the internship
The above analysis about the cross-cultural internship teaching experience also generated a three-phase adaptation process.

Phase I: novice anxiety
Novice anxiety represents a series of anxiousness that the student teacher wondered whether she could deal with the teaching task when she started the teaching practice. The above analysis suggested that the reasons for her anxiety were due to limited teaching experience, challenging cross-cultural teaching context, unfamiliar class atmosphere and potential identity conflicts. Learning professional skills and grasping the teaching procedures were the main tasks for the student teacher at this phase. Commander-obedient relationship between the mentor and the student teacher displayed the practice of apprenticeship mode. The mentor played a key role in guiding the student teacher to learn how to teach. It was not a smooth role transition from a student to a teacher. Additionally, cross-cultural teaching context aggravated the student teacher's anxiety about classroom interaction and the difficulty in constructing professional identity.

Phase II: negotiation
Negotiation is the second phase which demonstrates the process that the student teacher negotiated her prior learning experience with the current teaching context. She tried to change her teaching styles to master how to teach for local students. In this period, the student teacher became more confident and independent. She had been familiar with the teaching environment and obtained basic teaching skills. More importantly, she got recognition as well as encouragement from the mentor, and also succeeded in making effective adjustment. This contributes a lot to the formation of her teacher professional identity. Moreover, she started to recognize and accept the cultural difference and explore more cross-cultural capabilities.

Phase III: ability acquisition
Ability acquisition describes the third phase where the student teacher had developed the learn-to-teach ability. In this stage, the student teacher was competent in teaching and developing strategies to cope with internship teaching. The student teacher's teaching capacity had enhanced. Even if cultural differences hindered a little their interaction, she found her way to keep the teaching go on.

It has been noted that, during the whole internship process, besides teaching practical knowledge, the difficulties in cultural gaps were originated from both language usage and different cultural cognitions. It is hard for the student teacher to integrate herself into the local culture. Under the guidance of the mentor, further understanding of Macao society and more interactions with local students help the student teacher adapt to the cross-cultural teaching context, especially negotiating different cultural cognitions and creating appropriate teaching methods.

Discussion

This study identified challenging problems, coping strategies, and learning benefits of a two-month teaching internship for a mainland Chinese student in Macao. First, it indicates the necessity to deal with tasks, in both professional teaching skills and cultural differences. It is similar to what Wong *et al.* (2020) pointed out that mainland students pursuing a teacher education program in Macao need to handle dual challenges in language and teaching practice. Leach *et al.* (1997) also explained that entry-level trainees in an internship would struggle with high-level performance anxiety due to inadequate professional skills as well as low self-efficacy in their ability. In this study, cultural factors increased anxiety of the student teacher. Moreover, previous studies have proved that adaptation to an alienated culture, understanding the expectations of their role, and self-adjustment heightened levels of anxiety for international students when they go through a practical internship (Reynolds and Constantine, 2007). In this study, the cultural differences largely influence the relationship with local students. Although both Cantonese and Mandarin could be accepted as instructional language, Cantonese is still the mainstream language for Macao local students. At the same time, the student teacher was hard to recognize her teacher identity. In addition, Spooner-Lane *et al.* (2009) stated that Asian international pre-service teachers usually face tense relationship with their supervising teachers. But in this study, the relationship between the student teacher and the mentor teacher appears to be a positive factor. This situation is largely due to their similar cultural background of both coming from mainland China. The mentor can better understand the difficulties encountered by the student teacher, and figure out feasible solutions, which is helpful to the relationship building.

Corresponding to the problems stated above, some key points were figured out within an adaptation process to cope with the cross-cultural internship teaching. First, the guidance of mentor teacher and the self-learning mode work together to help the student teacher improve her teaching skills. Second, overcoming cultural differences and exploring alternative interaction approaches contribute to feasible teaching. Previous studies have also illustrated that it is hard for non-Cantonese speakers to integrate into the local Cantonese-speaking community (Yu and Wright, 2016; Vyas and Yu, 2018). In this study, mentor teacher played a key role in helping the student teacher understand how to respond to cultural differences actively, so as to better integrate into the local culture. As Spooner-Lane *et al.* (2009) indicated, mentor teacher could provide international pre-service teachers with culturally-specific information, ideas and support. In addition, in the process of continuous adjustment and negotiation between the student teacher and the new teaching environment, her teacher professional identity was gradually constructed. It is a dynamic process that urges multiple negotiation with others (Wenger, 1998), including mentor teachers and students (Martel and Wang, 2014). It is consistent with the argument of Stachowski and Mahan's study (1998), which indicated that understanding local culture and interacting with local students are conducive to the formation of professional identity in cross-cultural field placements.

Furthermore, the student teacher benefited from this internship beyond teaching. As Cushner and Mahon (2002) reported that international students' teaching experiences would impact on their cultural awareness, self-efficacy, and professional development in terms of global mindedness. In this study, to a certain extent, the student teacher had achieved a short-term success within this two-month internship coursework. She also gained a lot for her academic work.

Comparing with previous studies on mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong, this research indicates the unique cross-cultural learning context for mainland students studying in Macao. Yu and Zhang (2016) revealed that mainland students in Hong Kong's universities may suffer from linguistic adaptation, social network, political identification and perceived discrimination. It could be detected that students in both Hong Kong and Macao both encounter difficulties in language barriers and building friendship networks. However, in this study, the mainland student may not experience political identification and

discrimination in Macao. Different learning styles caused certain obstacles in this internship teaching, which echoes Gu's (2011) finding that a familiarity with the values, norms and popular terms deeply embedded in Hong Kong local culture is the real obstacle lying between mainland students and Hong Kong local students.

Conclusion

This study reveals the process of how a Chinese mainland student attempted to accomplish the task of a short-term internship teaching in Macao. Currently, many studies have pointed out adaptations in language, educational system, finance, and specific cultural context, for mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong (Cheung, 2013; Yu and Zhang, 2016; Vyas and Yu, 2018), but few discussed the group of students in Macao. From this perspective, this study recorded an adaptation process of a mainland student's educational internship in a cross-cultural context.

This study mainly inspires implications for how better facilitating internship teaching. As the research shown, role transition is not so smooth, especially in a cross-cultural teaching context. Several influencing factors were identified, such as the relationship with the mentor, cultural gaps, and individual reflections in his or her teacher identity. The university policy makers need to consider how to provide a more supportive context for non-local students who take part in internship courses in different majors. Some practical strategies could be taken into accounts, such as providing adequate orientation sessions and prerequisite training. The orientation sessions should offer specific information about the internship, local culture, local peers and the educational system. Prerequisite training including basic teaching skills has to be provided to students. Moreover, cultural gaps were identified as a big challenge. Hence, more cultural activities could be organized to encourage non-local students to get familiar with local communities (Stachowski and Mahan, 1998). Besides, positive mentor-student teacher relationship played a significant role in this inspiring process, particularly in decreasing anxiety and supporting the non-local students both practically and emotionally. More interaction sessions with the mentors should be set in advance.

Focusing on the adaptation efforts within a teaching internship, this study enriched the literature with the experience and practice of mainland Chinese students studying in Macao. Nevertheless, this study has some limitations. First, it applied autobiography to collect data and only focused on one mainland Chinese student about the internship experience. The results cannot be generalized to explain other cases. Second, the study was conducted based on a short-term internship teaching, which restricted the possibilities to do deeper investigation and make further interpretations.

References

Anderson, L.E. (1994), "A new look at an old construct: cross-cultural adaptation", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 293-328.

Barlow, C.A., Klassen, M., Schwartz, K., Kreitzer, L., Lichtmannegger, S., Lacroix, M. Mcdonald, L. and Orjasniemi, T. (2010), "EU-Canada social work practicum exchange: an EU perspective of opportunities and challenges", *Social Work Review (Revista de asistenta sociala)*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 43-57.

Barton, G.M., Hartwig, K.A. and Cain, M. (2015), "International students' experience of practicum in teacher education: an exploration through internationalisation and professional socialisation", *Australian Journal of Teacher Education,* Vol. 40 No. 8, pp. 149-160.

Benson, P. (2012), "Learning to teach across borders: Mainland Chinese student English teachers in Hong Kong schools", *Language Teaching Research*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 483-499.

Bodycott, P. (2009), "Choosing a higher education study abroad destination: what mainland Chinese parents and students rate as important", *Journal of Research in International Education*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 349-373.

Bray, M. (2015), "The growth and diversification of higher education in Macau", *Special Focus: China, Hong Kong, and Macau*, Vol. 23, pp. 19-20.

Charmaz, K. (2006), *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*, SAGE Publications, London.

Charmaz, K. (2008), "Grounded theory as an emergent method", Hesse-Biber, S.N. and Leavy, P. (Ed), *Handbook of Emergent Methods*, The Guilford Press, New York, pp. 155-172.

Cheng, C.Y., Cheung, A.C.K. and Yuen, T.W. (2011), "Development of a regional education hub: the case of Hong Kong", *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 25 No. 5, pp. 474-493.

Cheung, A.C.K. (2013), "Language, academic, socio – cultural and financial adjustments of mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong", *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 27 No. 3, pp. 221-241.

Cushner, K. and Mahon, J. (2002), "Overseas student teaching: affecting personal, professional, and global competencies in an age of globalization", *Journal of Studies in International Education*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 44-58.

DePoy, E. and Gitlin, L. (2005), *Introduction to Research: Understanding and Applying Multiple Strategies*, Elsevier Mosby, St Louis, MO.

Education and Youth Development Bureau, Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region (2020), "Summary of higher education data 2019", available at: https://www.dses.gov.mo/sc/queryinfo/lib/p1 (accessed 7 March 2022).

Fielding, N.G. and Fielding, J.L. (1986), *Qualitive Research Method Series 4*, SAGE Publications, Beverly Hills, CA.

Gu, M.Y. (2011), "Language choice and identity construction in peer interactions: insights from a multilingual university in Hong Kong", *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, Vol. 32 No.1, pp. 17-31.

Ghazarian, P.G. (2014), "Changing destinations: ideal attraction and actual movement of cross-border tertiary students from mainland China", *The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 1-16.

Hao, Z. (2016), "In search of a professional identity: higher education in Macau and the academic role of faculty", *Higher Education*, Vol. 72 No. 1, pp. 101-113.

Kim, J.H. (2015), *Understanding Narrative Inquiry: The Crafting and Analysis of Stories as Research*, SAGE Publications, Los Angeles.

Lau, C.M.D. and Yuen, P.K. (2013), "The globalisation of public higher education in Macau", *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 117-124.

Leach, M.M., Stoltenberg, C.D., McNeill, B.W. and Eichenfield, G.A. (1997), "Self – efficacy and counselor development: testing the integrated developmental model", *Counselor Education and Supervision*, Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 115-124.

Li, M. and Bray, M. (2007), "Cross-border flows of students for higher education: push-pull factors and motivations of mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong and Macau", *Higher Education*, Vol. 53 No. 6, pp. 791-818.

Martel, J. and Wang, A. (2014), "Language teacher identity", Bigelow, M.C. and Ennser, K.J. (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Educational Linguistics*, Routledge, UK, pp. 289-300.

Quezada, R. L. (2004), "Beyond educational tourism: lessons learned while student teaching abroad", *International Education Journal*, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 458-465.

Ramsay, S., Barker, M. and Jones, E. (1999), "Academic adjustment and learning processes: a comparison of international and local students in first-year university", *Higher Education Research and Development*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 129-144.

Reynolds, A.L. and Constantine, M.G. (2007), "Cultural adjustment difficulties and career development of international college students", *Journal of Career Assessment*, Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 338-350.

Spooner-Lane, R., Tangen, D. and Campbell, M.A. (2009), "The complexities of supporting Asian international pre-service teachers as they undertake practicum", *Asia - Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 79-94.

Stachowski, L.L. and Mahan, J.M. (1998), "Cross – cultural field placements: student teachers learning from schools and communities", *Theory into practice*, Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 155-162.

Trent, J. and DeCoursey, M. (2011), "Crossing boundaries and constructing identities: the experiences of early career mainland Chinese English language teachers in Hong Kong", *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 65-78.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2017), "Global flow of tertiary-level students", available at: http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow (accessed 7 March 2020).

Vyas, L. and Yu, B. (2018), "An investigation into the academic acculturation experiences of mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong", *Higher Education*, Vol. 76 No. 5, pp. 883-901.

Watson, C. (2007), "Small stories, positioning analysis, and the doing of professional identities in learning to teach", *Narrative Inquiry*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 371-389.

Wenger, E. (1998), *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Wong, P.M., Cheung, A. and Yuen, W.W. (2020), "A study of the mobility of mainland students: factors and issues behind pursuing a teacher education program in Macau", *International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 34 No. 2, pp. 279-295.

Yu, B. and Wright, E. (2016), "Socio-cultural adaptation, academic adaptation and satisfaction of international higher degree research students in Australia", *Tertiary Education and Management*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 49-64.

Yu, B. and Zhang, K. (2016), "It's more foreign than a foreign country: adaptation and experience of mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong", *Tertiary Education and Management*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 300-315.

Zhang, K. (2019), "Mainland Chinese students' shifting perceptions of Chinese-English code-mixing in Macao", *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 106-117.

About the authors

Lin Luo obtained her Master's degree in Education from City University of Macau, Macao SAR, China. Her research interests include teacher education and cross-cultural issues in education.

Yanju Shao is an Assistant Professor at Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, City University of Macau, Macao SAR, China. She obtained her PhD degree in Education at The University of Hong Kong. Her research interests include postgraduate education, student mobility, and sociology of education. Yanju Shao is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: yjshao@cityu.mo

An analysis of students' satisfaction with distance learning in Moroccan universities during the COVID-19 pandemic

Lahboub Zouiri and Fatima Ezzahra Kinani

Laboratory of Applied Economics, Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences-Agdal, Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco

Abstract

Purpose – In Morocco, universities have opted for online courses as a national effort to contain the coronavirus since the early stage. This article aims to analyze university students' satisfaction with their distance learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Design/methodology/approach – This article is based on the statistical analysis of a survey conducted in 2020 at the national level among 800 university students from all disciplines enrolled in open access and regulated access institutions in Morocco. Econometrically, the authors used the ordinal logistic regression model after checking several conditions justifying its use.

Findings – Findings from analysis reveal that students lacking basic computer skills have a negative perception of this new mode of learning. The results also show a certain sensitivity of the students to the way in which the courses are taught. The satisfaction of the learners largely depends on the duration of the courses, the interactivity, and the teaching methods adopted. In designing, developing, and delivering distance education courses, students' needs should be taken care of.

Originality/value – This article suggests that for public policies, professional training for teachers should equip them with the pedagogical skills so that they can adjust their teaching according to students' levels. Training in digital tools must also be provided to bridge the digital divide and accelerate positive change and adaptation to this new mode of training. In addition, this article highlights the role of interactivity in increasing adaptation to distance learning.

Keywords Student satisfaction, Distance learning, Epidemic crisis, Ordinal logistic model, Morocco

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Apart from the severe impact on public health and well-being, the chain effect resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic is a profound disruption for various other sectors, notably in education. COVID-19 has driven massive transformation in many aspects of the educational landscape, particularly as teaching and learning shifted to online mode due to school closure. As an example, the job loss in the aftermath of pandemic has brought difficulty for low-income households. This group is perceived to have low resources for loss recovery and may not prioritize health and education in rebuilding after a health crisis. Closures of learning spaces affected 94 percent of the world's school-age population, and up to 99 percent in low- and lower-middle-income countries (UNSDG, 2020).

At the same time, the pandemic has stimulated innovation in the education sector. In Morocco, universities have adopted online courses as a national effort to contain the

This paper forms part of a special section Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Implications, guest edited by Dr Stephanie Wing Lee.

HKPAA

Coronavirus at an early stage. Many universities have had to convert what remains of their normally face-to-face classes into online courses. However, far from being a miracle solution, distance learning may exacerbate certain social inequalities. Such a mode of education cannot succeed by ignoring the disparities of supply (public/private), environment (urban, peri-urban, rural, and remote rural), and gender (boy/girl). For this purpose, the shortage of equipment should not be underestimated (lack of essential computer equipment, difficulty in accessing the Internet or massive influx of connections, etc.). In addition, the immediate and rapid switch to digital technology reveals the limits of teacher training, the degree of complementarity between school textbooks and online resources, and finally, the case of students who are disoriented because they are left to their own devices and lack the support of educated adults.

The objective of this article is to identify the determining factors of the distance learning student's satisfaction in Moroccan universities. The authors approached this question through an analysis of the satisfaction of 800 students in Moroccan universities during 2020. Satisfaction, often presented as a sign of the quality of distance education, will be measured by different indicators particularly pedagogical quality of the courses, availability of teachers, guidance, and assistance. An econometric study using the ordered logit model to determine the factors influencing students' satisfaction with distance education in Morocco is conducted.

The conceptual framework of distance education

Open and Distance Learning has gained a new breath with the turn of the 21st century with more and more courses delivered through distance education models worldwide. The impact of the new media, particularly digital connective technologies to deliver courses from a distance has triggered a new interest towards open and distance learning opportunities including the advent of Open Education Resources (OER) and Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) that attempt to provide learning access to a wider audience. Distance education has been engineered and reengineered by the techno-social changes in the society. Besides, the practices, philosophies and cultures of people developing open and distance learning have impacted how it is designed and conducted (Saykili, 2018).

Generally speaking, research studies struggle to find a positive effect of distance education on learner satisfaction. It depends not only on the characteristics of the learners, but also on the types of courses which are offered. Carr (2000) indicates, for example, lower student satisfaction with distance learning can be attributed to the fact that it takes them much longer than full-time students to complete their training. Rivera *et al.* (2002) point out that students who are least satisfied with distance learning are particularly those who have less mastery of the tool's technologies. Summers *et al.* (2005) also report lower satisfaction based on feedback from student evaluation surveys and exchanges between students. Other studies have found positive effects of distance education under certain conditions depending on the motivation for this type of teaching and expertise in online training.

Although technology is an integral part of distance education, any successful program must focus on the instructional needs of the students, rather than on the technology itself. It is essential to consider their age, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, interests and experiences, educational levels, and familiarity with distance education methods.

According to Sherry (1995), the most important factor for successful distance learning is a caring, concerned teacher who is confident, experienced, comfortable with the equipment, uses the media creatively, and maintains a high level of interactivity with the students.

Public policy: a response

The shock to education systems has had, and will continue to have, significant effects beyond the educational sphere. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens education progress worldwide

through two major shocks: the near-universal school closures at all levels and the economic recession sparked by pandemic-control measures. The health crisis is exacerbating existing educational disparities, with many of the most vulnerable children, youth, and adults at risk of not returning to school. The lost learning time not only harms the current generation but could also reverse decades of progress. To counteract this heavy fallout, distance learning options have been developed through the rapid intervention of governments and partners around the world committed to ensuring educational continuity.

In Morocco, the High Commission for Planning conducted a household survey in April 2020 to monitor the adaptation of household lifestyles under the constraint of confinement. The results show that the platforms set up by higher education institutions are used by 37 percent of households with higher education students. As for satisfaction with this new education landscape, 59 percent of higher education students are moderately or not at all satisfied (HCP, 2020).

Other experts focused on the pedagogical integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The pandemic revealed the importance of ICT and the multiple benefits it could bring to the education system. The pedagogical use of ICT has developed and affected the entire learning process and pedagogical communication. The pandemic has forced the students to develop autonomy and self-discipline in the absence of the physical presence of the teachers (Rechidi and Bennani, 2020).

For other experts in Morocco, the failure of distance education is obvious, as evidenced by the government's decision to consider as the only effective learning that took place before the schools closed. Thus, the baccalaureate exam, the symbol of the system, is maintained, but its scope is limited to lessons taught before the schools closed. A colossal pedagogical effort is required of the actors in education, and first and foremost the teachers, to remotivate the students and bring them to a level of learning that will reassure them again throughout their training (Naji, 2020). Also, the implementation of an effective 'distance learning' system remains difficult to date despite the significant efforts that have been made. According to the survey conducted by Elmendilia and Saaidi (2020), 30 percent of the respondents seem dissatisfied with the distance learning experience.

Research methodology
The first part of this section will briefly present the characteristics of higher education in Morocco and then describe the survey which is the basis of this study. The rest of the section will present the econometric model with its characteristics and assumptions.

Presentation of the survey
a. Higher education in Morocco
The higher education system in Morocco consists of 423 establishments, including 148 public universities. In terms of students' population, the total number of students in the whole system has increased from 2020 to 2021 by approximately 7.5 percent growing from 1,009,596 to 1,085,064 students. Public universities are the majority with more than 90 percent of the students. In terms of teaching staff, the higher education system in Morocco has 20,771 teachers, including 15,325 in public universities.

b. Methodology of the survey
This study is based on the statistical analysis of a survey conducted by Zouiri, El Marhoum, and Ezzahid (2020). The survey is a sample survey, and similar to any survey of this kind, it requires a sampling frame which is for the case of this survey, the list of all students enrolled in Moroccan institutions. Given the difficulty of data collection, the authors opted for quota sampling method. The quota method is a non-probability sampling method which is

considered as the best substitute for probability methods in the case where the latter would encounter sampling frame constraints. Quota sampling involves studying the structure of the population according to empirically chosen criteria (quotas). The sample is then constructed in such a way to constitute a miniature reproduction of the population.

The proposed sampling plan involves representing the population of students according to a certain number of criteria in order to ensure a certain representativeness of the population, each of the criteria is applied according to the weight of its modalities in the population. The selected criteria are the type of establishment, type of access, and number of students by university. The weights used correspond to the structure of the student population in Morocco for the 2018/19 academic year.

The collection method used is online self-administration by email and by sharing on university social networks. A daily follow-up of the answers was ensured to check the representativeness of the sample according to the three fixed criteria (type of establishment, type of access, and type of university). In the event of underrepresentation of a category, a follow-up is carried out to straighten the sample. All data analysis was performed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) software. The size of the sample surveyed was stopped once the desired representativeness was reached, which is a total sample of 3,358 students. The survey was conducted between 22 May and 5 July 2020.

c. Main results of the survey

Overall, the students surveyed are familiar with basic computer tools. Only a very small percentage, i.e., 9 percent of students reported low familiarity with these tools (Figure 1).

The majority of students (83 percent) report taking courses remotely during the lockdown. These students primarily use smartphones or personal computers. Indeed, 65.9 percent and 60.3 percent of respondents report using these two tools respectively. It should be noted that during the COVID-19 lockdown, the use of distance learning was not a choice; it was the only option offered to students to continue their learning and complete their academic year (Figure 2).

The proportion of dissatisfied students exceeds 45 percent for the five aspects on which they are questioned. The two areas in which students are most dissatisfied are interactivity and the amount of work with teachers (Figure 3). When asked about their overall satisfaction, only 42.77 percent of students said they were satisfied or very satisfied (Figure 4).

