

## **An Introduction to Student Affairs in Higher Education in Selected Asian Countries<sup>1</sup>**

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*The Philippines (Author: Manuel M. Tejido, Ph.D., Professor, Religious Education, Ateneo de Manila University)*

It is important to read about student affairs in Philippines' higher education in the proper context of the country's socio-economic, political and cultural backgrounds. Colonial influence by Spain and the United States undoubtedly prompted the Filipino educators to strongly desire establishing its own unique educational identity and values according to the Filipino national tradition, while pulling itself out from the influence of the United States that established the country's public educational system, including higher education. The role of student affairs is very much one of in loco parentis, a role codified by law to meet its own national needs to provide nurturing and tender care to its students who are much younger than university students in Europe and the United States. The author expresses, at great lengths, the desire for the global community to share resources, time and expertise with developing countries such as the Philippines, yet at the same time, points out that developed countries must respect Philippine's pagsasarili, or its "being our own person" or "self-reliance"( 自制精神, 自强精神).

### **An Overview of Student Affairs and Services in Philippine Colleges and Universities**

As of 2000, of the 1,403 higher education institutions throughout the Philippine Islands, there are 1,173 private colleges and universities. Metro Manila has the most number of colleges and universities, at 225; and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has the least number: 24. Enrollments vary in size from as little as 500 students (and even less) to as many as 50,000 students.

Government subsidy for public tertiary institutions has been steadily dwindling over the years, while student tuition in private colleges and universities has been steadily rising. Sixty percent of government subsidy for public colleges and universities is earmarked for faculty salaries, with the bulk of the remainder goes to infrastructure maintenance and the salaries of all non-academic personnel including student affairs practitioners, with little left, if any, for student service programs and activities. Typical student services include: 1) scholarships and financial aid; 2) counseling and guidance; 3) health services; 4) student learning assistance; 5) food and cafeteria; 6) residence halls; 7) assistance to international students, and 8) supervision of student activities, especially social action programs. All Catholic institutions have, in addition, Campus Ministry Offices and Offices for Social Concern and Involvement. Student affairs personnel in these schools also vary in number: from just one in smaller schools to 50 in

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<sup>1</sup> Sections on Student Affairs of selected countries in this paper were authored by those indicated and edited by Howard Wang as part of a book project sponsored by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). Only excerpts were reproduced here with authors' permissions. For original reference, see the unedited version of the author's copy of: "The Internationalization of Student Affairs and Services in Higher Education: An Emerging Global Perspective" by Kenneth J. Osfield and Associates published by Instabook, 2006. This publication is being reviewed by NASPA for printing. Once printed, NASPA will hold the copyright to the book.

larger universities, such as the more affluent private universities, and the premier public University of the Philippines with more and better student services.

Problems and concerns facing many Filipino student affairs practitioners in typical colleges and universities today include: 1) lack of funds, facilities, especially computer hardware and software to support student services; 2) lack of personnel resulting in an overburdened student services practitioners; and 3) lack of trained staff as a result of heavy turnover of student affairs practitioners seeking "greener pastures" in other professions. These concerns are understandable within the larger context of Philippine social and economic realities. Most student Affairs offices in these colleges and universities are considered subservient to the academic community. They serve merely as a support system to the academic life of students in these tertiary level institutions, despite the fact that a significant number of those appointed to administrative posts related to student affairs come from the faculty ranks.

**Malaysia** (Authors: R. Ambihabathy, Principal Assistant Registrar, Department of Student Affairs, and Mohd Razali Agus, Ph.D., Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs, University of Malaya)

To meet the national mandate is very much the national philosophy of education in Malaysia, where the central Ministry of Education maintains great influence over the development of its students into Malaysian citizens who are educated, competent, moral, and capable of contributing to family, society and the nation. Student affairs began, in the 1970's, as a way to monitor student demonstrations and activities that were deemed inappropriate. Its role quickly evolved into one of students' total development in order to produce "quality graduates" to cater to market needs. With the vast natural resources in Malaysia, its government recognizes that developing human resources for "national building" is necessarily predicated upon building character and the holistic development of students.

