Towards a New Public Management Approach in Higher Education: A Case Study of the City University of Hong Kong

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by

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Abstract

Since the Public Sector Reform gained momentum in Hong Kong in the late 1980's, little attention has been paid to the effective management of local higher education institutions. In recent years, the public expenditure on higher education sector has been decreasing gradually. To live with growing limited resources coupled with the expanded university student population, using City University of Hong Kong as a case is a timely study on the implications for a managerial approach on a public-funded university.

Based on the literature review and the background study in Hong Kong higher education, CityU is used as a case study to investigate the paradigm shift of higher education in Hong Kong towards managerialism that emphasizes values such as market-orientation, customer services, cost-effectiveness and accountability. The issues arisen from the case study are found to be common among in the higher education sector. The most negative view on adopting the managerial approach in running universities is that academics fear of losing academic freedom and collegiality in decision-making. There is also concern on the limited interpretation of accountability on effectiveness management, leaving the societal aspect unattended.

Given the global trend and the external scrutiny, it is unavoidable for universities to perform effectively and to demonstrate they are providing value-for-money services to the community at large. The challenge of higher education institutions in 21st century and beyond would be more than maintaining the status quo practices in the 1980's. Unless academics and managers in universities re-orient their mentality, they cannot catch up the global tide of transforming higher education.
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