Only 40 percent of students reported that they were accompanied by their institution in distance learning (Figure 5). In case of problems, students manage on their own in 64 percent of cases.
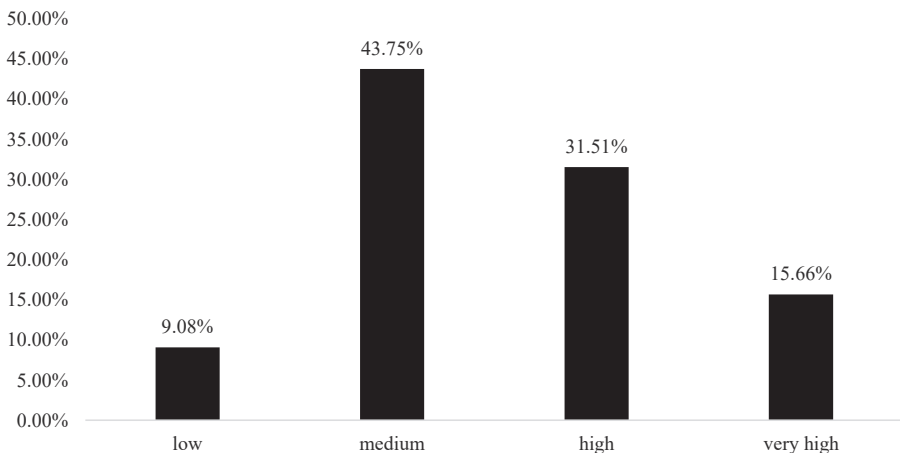

Figure 1.
Level of familiarity with basic computer tools
Source: Adapted from the student survey on distance education in Morocco by Zouiri *et al.* (2020)

More than 56 percent of students report that they are poorly or not at all adapted to distance learning (Figure 6). This is related to their overall dissatisfaction.

50.42 percent of the students prefer face-to-face teaching and 42 percent opt for hybrid teaching. Only 7.53 percent prefer distance learning (Figure 7). More than 65 percent think that distance learning cannot replace face-to-face teaching (Figure 8).

Presentation of the econometric model
a. Selected variables
One of the methods used to evaluate the effectiveness of distance education includes evaluating the satisfaction of students (Burns, 2013). The authors aim to explain students' satisfaction with their distance learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic as a function of several demographic and social characteristics such as gender and place of residence, and as a function of cognitive characteristics such as the degree of mastery and familiarity of students with the different distance learning tools. This study also links the students' perception of distance learning to educational practices deployed by the institution, such as pedagogical support for the appropriation of the different tools used. Responses were collected from 800 university students from all disciplines enrolled in open access and
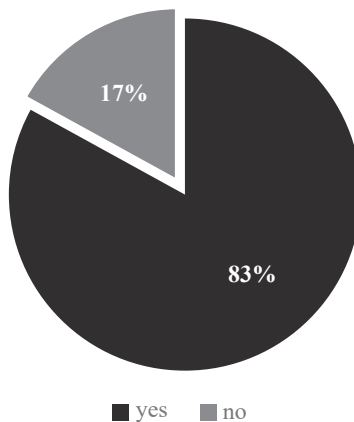
Figure 2.
Students who received
distance learning
during lockdown
Source: Adapted from
the student survey on
distance education in
Morocco by Zouiri
et al. (2020)
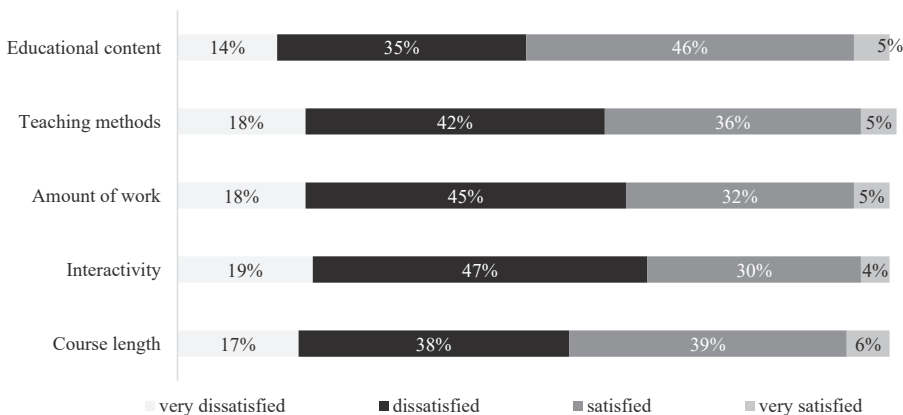
Figure 3.
Dimensions of distance
learning and students'
satisfaction
Source: Adapted from
the student survey on
distance education in
Morocco by Zouiri
et al. (2020)

regulated access institutions in Morocco. Indeed, the model constructed in ordinal logistic
regression is a proportional odds model, requiring the respect of the condition of parallel

Figure 4.
Degree of overall
satisfaction
Source: Adapted from
the student survey on
distance education in
Morocco by Zouiri
et al. (2020)
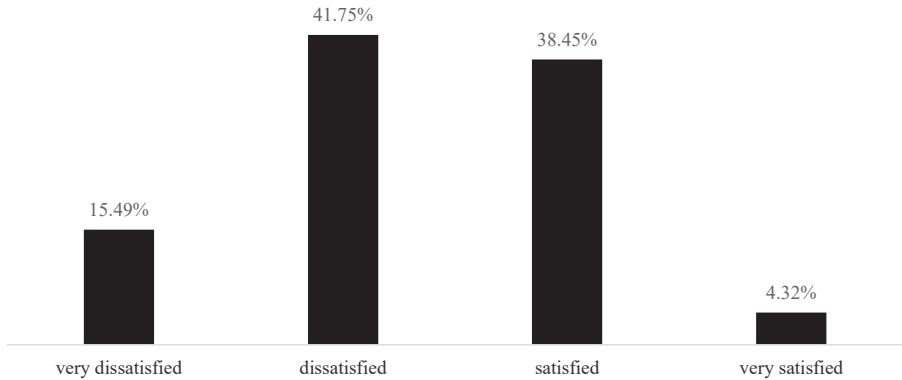
Figure 5.
Accompanied by the
university in the
distance learning
Source: Adapted from
the student survey on
distance education in
Morocco by Zouiri
et al. (2020)
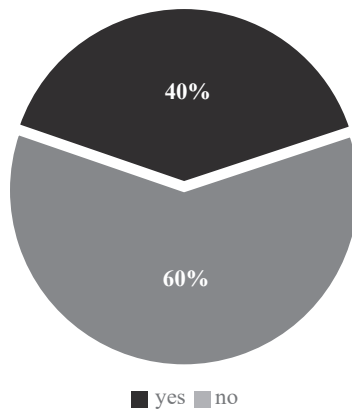
Figure 6.
Adaptation to distance
learning
Source: Adapted from
the student survey on
distance education in
Morocco by Zouiri
et al. (2020)
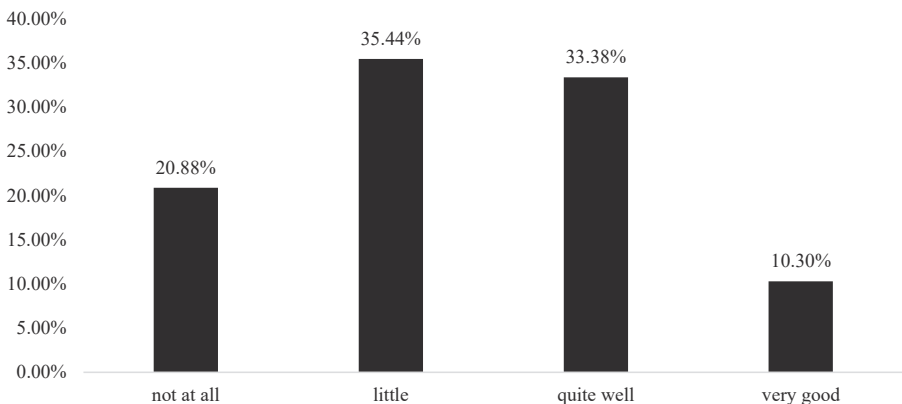
regression or proportionality of odds. The above condition is sensitive to large sample sizes and subsequently rarely verified.

As for the variable to be explained, the dependent variable measures overall student satisfaction with distance learning, on a scale from 1 to 4 as follows:

1: the student is very dissatisfied,

2: the student is dissatisfied,

3: the student is satisfied,

4: the student is very satisfied.

For the independent variables, the explanatory variables used in the model are presented below and can be distinguished between binary and polytomous variables:

— Gender: binary variable (1: male, 0: female).

— Place of residence: binary variable (1: student lives in urban area, 0: otherwise).

Figure 7.
Preferred mode of education
Source: Adapted from the student survey on distance education in Morocco by Zouiri *et al.* (2020)

Figure 8.
Possibility of replacement of face-to-face teaching by distance learning
Source: Adapted from the student survey on distance education in Morocco by Zouiri *et al.* (2020)

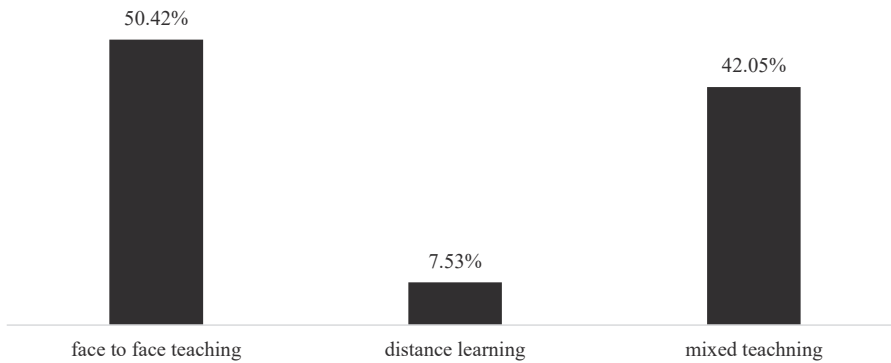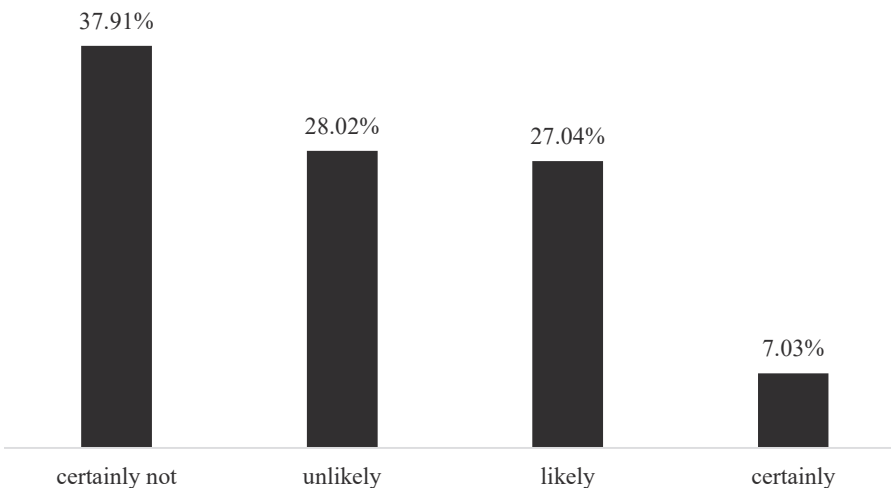– Type of institution: binary variable (1: student is enrolled in an open access institution, 0: otherwise).

– Level of education: polytomous variable (1: the student is in the first year, 2: the student is in the second year, 3: the student is in the third year, 4: the student is in the fourth year (Master 1), 5: the student is in the fifth year or above (e.g., Master's, PhD)).

– Training follow-up: binary variable (1: the student has already followed a distance learning training before the lockdown, 0: otherwise).

– Cost of connection: polytomous variable (1: the student judges that the cost of connection is not high at all, 2: the student judges that the cost of connection is low, 3: the student judges that the cost of connection is high, 4: the student judges that the cost of connection is very high).

– Degree of familiarity to distance learning tools: polytomous variable (1: low, 2: medium, 3: high, 4: very high).

– Level of mastery of distance learning tools by the student: polytomous variable (1: low, 2: medium, 3: high, 4: very high).

– Support by the university: binary variable (1: the student is supported by the institution when he encounters technical problems during distance learning, 0: otherwise).

– Pedagogical content: polytomous variable (1: the student is very dissatisfied with the pedagogical content, 2: the student is dissatisfied with the pedagogical content, 3: the student is satisfied with the pedagogical content, 4: the student is very satisfied with the pedagogical content). This variable reflects the theoretical knowledge that a learner can acquire on a given subject.

– Teaching methods: polytomous variable (1: student is very dissatisfied with teaching methods, 2: student is dissatisfied with teaching methods, 3: student is satisfied with teaching methods, 4: student is very satisfied with teaching methods). This variable reflects the principles and methods used by teachers.

– Interactivity: polytomous variable (1: the student is very dissatisfied with the interactivity, 2: the student is dissatisfied with the interactivity, 3: the student is satisfied with the interactivity, 4: the student is very satisfied with the interactivity). This variable concerns student-teacher interaction during class.

– Course length: polytomous variable (1: student is very dissatisfied with the course length, 2: student is dissatisfied with the course length, 3: student is satisfied with the course length, 4: student is very satisfied with the course length).

b. Presentation of the ordinal logistic regression
For the multivariate approach adopted in this study, the authors applied ordinal logistic regression using STATA software. The ordered logit model is a variant of the logit models. It estimates the relationship between an ordinal dependent variable and several independent variables. The condition required for the use of the ordinal logit model is that the modalities of the dependent variable must have an orderly relationship between them and be classified according to a given order. Apart from the ordinal character, another condition must be fulfilled for the ordered logit to be applied. The number of terms must be greater than two, otherwise the ordered logit model will be confused with the binary logit model.

The ordered logit model is similar to the multinomial logit model. The only difference between the two is the nature of the dependent variable. The dependent variable is ordinal for the former and polytomous for the latter. The use of a multinomial logit model, when the

dependent variable is ordinal, introduces a bias in the results by the fact that the multinomial logit does not take into account the ordinal character of the modalities of the dependent variable.

The dependent variable reflects the degree of satisfaction of students who took distance education courses during the lockdown period. Thus, to meet the requirements of the model, the authors have classified its modalities according to a numerical scale: "very dissatisfied = 1", "dissatisfied = 2", "satisfied = 3", "very satisfied = 4".

Assume that the underlying process to be characterized is:

$$\mathbf{y}^* = \mathbf{X^T}.\boldsymbol{\beta} + \boldsymbol{\varepsilon}$$

Where y* is the exact but unobserved dependent variable; x is the vector of independent variables, ε is the error term, and β is the vector of coefficients of the regression to estimate. Suppose further that, although y* cannot be observed, the response categories can be observed.

$$Y = \begin{cases} \mathbf{1\ si\ y}^* \le \mathbf{u_1} \\ \mathbf{2\ si\ u_1 \le y}^* \le \mathbf{u_2} \\ \mathbf{3\ si\ u_2 \le y}^* \le \mathbf{u_3} \\ \mathbf{4\ si\ u_3 \le y}^* \end{cases}$$

Where the u parameters are the externally imposed ends of the observable categories. Then, the ordered logit technique will use the observations on y, which are a form of censored data on y*, to fit the parameter vector β.

Thus, the probability of realizing the event y $\in$ {1, 2, 3, 4} of the dependent variable corresponds to the probability of belonging to the interval bounded by estimated intersection points corresponding to each of the modalities of the dependent variable (the u ends). After simplification, the probability of y is given by:

$$Pr(y = 1) = Pr(U_1 \le X\beta 1)$$
$$Pr(y = 2) = Pr(U_2 \le X\beta 2) - Pr(U_1 \le X\beta 1)$$
$$Pr(y = 3) = Pr(U_3 \le X\beta 3) - Pr(U_2 \le X\beta 2)$$
$$Pr(y = 4) = 1 - Pr(U_3 \le X\beta 3)$$

The error term Ui is assumed to be logistically distributed.

The coefficients of the linear combination β cannot be consistently estimated using ordinary least squares. They are usually estimated using maximum likelihood.

Apart from the coefficients, the "ordinal logit" model provides, among other things, the Chi-square statistic, the Chi-square probability attached to the model, the pseudo R-square, and the significance level of the parameters.

The interpretation of the results of the ordinal logistic modeling concerns two series of elements: the validity and likelihood of the model on the one hand, and the respective influences of the explanatory variables on the explained variable on the other. The likelihood of the model is assessed using the significance of the Chi-square statistic attached to it. The degree of adequacy of the model is given by the coefficient of determination, which is also termed the pseudo R-square.

Results and interpretations

One of the assumptions underlying ordered logistic regression is that the relationship between each pair of outcome groups is the same. In other words, ordered logistic regression assumes that the coefficients that describe the relationship between, for example, the lowest and all higher categories of the response variable are the same as those that describe the relationship between the next lowest category and all higher categories, and so on. This is called the proportional odds hypothesis or the parallel regression hypothesis. Since the relationship between all pairs of groups is the same, there is only one set of coefficients (one

model). If this were not the case, different models would be needed to describe the relationship between each pair of outcome groups.

Thus, the authors need to test the proportional odds hypothesis. The insignificant value ($p > 0.05$) of the Chi-square test shows that this model does meet the condition of parallel regression or proportional odds (see Appendix 1). In this respect, the use of the ordinal model is well justified.

For this model, the results of the likelihood ratio tests show a very significant critical probability (p-value) at the 1 percent level, allowing the authors to reject the null hypothesis of equality of the coefficients (see Appendix 2). The model is hence globally significant and can therefore be used in the analyses. The criterion of the pseudo R-square is close to 23 percent which shows that this model brings 23 percent more improvements compared to the null model. The pseudo R-square of the logistic models are not expected to reach high levels similar to the R-square of the linear regression. Indeed, a pseudo R-square between 20 percent and 40 percent reflects that the goodness of fit of the model is very good.

The below summarizes all the outputs obtained by the STATA software; it includes the estimated results taking into account the variables likely to be main determinants of distance learning students' satisfaction (Table 1).

Demographic and social characteristics

The results of the ordered logistic model estimations show that demographic or social characteristics do not appear to impact distance learning student's satisfaction. The variables of gender and place of residence are not significant in this model. The insignificance of those variables can be explained by the changing profile of the distance learning student with the evolution of training methods and technologies. If the studies converge on a typical profile of the distance learning student (older face-to-face students, more frequently female, married with children, and employed), it seems to have evolved quite noticeably these recent years (Dabbagh, 2007). This audience is becoming much more heterogeneous, younger, and more responsive to new information technologies and communication.

On the other hand, the level of education attained by the students seems to have an impact on their satisfaction. Indeed, students in their fifth year or higher are more likely to be satisfied with distance education than students in their first year of university. They have acquired a certain level of autonomy with respect to time management and organization which allows them to appreciate distance learning.

Digital tools and technology

Regarding the financial context of the student, the variable, cost of connection is considered as a variable reflecting the financial difficulties encountered by the student. The modeling results show that this variable is insignificant. This can be explained by the collaborations made with the telephone operators and competitive offers given by the latter to ensure access to education. It should be noted that the variables reflecting the financial conditions of the students may not be significant since Morocco has offered financial aid to support the different categories of people whose purchasing power and living conditions have been impacted by state of health emergency measures.

The results of the survey show that the majority of students surveyed (83 percent) reported taking courses remotely during the lockdown. These students primarily use smartphones or personal computers. The distance learning mode requires special training technologies, course design, and communication means based on electronic or other technology. Indeed, students who do not master digital tools had difficulties learning, and hence might not be enthusiastic about taking online courses (Xie *et al.*, 2006).

DEGREE OF SATISFACTION	COEF.	STD. ERR.	Z	P>|Z|	[95 PERCENTCONF. INTERVAL]	
GENDER	-0.277	0.152	-1.820	0.069	-0.576	0.022
PLACE OF RESIDENCE	-0.083	0.200	-0.410	0.678	-0.475	0.309
TYPE OF INSTITUTION	0.012	0.202	0.060	0.951	-0.384	0.409
LEVEL OF EDUCATION						
2	-0.132	0.268	-0.490	0.622	-0.657	0.393
3	0.559	0.248	2.260	0.024	0.074	1.045
4	0.330	0.241	1.370	0.171	-0.142	0.802
5	0.825	0.255	3.230	0.001	0.325	1.325
FORMATION FOLLOW-UP	0.355	0.155	2.290	0.022	0.052	0.659
COST OF CONNEXION	0.016	0.077	0.210	0.836	-0.134	0.166
DEGREE OF FAMILIARITY	-0.219	0.107	-2.050	0.040	-0.428	-0.010
MASTERY OF DISTANCE-LEARNING TOOLS	0.726	0.120	6.060	0.000	0.491	0.961
SUPPORT BY THE UNIVERSITY	0.642	0.152	4.240	0.000	0.345	0.939
PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT						
2	-0.145	0.261	-0.560	0.578	-0.658	0.367
3	0.342	0.287	1.190	0.234	-0.221	0.904
4	1.103	0.549	2.010	0.045	0.027	2.179
TEACHING METHODS						
2	0.426	0.233	1.830	0.068	-0.031	0.883
3	1.643	0.294	5.580	0.000	1.065	2.220
4	1.180	0.533	2.220	0.027	0.136	2.224
INTERACTIVITY						
2	0.589	0.226	2.610	0.009	0.147	1.032
3	0.960	0.283	3.390	0.001	0.405	1.514
4	2.187	0.685	3.190	0.001	0.845	3.529
COURSE LENGTH						
2	0.015	0.259	0.060	0.953	-0.493	0.524
3	0.269	0.275	0.980	0.328	-0.270	0.808
4	1.624	0.440	3.690	0.000	0.761	2.488
/CUT1	1.586	0.441			0.721	2.450
/CUT2	4.470	0.472			3.544	5.395
/CUT3	8.388	0.556			7.298	9.478

Table 1.
Results of the ordinal
logistic regression

The variable, degree of familiarity had a negative coefficient. This result, which is not supported by the literature, can be explained by the conditions in which the distance learning was carried out. The time lost by teachers adapting to digital tools and solving technical problems can frustrate students who are already familiar with digital tools and thus dampen satisfaction.

Educational methods
The "support" variable is significant in this model. The institution's pedagogical assistance, which is based on the singularity of people in their individual and collective dimensions which reinforces the students' satisfaction with this new learning mode. Unfortunately, the results of the survey and the source of this study, reveal that only 40 percent of the students declared that they were supported technically by their institution in distance learning. When problems arise, most students manage to resolve the technical problems on their own (64 percent) or use the internet. The work of Giret (2020) shows that distance learning students are a little less satisfied compared to their face-to-face counterparts. This lower satisfaction is attributed to two reasons, the availability of teachers and assistance with orientation and professional integration. Support is thus a key variable differentiating between face-to-face teaching and distance education.

The results of the ordinal logistic regression also show sensitivity of the students to the way in which the courses are taught. The satisfaction of the learners largely depends on the duration of the courses, interactivity, and teaching methods adopted. In designing, developing, and delivering distance education courses, students' needs, and perceptions are of paramount importance. A course failing to meet student expectations and needs may lead to low levels of student involvement (Sahin and Shelley, 2008).

The coefficients calculated using ordinal logistic regression do not reflect the magnitude of the relationship between target variable and independent explanatory variables. These coefficients only capture the direction of the relationship. Thus, the authors used Odds Ratio (OR) which is a statistical measure expressing the degree of dependence between qualitative random variables. They are used in Bayesian inference and logistic regression, measuring factor effects (Table 2).

Demographic and social characteristics
The above results show that students in their fifth year or beyond are about 2.3 times more likely to be satisfied with distance learning than first year students who find themselves disoriented, unprepared for a new learning system, and in need of guidance and assistance in setting their pace within the academic world. The distance becomes an obstacle to good teaching delivery for first-year students at university.

Digital tools and technology
The success of distance learning depends on the mastery of adequate technological equipment and the student's degree of familiarity with the world of distance learning. Indeed, students who declare to have mastered ICT of distance learning are twice as likely to be satisfied with this mode. In addition, learners who have already taken a distance education course are 1.4 times more likely to be satisfied with distance learning than those who have never had the opportunity to undertake a distance education course.

Educational methods
Distance learning requires a comprehensive team of teachers, administrators, and technicians who operate at teacher-student interfaces to facilitate learning. To this end, the support and

DEGREE OF SATISFACTION	ODDS.RATIOS	STD. ERR.	Z	P>|Z|	[95 PERCENT CONF. INTERVAL]	
GENDER	0.758	0.116	-1.820	0.069	0.562	1.022
PLACE OF RESIDENCE	0.920	0.184	-0.410	0.678	0.622	1.362
TYPE OF INSTITUTION	1.013	0.205	0.060	0.951	0.681	1.505
LEVEL OF EDUCATION						
2	0.876	0.235	-0.490	0.622	0.519	1.481
3	1.750	0.433	2.260	0.024	1.077	2.842
4	1.391	0.335	1.370	0.171	0.868	2.229
5	2.282	0.582	3.230	0.001	1.384	3.762
FORMATION FOLLOW-UP	1.426	0.221	2.290	0.022	1.053	1.932
COST OF CONNEXION	1.016	0.078	0.210	0.836	0.874	1.181
DEGREE OF FAMILLIARITY	0.803	0.086	-2.050	0.040	0.652	0.990
MASTERY OF DISTANCELEARNING TOOLS	2.067	0.248	6.060	0.000	1.634	2.615
SUPPORT BY THE UNIVERSITY	1.900	0.288	4.240	0.000	1.412	2.557
PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT						
2	0.865	0.226	-0.560	0.578	0.518	1.444
3	1.407	0.404	1.190	0.234	0.802	2.469
4	3.012	1.654	2.010	0.045	1.027	8.834
TEACHING METHODS						
2	1.531	0.357	1.830	0.068	0.969	2.418
3	5.168	1.522	5.580	0.000	2.902	9.205
4	3.256	1.734	2.220	0.027	1.146	9.248
INTERACTIVITY						
2	1.802	0.407	2.610	0.009	1.158	2.806
3	2.611	0.739	3.390	0.001	1.499	4.546
4	8.905	6.097	3.190	0.001	2.327	34.073
COURSE LENGTH						
2	1.015	0.263	0.060	0.953	0.611	1.688
3	1.309	0.360	0.980	0.328	0.763	2.244
4	5.074	2.235	3.690	0.000	2.140	12.031
/CUT1	1.586	0.441			0.721	2.450
/CUT2	4.470	0.472			3.544	5.395
/CUT3	8.388	0.556			7.298	9.478

Table 2.
Odds-Ratios of the
ordinal logistic
regression

assistance provided by institutions have a significant impact on students' satisfaction. The authors estimate that learners who have been supported by their institutions are 1.9 times more likely to experience satisfaction with distance learning.

Relative to the teaching methods variable, students who reported high satisfaction with educational practices are 3 times more likely to rate distance learning favorably. Indeed, the task of designing a distance course was recognized by some as the most critical part related to students' success. In face-to-face settings, designing a course is already a complex process with various grey areas. In distance learning, the job is even more difficult. The teacher is therefore no longer just a 'programmer' or a communicator, but also a learning facilitator and must take particular care in the sequencing of courses.

As for the interactivity variable, the lack of feedback, isolation, and anxiety may hinder the success of distance learning during lockdowns due to the absence of teacher-learner interaction, which is a demotivating factor. Indeed, students who were able to interact with teaching staff were very satisfied and 9 times more likely to appreciate the distance learning system.

The course must allow for sufficient time and duration to facilitate learners to consolidate their understanding and assimilation of course content. Satisfaction with this variable strongly influences the appreciation of distance learning. Students who were very satisfied with the length of the course were 5 times more likely to adapt well to distance learning and subsequently experience a high degree of satisfaction.

Conclusion and recommendations

Education is not only the foundation on which egalitarian and inclusive societies are built, but also one of the main drivers of development. Ensuring educational continuity during school closures has become a priority for governments around the world. Understanding students' satisfaction regarding distance learning is the first step in developing an efficient online learning environment.

The results of the econometric modeling highlight the important role of interactivity in addition to efficient teaching methods, and institutional support is one of the main key factors conducive to satisfactory experience of distance learning. National policies must therefore pay special attention to how courses are designed and delivered. In fact, according to Martins (2011), the continuous training of teachers and academic advisers in distance higher education has an impact on the transmission of knowledge and skills. From the outset of the pandemic, the health crisis revealed that pre-service and in-service teacher training should be revised to better prepare teachers for new forms of teaching.

The comparison between the choices adopted by Morocco and the international trends in terms of teacher training, make it possible to observe, on the one hand, that Morocco is part of these international trends by adopting the principle of "universitarization" of initial teacher training and on the other hand, the country is also committed to applying the principle of professionalization of training (Lahchimi, 2015). According to Lahchimi, despite the difference noted between the objectives of the initial training and professional qualification, 82 percent of trainees claim a redundancy of activities between initial university training and professional qualification. The trend towards face-to-face lectures seems to continue to predominate in modular training (according to 87 percent of teachers surveyed). Thus, teachers must be trained in digital tools and receive a deep professional development in order to bridge the digital divide, accelerate positive change, and manage to adapt their pedagogical skills to various levels of students.

With regard to student support, national policies should incorporate counselling into their plans, manuals, and guides for teachers and students to provide additional support. Without such support, the pressure can lead to burnout, which increases absenteeism and dropout,

and may even cause some to leave their jobs or institutions. This may in turn undermine efforts to build institutional resilience of the education system.

As for the interactivity variable, without connectivity, the student may become autonomous and isolated. He/she may even procrastinate and eventually drop out. Interactivity takes many forms. It is not just limited to audio and video formats, nor solely to teacher-student interactions. It represents the perceived connectivity between students and distance learning teachers, local teachers, aides, facilitators, and peers (Sherry, 1995). The desire to succeed in distance learning has led to various higher education initiatives to create mechanisms for interaction and support among peers, sometimes just by suggesting and sometimes imposed on students, especially in the form of cooperative or collaborative learning.

The logistic regression used in this article reveals that the lack of basic computer skills in some students may make it difficult for them to ensure their own professional development, which may lead to a negative perception of this new form of learning. Students who use digital tools in their personal and professional lives are more comfortable and familiar with the online learning environment. Policymakers and managers must work to remove barriers to technology by investing in digital infrastructure and lowering the costs of accessing networks.

From this point of view, the appropriation of techno-pedagogical devices by teachers and learners, accompanying effects of these devices on pedagogical options, practices, professional development, and performance of learning are without doubt new indicators of competences that should be integrated into an innovative reference system.

The unprecedented health crisis has also highlighted the need for a flexible education system based on hybrid learning. These hybrid models ensure not only strong articulation between different levels and types of education, but also have the capacity to implement other learning models. Hybrid learning, which offers students flexible and quasi-individualized learning pathways, combines various pedagogical approaches, and makes use of alternative learning resources.

This study helped understand the determinants of students' satisfaction, which is a perceived indicator of quality of distance education. However, it needs to be further enhanced based on the comparison between the success rates of students in distance education and those of face-to-face education. To control or confounding variables, such comparisons should be made based on comparable populations, same examinations, same lessons, and same teachers. This could capture the internal efficiency of distance education.

References

Burns, B. (2013), "Students' perceptions of online courses in a graduate adolescence education program", *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 13-25.

Carr, S. (2000), "As distance education comes of age, the challenge is keeping the students", *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vol. 46 No. 23, pp. 39-41.

Dabbagh, N. (2007), "The online learner: characteristics and pedagogical implications", *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 217-226.

Elmendilia, S. and Saaidi, S. (2020), "Distance learning practices in Moroccan universities in the era of the coronavirus: the case of Mohammed V University in Rabat", *The Journal of Quality in Education*, Vol. 10 No. 16, pp. 71-102.

Giret, J.F. (2020), "What satisfaction for distance and face-to-face students in French universities?", Institute for Research in the Sociology and Economics of Education, Dijon Cedex, 10 July.

HCP (2020), "Survey on the impact of Coronavirus on the economic, social and psychological situation of the households: summary of main results", available at: https://www.hcp.ma/Enquete-sur-l-

impact-du-coronavirus-sur-la-situation-economique-sociale-et-psychologique-des-menages-Note-de-synthese_a2506.html (accessed 4 October 2021).

Lahchimi, M. (2015), "The reform of teacher training in Morocco", *International Journal of Education of Sèvres*, Vol. 69, pp. 21-26.

Martins, O.B. (2011), "The continuing education of teachers and academic advisors in distance higher education. Pedagogical mediation and transformative practices", *Distances and Knowledge*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 257-268.

Naji, A. (2020), "The repercussions of Covid-19 on the field of education", *The Journal of Quality in Education*, Vol. 10 No. 16, pp. 1-21.

Rechidi, N. and Bennani, H. (2020), "The pedagogical integration of ICT in the test of the crisis covid-19: What lessons to draw?", *International Journal of the Researcher*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 1-24.

Rivera, J.C., McAlister, M.K. and Rice, M.L. (2002), "A comparison of student outcomes & satisfaction between traditional & web-based course offerings", *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 1-11.

Sahin, I. and Shelley, M. (2008), "Considering students' perceptions: the distance education student satisfaction model", *Educational Technology & Society*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 216-223.

Saykili, A. (2018), "Distance education: definitions, generations, key concepts and future directions", *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research,* Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 2-17.

Sherry, L. (1995), "Issues in distance learning", *International Journal of Educational Telecommunications*, Vol. 1 No. 4, pp. 337-365.

Summers, J.A., Hoffman, L. Marquis, J. Turnbull, A. Poston, D. and Nelson, L.L. (2005), "Measuring the quality of family-professional partnerships in special education services", *Exceptional children*, Vol. 72 No. 1, pp. 65-81.

UNSDG (2020), *Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and Beyond*, United Nations Sustainable Development Group, New York, NY.

Xie, K. Debacker, T.K. and Ferguson, C. (2006), "Extending the traditional classroom through online discussion: the role of student motivation", *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 67-89.

Zouiri, L., El Marhoum, A. and Ezzahid, E. (2020), "Distance learning in Morocco: perceptions of students during the Covid-19 confinement period from a national survey", paper presented during the Study Day as part of the 50th anniversary of the Francophonie, Rabat, 19 May.

Appendix

Appendix 1: The test of the proportional odds

Chi² (26) = 26.58	Prob > Chi²= 0.4316

Appendix 2: Fitness of the model

Number of obs	= 800	*LR Chi² (24)*	=	*417.48*
Pseudo R²	= 0.2257	Prob > Chi²	=	0.0000

About the authors
Lahboub Zouiri is a teacher-researcher at the Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences (FSJES), Agdal-Rabat and a member of the Laboratory of Applied Economics (LEA) accredited within the FSJES, Agdal. He obtained a PhD in Economic Sciences from CEMAFI University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis.

About the author

Fatima Ezzahra Kinani is an engineer in statistics and applied economy and a PhD candidate in the Laboratory of Applied Economics (LEA) within the Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences, Agdal-Rabat. She works on immaterial capital and its link with economic growth. Fatima Ezzahra Kinani is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: fatimaezzahrakinani@gmail.com

A behavioral approach to administrative reform: a case study of promoting proactive administration in South Korea

Pan Suk Kim

Department of Global Public Administration, Yonsei University, Mirae Campus, Wonju, South Korea

Abstract

Purpose – The South Korean government launched the proactive administration initiative in mid-2017, which has been widely implemented throughout the public sector. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to review a behavioral approach to promote proactive administration in the South Korean government.

Design/methodology/approach – The research questions are as follows: (1) How did the South Korean government initiate a behavioral approach to administrative reform by promoting proactive administration? (2) What systems or mechanisms has the South Korean government utilized to promote proactive administration? (3) What kind of constraints did the government face in the process of administrative reform and how did it resolve them? (4) What was the preliminary reaction to or evaluation of such reforms in public administration communities?

Findings – Although it is still too early to evaluate the overall impact of administrative reform to promote proactive administration on civil servants' behavior, it has nonetheless contributed greatly to the substantial change in perception that public officials in the administrative field should pursue their work as actively as they can.

Originality/value – This study is meaningful because while many countries have promoted administrative reforms such as structural reorganization, downsizing of human resources, cutback management and fiscal innovation, privatization, regulatory reform and promotion of digital government, cases of behavioral innovation, such as proactive administration, have been relatively scarce. Since a behavioral approach to administrative reform would be essential in many countries, this paper will serve as a useful reference for the consideration of their governments.

Keywords Behavioral approach, Proactive administration, Administrative reform, South Korean government

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The approach to administrative reform refers to the criteria whereby administrative reform issues are selected and what information is obtained and processed. In fact, the approach typically varies across administrative issues and years. The most common or important reform approaches can be categorized as follows: structural, process, behavioral, cultural, technological, and integrated. The central government of South Korea (hereafter, Korea) has long devoted substantial efforts to reorganizing central agencies, improving the efficiency and performance of the government under the framework of new public management (NPM), reforming regulations, and implementing digital government utilizing information and communication technology and artificial intelligence. In the past, almost every new government has attempted administrative reform for various reasons, including establishing

democratic government, ethical government, competitive government, efficient and effective government, or e-government or digital government (Kim, 1996, 2000; Light, 1997). Moreover, previous governments have frequently changed organizational structures by reorganizing central agencies. Accordingly, a certain degree of reform fatigue has crept into the views of both public officials and the general public. Consequently, the Moon Jae-in administration (2017–2022) has chosen a different, behavioral approach to administrative reform – "proactive administration" (PrA), a key reform initiative since the President's inauguration in mid-2017.

The research questions are as follows: (1) How did the Korean government initiate a behavioral approach to administrative reform by promoting PrA among public officials? (2) What systems or mechanisms has the Korean government utilized to promote PrA among public officials? (3) What constraints did the government face in the process of administrative reform and how did it resolve them? (4) What was the preliminary reaction to or evaluation of such reforms in public administration communities? This study undertakes a literature review of legislation, government documents, and scholarly materials, including legal documents, guidelines, and strategies for promoting PrA among public officials, as well as related literature from public administration journals in Korea and overseas.

Since administrative reform focusing on PrA is a new behavioral approach in the Korean context, this study will briefly review the historical development of proactive administration initiatives by the South Korean government, then explore the Korean government's attempts to establish a legal framework for the PrA movement and institutional issues such as incentives to promote proactive behavior, action plans and evaluation of PrA. Lastly, challenges to and constraints on PrA will be discussed, followed by the policy implications and conclusion.

The historical development of proactive administration initiatives in government

The last decade has witnessed remarkable growth in the field of behavioral public administration, both in practice and in academia (Cantarelli *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, public organizations increasingly apply behavioral insights to improve administrative work practices, facilitate access to public information and services, and improve outcomes (Jilke *et al.*, 2018). Applications of behavioral science to policy problems have advanced at breakneck speed (Bhanot and Linos, 2020; James *et al.*, 2020). Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.* (2017) envision a broad variety of research questions in public administration that can be addressed by behavioral public administration, and James *et al.* (2020) emphasize a behavioral approach to public performance. Accordingly, this study specifically examines the Korean government's behavioral approach to administrative reform.

The issue of proactive behavior has been analyzed in the literature as guiding employees in their search for solutions, persistence, and ability to obtain the desired results (Grant and Ashford, 2008; Rauch *et al.*, 2009). It is defined as taking the initiative to improve current circumstances and involves challenging the status quo, rather than passively adapting to present conditions (Crant, 2000, p. 436; Ohly and Fritz, 2007, p. 623). Instead of performing narrowly defined tasks (job performance), employees are expected to engage in broad work roles (Parker, 2000, p. 449). It also refers to pioneering behaviors, risk-taking initiatives to discover opportunities, and efforts to innovate and lead (Segarra-Ciprés and Escrig-Tena, 2019, p. 866). Grant and Ashford (2008, p. 8) define it as an anticipatory action that employees take to change themselves and/or their environments.

Seibert *et al.* (2001) assert that proactivity improves individual outcomes such as employees' task performance. Furthermore, it can contribute to organizational innovation, particularly in dynamic technological environments, where there is intense pressure to

innovate, and employees with self-starting behaviors and change orientation take on a more critical role (Covin and Slevin, 1989; Sonnentag, 2003; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005; Rauch *et al.*, 2009; Kraus *et al.*, 2012). Proactivity refers to self-starting, change-focused, and future-oriented behaviors (Crant, 2000; Frese and Fay, 2001; Unsworth and Parker, 2003). It facilitates employees' capacity to shape their environments by highlighting individual strengths and improves performance (Crant, 2000).

In Korea, the term "proactive administration" (PrA) first appeared in the initial phase of the Lee Myung-bak administration (2008–2013) in the announcement of a new PrA exemption system introduced by the Board of Audit and Inspection. As public officials are concerned about being audited by the Board of Audit and Inspection if they actively pursue initiative, the Board established a new mechanism to encourage PrA among public officials, enacting the "Operation Regulations on Immunity System for PrA" in early 2009 (Board of Audit and Inspection, 2021a, 2021b). However, there were no further developments during the Lee Myung-bak administration.

Later, the Park Geun-hye administration (2013–2017) revised the Board of Audit and Inspection Act and the Act on Public Sector Audits in 2015. The Board of Audit and Inspection Act established a policy on proactive administrative immunity (Article 34-3) for "persons subject to audit by the Board of Audit and Inspection". Article 34-3 of the Board of Audit and Inspection Act, revised in February 2015, states: (1) Where a person subject to inspection by the Board of Audit and Inspection proactively exercises duties in the public interest, such as the improvement of unreasonable regulations, they shall not be held responsible for the results thereof by way of disciplinary actions or reprimands, provided they are found not to have acted intentionally or with gross negligence; and (2) the specific criteria and operational procedures for exemption from responsibility referred to in the previous paragraph and other necessary matters shall be prescribed by the Board of Audit and Inspection regulations. In addition, the Act on Public Sector Audits created a legal basis for proactive administrative immunity by establishing a policy for the same (Article 23-2) while targeting "persons subject to self-audit". Nonetheless, the discussion initiated by the Board of Audit and Inspection on the issue of proactive administrative immunity was not extended beyond the area of auditing, either academically or practically. That is, the Board of Audit and Inspection tried to introduce a proactive administrative immunity system, but it did not gain the attention of the government sector or academic community.

When the new Moon Jae-in administration was established in 2017, initiatives on PrA were renewed and expanded. When the Board of Audit and Inspection reintroduced the concept of PrA, the Ministry of Personnel Management (MPM) supported this idea as a timely subject for possible administrative reform. In particular, the then MPM minister openly advocated for the idea at a State Council meeting in 2017-2018. When President Moon Jae-in emphasized the need for PrA at a State Council meeting on February 12, 2019, PrA emerged as a new method for administrative reform. The President emphasized that public officials should undertake proactive administrative actions. PrA was under the spotlight after the President's following remarks at the State Council, "We set a standard to encourage PrA without reproach under the responsibility of the minister and actively encourage it, reprimanding those officials who engage in passive administration."

Consequently, a joint task force was established with personnel from the relevant agencies, including the Office for Government Policy Coordination in the Office of the Prime Minister, Board of Audit and Inspection, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior and Safety, Ministry of SMEs and Startups, Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission, Ministry of Personnel Management, and Ministry of Government Legislation. These organizations collectively formulated the Operation Regulations for PrA, which were enacted by presidential decree on August 6, 2019.

Since then, administrative reforms have focused on PrA to reduce distrust in the government sector by emphasizing proactive work performance and service provision through improvements in the passive work practices prevalent in public policy and public service delivery. PrA has been understood to increase trust in government by improving the quality of administrative services based on changes in public officials, public policy, and public service delivery.

The legal foundation of proactive administration in government

In the past, efforts aimed at governmental innovation viewed public officials as the object of innovation. However, recent initiatives have focused on inducing changes in the behavior and attitudes of individual public officials, who are considered the main agents of innovation. PrA emphasizes the behavior and attitudes of public officials (MPM, 2019b). That is, PrA presupposes that changes in public officials' perceptions are crucial to achieve the desired improvements.

As displayed in Table 1, Article 2-1 of the Operation Regulations for PrA, PrA refers to any act in the public interest whereby public officials actively deal with work based on their creativity and expertise, such as improving unreasonable regulations, while according to Article 2-2, passive administration refers to any act infringing the rights and interests of the people or causing national financial loss as a result of passive working behavior, such as public officials' negligence of their jobs or dereliction of duty. Additionally, Article 2-1 of the Board of Audit and Inspection's Rules on the Operation of the Audit Vindication System for Proactive Administrative Immunity (ROAVSPAI) describes PrA as any act that a person audited by the Board of Audit and Inspection performed sincerely and actively to promote public interest, such as improving unreasonable regulations or promoting public service projects. Furthermore, Article 2-2 stipulates that a person audited by the Board is exempt from responsibility for the results of any actions taken proactively if the outcomes were unintentional or did not arise from gross negligence (Board of Audit and Inspection, 2021a, 2021b).

In fact, the definition of PrA under the Board of Audit and Inspection's ROAVSPAI is somewhat narrower than that in the Operation Regulations for PrA, as it only refers to auditing activities by the Board of Audit and Inspection. In general, in the statutes/administrative rules, PrA is intended to improve the quality of administrative services by improving public officials' awareness and behavior, as well as their work culture. PrA focuses on both improving the credibility of the government and innovating the way public offices work. PrA emphasizes

Category	Operation Regulations for PrA	ROAVSPAI
Proactive Administration	An act in the public interest, whereby public officials actively deal with work based on their creativity and expertise, such as improving unreasonable regulations (Article 2-1)	An act that a person who is audited by the Board of Audit and Inspection performs sincerely and actively to promote public interest, such as improving unreasonable regulations or promoting public service projects (Article 2-1)
Passive Administration	An act infringing on the rights and interests of the people or causing national financial loss as a result of passive working behavior, such as negligence of a public official's job or dereliction of duty (Article 2-2)	An act of infringing on the rights and interests of the people or causing losses to the national finances by the omission or negligence of a public official's job or dereliction of duty (Article 2-8)

Sources: Ministry of Personnel Management (2019a, 2019b)

Table 1.
Proactive
Administration and
Passive
Administration under
the Operation
Regulations for PrA
and the ROAVSPAI

assertiveness, proactiveness, responsibility, ownership, and risk-taking initiative on the part of public officials. Thus, it includes the behavioral aspects of individual public officials and the administrative value that public officials must achieve through administrative actions.

The MPM (2019b) analyzed various concepts related to PrA, defined it at a more practical level, and tried to establish it by comparing it with passive administration. Table 2 delineates the differences between passive administration and PrA in practical terms. Here, PrA is defined as "an act in the public interest, in which a public official proactively conducts business based on their own creativity and expertise, such as improvement of unreasonable regulations." This regulation views PrA as the proactive and creative business actions of public officials undertaken in the business process. PrA is related to the moral and subjective responsibilities of public officials with reference to the actions of responsible public officials. Passive administration is, however, the opposite of PrA: It refers to a passive way of operating in which public officials handle business with minimal effort but within the scope of their duties; do not handle business actively in a routine manner and take action without consideration of the effect of the outcome; and do not take responsibility.

Institutionalization of proactive administration in government

President Moon Jae-in declared that "PrA needs to be firmly established as a new public culture" and called for a change in public service, emphasizing the importance of and need for PrA at a state council meeting in February 2019. To this end, the Office for Government Policy Coordination, the Board of Audit and Inspection, the Ministry of Personnel Management, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of SMEs and Startups, the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission, and the Ministry of Legislation assembled a taskforce on how to institutionalize PrA. As public officials would be the ones to practice PrA, the key was to change how they provide public services. Meanwhile, institutionalizing PrA is critical if Korea were to make it a sustainable long-term practice, not merely a policy or administrative slogan. In this process, the MPM became a leading change

Passive Administration	Proactive Administration
• Procrastinates for no reason or for internal review (this phenomenon could be called "no action, only talk"). • Makes an arbitrary judgment without sufficiently reviewing the purpose and facts of the law. • Rejects legitimate applications due to concerns about conflict of interest or civil complaints. • Refers to unfounded or unpublished internal guidelines in superior laws in the legislative systems and procedures (this phenomenon could be called "no precedent, no action"). • Handles business according to existing regulations and practices even though they are unreasonable. • Requires additional documents besides statutory documents to avoid liability. • Contrary to the purpose of the law, rejects an application following limited interpretation of the law, etc.	• Promptly processes applications within the processing deadline, but explains in advance if any reason for delay arises. • Fully reviews all matters and makes reasonable judgments from the public standpoint. • Resolves civil complaints through active interest adjustment, such as suggesting rational alternatives. • Processes work based on legitimate delegation and in accordance with published guidelines. • Works more creatively, without being bound by irrational regulations and practices. • Asks for only the minimum documents necessary for review and examination. • Actively interprets and applies laws and regulations in line with new environmental changes, etc.

Table 2.
Comparison between Passive and Proactive Administration

Sources: Ministry of Personnel Management (2019a, 2019b)

agent, in collaboration with the Office for Government Policy Coordination in the Office of the Prime Minister, the Board of Audit and Inspection, and other related central agencies.

It would be counterproductive if the practice of proactive public service might result in audit inspections or disciplinary consequences or if there are no incentives for those who act proactively. Accordingly, the Korean government has introduced institutional measures to protect public officials from being the target of audit inspections or disciplinary actions, and established incentives for those who act proactively. Furthermore, to raise awareness of PrA, various training programs have been made available by public training institutes. Moreover, the MPM regularly evaluates government organizations' performance to encourage their proactive practice.

Protection for public officials who practice PrA
In May 2018, the MPM revised the "Enforcement Rule of the Decree on Disciplinary Action against Public Officials" to add a new provision on "Exemption from disciplinary consequences due to PrA." Under the revised Enforcement Rule, the disciplinary committee shall not impose disciplinary measures if a public servant is found to have practiced PrA (MPM, 2019a).

In August 2019, the MPM enacted the Operation Regulations for PrA to provide an institutional framework for PrA, under which the heads of central administrative agencies are required to implement "Action Plans on PrA" every year and meet with the PrA Committee in their respective agencies. Moreover, the Decree stipulates that excellent public officials who promoted PrA will be selected every 6 months to receive promotion-related advantages, such as special promotions, and that public officials who deliver proactive services will be protected from disciplinary actions.

The Decree specifically provides that public officials shall not be subject to disciplinary consequences if they performed their duties based on advice from the PrA Committee or prior consultation from an audit institution, if there was no willful misconduct or gross negligence, and if no personal interest existed between them and their work. Additionally, the MPM implemented assistance programs, such as public officials' liability insurance and litigation support services, to allow public officials subject to disciplinary actions or litigation to receive attorney fees from their employers (MPM, 2019a).

Incentives for excellent public officials who conduct PrA
The Operation Regulations for PrA require that each central administrative agency identify public officials who practiced excellent PrA and reward them with promotion-related advantages, such as special promotions. From 2020 onward, more than 50 percent of the selected public officials shall be offered extraordinary incentives, including special promotion and the highest-level performance-based bonus (MPM, 2019a).

Every year, the MPM hosts PrA Best Practice Competitions for all central administrative agencies, local governments, and public organizations so that participant organizations can share and benchmark best practices. Until 2019, the Competition was held only once a year, but it has been held semi-annually from 2020. The Competition encourages not only experts but also ordinary citizens to participate in the evaluation process so that cases that make a real difference to citizens' lives are promoted. Public officials who contribute to best practice receive merit and special awards. The Competition also solicits citizens' nominations and invites them to the evaluation process so that public officials who genuinely work for the public's interest may be recognized.

Systems to assist public officials' proactive decision-making
Most public officials are likely to make passive decisions while performing their duties so as to avoid unnecessary trouble in the absence of clear legal guidelines or precedents. To prevent

this problem, the Korean government has implemented a system through which public officials can request directions for their work by means of obtaining advice from the PrA Committee or arranging a prior consultation with an audit institution.

The PrA Committee was first established in all central administrative agencies in 2019. To ensure objectivity and transparency in decision-making, Article 12 of the Operation Regulations for PrA requires that more than half of the members of the PrA Committee be from the private sector; moreover, PrA Committee stakeholders can participate in a committee meeting and voice their opinions. Meanwhile, prior consultations have been made available to all central administrative agencies since 2019 by the Board of Audit and Inspection and internal audit divisions at each administrative agency — in the past, they were only available in certain organizations.

Education and training for PrA
Even if an institutional framework is well established, PrA cannot be fully realized if public officials are not familiar with the details of PrA. Therefore, providing systematic education and training for public officials is essential. To this end, the MPM introduced workplace education and training programs and required each administrative agency to provide PrA training for all public officials at least twice a year. Furthermore, the National Human Resources Development Institute, under the MPM, prepared mandatory courses related to PrA as part of its general staff programs for new recruits and promoted (or soon-to-be-promoted) officials.

Effective educational materials and teaching staff are critical for providing quality education and training. Therefore, the MPM prepared and distributed a "standard curriculum on PrA" to ensure that basic and essential contents are included in all training courses. The standard curriculum covers the concept of PrA, what the PrA Committee does and how prior consultation works, best practices, the protection and promotional advantages available to public officials who provide proactive public services, and similar matters.

The MPM has trained many designated lecturers and assigned them to various training courses. The lecturers, who are either public officials recommended by central government agencies or professional instructors at public servant training centers, oversee the workplace training programs. Additionally, to provide case-based education and training, the MPM organizes additional programs, in which 38 winners of the PrA Best Practice Competition share their best practice (MPM, 2020a). The MPM has also developed e-learning programs such as "Understanding PrA" and "PrA Strategy" to afford officials access to education and training regardless of time and place. In particular, during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, e-learning programs became a safer training option.

Action plans and evaluation of PrA
All central administrative agencies are required to formulate and implement the "Action Plans on PrA" every year while comprehensively considering the nature of the agency's work, unusual circumstances, and other factors. The "Action Plans on PrA", as a comprehensive annual plan for PrA, include specific strategies to promote PrA, key tasks, assistance programs (i.e., the PrA Committee, prior consultation), plans to protect and provide advantages to public officials who act proactively, and educational and promotional schemes.

As planning alone is inadequate, the MPM ensures that each administrative agency's performance is evaluated during a mid-year self-review, with the results presented at the vice-ministers' meeting. At year-end, the MPM evaluates each agency's annual performance and reports the results to the Cabinet Meeting presided by the President. The MPM establishes the Performance Management Plan every year. At the end of each year, experts in fields such as science, law, civil society (university professors, head of enterprises or civic groups,

lawyers, researchers, and others), and public service users evaluate performance from various perspectives. A total of 10 to 20 experts assesses the performance of all ministers and agencies, while an assessment group of public service users comprising 100 to 150 citizens assesses a single ministry or agency. In 2019, additional indicators for performance evaluation were included reflecting the usual steps of policy implementation: improvement of public service quality, degree of administrative efficiency improvement, regulatory innovation or conflict resolution, implementation of new policies and collaboration with related stakeholders, and goal achievement levels and policy effectiveness.

The assessment conducted in 2019 concludes that PrA is vital for future transformations. The MPM reported the results of the 2019 PrA evaluation for central administrative agencies to the State Council on January 15, 2020. In all, 44 central administrative agencies were evaluated in accordance with the Operation Regulations for PrA enacted in 2019, and the results of the survey on public opinion were evaluated under the criteria of: (1) the faithfulness of the action plan; (2) efforts to revitalize PrA; (3) achievements such as best practices; and (4) people's opinions (MPM, 2020b).

In 2019, out of 23 ministerial-level agencies, 9 — the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission; Ministry of Defense; Ministry of Economy and Finance; Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of SMEs and Startups; Ministry of the Interior and Safety; and Ministry of the Environment — were selected as excellent organizations; 10 agencies were rated average and 4 unsatisfactory (MPM, 2020b). Out of 21 vice-ministerial-level agencies, 8 — the Ministry of Legislation; Ministry of Food and Drug Safety; Ministry of Personnel Management; National Policy Agency; Korean Customs Service; Military Manpower Administration; Korean Intellectual Property Office; and Korean Coast Guard — were selected as excellent organizations; 9 were rated average; and 4 unsatisfactory (MPM, 2020b).

In 2020, the MPM reported the results of the 2020 PrA evaluation for central administrative agencies to the State Council on February 2, 2021. A total of 43 central administrative agencies were evaluated in accordance with the Operation Regulations for PrA. Out of 23 ministerial-level agencies, 7 — the Ministry of Employment and Labor; the Ministry of Science and ICT; the Ministry of SMEs and Startups; the Ministry of Health and Welfare; the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs; the Ministry of the Interior and Safety; and the Ministry of the Environment — were selected as excellent organizations selected as excellent organizations; 12 were rated average and 4 unsatisfactory (MPM, 2021b). Out of 20 vice-minister-level agencies, 6 — the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety; Ministry of Personnel Management; Korean Customs Service; Rural Development Administration; Military Manpower Administration; and Korean Coast Guard — were selected as excellent organizations; 10 were rated average and 4 unsatisfactory (MPM, 2021b).

Constraints in the reform process and possible resolutions

Public officials face several challenges in PrA. If issues arise, officials fear they will be audited by the Board of Audit and Inspection. Due to the possibility of disciplinary action as a result of such audits, public officials are often cautious and passive. Therefore, to promote PrA, a corresponding incentive system is required. The MPM identifies the constraints on PrA by dividing them into the following: fear of audit, lack of incentives, and rigidity of existing laws (as shown in Table 3). Each factor can be understood from the viewpoint of how they discourage public officials from participating in daily public service due to, for example, fear of being audited and receiving disciplinary sanctions (MPM, 2021a).

Public officials may experience personal fear of audit or disciplinary action due to the ambiguity of regulations and restrictions on the scope of discretion, that is, they may be concerned that an audit may be resumed even on previously exempt matters with changes in

Category	Content
Fear of auditing	• (Fear of audit) Experience of audit and disciplinary action; fear of resumption of audit when policy direction changes • (Attribution of personal responsibility) Individuals are responsible for unforeseen circumstances caused by PrA • (Responsibility for decision-making) When a problem arises in relation to an important matter, the person in charge is responsible for it.
Lack of incentives and awareness	• (Lack of incentives) Insufficient incentives and insufficient sense of authenticity • (Lack of awareness) Even if active operation is possible, it is rejected without any sufficient explanation. • (PrA culture) Individuals take responsibility in the event of a problem; no internal atmosphere to support and encourage PrA within the organization.
Rigidity of existing statutes	• (Rigid legal regulations) Responses to environmental changes are insufficient, and most statutes do not allow even discretionary powers for PrA. • (Restriction of subordinate laws) Although a measure may be possible under the main laws and regulations, there are frequent cases where measures are rejected based on sub-regulations or guidelines. • (Lack of sharing and understanding) Comprehensive dissemination of the system improvement content is insufficient, the understanding of field officials is insufficient, etc.

Table 3.
Constraints on Proactive Administration

Source: Ministry of Personnel Management (2019a)

government and policy direction (Cho, 2019). The fear of being audited limits the proactive interpretation of laws and regulations and the improvement of regulations, for if the government official does not conduct PrA, there is no audit threat. Therefore, public officials are not motivated to pursue PrA. In addition, the incentives offered to undertake PrA are insufficient. PrA requires higher attention to one's work and in some cases leads to an increased workload (Cho, 2019). While extra effort is required, monetary and non-monetary incentives for the effort are needed. Moreover, PrA can be revitalized by loosening the stringency of statutes and regulations that hinder creativity and proactivity.

To institutionalize PrA, it is necessary to: (1) clearly define the concept of PrA; and (2) establish a clear legal basis for it through the National Public Officials Act and the Local Public Officials Act, in addition to the Operation Regulations for PrA and other related regulations, to incentivize public officials to make judgments based on PrA. In fact, Article 56 of the National Public Officials Act and Article 48 of the Local Public Officials Act stipulate that "every public official shall observe statutes, and faithfully perform his/her duties." However, the concept of PrA does not ask "How far is the aggressiveness beyond normal business performance permissible?". The greatest difficulty in conceptualizing PrA or passive administration is that these concepts are multifaceted. Therefore, they need to be subdivided on a more granular basis, and specific behavioral indicators must be identified.

First, to revitalize PrA, the exercise of autonomous responsibility by public officials must be emphasized. The autonomous responsibility of public officials refers to the administrative responsibility secured as a result of the autonomous discretion of public officials based on their sense of professional responsibility and ethics. In the era of the 4th industrial revolution and during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, for example, the government must be able to provide services people need, and should focus on enhancing administrative transparency and accountability by monitoring the process and results of the service in real time. This requires public officials to display both autonomous responsibility and professional ethics.

Second, to enhance practical feasibility, public officials should autonomously conduct PrA according to their inner values and standards and select rational or best alternatives, as well as being able to respond proactively. The government must have an internal control system that can effectively conduct ethical activities on its own. The main strategy to dilute risks within the organization is to implement internal control, either preventative or exploratory. Effective communication is critical to the operation and control of an organization. Therefore, an organization's managers should be able to communicate relevant, reliable, accurate, and timely details of events inside and outside the organization.

Third, Article 57 (Obligation of Obedience) of the National Public Officials Act stipulates that "every public official shall obey each request of his/her superior officer with respect to his/her duties". However, it is not easy to expect subordinates to proactively ponder the value of public service given the obligation to obey their superiors. These regulations make it difficult for a public official who performs administrative acts to become a proactive official. Therefore, as a premise for institutionalization of PrA, reasonable grounds for refusal to obey illegal requests should be stipulated through legal provisions. In other words, if the request of the superior is clearly illegal, there is a need for clear legal provision that the subordinate has no obligation to comply with such request.

Fourth, evidence-based administration should be undertaken by including the provision of proactive communication and cooperation with the public in the definition of sincere duty in the National Public Service Act. Evidence-based administration refers to administration based on evidence from research studies that incorporate valid, reliable, and appropriate professional judgment and knowledge. It is necessary to redefine the act of performing sincere duty more specifically, including the obligation to present evidence of the act, by supplementing the relevant provisions of the National Public Service Act.

Furthermore, an approach that continuously re-evaluates the concept and type of administration is needed. It is necessary to host contests to recognize administrative innovation and continuously check the limitations of prevalent methods for recognizing and awarding excellent cases. PrA aims to improve the status quo, weed out unreasonable practices, and encourage proactive and progressive working behaviors. Thus, there is a need to develop a more comprehensive approach to improving the working climate of institutions and departments.

Conclusion

PrA guides individual public officials in performing their jobs as a complex concept that includes such factors as behavioral aspects (activeness, responsibility, integrity, initiative, etc.) and the inherent values of individuals (responsiveness, democracy, compliance, etc.). The MPM enacted the Operation Regulations for PrA in August 2019 to institutionalize PrA in Korea. The Decree protects public officials engaged in PrA from audit inspections or disciplinary actions, and provides officials with advantages such as special promotion. Furthermore, the PrA Committee supports public officials in performing their duties. Government ministries and agencies self-review their performance on a quarterly basis, and external experts and citizens assess the outcome at the end of each year. Based on this framework, these tasks have strengthened the protection of and expanded the benefits for public officials, and added tangible value for citizens. In light of the differences among government ministries and agencies in their capacity to implement PrA and their members' participation, the government offered tailored consulting, provided education and training programs, and raised awareness of best practices through brochures and videoclips. The most motivating measure was unconventional incentives for excellent public officials.

Generally, a public official who does not follow laws or procedures will pay a price for such violations, even if their actions were in public interest. However, the Moon Jae-in

administration established a new principle of protecting public officials who practice PrA and of rewarding excellent results that exempts public officials from audit inspections or disciplinary actions for the results of proactive service, and ensures that their achievements are rewarded through special promotion and similar measures.

The PrA initiative was implemented by the central government and local governments simultaneously in Korea, and has been broadly implemented throughout the public sector. The MPM has issued a manual detailing the operation of the initiative for government ministries and agencies and is providing various education and awareness programs. At the end of each year, a group of experts and citizens assesses the task result, and their evaluation is made public for better transparency. Although it is still too early to evaluate the overall impact on civil servants' behavior of administrative reform to promote proactive administration, it has contributed greatly to a significant change in the perception that public officials in the administrative field should actively pursue their work. With the change of government to the Yun Suk-yeol administration on May 10, 2022, policy changes are expected in many areas. However, since the MPM has an established division for PrA, administrative reform for PrA is expected to continue unwaveringly in the future.

As PrA is emerging as a new topic in Korean public service, this study has examined the Korean government's experience from the perspectives of organizational behavior theory and bureaucratic behavior. Of course, there are also limitations of this paper. It will be necessary to conduct empirical research on the concept and cause of PrA, as well as theoretically investigate the tendency of individual risk avoidance studied by organizational behavior theory. Furthermore, there are few reference materials for behavioral administrative reform studies. Therefore, a case study of the Korean experience of proactive administration can be a useful for administrative reform studies in other countries.

References

Bhanot, S. and Linos, E. (2020), "Behavioral public administration: past, present, and future", *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 80 No. 1, pp. 168-171.

Board of Audit and Inspection (2021a), *The Board of Auditing and Inspection Act*, Board of Audit and Inspection, Seoul, Korea.

Board of Audit and Inspection (2021b), *The Rules on the Operation of the Audit Vindication System for Proactive Administrative Immunity*, Board of Audit and Inspection, Seoul, Korea.

Cantarelli, P., Belle, N. and Belardinelli, P. (2018), "Behavioral public HR: experimental evidence on cognitive biases and debiasing interventions", *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 56-81.

Cho, T.J. (2019), "Personnel system development plan to promote proactive administration", *Korean Public Personnel Administration Review*, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 311-323.

Covin, J.G. and Slevin, D.P. (1989), "Strategic management of small firms in hostile and benign environments", *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 75-87.

Crant, J.M. (2000), "Proactive behavior in organizations", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 26 No. 3, pp. 435-462.

Frese, M. and Fay, D. (2001), "Personal initiative: an active performance concept for work in the 21st century", Staw, B.M. and Sutton, R.I. (Eds), *Research in Organizational Behaviour* Vol. 23, Elsevier Science, Amsterdam, pp. 133-187.

Grant, A.M. and Ashford, S.J. (2008), "The dynamics of proactivity at work", *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 28, pp. 3-34.

Grimmelikhuijsen, S., Jilke, S., Olsen, A.L. and Tummers, L. (2017), "Behavioral public administration: combining insights from public administration and psychology", *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 44 No. 1, pp. 45-56.

James, O., Moynihan, D.P., Olsen, A.L. and Van Ryzin, G.G. (2020), *Behavioral Public Performance: How People Make Sense of Government Metrics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Jilke, S., Meier, K. and Van Ryzin, G. (2018), "Editorial", *Journal of Behavioral Public Administration*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 1-3.

Kim, P.S. (1996), "South Korea: searching for a new director of administrative reform", *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 55 No. 4, pp. 30-44.

Kim, P.S. (2000), "Administrative reform in the Korean central government", *Public Performance and Management Review*, Vol. 24 No. 2, pp. 145-160.

Kraus, S., Rigtering, J.C., Hughes, M. and Hosman, V. (2012), "Entrepreneurial orientation and the business performance of SMEs: a quantitative study from the Netherlands", *Review of Managerial Science*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 161-182.

Light, P.C. (1997), *The Tides of Reform: Making Government Work, 1945-1995*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.

Ministry of Personnel Management (MPM) (2019a), *The 2019 Operation Guidelines for Proactive Administration (OGPA)*, Ministry of Personnel Management, Sejong, South Korea.

Ministry of Personnel Management (MPM) (2019b), *The Operation Regulations for Proactive Administration (OGPA)*, Ministry of Personnel Management, Sejong, South Korea.

Ministry of Personnel Management (MPM) (2020a), *The Story of Proactive Administration that Shines in the Midst of Crisis*, Ministry of Personnel Management, Sejong, South Korea.

Ministry of Personnel Management (MPM) (2020b), "Press release on 15 January 2020: results of comprehensive evaluation of proactive administration by Central Administrative Agencies in 2019", Ministry of Personnel Management, Sejong, South Korea.

Ministry of Personnel Management (MPM) (2021a), *The 2021 Operation Guidelines for Proactive Administration (OGPA)*, Ministry of Personnel Management, Sejong, South Korea.

Ministry of Personnel Management (MPM) (2021b), "Press release on 2 February 2020: results of comprehensive evaluation of proactive administration by Central Administrative Agencies in 2020", Ministry of Personnel Management, Sejong, South Korea.

Ohly, S. and Fritz, C. (2007), "Challenging the status quo: what motivates proactive behavior?", *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 80 No. 4, pp. 623-629.

Parker, S.K. (2000), "From passive to proactive motivation: the importance of flexible role orientation and role breadth self-efficacy", *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, Vol. 49, pp. 447-469.

Rauch, A., Wiklund, J., Lumpkin, G.T. and Frese, M. (2009), "Entrepreneurial orientation and business performance: an assessment of past research and suggestions for the future", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 33 No. 3, pp. 761-787.

Segarra-Ciprés, M. and Escrig-Tena, A. (2019), "Employees' proactive behavior and innovation performance: examining the moderating role of informal and formal controls", *European Journal of Innovation Management*, Vol. 22 No. 5, pp. 866-888.

Seibert, S.E., Kraimer, M.L. and Crant, J.N. (2001), "What do proactive people do? A longitudinal model linking proactive personality and career success", *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 54 No. 4, pp.845-874.

Sonnentag, S. (2003), "Recovery, work engagement, and proactive behavior: a new look at the interface between nonwork and work", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 88 No. 3, pp. 518-528.

Unsworth, K.L. and Parker, S.K. (2003), "Proactivity and innovation: promoting a new workforce for the new workplace", Holman, D., Wall, T.D., Clegg, C.W., Sparrow, P. and Howard, A. (Eds), *The New Workplace: A Guide to the Human Impact of Modern Working Practices*, John Wiley and Sons, San Francisco, CA, pp. 175-196.

Wiklund, J. and Shepherd, D. (2005), "Entrepreneurial orientation and small business performance: a configurational approach", *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 71-91.

About the author

Pan Suk Kim is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Global Public Administration, Yonsei University, Mirae Campus, South Korea. He is currently a commission member of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) of the United Nations and a lifetime fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) in Washington, DC. He was the president of the Asian Association for Public Administration (AAPA) and the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS). Pan Suk Kim can be contacted at: pankim@yonsei.ac.kr

Equality in contention: exploring the debates of gender-equal inheritance rights in Bangladesh

Jinat Hossain
Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium, and
Ishtiaq Jamil
Department of Government, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the paper is to evaluate what caused the debates and confusion in articulating a gender-equal inheritance policy in Bangladesh, and to identify the socio-political drivers and nature of the political power play that thwarted the policy's adoption.

Design/methodology/approach – The research undergirding this paper is based on a qualitative approach involving a case study with in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions, and secondary data analysis. The interviews were conducted with policy makers, officials, lawyers, women activists, Muslim religious scholars, Hindu priests, academics and researchers, and women representing Hindu and Muslim religions.

Findings – The findings illustrate that the controversies between the Islamic religion and national and international policies led to serious debates and confusion about gender-equal rights of inheritance in Bangladesh. The failure to formulate and adopt a gender-equal inheritance policy was influenced by several socio-political phenomena and gender-biased institutional settings. This kind of policy is deeply political, and cultural compatibility is necessary to formulate it, especially when the policy affects religious sentiments. Religious sentiments and beliefs, which are associated with religion-based personal law, therefore influence both the formulation or non-formulation of a gender-equal policy. To move forward with the fundamental idea of women's inclusion, there is a strong need to identify the socio-cultural and political drivers behind formulating, non-formulating, as well as implementing a gender-equal policy.

Originality/value – The paper will be beneficial to scholars and policy makers who seek to explore the epicenter of challenges and opposition to formulating a gender-equal policy in the context of a developing country with a Muslim majority.

Keywords Inheritance rights policy, Legal pluralism, Religion, Policy formulation, Gender, Bangladesh

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Democracy is threatened in most Muslim-majority countries (Karatnycky, 2002; Norris and Inglehart, 2002), particularly where gender equality is not observed (Glas *et al.*, 2018; Kostenko *et al.*, 2016; Rizzo *et al.*, 2007). In such cases, the relationship between Islam and authoritarianism reflects a narrow view of democracy, and the discrimination is based on gender and religion (Fish, 2002; Norris, 2007; Rizzo *et al.*, 2007). Women tend to have inferior positions in autocratic and patriarchal Muslim societies (Rizzo *et al.*, 2007). The quality of democracy is shaped not only by institutions such as informal rules, norms, and illegitimate practices, but also by how these institutions function, how different social groups participate in them, and how their rights are preserved in the formal institutional arrangements

(i.e., legislation) (Moghadam, 2004). Religious minorities in such countries also encounter challenges when seeking to have their needs fulfilled and their values and rights respected — even in practicing their religion (Gouda and Gutmann, 2021). Democratic practices such as gender equality and religious freedom therefore face significant challenge in such countries.

Despite strong patriarchal-Islamist settings, it is now the case that in many developing countries, a few of which have Muslim-majority populations, women are increasingly included in higher-level political and administrative spheres. Nevertheless, formulating gender-equal policies and legislation is always challenging due to socio-political and cultural-religious factors. In many countries, some interpretations of rights are based on formal laws and constitutional principles, and others on the informal institutions such as social and/or religious norms. The informal institutions may undermine the formal rules and policies and challenge the formulation and implementation of gender-equal policies (Waylen, 2017). But revising or reformulating formal regulations based on customary sources is not simply due to the religious sensitivity of the majority of the population (Hossain, 2020a). Moreover, multiple political-power dynamics and interests among the ruling coalition and other social and political groups influence governments to either adopt or not adopt gender-equal policies (Hickey and Nazreen, 2019). Based on this complex scenario, the paper seeks to identify the socio-political factors behind the formulation or non-formulation of a gender-equal policy in a Muslim-majority country.

To explain this, the authors focus on the case of Bangladesh, the fourth largest Muslim-inhabited country in the world (World Atlas, 2022) and analyze the policies and regulations related to inheritance rights. Inheritance rights in Bangladesh are guided by personal laws that follow respective religions. These personal laws often discriminate against women and are contrary to Bangladesh's constitution, which ensures equality in every sphere of life. The government's National Women's Development Policy (NWDP) initially had several initiatives for the gender-equal provision of inheritance rights (Hossain, 2020a). This provision was intended to ensure equal rights for women regarding the inheritance of property, and it was based on Bangladesh's constitutional principles of equality. The provision was, however, withdrawn by the government in the policy's formulation stage. The multiplicity of laws from different sources and multiple interpretations of rights triggered debate and antagonistic situations. Religious clerics challenged the policy's proposed provision because it violated existing practices that were based on religious laws. This brought about contestations over the proposed equal provision of inheritance rights, triggered violent protests by Islamic fundamentalist groups, and finally led to the withdrawal of the policy in the formulation stage. The objectives of this paper are thus as follows:

(a) To analyze what caused the debates and confusion in articulating a gender-equal inheritance policy. Arguments both for and against the policy are presented, the actors behind these arguments are identified, and the challenges the policy faced.

(b) To identify the socio-political drivers and the nature of the political power play that thwarted the adoption of the gender-equal inheritance policy in Bangladesh. It is argued that policy making is deeply political and cannot be relegated to technical and administrative personnel.

Inheritance rights in Bangladesh: geo-historical and political perspective

Bangladesh's legal system is mainly based on the legislative system developed during the British era. In the post-1947 partition period, British-era legislation continued in Pakistan, a situation which influenced the formulation of personal laws in Bangladesh after the liberation war in 1971 (Banu, 2015). Warren Hastings, in 1772, had settled the decree of "Personal Law," which meant the colonial ruler would not intervene in religious and family matters

(Begum, 2009). The notion of "religious personal laws" was therefore officially documented since the 18th Century (Begum, 2009). Interference laws in Bangladesh as well as in the Indian subcontinent evolved, particularly during the British era. While Hindu laws were followed here and there before the British regime, British rule in India initiated a new phase in the formulation of Hindu law (Agarwal, 1998). The Hindu Law of Inheritance Act, for example, was amended in 1919, and the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937 specifically concerns a widow's right to property. On the other hand, the Muslim Family Law Ordinance, 1961 was formulated when what is today Bangladesh was still part of Pakistan, and is based on Sharia principles. Since the multiplicity of laws often generated confusion, it was perhaps only to be expected that women activists and feminist organizations (notably Bangladesh Mohila Samity (BMS), Ain o Shalish Kendra, Women for Women) demanded the formulation of a unified family code (UFC) in the late 1980s (Banu, 2015). In 2005, the report "Marriage, Inheritance and Family Laws in Bangladesh: Towards a Common Family Code," which is based on the basic principles of the Bangladesh Constitution and international feminist mandates, was published. Nonetheless, these initiatives failed to be effective, as customary laws based on religious and cultural values often discriminate against women and are still widely practiced. The prospect of gender-equal rights to inheritance is a radical move, and Bangladesh's feminist movement has yet to push through with its demand.

The demand for equal inheritance rights brings together three contrasting debates. Islamists oppose change in the Sharia law (Hossain, 2020a; Tamanna, 2008). In contrast, secular and modernist women's rights activists oppose the existing inheritance practices and demand uniform, secular, and equitable reform (Tamanna, 2008). Another group, which situates itself in the middle position, refutes the conservative arguments in Islam that continue to subordinate women. This school strongly demands the proper implementation of responsibilities and rights that are guaranteed under *Islamic* law rather than bringing about changes in the Sharia laws (Monsoor, 1999). It should also be mentioned that in practice, women are often deprived of the share they are supposed to get as suggested by the existing personal laws (Das, 2016). Muslim women often give their portion of property to their brothers in order to secure shelter at their parental place if their husband dies or leaves them (Mahmud *et al.,* 2021). The situation of Hindu women is even worse than that of Muslim women because the existing legal framework deprives them of any share of property. Furthermore, Hindus are the minority – constituting around 8.5 percent of the total population in Bangladesh (BBS, 2011). Due to their minority status, Hindus often become victims of forceful eviction from their land (Mohajan, 2013; Mithun, 2019). Frequent violence targeting the Hindu community triggers fear and sense of insecurity among them, and gender-based violence in particular is one of the most common fears (Naher and Tripura, 2010).

Bangladesh is one of the countries that prioritizes gender as a development component in its formal planning and policies (Panday, 2008). The government has signed and ratified many international gender-related treaties and conventions, examples being Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR4), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). Bangladesh ratified CEDAW in 1984, yet the country keeps reservations on articles 2, 13(a), and 16.1(c) (Khan, 2019), as these may conflict with Sharia law (Banu, 2015). These reservations are also factors behind not adopting non-discriminatory provisions such as the UFC and NWDP. A few Muslim countries have passed equality-based reforms in personal laws, examples being Tunisia and Morocco (Tamanna, 2008), and even India—a country with a vast Hindu majority—has enforced equal inheritance rights in five of its states (Bhalotra *et al.*, 2020). These achievements prompt the question of why Bangladesh, a country that gives gender a high priority in its governance, cannot even frame a policy for equal inheritance rights.

Theoretical lens: power domain and feminist institutionalism

To understand the complexities and contestations in formulating gender-equitable policies, the authors draw inspiration from the theory of feminist institutionalism (Waylen, 2014, 2017) and the "power domain approach" to investigating politics and gender equity (Hickey and Nazreen, 2019). Feminist institutionalism argues that formal and informal institutions can be gendered, and that these institutions interact, negotiate, and reproduce gender-equal or unequal power domains (Chappell and Waylen, 2013; Helmke and Levitsky, 2004; Waylen, 2017). As these scholars explain, the concept of informal institutions refers to rules, norms, customs, and illegitimate practices that are based on religion or culture rather than on a formal code of law. Such forms of informality may reinforce certain gendered norms and practices that disadvantage women—despite the presence of gender-equal formal rules (Waylen, 2014). Feminist institutionalism can offer a theorization of the gendered nature of formal institutions, the significance of informal institutions, and the power relations within and across them (Mackay and Murtagh, 2019).

Inasmuch as gender equality is primarily a question of power, feminists concentrate on how such power operates in society. Analyzing the interplay of power between formal and informal institutions makes it possible to understand how women have been systematically oppressed and rendered submissive since ancient times in various religious, custom-based, and formal-policy settings. Such systematic oppression leads to strengthening and reproducing patriarchy. The attempt to adopt a formal gender-equal policy may therefore often be grounded in what has been termed a "power domain." The power-domain approach to investigating politics and gender equity offers an understanding of the distribution of power across actors and institutions. This in turn can be relevant for analyzing a specific policy problem (Khan, 2010). As for policy perspectives, this paper concentrates on how informal institutions influence the formal institutions during policy formulation, and how different forms of power exist, are distributed, and interact within and across formal and informal institutions (Hassan, 2013; Khan, 2010).

As Table 1 explains, the authors used feminist institutionalism and the power-domain approach (a) to portray men's historical domination of women regarding inheritance rights prescribed in Islam and Hinduism, Bangladesh's two main religions; (b) to map the actors involved at the fundamental junctures and in changes made to policy formulations such as NWDP; and (c) to understand how the dynamics of the power domain interact and distribute benefits and interests among actors.

Methodology

The study pursued a qualitative case-study method employing primary and secondary sources of data. For primary sources, in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions, and interviews were carried out with key actors. As Table 2 elaborates, purposive sampling was used to choose respondents (a) who were directly involved in the

Theoretical lens	Analysis of the empirical case study
Feminist institutionalism (Waylen, 2014; Waylen, 2017)	(a) The historical oppression of women as regards inheritance rights in Islam and Hinduism
	(b) The role of religion in formulating a gender-equal inheritance policy
Power domain (Hickey and Nazreen, 2019)	(c) The distribution of power, which includes bargaining for interests and benefits between different actors and organizations in formal and informal institutions.
	(d) The role of the power domain in influencing the folding back of a policy provision favoring equal inheritance rights.

Table 1.
Theoretical lenses linked to analyzing the empirical case study

Data Source	Explanation	Themes	Number
Policymakers and officials	Officials in the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, and the Department of Women's Affairs	The process of policy formulation	5
Lawyers	Lawyers working with family and inheritance issues	Interpretation of Muslim and Hindu laws	5
Women activists	Activists involved in different women's movements (purposively chosen), particularly those who have been vocal on equal inheritance rights in national and international fora	Feminist interpretation of personal law, NWDP in regard to gender-equal inheritance policy	5
Muslim religious scholars	Interviews with imams and hafiz of reputed mosques in Bangladesh, Islamic voices heard through mass media, and authors of Islamic books	Sharia interpretation of the distribution of inheritance	3
Hindu priests	Hindu clerics working in central temples	Hindu religious interpretation of inheritance rights	3
Academics and researchers	Researchers and academics working with the topic	Exiting policy and regulations interpreting gender-equal inheritance	6
Women representing Hindu and Muslim religion	Purposively chosen with urban middle-class background	Perceptions and attitudes towards inequitable inheritance law	6
			Total 33

Table 2.
Categories of respondents

policy process (policymakers and officials); (b) who opposed the state policy (Muslim religious scholars and Hindu priests); (c) who advocated for the policy (key actors, lawyers, women activists); and (d) women from both religions. The data collection process was from September 2019 to March 2020 and in January 2022. Narrative analysis was applied to the data, with the transcribed text being placed within the comprehensive context of the interviewees and participants (Herman and Vervaeck, 2019). The research follows all ethical protocols of social science research, including anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent.

Secondary sources include religious edicts on Hinduism and Islam: The Holy *Qur'an* (*Qur'an*, 2001); *Hadith* (Bukhari, 1966); *Manu Smriti* (Manu, 1969); *R̥gvedaḥ* (*Veda*) (Wendy, 1981) and their interpretations in relevant blogs, books, and newspapers articles. The authors also reviewed the laws based on these religious interpretations, examples being the Muslim Family Law Ordinance, 1961 and the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937 (LPAD, 1937). Finally, content analysis was used to compare the policy and legal documents (Drisko and Maschi, 2016).

Unpacking the inheritance debate: reflection from religion

In Bangladesh, different practices and interpretations have led to variations of personal and family laws. This situation pertains mainly to the regulation of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other family-related issues. This section presents strands of the debate on inheritance rights that emanate from inheritance laws and practices in Muslim and Hindu communities in Bangladesh. Islamic inheritance law, known as *al-faraid,* combines ideas from the Holy *Qur'an* and *Hadith* (Chowdhury, 1964) The *al-faraid* declares that (a) the share of one son is equivalent to that of two daughters; (b) a daughter will get half of the property if there is no son; (c) if there is more than one daughter, then they share two-thirds of the property while others will share the rest of the property; (d) if there is only a son, then he is entitled to all the

property (Holy *Qur'an*, 4; Uthaimin, 1983, p. 45); (e) when the wife dies without children, the husband inherits half of what she leaves. Conversely, wives inherit a quarter of what the husband leaves.

The rules of Hindu laws mostly originate from *Sruti,* which is documented in different books. *Rgvedah* (*Veda*) and *Manu Smriti* are the primary sources on which the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937 is formulated. Hindu women's rights to property fall into two categories: a) absolute ownership of property, called *stridhana,* gives a woman full rights to the property she owns, meaning she can do whatever she wants with it, has full access to and control of it, and can dispose of it anytime she wants; b) limited ownership of property, called *women's estate*, means that on the death of the female owner, the property will not pass to her heirs, but to the heir of the last male who previously owned the property (Zahur, 2016).

As the ancient legal text *Manu Smriti* explains, daughters usually are only eligible to inherit if they have no son, grandson, or great-grandson, and if they are widows (Aktar and Abdullah, 2007; Manu, 1969). Daughters do not inherit until all the widows are dead (Mulla, 1986). The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937 (Session 3.3) approves the principle that a Hindu widow can claim a share of her husband's property equal to that of a son, yet it also allows for the "widow's limited estate." This means a woman inherits from her deceased husband only during her lifetime and cannot sell or dispose of the property (Zahur, 2016).

The principles of offering an unequal share of land to women lie in how women are presented and how their roles and responsibilities are defined in these religions. For instance, Manu says the following:

> By a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house. In childhood, a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent. (*Manu Smriti*, Chapter 5, verses 147–148)

Both Sharia and Hindu laws confirm that women must be taken care of by male relatives such as a father, a brother, or a husband (Khan *et al.*, 2016; Sourav, 2019). According to these religions, women are given less responsibility than men, particularly in managing formal and financial arrangements. Women therefore get smaller portions of an inheritance from the family.

Understanding the inequality in inheritance: a feminist perspective

In response to the position put forward by Muslim and Hindu clerics, women activists and scholars claim that religion leaves women in a secondary position and makes them unduly dependent on men. Regarding this aspect, one woman activist argues as follows:

> I am quite sure that most religious practices in Bangladesh do not provide men and women with an equal share of the property. Although formally, Christianity gives equal share, who knows whether it is practiced or not. Further, I deny the logic of providing maintenance to women to compensate for their inheritance rights. I think providing maintenance for women and giving proper dower in the time of marriage remain only on paper. There are many cases of women who are the head of households; they work and maintain the family. (Interview with researcher, March 7, 2020, Dhaka)

Key informants argue that those Muslims who oppose the equal provision of shared inheritance should practice Sharia laws properly. For example, does every Muslim woman get the maintenance or the dower? But even if women get the property that Sharia law says they have a right to own, do women have control over it? Can they gain access to it when they need it? Do they have the power to use the resources? While discussing these issues, one woman activist expressed the following view:

> The inequality in inheritance reinforces other inequalities in society. It justifies that women are unable to maintain themselves or their family. This paves the way for women to be restricted from

being productive. It limits women's opportunities, undermines women's capabilities, and confines women's power and skill. Religion does not allow women to handle financial matters that could have enabled them to exercise power. It seems that women are only given maintenance; they cannot earn it. (Interview with woman activist, February 17, 2020, Dhaka)

The conclusion drawn from this is that due to religious laws, women are obliged to be submissive and dependent on men. While the interviewed priests blamed social norms for keeping women from getting a fixed share of the inheritance, women activists explained that the regulations prescribed in religion reinforce discriminatory practices in society. Neither the practice of religious laws nor the socio-cultural norms allow women to receive an equal share of an inheritance.

> When my husband died, our house and land were taken by my in-laws, I don't get any right of my husband's property [. . .] I got some property from my parents, but normally my brother is taking the benefits of it. I don't claim my right to my paternal land, maybe people will tell me I am greedy if I claim my land [. . .] I'am only owner by name, I don't get its benefit. (Focus group discussion with Hindu and Muslim women, 24 December 2021)

Focus group discussions with woman representatives from Hindu and Muslim communities confirm how discriminatory and unjust the existing inheritance laws are in women's practical life. Different studies confirm such interpretations (Das, 2016; Hossain, 2020b; Zahur, 2016).

The National Women's Development Policy (NWDP): an initiative for equality
In response to the demand for equal inheritance rights made by the feminist movement and several national and international committees, initiatives were taken to include a provision for equality in the NWDP. The policy was formulated in 1997 during the Awami League (AL) ruling coalition. When first formulated, the NWDP expressed the government's commitment to ensure equality in inheritance rights for men and women. Section 7.2 of the 1997 policy stated that "Women would be given full and equal rights, and control over earnings, inheritance, wealth, loan, land, and wealth earned through technology and market management, and new laws would be enacted to achieve this goal" (GoB, 1997).

Women activists welcomed the policy, but with the change of government in 2004, it remained unimplemented. The new government led by the Bangladeshi Nationalist Party (BNP) reformulated the policy and excluded the equal inheritance provision. After 2008, yet another government, once again led by the AL, attempted to revise the policy from 1997. In 2009, the NWDP draft that contained the provision for equal inheritance rights for women faced severe opposition from Hefazat-e-Islam and a few other fundamentalist groups. Hefazat-e-Islam is comprised of Qwami madrasa students and teachers based in Chittagong (the second largest city in Bangladesh). The group mobilized against the draft policy with one of their 13-point demands calling for the "abolishment of the 'anti-Islamic' inheritance law" (Khan, 2019). A policy was eventually passed on March 8, 2011, but it had some confusion and un-clarity in its contents and clauses, particularly regarding inheritance rights (Gayen, 2011). Nevertheless, the policy sparked and prolonged the opposition and was challenged by various religious groups all over the country (Gayen, 2011). One woman activist who was interviewed also explained why it was a disappointment to women:

> We expected that the NWDP, 2011, would contain the clause ensuring an equal share of inheritance like the NWDP, 1997, but when it was announced, it did not guarantee women's equal share in inheritance matters. Therefore, it took a while for the women activists and scholars to realize that the policy did not provide equality in sharing inheritance rights. (Interview with a woman activist, October 27, 2019, Dhaka)

The key informants interpret NWDP 2011 by pointing to clause 25.2, which states that the policy gives "women the rights to wealth and resources earned through income, succession,

loan/credit, land, and market management" (GoB, 2011, p. 42). This means women would get access to the property (i.e., land or resources) they have already acquired. The 1997 policy, in contrast, gave full and equal rights, control over earnings, inheritance, wealth, and loans, and proposed to enact additional new laws to achieve these goals. The activists therefore argue that NWDP 2011 was a step backwards from NWDP 1997, particularly regarding the right to inherit property. Table 3 explains the vagaries of equal provision in NWDP in different political regimes.

The officials interviewed from the relevant ministry justified the government's position in response to the women activists' claim:

> Bangladesh has progressed a lot in women's empowerment. The government is concerned about gender equality, and we are working for it. But the government won't take any step that goes against the religious sentiments of the people of the country. (Interview with an official from the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, September 13, 2019, Dhaka)

The government realized that implementing the NWDP that ensured equal-inheritance rights would be impossible because it angered Muslims – the dominant religious group in Bangladesh – and could result in the AL losing popularity. Fearing this and other forms of reprisal, the party consolidated its power through political negotiations with various political elites (e.g., religious groups like Hefazat-e-Islam). Consequently, despite having good intentions for NWDP, even 22 years after its initiation, the provision of equal-inheritance rights has never seen the light of day. The AL-led government did not expect such violent opposition and failed to anticipate its strength. When violence threatened national peace and security, the government omitted the clause ensuring equal inheritance irrespective of gender. At the end of the amended policy, a footnote was added stating that the policy would not include any clause that went against Islamic law.

Discussion

This study clarifies that neither Islamic nor Hindu laws give women and men an equal share of an inheritance. This case study identifies that the non-adoption of equal inheritance provisions is influenced by several socio-political phenomena and gendered institutional settings. The reasons for failing to formulate and adopt a gender-equal inheritance policy are also rooted in the religious sentiments of the majority population, which is a big concern for the political parties. These religious sentiments and beliefs are associated with religion-based personal law. As the case study demonstrates, informal institutions such as religion-based customary laws significantly influence formal institutions by determining what kind of policy modification is possible and what is not (Waylen, 2014). Since the personal laws are discriminatory, such informal institutions influence the formal policy arrangements.

The failure to formulate and adopt the equal inheritance policy is also profoundly linked with the political mechanisms of the ruling party and its negotiation process with fundamentalist parties. Bangladesh was initially established as a secular state, but this status was contradicted inasmuch as it kept Islam as a state religion. The AL, which has led a coalition government since 2008, presents itself as a secular party. The BNP, the main

Year	Political regime	Equal inheritance provision in NWDP
1997	AL	Equal provision of inheritance rights incorporated.
2004	BNP and four-party alliance	Equal provision of inheritance rights deducted.
2011	AL-led grand alliance	Withdrawal of the equal provision due to protests and opposition; later, equal access to property is mentioned, but that only concerns already-inherited property.

Table 3.
Timeline of formulating and deducting the equal provision of inheritance rights

opposition party, has allied itself with Islamic fundamentalist parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami. The opposition often criticizes the AL-led government as anti-Islamic and closer to India, which is predominantly Hindu. The AL-led ruling coalition directed the prosecution of war criminals who were primarily Islamist political elites from the Jamaat-e-Islami movement and allied with the BNP, and several of its prominent leaders were executed in the past few years for atrocities committed during the 1971 war of independence from Pakistan. This generated hostile reactions from BNP supporters and severe criticisms from Islamic followers. In response to such criticism, the AL realized the need to be sensitive to the values and sentiments of the dominant Islamist religious group. The severe opposition to the NWDP put the government in a dilemma. On one hand, the AL portrays itself as a secular party promoting women's upliftment; on the other hand, it does not want to hurt the religious feelings of the majority population and religion-based political parties. The current AL-led coalition government has expressed a positive attitude to the dominant religious values. For example, it collaborates with a few Islamic fundamentalist organizations or parties such as Hefazat-e-Islam. It has created an Islamic sub-wing called the Bangladesh Awami Olama League (*Dhaka Tribune*, 2019). Several Islamic parties have also shown interest in prolonging these collaborations. For instance, as a token of appreciation for favors extended by the government to *Madrasa* education, the Islamic groups recently honored Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with the title "Mother of Qawmi" (*Dhaka Tribune*, 2018).

From this case study, some valid questions arise: Why is the AL government even being led by a woman, and after committing itself to a secular and gender-equal policy, why does it opt to negotiate with Muslim fundamentalists on the question of the policy? How does the non-formulation of an equal inheritance provision benefit different group of actors? As the case study demonstrates, the opposition's violence and power made the coalition government reluctant to adopt a radical gender-equal policy for fear of losing state power. The government's negotiations with Islamic fundamentalist groups led to an easy solution that allowed it to continue ruling. Nevertheless, the outcome fails to fulfil the rights and demands of women and feminist activists. They must mobilize extensively and work hard to get attention without any guarantee of success (Nazreen and Hicky, 2019). The outcome of removing the equal inheritance provision dissatisfied women activists, NGOs, INGOs, and many members of civil society. In turn, the religious-fundamentalist groups that had been sidelined by the AL-led government saw this as a window of opportunity to put pressure on the government, force it to negotiate, and make it realize that the fundamentalists are a formidable force to be reckoned with, especially concerning religious issues.

Although the outcome of stepping back from formulating the equal inheritance policy minimized political instability and violence, at least for that moment, there is still a question of whether the negotiated political regime will ensure sustainability, justice, and equality in Bangladesh in the long term. Did it only give the government an easy, short-term solution to staying in power? It is crucial to take into consideration that while such political negotiations maintain political stability, the survival of the regime, and the distribution of benefits to the Islamic fundamentalist groups and the ruling coalition, they ultimately prolong the systematic oppression of women and inequality in society. The whole process—that is, of initiating an equal inheritance policy, followed by the incidents that include the violent opposition which ultimately led to the folding back of the policy—is depicted in Figure 1.
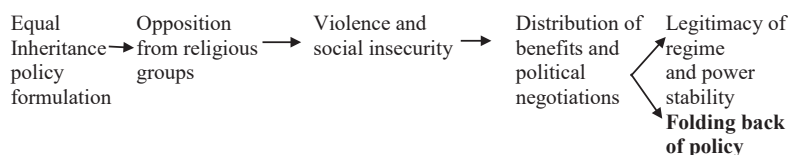

Equal Inheritance policy formulation → Opposition from religious groups → Violence and social insecurity → Distribution of benefits and political negotiations → Legitimacy of regime and power stability / **Folding back of policy**

Figure 1.
How equal inheritance policy folded back in Bangladesh

Conclusion

The article analyzed the ongoing debates over inequality between Bangladeshi men and women regarding inheritance rights. Women's right to an inheritance is a sensitive issue amongst Muslims and Hindus in the country, inasmuch as their views are guided by religious values and norms that have been practiced for centuries. When the government-initiated change by formulating a formal regulation, it led to violent opposition, especially from the fundamentalist Islamic parties that threatened societal peace, security, and the survival of the regime. Despite positive intentions, the government failed to formulate the policy. Instead, it negotiated with the fundamentalist Islamic groups to quell their opposition, maintain peace, and remain in power. The case of Bangladesh's inheritance policy is an excellent example of how policy initiatives that are incompatible with religious sentiments cannot even be formulated.

What lessons can be learned from this failure in gender-equal policy formulation, and what strategies can the government embark upon to overcome the political negotiations that compromise the policy and keep it from being implemented? These questions are essential because while such political negotiations maintain the status quo, distribute power and interest among political elites, and keep the regime in power, they regenerate the systematic oppression of women and structural inequality. The lessons to be learned relate to the observation that the inheritance policy is not a technical, economic, or financial policy, but one that seeks to bring about a fundamental change in the formal (legislation) and informal institutions (socio-cultural and religious norms and practices) that have been in operation for centuries.

The first lesson is that this kind of policy is deeply political and, since it may affect religious sentiments, requires cultural compatibility. A culture-policy misfit is likely to make policies fail or remain unimplemented. Second, radical changes require supporters, allies, and people who believe in reform. Third, the state must be willing to support a gender-equitable policy, locate the epicenter of opposition, understand its nature, strength, and type. Fourth, it is necessary to go beyond the fundamental idea of women's inclusion to ensure gender equality; a broader framework is required to identify the socio-political drivers in formal and informal institutions and to understand the politics of negotiating gender equality. Finally, promoting bottom-up and participatory gender-equal policymaking may enhance a policy's legitimacy. Any policy that seeks to bring about fundamental changes in cultural and religious norms and practices requires a relatively long-time frame and the state's strong willingness to follow up and support the changes through subsequent governments, each of which must be supported by the major political parties. This is because different mobilizations and dialogues between various organizations and stakeholders are essential for building consensus with political elites and religious leaders. Such consensus would ultimately enhance the legitimacy of the policy and the regime and enable the policy's successful formulation as well as implementation.

References

Agarwal, B. (1998), "Widows versus daughters or widows as daughters? Property, land, and economic security in rural India", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 1-48.

Aktar, S. and Abdullah, A.S.M. (2007), "A comparative study on Hindu law between Bangladesh and India", *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 61-95.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2011), *Population and Housing Census*, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka.

Banu, A. (2015), "Global-local interactions: first three decades of women's movement in Bangladesh", *The Journal of Asiatic Society*, Vol. 60 No. 2, pp. 203-230.

Begum, M. (2009), "Byaktigoto Ain Porjalochona: Bangladesh O Poschim Bongo" (Revisiting personal law: Bangladesh and West Bengal), Mimeo of post-doctoral research as visiting professor to Kolkata University, Kolkata.

Bhalotra, S., Brulé, R. and Roy, S. (2020), "Women's inheritance rights reform and the preference for sons in India", *Journal of Development Economics*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2018.08.001.

Bukhari, M.I. (1966), *Sahih Bukhari (a collection of sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh))*, Muhammad Sarid, Karachi.

Chappell, L. and Waylen, G. (2013), "Gender and the hidden life of institutions", *Public Administration*, Vol. 91 No. 3, pp. 599-615.

Chowdhury, A.B.M.S.A. (1964), "The problem of representation in the Muslim law of inheritance", *Islam Study*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 375-391.

Das, J. (2016), "Good laws, bad outcomes: land rights and inheritance practices for Christian women in Bangladesh", *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, Vol. 48 No. 2, pp. 159-185.

Drisko, J. W. and Maschi, T. (2016), *Content Analysis. Pocket Guide to Social Work Research Methods*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.

Fish, M.S. (2002), "Islam and authoritarianism", *World Politics*, Vol. 55 No. 1, pp. 4-37.

Gayen, K. (2011), "Equal property rights: much ado about nothing", *Forum – A Monthly Publication of Daily Star*, Vol. 5 No. 5, available at: http://archive.thedailystar.net/forum/2011/May/right.htm (accessed 30 August 2022).

Glas, S., Spierings, N. and Scheepers, P. (2018), "Re-understanding religion and support for gender equality in Arab countries", *Gender & Society*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 686-712.

Gouda, M. and Gutmann, J. (2021), "Islamic constitutions and religious minorities", *Public Choice*, Vol. 186 No. 3, pp. 243-265.

Government of Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh (1997), *National Women Development Policy*, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, Dhaka.

Government of Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh (2011), *National Women Development Policy*, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, Dhaka.

Hassan, M. (2013), "Political settlement dynamics in a limited-access order: the case of Bangladesh", ESID Working Paper No. 23, Development Institute, BRAC University, Dhaka.

Helmke, G. and Levitsky, S. (2004), "Informal institutions and comparative politics: a research agenda", *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 2 No. 4, pp. 725-740.

Herman, L. and Vervaeck, B. (2019), *Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE, Introduction, pp. 1-10.

Hickey, S. and Nazreen, S. (2019), "Investigating the politics of gender equity through a power domains approach", Nazneen, S., Hickey, S. and Sifaki, E. (Eds), *Negotiating Gender Equity in the Global South: The Politics of Domestic Violence Policy*, Routledge, London, pp. 21-43.

Holy Qur'an (2001), A.Y. Ali, (Trans.) and T. Griffith (Ed), *Wordsworth*.

Hossain, J. (2020a), "How policy folds back before implementation: a study on unequal inheritance right in Bangladesh", Jamil, I., Aminuzzaman, S., Kabir, S.L. and Haque, M. (Eds), *Gender Mainstreaming in Politics, Administration and Development in South Asia*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, CH, pp. 37-60.

Hossain, M.A.I. (2020b), "Identifying the catalysts for systematic deprivation of Hindu women's right to property: an appraisal from the political contours of Bangladesh", *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 210-222.

Karatnycky, A. (2002), "Muslim countries and the democracy gap", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 99-112.

Khan, M. (2010), "Political settlements and the governance of growth-enhancing institutions", available at: https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/9968/1/Political_Settlements_internet.pdf (accessed 19 June 2021).

Khan, M. (2019), "CEDAW at a dead end in Bangladesh?", *The Daily Star*, 8 March.

Khan, I., Abdullah, M., Rahman, N.N.A., Nor, M.R.B.M. and Yusoff, M.Y.Z.B.M. (2016), "The right of women in property sharing in Bangladesh: can the Islamic inheritance system eliminate discrimination?", *SpringerPlus*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 1-8.

Kostenko, V.V., Kuzmuchev, P.A. and Ponarin, E.D. (2016), "Attitudes towards gender equality and perception of democracy in the Arab world", *Democratization*, Vol. 23 No. 5, pp. 862-891.

Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division (LPAD) (1937), *The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937*, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka.

Mackay, F. and Murtagh, C. (2019), "New institutions, new gender rules? A feminist institutionalist lens on women and power-sharing", *feminists@ law*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 1-54.

Mahmud, K.T., Kabir, F., Hossain, J. and Chawdhury, D. (2021), "Can land ownership really improve the economic status and decision-making capacity of the rural women? Evidence from Bangladesh", *Journal of Poverty*, pp. 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/10875549.2021.2011532.

Manu (1969), *Manu Smriti (Laws of Manu- an ancient legal text of Hinduism)*, Gujrati Printing Press, Bombay.

Mithun, M.B. (2019), "Reasons behind the forced migration of Bangladeshi Hindu religious minorities to India", *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, Vol. 26 No. 3, pp. 461-483.

Moghadam, V.M. (2004), "Patriarchy in transition: women and the changing family in the Middle East", *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 35 No. 2, pp. 137-162.

Mohajan, H. (2013), "Human rights in Bangladesh: stresses on the period of 2009 to 2012", *Proceedings of KASBIT Business Journal*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 38-64.

Monsoor, T. (1999), *From Patriarchy to Gender Equity: Family Law and its Impact on Women in Bangladesh*, Dhaka University Press, Dhaka.

Mulla, D.F. (1986), *Principles of Hindu Law*, N.M. Tripathi Private Ltd, Mumbai.

Naher, A. and Tripura, P. (2010), "Violence against indigenous women", Mohaiemen, N. (Ed.), *Between Ashes and Hope: Chittagong Hill Tracts in the Blind Spot of Bangladesh Nationalism*, Drishtipat Writers' Collective, pp. 194-198.

Nazreen, S. and Hickey, S. (2019), "Investigating the politics of gender equity through a power domains approach", Nazneen, S., Hickey, S. and Sifaki, E. (Eds), *Negotiating Gender Equity in the Global South: The Politics of Domestic Violence Policy*, Routledge, London, pp. 1-20.

Norris, P. (2007), "Political activism: new challenges, new opportunities", Boix, C. and Stokes, S. (Eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 628-652.

Norris, P. and Inglehart, R. (2002), "Islamic culture and democracy: testing the 'clash of civilizations' thesis", *Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 1 No. 3-4, pp. 235-263.

Panday, P.K. (2008), "Representation without participation: quotas for women in Bangladesh", *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 489-512.

Rizzo, H., Abdel-Latif, A.H. and Meyer, K. (2007), "The relationship between gender equality and democracy: a comparison of Arab versus non-Arab Muslim societies", *Sociology*, Vol. 41 No. 6, pp. 1151-1170.

Sourav, K. (2019), "Property right of Indian women (600 BC-400 AD)", available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3654574 (accessed 14 March 2022).

Tamanna, N. (2008), "Personal status laws in Morocco and Tunisia: a comparative exploration of the possibilities for equality-enhancing reform in Bangladesh", *Feminist Legal Studies*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 323-343.

The Dhaka Tribune (2018), "PM Sheikh Hasina branded as 'Mother of Qawmi'", 4 November, p. 109.

The Dhaka Tribune (2019), "Who runs Bangladesh Awami Ulama League?", 23 January, p. 52.

Uthaimin, M. (1983), *Tashilu al-Faraid*, (Islamic inheritance law), Dar al-Taibah.

Waylen, G. (2014), "Informal institutions, institutional change, and gender equality", *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 67 No. 1, pp. 212-223.

Waylen, G. (2017), "Analyzing gender in informal institutions: an introduction", Waylen, G. (Ed.), *Gender and Informal Institutions*, Rowman & Littlefield, London, pp. 1-21.

Wendy, D.O.F. (1981), *The Rig Veda: An Anthology: One Hundred and Eight Hymns, Selected, Translated and Annotated*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex and New York, NY.

World Atlas (2022), "Muslim population by country", available at: https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-the-largest-muslim-populations.html (accessed 8 March 2022).

Zahur, M. (2016), "Hindu women's property rights: Bangladesh perspective", *BRAC University Journal*, Vol. X1 No. 1, pp. 79-86.

About the authors
Jinat Hossain is a PhD fellow at Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, KU Leuven. She also holds a position of Assistant Professor (on study leave) at Noakhali Science and Technology University, Bangladesh. She has worked as a research consultant for different government, non-government and international organizations. Her research focuses on gender, climate change adaptation, land right, gender policy, migration, and religion. Jinat Hossain is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: jinat.hossain@kuleuven.be

Ishtiaq Jamil is professor at the Department of Government, University of Bergen, Norway. His current research focuses on institutional trust, social capital, administrative culture, public policy, and governance in the context of South Asia, and East and West Africa. He has recently edited several books on governance and public policy and published several articles on institutional trust, quality of government, and public policies in international journals.

An evaluation of community care services for the elderly in Hong Kong

Gigi Lam

Department of Sociology, Hong Kong Shue Yan University, Hong Kong SAR, China

Abstract

Purpose – This article analyses community care services (CCS) in terms of availability, awareness, accessibility, and acceptance (the Four A's approach), untangles the deep-seated factors underlying the CCS and provides some short-term, medium-term, and long-term recommendations.

Design/methodology/approach – A literature review was conducted, including relevant government reports, consultation papers, Legislative Council papers and articles from academic journals from 1980 to the present.

Findings – The Four A's approach shows that applicants to both centre-based services and home-based services endure lengthy waiting times because of the limited number of CCS. Furthermore, the awareness of day respite services is approximately 50 percent, which lags behind other CCS. Accessibility is contingent on a cross-district day respite service system and a lack of consistency between the quota and the proportion of older adults in the districts. Finally, the level of service provided by CCS is unsatisfactory due to inflexible service provision. Reviewing the brief history of long-term care services (LTC) reveals the deep-seated factors at the core of their heavy reliance on the subvention model, in contrast to the adoption of the 'mixed economy of care' by residential care services (RCS). An imbalance in budget allocation to RCS and CCS is also revealed.

Originality/value – Although the principle of 'ageing in place' was introduced in 1977, the institutionalisation rate (6.8 percent) of older adults remains unexpectedly high in Hong Kong, even surpassing its Asian counterparts, whereas the usage rate of CCS hovers around 0.8 percent. Thus, how to implement policy concerning LTC services for older adults must be re-evaluated.

Keywords Community care services, Ageing, Four A's approach, Publicly funded model, Unbalanced budget allocation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Evidence confirms that Hong Kong has already entered the era of an ageing society. First, males enjoyed an incremental increase in life expectancy at birth from 72.3 in 1981 and 78.4 in 2001 to 82.2 in 2020, while the corresponding increase for females was from 78.5 in 1981 and 84.6 in 2001 to 88.1 in 2020 (C&SD, 2012; 2020a). Another piece of persuasive information concerning the ageing society pertains to the large proportion of people aged 65 or older (18 percent) in 2019, which is projected to elevate to 36 percent in 2049 (C&SD, 2020b).

The immediate consequences of the long life expectancy are the projected increase in the old-age dependency ratio from 265 in 2019 to 653 in 2049 (C&SD, 2020b) and the projected decrease in the labour force participation rate from 59.2 percent in 2016 to 49.6 percent in 2066 (C&SD, 2017). These factors will put tremendous pressure on the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government not only to ease the demands on healthcare, housing, social security, and elderly services but also to promote active ageing, which refers to "the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age" (World Health Organization, 2002).

One of the key engines of active ageing resorts to the long-term care services (LTC) (i.e., community care services (CCS) and residential care services (RCS)). The principles of LTC in Hong Kong entail 'ageing in place as the core', 'institutional care as the backup' and the 'continuum of care'. Ageing in place refers to the encouragement of the elderly to stay at home to prevent unnecessary or misplaced institutionalisation (Audit Commission, 2014). Institutional care refers to that the elderly depend on institutionalisation as a last resort and the continuum of care encourages the elders to stay at the same residential care home for the elderly (RCHE) even when their health deteriorates. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) is introducing various long-term community care services (CCS) as discussed in the following section. Subsequently, the current CCS are evaluated, and the paper concludes with some recommendations.

Literature review

Different scholars have endeavoured to investigate the LTC in Hong Kong revolving around five major themes: a) a historical account of the development of LTC in Hong Kong from 1970s onwards (Chan and Philipps, 2002); b) the problems faced by LTC in compromising ageing in place (e.g., structural constrains as exemplified by an unbalanced budget allocation to subsidised RCS over CCS (Chui, 2011), a lack of alternative funding mode apart from subsidised CCS (Leung, 2001) and a lack of LTC insurance coverage (Chi, 2001), operational constraints as illustrated by poor service coordination (Chi, 2001; Leung, 2001) and no quality control over services (Chi, 2001; Leung, 2001), cultural constraints as exemplified by declining filial virtues (Chui, 2008; Fong and Law, 2017) and a change in family structure and support (Leung, 2001); c) an exploration of the alternative arrangements to the current LTC (e.g., a proposal of voucher system on LTC in Hong Kong by putting against four preconditions of a sustainable care system (Chou *et al.*, 2005) and an introduction of an accreditation system for LTC by taking reference of models from Australia and Canada (Ng *et al.*, 2017); d) the projections on financial sustainability of LTC (Yuen, 2014) and e) how LTC (i.e., RCS and CCS) respond to the threats emanating from COVID-19 (Lum *et al.*, 2020).

While the previous research focused on the structural perspectives to analyse CCS (Chan and Philipps, 2002; Chi, 2001; Chou *et al.*, 2005; Chui, 2008; Fong and Law, 2017; Leung, 2001), this study will conduct an evaluation research of CCS based on the perspective of target participants (i.e., elders). A stepwise evaluation research consists of five steps, including needs assessment, programme theory and design, programme implementation, programme outcomes, and programme efficiency. The current study focuses on the first stage by examining elders' needs assessment of the CCS with the Four A's approach (i.e., availability, accessibility, awareness and acceptance).

Synopsis of CCS

Community care and support services can be classified as centre-based services and home-based services. The former category includes District Elderly Community Centres (DECCs), Support Teams for the Elderly (STE), Neighbourhood Elderly Centres (NECs), Social Centres for the Elderly (S/E) and Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly (DEs/DCUs). Home-based care services include Enhanced Home and Community Care Services (EHCCS), Integrated Home Care Services (IHCS) and Home Help Service (HHS).

Centre-based services
DECCs (at the district level) and NECs (at the neighbourhood level) provide health education, counselling services, educational and developmental activities, provision of information on community resources and referral services, volunteer development, carer support services,

educational and supportive programmes on dementia, reaching out and networking, meal and laundry services, drop-in service and social and recreational activities. The S/Es offer social and recreational activities for the elders by helping them make constructive use of their leisure time, build social networks and participate in community affairs. Both DECCs and NECs operate from 9 am to 5 pm from Mondays to Saturdays by charging the elders annual membership fee.

The elders aged 60 or more who are frail or suffering from moderate or severe levels of impairment and who are not receiving any residential care, elderly people with low self-care abilities and no daytime family care usually attend D/Es or DCUs full time (4 days or more per week). Those elders with higher self-care abilities or partial family daytime care usually attend D/Es or DCUs part time (fewer than 4 days per week). In addition, a respite care service, which is a temporary day care service from 8 am to 6 pm from Mondays to Saturdays, is available for frail people aged 60 or more to give temporary relief to the carers; this service is provided by D/Es and DCUs at a charge of HK$41.5 per day.

Home-based services
As an alternative to centre-based services, the services provided by EHCCS and IHCS cover care management, basic and special nursing care, personal care, rehabilitation exercises, day care services, carer support services, day respite services, counselling services, 24-hour emergency support, environmental risk assessment, home modifications, cooking and meal delivery services, transportation and attendant services. Eligibility criteria for EHCCS and IHCS differ: EHCCS caters to the nursing and caring needs for elderly people aged 65 or over suffering from moderate or severe impairment, whereas IHCS caters to a broader group, targeting both frail cases (frail elders aged 60 or more suffering from moderate or severe impairment) and ordinary cases (elders aged 60 or more with mild or no impairment).

Evaluation of CCS: the Four A's approach
The Four A's approach is a useful tool for conducting needs assessment and evaluating social policy effectiveness, which was first introduced as "Seven A's" approach by Krout (1986, 1994) and Williams *et al.* (1991). These "Seven A's" identify availability, accessibility, awareness, acceptability, affordability, appropriateness, and adequacy as the key elements of an effective social policy. Hence, the Seven A's approach represents an analytical framework to evaluate community-based services provided to the elders in the United States (Krout, 1986, 1994), in-home services for elders in rural America (Williams *et al.*, 1991), and community resource needs among the elders (Truglio-Londrigan and Gallagher, 2003).

Royse *et al.* (2016) further highlighted four out of seven key elements that cover awareness (whether those who would benefit from a service are aware of the service), availability (the number of services provided), accessibility (whether a service is convenient to reach and any transportation cost involved in reaching the service) and acceptance (the satisfaction level with a service) for evaluating the needs assessment of a social policy. Therefore, with focus on the four key factors, the Four A's approach will be adopted in this paper as an evaluation tool for evaluating the CCS in Hong Kong.

Availability
The typical waiting period (on the Central Waiting List) for home care services, including EHCCS and IHCS (frail cases), increased from 2.5 to 6 months between 2010 and 2021, with the peak hovering between 11 and 20 months from 2017 to 2020, as Figure 1 shows. Similarly, the typical waiting period for centre-based services increased from 6.8 months to 13 months between 2010 and 2020 although it has shortened to 7 months in 2021. The long waiting period for CCS can be attributed to the demand which is outweighing the supply. Figure 2

clearly shows that the rate of increase in subsidised places for CCS (117 percent) is incompatible with that of waitlisted cases (356 percent) over the 10 years between 2010 and 2020.

Given the limited capacity, another pressing concern is service overlap. A close examination of EHCCS and IHCS reveals the similarities in realms of coverage, target users and services provided (Audit Commission, 2014). Both schemes provide care management, basic and special nursing care, personal care, rehabilitation exercises, day respite services and carer support, and both schemes serve elderly people across 18 districts in Hong Kong assessed to be moderately or severely impaired (Audit Commission, 2014). The overlap between EHCCS and IHCS gives rise to the question of whether the already limited resources have been too widely distributed (Audit Commission, 2014). It is plausible that integrating limited resources would be a more efficient way of accommodating the growing needs of the
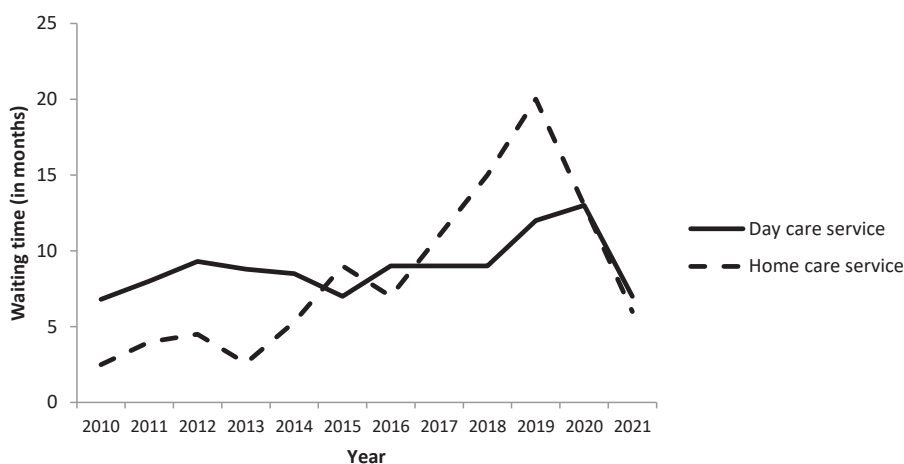
Figure 1.
Waiting time (in months) of community care service, 2010-2021
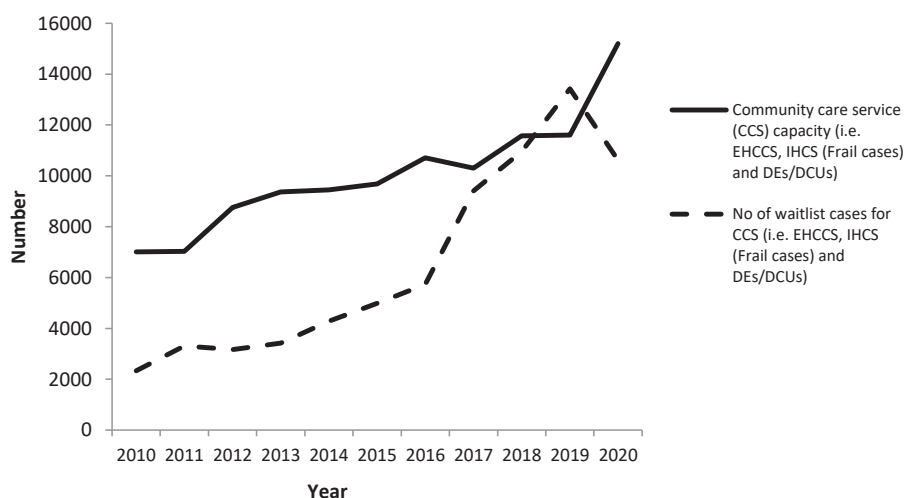**Sources:** Audit Commission Hong Kong (2014), Social Welfare Department (2021d) and HKSARG (2019)

Figure 2.
Demand and supply of community care service, 2010-2020
Sources: Audit Commission Hong Kong (2014), Social Welfare Department (2021f), Social Welfare Department (2021g)

elderly (Audit Commission, 2014). Given that both schemes have been operating for over 17 years, it is perhaps the right time to consider adopting a more pragmatic strategy by integrating duplicate services (Audit Commission, 2014).

Awareness

Carers' awareness of the services is different across different services. Whereas 76.3 percent of carers were aware of IHCS, only 53.2 percent of carers were aware of respite care services and 20.5 percent of carers did not know how to apply for respite services (Society for Community Organization, 2017).

Differences in awareness can be attributed to two factors, namely the availability of channels through which to learn about services and the scope of the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services (SCNAMES). The SCNAMES is a mechanism implemented by the SWD since 2000 to provide assessment and registration for subsidised LTC services (i.e., CCS and RCS).

The elders usually participate in activities in DECCs or NECs, which may bring opportunities for them to approach the IHCS or EHCCS provided by DECCs or NECs (SWD, 2021a). Furthermore, when elderly individuals are hospitalised for any reason, medical social workers will refer them to home care services after they are discharged to meet their needs during their recovery. This increases the chances of elderly individuals and/or their carers learning about home/community care services.

In contrast, respite care service requires self-arrangement. Elderly individuals in need and/or their carers have to contact the service provider to submit an application. Moreover, the service providers are not DECCs or NECs, but DEs/DCUs (SWD, 2021b). DEs/DCUs are not open facilities. Carers are generally unlikely to encounter these units in their daily lives or to be familiar with the services they provide.

When seeking elderly services, the elderly/their carers first have to take the SCNAMES conducted by the SWD before applying, to assess which types of services are suitable for them (SWD, 2021c). The subsidised CCS covered by the SCNAMES include IHCS (Frail Cases), EHCCS and DEs/DCUs. As EHCCS and IHCS (Frial Cases) are covered by the assessment, applicants are likely to be more aware of these services when seeking assistance. In contrast, day respite services are not covered by the SCNAMES, so applicants are likely to be less exposed to and thus less aware of these services.

Accessibility

In general, the accessibility of CCS depends on strict requirements set by the SWD. To determine the care needs of elderly individuals, the comprehensive assessments under the SCNAMES are conducted by accredited assessors (i.e., social workers, nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists) according to the physical functioning, abilities in activities of daily living, social support and living environment of the elders by putting against the assessment tool, interRAI-Home Care (SWD, 2021c). Of the applicants who apply for CCS, only elderly individuals who are assessed as having moderate or severe physical impairments are eligible to access such services while their counterparts who are assessed as having no impairment or mild impairment are not eligible for any subsidised CCS. This results in a low CCS utilisation rate in Hong Kong. For example, only 14.8 percent of the carers used EHCCS, and only 6.3 percent of the carers used the Day Care Centre Service (Society for Community Organization, 2017).

Apart from the strict requirements, accessibility also differs across various on-site support services and respite care services. On-site support services are handled by the Support Teams for the Elderly associated with the DECCs. According to the SWD's 2021 figures, Hong Kong has 41 DECCs distributed across 18 districts, each with one Support

Team for the Elderly. On average, each district has at least two teams. Those in need can apply for services at the DECC in their area of residence. This shows that the coverage of on-site support services is broad and easy to reach. Therefore, its accessibility is high.

However, respite care services adopt a non-regional division model to provide services (The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 2018). Despite there being 90 units providing services in Hong Kong (SWD, 2021d), the services available for appointment may not be in the same community as the service users. The cross-district system is further complicated by the number of spots available for day respite services. According to the latest Vacancy Position number of Day Respite Services for Elderly Persons (as of September 2021) (SWD, 2021e), only 47 out of 90 respite service units can be reserved, and there are only 78 vacancies in total. This greatly increases the difficulty for carers to find services. Therefore, accessibility of day respite service is low due to location and vacancy issues.

The allocation of services is also disproportionate to the ratio of elderly people across the different districts. Despite Kwun Tong (9.6 percent), Shatin (9 percent) and Yuen Long districts (8 percent) having the largest proportions of elderly citizens to Hong Kong's total elderly population out of the 18 districts in Hong Kong (C&SD, 2018), the percentages of the total day respite services allocated to them were 17 percent, 12 percent and 6 percent, respectively. The percentage of the total day respite services allocated to Yuen Long is even the same as that of the Central and Western District (6 percent), which only had 3.3 percent of total elderly population in Hong Kong (C&SD, 2018; SWD, 2021e). Furthermore, the percentages of actual vacancies in those three districts were 36 percent, 16 percent and 38 percent respectively (SWD, 2021e). This greatly increases the difficulty for carers to find services.

Acceptance

Acceptance varies across different CCS. In the survey conducted by Sau Po Centre on Ageing (2011), 10.8 percent of subsidised CCS users suggested increasing service hours and flexibility of services. Currently, meal delivery services under EHCCS are not provided on Sundays and public holidays (Elderly Rights League H.K. and Society for Community Organization, 2012). To accommodate staff members' commuting time, lunch and dinner are delivered at 11:00 am and 4:30 pm, which may not align with the normal living habits of all elderly service users (ERL, 2012). The household cleaning and rehabilitation services under the programme also performed poorly. Cleaning staff usually visit older adults only once per month for 1 hour each visit, while physical therapists may only visit them once every 6 months (ERL, 2012).

In stark contrast, 100 percent of the caregivers were satisfied with the day respite services and only 6.1 percent of the interviewees were worried about the service cost (Society for Community Organization, 2017). In this regard, acceptability is quite high and the service fee is not a burden for carers.

Discussion

The aforesaid Four A's approach shows that applicants to both centre-based services and home-based services perceive availability, awareness, accessibility, and acceptance as unsatisfactory. It represents an initial attempt to evaluate the needs assessment of CCS from the perspective of target participants. It adds new knowledge to existing literature, which identified the structural barriers and operational constraints based on the organisational perspectives.

Overview of long-term care policy: deep-seated causes of the lagged development of CCS

Until the 1970s, economic development was prioritised over welfare programmes, which mainly arose as by-products of economic development and the remedial and reactive actions of departments (Chan and Phillips, 2002). In other words, there was no specific LTC policy to address the ageing population. In response to the increase in the population aged 65 or above from 4.5 percent in 1971 to 5.5 percent in 1976 (C&SD, 1997), the government issued the first White Paper on ageing and services and the Programme Plan on elderly services in 1973 and 1976, respectively. Although these early initiatives highlighted the shortcomings of the services provided to this high-risk group and acknowledged the need for coordination among government departments, they both succumbed to unfavourable economic conditions (Chan and Phillips, 2002). In 1977, the needs identified by professionals were recognised via the issuance of the Green Paper on Services for the Elderly, which upheld the principles of ageing in place (Chan and Phillips, 2002). Ageing in place is defined as allowing the elderly to live in a familiar place for as long as they wish (Fisk, 1986; Pastalen, 1990), which aligns with the five major principles (i.e., independence, participation, care, dignity and self-fulfilment) of social policy for older adults identified by the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (United Nations, 2008). Subsequent adherence to the principles of ageing in place was addressed in the 1980 White Paper on Social Welfare and the 1991 White Paper - Social Welfare into the 1990s and Beyond (Social Welfare Department, 1980; The University of Hong Kong, 2009). Hong Kong's first Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, set care for the elderly as a strategic policy objective in 1997 (Audit Commission, 2014). Ageing in place and the continuum of care were adopted as two guiding principles to promote a sense of security, a sense of belonging and a sense of health and worthiness among the elderly (Tung, 2000).

Ageing in place is, however, constrained by both structural and cultural barriers. The structural barriers consist of the funding mode of LTC (Chan and Phillips, 2002; Chou *et al.*, 2005; Chui, 2011) and the imbalanced budget allocation to RCS and CCS (Hong Kong Policy Research Institute and Hong Kong Vision, 2017; Sau Po Centre on Ageing, 2011). The cultural barriers are caused by the decline in the traditional Chinese values of filial piety (Chui, 2008; Leung, 2001).

Structural barriers
First, inherited from the British model, the financing mode of LTC services before 1999 was predominantly based on the subvention model supported by tax revenue, in which subventions were provided to nongovernmental organisations for service provision (Chan and Phillips, 2002). The SWD played a statutory role in ensuring services providers in accordance with service quality standards and funding and service agreements. After 1999, the predominant subvention model transformed into a mixed model of public, private and voluntary providers (i.e., a mixed economy of care; Walker *et al.*, 1998), as the SWD contracted out home help and home care services (1999), introduced competitive bidding among contractors to run contract homes (2001) and allowed nongovernmental organisations to run self-financed homes by charging higher fees without seeking government funding (Chan and Philipps, 2002; Chui, 2011). Salient differences, however, can still be identified between RCS and CCS. Due to the unique history of residential care homes, private residential homes became alternatives in coping with the escalating ageing population and prolonged bureaucratic procedures in the 1980s (Lam, 2022).

In contrast, the private market of CCS is relatively underdeveloped, constrained by its labour-intensive nature. High-touch services (Wilber *et al.*, 1997) appear unattractive and unprofitable to private service providers, resulting in a reliance on government support for nongovernmental organisations in providing CCS (Chi, 2011). As solely relying on the public

sector restricts service providers' options, introducing a voucher system that advocates consumer-oriented LTC should be considered (Chou *et al.*, 2005; Leung, 2001). Hence, in 2013 the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly, based on the 'money-follows-the-user' approach, and the co-payment scheme, based on a sliding scale of users' ability to pay, were introduced. The pilot scheme has attracted more service providers, the number rising from 62 in 2013 to 227 in 2020, with one third of the new entrants coming from the private sector (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2021).

Moreover, an over-reliance on the public market is further compromised by an unbalanced budget allocation to RCS and CCS. Figure 3 presents the recurrent expenditure on the provision of subsidised RCS and CCS from 2004 to 2020. It shows that from 2003 to 2015 the recurrent expenditure on subsidised RCS was on average 3.35 times greater than that on CCS (Figure 3), and the capacity of subsidised RCS was on average 3 times greater than that of CCS (Figure 4). Although the recurrent expenditure of CCS in 2020 was triple that in 2014, the recurrent expenditure of RCS remained 1.8 times that of CCS (Figure 3). The budget imbalance runs in tandem with the service imbalance between RCS and CCS (Elderly Commission, 2017). From 2013 to 2015, approximately 65 percent of the new applications were for CCS, whereas only 35 percent were assessed as having care needs that could only be met by RCS. However, over 95 percent of the applicants applied for subsidised RCS because of the dual option of CCS and RCS (Elderly Commission, 2017).

The imbalance is intricately intertwined with the non-means-tested mechanism (universal rather than targeted) and nuances in the subsidised modes of RCS and CCS, supplemented with the social insurance system (Chui, 2011). A Standard Care Need Assessment Mechanism was established in 2000 as a centralised screening mechanism to determine the care needs of elderly individuals according to their impairment levels, rather than a means-tested or needs-related mechanism (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2021; Leung, 2001). In 2021, RCHE-subsidised places accounted for 40 percent of residential homes, including 27 percent subvented homes (i.e., nursing homes and care and attention homes), self-financed homes, and contract homes, and 13 percent Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS) homes. The remaining 60 percent of residential care homes were private. However, the government still indirectly subsidises private homes (i.e., it subsidises older adults to live in private homes via
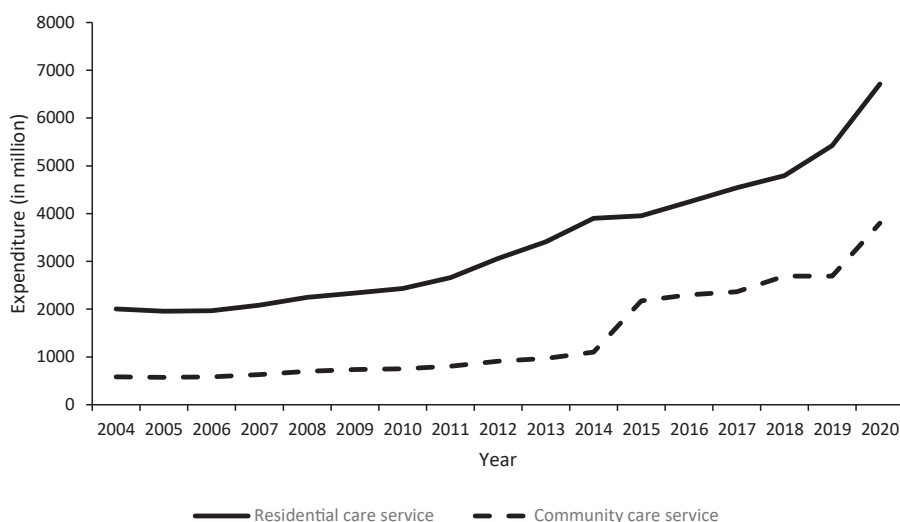

Figure 3.
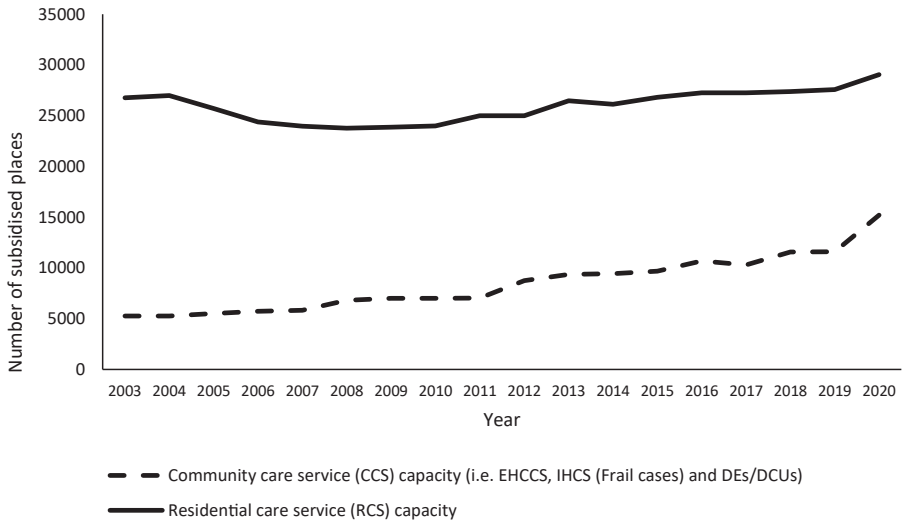Recurrent expenditure on subsidised community care services and residential care services, 2004-2020
Sources: Audit Commission Hong Kong (2014), Legislative Council Secretariat (2019) and Sau Po Centre on Ageing (2011)

Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) once they pass the income and assets tests; Elderly Commission, 2011). Figure 5 presents the ratio of CSSA recipients living in private homes to the total number of subsidised places, which hovered around 50 percent from 2008 to 2017.

In contrast, CCS are publicly financed, with the government subsidising 90 percent and 96 percent of the unit cost of centre-based and home-based CCS, respectively (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2021). As CCS and RCS are complementary, it is not surprising that the institutionalisation rate was as high as 6.8 percent in 2008, surpassing that in Asian counterparts, such as Japan (2.9 percent), Singapore (2.9 percent), Taiwan (1.9 percent) and China (1.7 percent), whereas the utilisation rate of CCS accounted for only 0.8 percent in Hong Kong in 2010, lagging behind Japan (5.5 percent), Taiwan (1 percent) and China (i.e., Shenzhen: 19 percent) (Hong Kong Policy Research Institute and Hong Kong Vision, 2017). The high

Figure 4.
Capacity on subsidised community care services and residential care services, 2003-2020
Sources: Audit Commission Hong Kong (2014), Sau Po Centre on Ageing (2011), Social Welfare Department (2021f), Social Welfare Department (2021g)
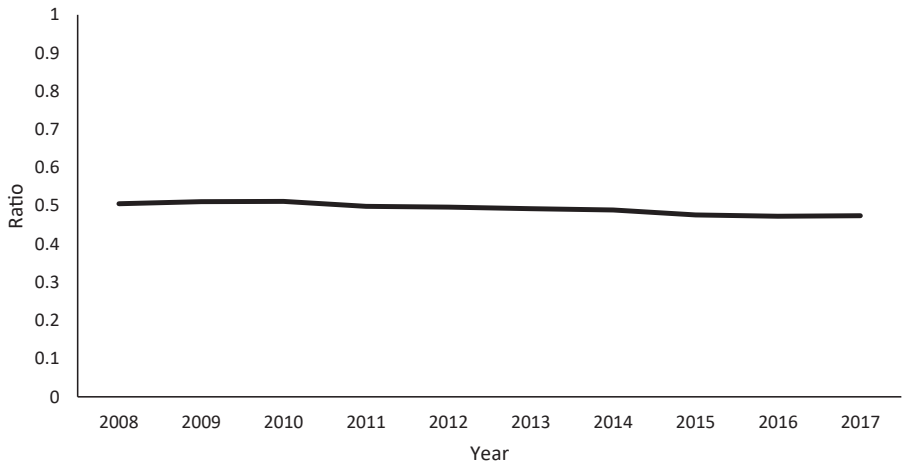
Figure 5.
Proportion of CSSA cases to total number of subsidised residential care service places, 2008-2017
Sources: Calculated from Audit Commission Hong Kong (2014), Sau Po Centre on Ageing (2011) and HKSARG (2018)

institutionalisation rate is caused by several factors, including the decreasing co-residence rate between parents and adult children, the declining family size and flat size, the lack of transitional support after discharge from hospital and the sudden deterioration of the health status of older adults (Elderly Commission, 2009). However, underdeveloped CCS are considered to be the main cause of the high institutionalisation rate in Hong Kong (Leung, 2001). This drives a vicious cycle that violates the ageing in place principles that have been upheld since 1977. Despite the high rate of institutionalisation and underuse of CCS, 96.4 percent of elderly respondents to an official survey stated a preference not to move to a residential care home and 81.4 percent stated that they would rather remain at home even if their health worsened (C&SD, 2009). This is in accordance with the normative belief that the Chinese prefer to age in a familiar environment, with the support of their family, friends and neighbours.

Conclusion and recommendations

Underdeveloped CCS are hindered by a shortage of subsidised CCS places coupled with long waiting times of 10 months and 5 months for day care and home care services, respectively, in 2021 (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2021). The shortage has become acute, with the Elderly Commission (2017) predicting a shortage of 18,000 CCS places in 2026. The shortage is attributed to structural factors, including a publicly financed model and prioritising of the budget allocation to RCS over CCS. Enormous financial pressure puts fiscal sustainability at stake, which will result in a structural financial deficit in 2029–30 as predicted by the Working Group on Long-Term Fiscal Planning (Elderly Commission, 2017); currently, the intended objective of ageing in place cannot be achieved. The priority assigned to RCS drives a vicious cycle characterised by a shortage of CCS places, thus causing a failure to uphold ageing in place.

Since the ageing in place is compromised by the aforementioned structural barriers, CCS reform over the short, medium and long terms is urgently needed. The short-term reform should involve refining existing services, including service integration between IHCS and EHCCS, an expansion of service coverage from moderate and severe levels of impairment to mild levels of impairment. The government made the initial attempt to introduce a pilot scheme of CCS in December 2017 by extending coverage to low-income elderly persons with mild impairment waiting for IHCS (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2021). Moreover, a district-based preregistration system for respite services can be established by assigning quotas according to the proportion of elderly individuals in each district (Elderly Commission, 2017). However, refining the existing services would not suffice, as the effectiveness of CCS hinges on awareness of CCS. The Four A's approach shows that awareness of respite services is generally low among the elderly and their carers. Hence, CCS promotion should be strengthened, including the hosting of CCS promotions in DECCs and NECs, social workers sharing relevant information in hospitals or the inclusion of respite services in the SCNAMES. Emphasis should be placed on the advantages of CCS, including the enhancement of the physical and cognitive status of elderly users, the prevention of unnecessary institutionalisation and the relief of physical and mental pressure among carers.

This should be supplemented by a diversified finance system in the medium term to encourage shared responsibility among the government, individuals, nongovernmental organisations and private sectors to finance LTC (Elderly Commission, 2017). Concrete measures could include co-payment schemes, self-financed CCS offered by nongovernmental organisations and CCS offered by the private sector (Elderly Commission, 2017). The Pilot Scheme on CCSV offers a good example of a co-payment scheme between the government and the elderly population. It not only empowers the

elderly and/or their carers (Benjamin and Matthias, 2000) but also represents an alternative financing mode and encourages public–private partnership. Attention should be paid to how to attract CCSV holders to use the vouchers by refining existing service packages.

Moreover, the effectiveness of the voucher system hinges on the availability of healthcare workers and the quality assurance system (Sau Po Centre on Ageing, 2011). The voucher system is susceptible to polarisation of service providers into 'very good' and 'very bad' (Chou, Chow and Chi, 2005). Furthermore, lessons should be learned from RCS in terms of disparate quality between subvented, self-financed and private homes for elderly people (Wong, 1995). Establishing a licensing system for CCS may prove difficult, as the spectrum of services is too wide (Sau Po Centre on Ageing, 2011). Rather, drawing on examples from Germany and Japan, a transparent and clear accreditation system covering service performance standards, independent party audits and a transparent complaint system can be set (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2021; Sau Po Centre on Ageing, 2011). Rewards can be given to private providers if they exceed the minimum performance threshold, but they may be asked to exit the market if they underperform, aligning with one of the preconditions of vouchers stated by Chou, Chow and Chi (2005).

The key precondition of public–private partnership is an incentive for the private sector to enter this unattractive market to provide high-touch services. Initial attempts could rely on non-subsidised places to offer subsidised services, such as utilising existing nonsubsidised places in the EBPS, contract homes, self-financed homes and subvented homes to provide respite and emergency placement services (Elderly Commission, 2017). However, incentives such as tax deductions should be given to the private sector.

Long-term measures should revolve around cultivating a positive elder care culture among carers, among the elderly and across generations. Subsidies, leave and flexible working hours can be provided to carers as incentives for taking care of the elderly, but the level of subsidy should not exceed their income, as excessive subsidies may discourage carers from working and thus negatively affect the labour market (Hong Kong Policy Research Institute and Hong Kong Vision, 2017; Sau Po Centre on Ageing, 2011).

In the long run, an alternative financing mode, such as an LTC insurance system, should also be considered to enhance financial sustainability (Elderly Commission, 2017). Cross-regional comparisons reveal an interconnectedness across the LTC insurance system, the health system, the pension system and the tax rate of regions (The University of Hong Kong, 2009). Whether social or private insurance is introduced depends on three preconditions (The University of Hong Kong, 2009).

First, a mechanism of co-payment between individuals, employers and employees would help prevent abuse of LTC insurance. Second, the assessment of service need should be objective and impartial. Examples from Japan demonstrate that reassessment is sometimes requested by family members or elderly individuals to decrease the contributory payment (The University of Hong Kong, 2009). Third, the problem of 'budgetary flight', referring to the tendency for insurance companies/agents to avoid users providing the costliest service, should be circumvented.

References

Audit Commission Hong Kong (2014), "Provision of long-term care services for the elderly", available at: http://www.aud.gov.hk/pdf_e/e63ch01.pdf (accessed 5 October 2021).

Benjamin, A.E. and Matthias, R.E. (2000), "Comparing consumer- and agency-directed models: California's in-home supportive services program", *Generations*, Vol. 24, pp. 85-87.

Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) (1997), *Hong Kong Population Projections 1997-2016*, C&SD, Hong Kong.

Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) (2009), *Socio-demographic Profile, Health Status and Self-care Capability of Older Persons. Thematic Household Survey Report No. 40*, C&SD, Hong Kong.

Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) (2012), "The mortality trend in Hong Kong, 1981 to 2011", available at: http://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B71212FC2012XXXXB0100.pdf (accessed 17 August 2021).

Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) (2017), "Hong Kong labour force projections for 2017 to 2066", available at: https://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B71710FB2017XXXXB0100.pdf (accessed 17 August 2021).

Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) (2018), *Thematic Report: Older Persons 2016 Population By-census*, C&SD, Hong Kong.

Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) (2020a), "Hong Kong annual digest of statistics", available at: https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat_report/product/B1010003/att/B10100032 020AN20B0100.pdf (accessed 17 August 2021).

Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) (2020b), "Hong Kong population projections 2020-2069", available at: https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat_report/product/B1120015/att/ B1120015082020XXXXB0100.pdf (accessed 17 August 2021).

Chan, A.C.M. and Phillips, D.R. (2002), "Policies on ageing and long-term care in Hong Kong", Phillips, R. and Chan, A.C.M. (Eds), *Ageing and Long-Term Care: National Policies in the Asia-Pacific*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and International Development Research Centre, Singapore, pp. 23-67.

Chi, I. (2001), "Long-term care policy for elders in Hong Kong", *Journal of Aging and Social Policy*, Vol. 13 Nos 2/3, pp. 137-153.

Chou, K.L., Chow, N.W.S. and Chi, I. (2005), "A proposal for a voucher system for Long-Term Care in Hong Kong", *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 85-106.

Chui, E. (2008), "Ageing in place in Hong Kong – challenges and opportunities in a capitalist Chinese city", *Ageing International*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 167-182.

Chui, E. (2011), "Long-term care policy in Hong Kong: challenges and future directions", *Home Health Care Services Quarterly*, Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 119-132.

Elderly Commission (2009), *Elderly Commission's Study on Residential Care Services for the Elderly Final Report*, Hong Kong.

Elderly Commission (2017), "Elderly services programme plan", available at: https://www. elderlycommission.gov.hk/en/download/library/ESPP_Final_Report_Eng.pdf (accessed 5 October 2021).

Elderly Rights League H.K. and Society for Community Organization (ERL) (2012),《長者社區支援服務參與式研究報告》 (A report on the participation of community care services for the elderly), available at: https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/chinese/panels/ws/papers/ws0427cb2-1858-2-c. pdf (accessed 5 October 2021).

Fisk, M.J. (1986), *Independence and the Elderly,* Billing and Sons Ltd., Worcester.

Fong, B. and Law, V. (2017), "Aging in place", Fong, B., Ng, A. and Yuen, P. (Eds.), *Sustainable Health and Long-Term Care Solutions for an Aging Population*, IGI Global, U.S., pp. 259-276.

Hong Kong Policy Research Institute and Hong Kong Vision (2017), *Aging in Place: Family and Community Care and Support*, Hong Kong Policy Research Institute, Hong Kong.

Krout, J.A. (1986), *The Aged in Rural America,* Greenwood, Westport.

Krout, J.A. (Ed.) (1994), *Providing Community-based Services to the Rural Elderly*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Lam, G. (2022), "Problems encountered by elders in residential care services in Hong Kong", *Asian Education and Development Studies*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 106-117.

Legislative Council Secretariat (2019), "Government expenditure on the elderly", available at: https:// www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1920rt02-government-expenditure-on-the- elderly-20191213-e.pdf (accessed 5 October 2021).

Legislative Council Secretariat (2021), "Community care services for the elderly in Germany and Japan", available at: https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/2021in12-community-care-services-for-the-elderly-in-germany-and-japan-20210616-e.pdf (accessed 5 October 2021).

Leung, E.M.F. (2001), "Changing needs and changing service delivery for long-term care in Hong Kong", *Journal of Aging & Social Policy,* Vol. 13, No. 2/3, pp. 155-168.

Lum, T., Shi, C., Wong, G. and Wong, K. (2020), "COVID-19 and long-term care policy for older people in Hong Kong", *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, Vol. 32 No. 4-5 pp. 373-379.

Ng, A., Leung, T. and Ho, J. (2017), "Development of accreditation approach of elderly care service providers: experience from East and West", Fong, B., Ng, A. and Yuen, P. (Eds.), *Sustainable Health and Long-Term Care Solutions for an Aging Population*, IGI Global, U.S., pp. 126-144.

Pastalen, L.A. (1990), *Ageing in Place: The Role of Housing and Social Support*, Haworth, New York.

Royse, D., Thyer, B.A. and Padgett, D.K. (2016), *Program Evaluation: An Introduction*, Cengage Learning, Wadsworth.

Sau Po Centre on Ageing and Department of Social Work & Social Administration, HKU (2011), *Consultancy Study on Community Care Services for the Elderly Final Report*, HKU, Hong Kong.

Social Welfare Department (SWD) (1980), *White Paper on Social Welfare into the 1980s*, SWD, Hong Kong.

Social Welfare Department (SWD) (2021a), "Enhanced home and community care services", available at: https://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_elderly/sub_csselderly/id_enhancedho/ (accessed 5 October 2021).

Social Welfare Department (SWD) (2021b), "Day respite service for elderly persons", available at: https://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_elderly/sub_csselderly/id_dayrespite/ (accessed 5 October 2021).

Social Welfare Department (SWD) (2021c), "Standardised care need assessment mechanism for elderly services", available at: https://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/603/en/SCNAMES_Pamphlet___June_2021(eng).pdf (accessed 5 October 2021).

Social Welfare Department (SWD) (2021d), "Waiting list for subsidised community care services for the elderly", available at: https://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/2789/en/LTC_Statistics_CCS(Eng)(Dec_2021).pdf (accessed 12 May 2022).

Social Welfare Department (SWD) (2021e), "Vacancy position of designated places of day respite service for elderly persons (as at 30.9.2021)", available at: https://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/1573/tc/Vacancy_position_of_day_respite_as_at_30_9_21.pdf (accessed 5 October 2021).

Social Welfare Department (SWD) (2021f), "SWD review 2017-18 & 2018-19", available at: https://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/1435/en/SWD_Review_2017-18_and_2018-19_(Eng)_text_version.pdf (accessed 6 May 2022).

Social Welfare Department (SWD) (2021g), "Social welfare services in figures 2021 Edition", SWD, Hong Kong SAR Government, HK, available at: https://www.swd.gov.hk/storage/asset/section/296/en/swdfig2021(Fast_web_view).pdf (accessed 6 May 2022).

Society for Community Organization (2017),《以老護老：基層年長護老者服務需要問卷調查報告》 (Carers take care of the elders: a report on the investigation of carers of the elderly), available at: https://soco.org.hk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/elderly-research_2017_3_5.pdf (accessed 5 October 2021).

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSARG) (2018), "LCQ20: Statistical information on residential care homes for the elderly", available at: https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201807/04/P2018070400673.htm?fontSize=1 (accessed 5 October 2021).

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSARG) (2019), "LCQ15: Home and community care services for the elderly and persons with disabilities", available at: https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201902/20/P2019022000632.htm (accessed 5 October 2021).

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service (2018),《支援照顧者》(Provide support to the carers), *Policy Bulletin*, No. 24, pp. 1-36.

The University of Hong Kong (2009), *Elderly Commission's Study on Residential Care Services for the Elderly*, HKU, Hong Kong.

Truglio-Londrigan, M. and Gallagher, L.P. (2003), "Using the seven A's to determine older adults' community resource needs", *Home Healthcare Nurse*, Vol. 21 No. 12, pp. 827-831.

Tung, C.H. (2000), *Policy Address 2000*, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Hong Kong.

United Nations (2008), "Principles for older persons", United Nations, Geneva.

Walker, L.C., Bradley, E. and Wetle, T. (Eds.) (1998), *Public and Private Responsibilities in Long-term Care: Finding the Balance*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland.

Wilber, K.H., Schneider, E.L. and Thorstenson, K.H. (1997), "Long-term care financing: challenges and choices confronting decision makers", Wilber, K.H., Schneider, E.L. and Polisar, D. (Eds), *A Secure Old Age: Approaches to Long-Term care financing*, Springer, New York, NY, pp. 11-29.

Williams, M., Ebrite, F. and Redford, L. (1991), *In-home Services for Elders in Rural America*, National Resources Center for Rural Elderly, Kansas City, MO.

Wong, H.K. (1995), "Anomalies and issues in welfare pluralism: financing residential care for the elderly in Hong Kong", *Asian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 248-266.

World Health Organization (2002), *Active Ageing: A Policy Framework, No. WHO/NMH/NHP/02.8*, World Health Organization, Geneva.

Yuen, P. (2014), "Financing health care and long-term care in a rapidly ageing context: assessing Hong Kong's readiness", *Public Policy and Administration,* Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 56-64.

About the author
Gigi Lam is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Hong Kong Shue Yan University. She graduated from Hong Kong University of Science and Technology with a PhD (Social Science) majoring in Demography. Her main research interests are population policy and mental health policy. She has published academic papers in leading journals, such as *Asian Education and Development Studies* and *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*. She is on the editorial board of refereed journals, such as *Frontiers in Public Health, Frontiers in Psychiatry,* and *Frontiers in Sociology*. Gigi Lam can be contacted at: glam@hksyu.edu

PAP Reviewer contributions for 2018-2022

Dr Keshav K. Acharya
Professor Patrick Barrett
Professor Eric Batalla
Professor Thomas Bellows
Dr Shahjahan Bhuiyan
Professor Yury Blagov
Professor Emil Bolongaita
Professor David Briggs
Professor Shannon Brown
Dr Cleo Calimbahin
Professor Matthew Carlson
Dr Andrew Chan
Professor Hon S. Chan
Dr K.S. Chan
Ken Chan
Dr Thomas Chan
Professor Tathagata Chatterji
Dr K.C. Cheung
Professor Warren Chiu
Dr Franky K.H. Choi
Dr Chak Chung
Professor Prabhat Datta
Dr Suresh Dhakal
Dr Ben Y.F. Fong
Professor Peter K.W. Fong
Dr Adam Fusheini
Professor Alisa Gaunder
Dr Shahzad Ali Gill
Professor Ting Gong
Professor Adam Graycar
Professor Robert Gregory
Dr Sk Tawfique M. Haque
Professor Shamsul Haque
Dr Syed Abu Hasnath
Professor Loizos Heracleous
Dr Bryan Ho
Dr Tommy Ho
Professor Leslie Holmes
Professor Kempe Ronald Hope

Dr Farhad Hossain
Dr Mallik Akram Hossain
Professor Ahmed Shafiqul Huque
Anthony K.C. Ip
Professor Ishtiaq Jamil
Dr David Seth Jones
Professor Haroon Khan
Professor Liangwen Kuo
Tony M.W. Kwok
Dr Raymond Kwong
Professor Danny Lam
Dr Wilfred U. Lameck
Dr Sau-wai Law
Dr Vincent T.S Law
Professor Frederick Y.S. Lee
Dr Stephanie Wing Lee
Professor Joe C.B Leung
Dr Hui Li
Dr Alicia Lie
Professor K.K. Ling
Lilach Litor
Professor Carlos W.H. Lo
Dr Jack M.K. Lo
Professor Tai-lok Lui
Dr Sabrina Luk
Dr Choi-ming Lum
Syasya Y.F. Mas'udi
Dr Aroon Manoharan
Dr Kunichika Matumoto
Professor Kenneth McElwain
Professor Michelle Miao
Dr Kezia H. Mkwizu
Professor Akira Morita
Professor Colin Murphy
Dr Achmad Nurmandi
Professor Eiji Oyamada
Laura Panadès-Estruch
Professor Pranab Kumar Panday
Dr Isaac Podah

Arif Budy Pratama
Professor Jon S.T. Quah
Dr Francesca Quattri
Professor Habib Rahman
Dr Ramesh Ramasamy
Professor Syed Ali Raza
Professor Raymond Saner
Professor Lichia Saner-Yiu
Professor Colin Scott
Professor Ian Scott
Professor Anne Scully-Johnson
Dr Muhammad Kashif Shad
Professor Noore Alam Siddiquee
Professor Kee Hean Soh
Professor Catherine Solheim
Dr Db Subedi
Dr Kazuyuki Suzuki
Dr Alice Y.C. Te
Dr Wesley Teter
Dr Kar-wai Tong
Dr Nasir Uddin
Professor M. V-Mendoza
Professor Yi Wang
Dr Bo Wen
Professor Martin C.S. Wong
Professor Samuel Wong
Dr Vincent W.L. Wong
Dr Edmund T.M. Wut
Dr Wing-yan Yeung
Dr Bosco Yu
Professor Chilik Yu
Professor Eddie Yu
Dr Eilo Yu
Professor Peter P. Yuen
Dr Habib Zafarullah
Dr Hui Zhang
Dr Jiangnan Zhu
Professor Daniel Zirker

Public Administration and Policy
An Asia-Pacific Journal

Subscription Form for Printed Copies

Institutional

Organization Name: _____

Delivery address: _____

_____

Issues to be subscribed: from _____ to _____

The following rates are for three issues. Please tick one box.

1. Hong Kong & Macao: ☐ HK$600
2. Mainland China & Taiwan: ☐ HK$750
3. Others (overseas):   ☐ US$180

Contact person: _____ Position: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

Date: _____ Signed: _____

Individual

Name of Subscriber: *Prof./Dr./Ir./Mr./Mrs./Ms/Miss: _____ _____

Organization Name: _____

Position: _____

Delivery Address: _____

_____

Contact Tel: _____ Email: _____

Issues to be subscribed: from _____ to _____

The following rates are for three issues. Please tick one box:

1. Hong Kong & Macao: ☐ HK$300
2. Mainland China & Taiwan: ☐ HK$375
3. Others (overseas):   ☐ US$90

Date: _____ Signed: _____

Three issues will be published per year.
Postages are included for ordering printed copies.
Paid-up members of HKPAA will have free copies of the Journal.

Please fill in this form with a crossed cheque of HK dollars payable to "**Hong Kong Public Administration Association**" and send to Dr. Alice Te, Managing Editor, Public Administration and Policy Journal at: HKPAA, GPO Box 3350 Hong Kong. For overseas subscriptions, T/T will be required. Please contact Dr. Alice Te at aliceteyc@yahoo.com.hk for details.

Executive Committee (2022-2024)
President:
Prof. Peter Fong
Vice-Presidents:
Dr. Alice Te
Dr. Vincent Wong
Dr. Irene Lau
Dr. Cheung Hoi Yan
Hon Secretary:
Dr. Alice Te
Hon Treasurer:
Ms Stephanie Yeung
Webmaster:
Mr. Natural Kan

Members:
Dr. Jack Lo
Prof. Eddie Yu
Dr. Yip Yung
Mr. Ken Chan
Dr. Franky Choi
Dr. Arthur Sham
Ms Janice Lam
Dr. Stephanie Lee
Mr. Lawrence Lui
Dr. Samuel Law
Ms Irene Chan

HKPAA 香港公共行政學會
HONG KONG PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ASSOCIATION

Introduction

Since first established in 1990, Hong Kong Public Administration Association is committed to promote and enhance the quality of research and practice of public sector management in Hong Kong and the region. It provides a forum for the identification and discussion of important issues in public policies and management. We have collaborated with local universities as well as overseas counterparts to arouse keen interest in the pursuit of best public services through our *Public Administration and Policy* journal and regular dinner talks, seminars and conferences by renowned leaders in both public and private organizations.

Membership

The Association is a non-partisan organization which welcomes academics and practitioners in public administration and related fields to join.

Application for Membership

Name: *Prof./Dr./Ir./Mr./Mrs./Ms/Miss_____Chinese:(_____)
    *delete as appropriate

Organization Name:_____

Position:_____

Correspondence Address:_____

_____

Contact Tel:_____Email:_____

Academic Qualifications:_____

Professional Qualifications:_____

Date:_____ Signed:_____

Please mail this form with a crossed cheque HK$300 for annual membership fee payable to "**Hong Kong Public Administration Association**" HKPAA, GPO Box 3350 Hong Kong. Or deposit / transfer HK$300 to Bank of East Asia Limited under Account name: Hong Kong Public Administration Association, Account No.: 015-176-68-00073-9 And email the receipt to: aliceteyc@yahoo.com.hk

*Admission of application is subject to the approval of Executive Committee and formal notification to the applicant will be confirmed upon acceptance. (Full time student's annual subscription fee is HK$150.)

FSC
www.fsc.org
MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC® C013604

Public Administration and Policy

Contents

Editorial

Preface
Peter K.W. Fong

Introduction to the special issue
Stephanie Wing Lee

Special Issue Articles

A study of work-integrated learning experience of hospitality and tourism management students in Guangdong under the COVID-19 pandemic
Jing Bill Xu, Pimtong Tavitiyaman, Xinyan Zhang and Mingfang Zhu

The differences between students' fixed and growth mindsets: a case of study tour between Hong Kong and Canada
Carmen Sum, Yui-yip Lau and Ivy Chan

Effects of self-efficacy and learning environment on Hong Kong undergraduate students' academic performance in online learning
Francis C.Y. Kuan and Stephanie Wing Lee

Mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution to resolve interpersonal conflicts in Hong Kong universities
Aaron C.K. Lau

Learning to teach: cross-cultural internship teaching of a mainland Chinese Master's student in a Macao university
Lin Luo and Yanju Shao

An analysis of students' satisfaction with distance learning in Moroccan universities during the COVID-19 pandemic
Lahboub Zouiri and Fatima Ezzahra Kinani

Regular Articles

A behavioral approach to administrative reform: a case study of promoting proactive administration in South Korea
Pan Suk Kim

Equality in contention: exploring the debates of gender-equal inheritance rights in Bangladesh
Jinat Hossain and Ishtiaq Jamil

An evaluation of community care services for the elderly in Hong Kong
Gigi Lam

HKPAA 香港公共行政學會
HONG KONG PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ASSOCIATION

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
香港理工大學

School of Professional Education and Executive Development
專業進修學院
SPEED

emerald
publishing services