### **Higher Education and its Governance in Malaysia**

Currently, there are 17 public universities and University Colleges, and around 670 private institutions. University Colleges, unlike universities, are set up by the government to offer specialized courses or training that emphasizes predominantly on technology and/or engineering. Public and private universities are now being coordinated and monitored by the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Higher Education. The autonomous nature of the universities, in particular public universities, is subject to the scope of the government's direction as the major stakeholder that provides the funding. Universities are duty bound to take into consideration the National Education Philosophy, and university Departments of Student Affairs do act as an impetus in achieving the government's aspiration or agenda.

### **Development of Student Affairs and Services in Malaysian Universities and Colleges**

The first Department of Student Affairs (DSA) was established in 1975 at the University of Malaya, following the Universities and University College Act 1971(as amended 1975). The Deputy Vice-Chancellor for student affairs, appointed the Ministry of Higher Education for a fixed term, is presumably the chief architect of student activities on each campus. The DSA at the University of Malaya, with a handful of officers, is setup to perform two primary functions: (a) to establish discipline and order, and (b) to monitor and regulate student activities on campus. Nowadays, the overall focus of these DSAs seems to be in "student development" more than anything else. As with other university communities around the globe, Malaysian universities are cognizant that they should provide and facilitate the environment that enhances the learning process and students' total education. At the University of Malaya, emphases are placed on programs in the following developmental areas: 1) Academic and Intellectual, both in and

out of the classrooms; 2) Welfare and Community-based Service to prepare future student leaders; 3) Spiritual and Ethics to foster understanding of various religions and ethnic groups on campus; 4) Art and Creativity to facilitate artistic and cultural competence of students; 5) Sports and Recreation to encourage competitive and non-competitive sports; 6) Uniform Groups to instill discipline, leadership qualities, and positive attitude by serving on the Reserves Officers Training Unit (ROTU).

The organizational structures of student affairs departments in most public universities are similar. The different “sections” and “units” within a student affairs department, using University of Malaya (UM) as an example, typically include sections for: 1) Student Services; 2) Student Development; 3) Counseling Advisory; 4) Student Health Services; and 5) Alumni.

The strategy of moving from student discipline to student development is even more important with rising societal and institutional concerns in the wake of stiff competitions among both private and public universities in the quest to produce quality graduates. For graduates to be competitive, they must possess the “extra skills” transferable to the world of work. With globalization, graduates do not necessarily compete locally but must be prepared to compete globally. Nation building, preparing for human resource needs of the nation, and character and holistic development of students to be patriotic citizens are demands placed on universities and colleges in Malaysia.

**Singapore** (Author: Suan Eng, Deputy Director, Office of Student Affairs, National University of Singapore)

### **Education System in Singapore**

Singapore, without any natural resources, sees education as a top priority since her people are the only resource for this small country. It recognizes that a good education system prepares the people for a knowledge-based economy and global competition. Every child in Singapore undergoes at least 10 years of general education: six years of primary education and four years of secondary education. The entire education system aims to equip students with the desire and skills for continuous learning beyond the confines of schools. Information technology is used widely to develop skills in communication and independent learning. An emphasis on bilingual ability ensures that students learn at least two languages – English and their mother tongue of the ethnic group they come from. Total student enrollment is 500,000. About 22% of the Primary One cohort eventually makes it to the universities, while 40% are admitted to the polytechnics. The rest either enter the workforce, or go overseas for higher education. Close to 5,000 of Singapore’s overseas students are studying in the United States.

### **Higher Education in Singapore**

Higher education in Singapore includes three major universities and five polytechnics. The universities are the National University of Singapore (NUS), founded in 1905; Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the Singapore Management University (SMU), both founded in the 1980’s. The first two are state universities, and the third is a publicly-funded private university. A fourth university is now being considered. The five polytechnics are Singapore Polytechnic (SP), Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), Temasek Polytechnic (TP), Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) and Republic Polytechnic (RP). Most of the tertiary institutions are currently under the purview of the Ministry of Education, with more than 75% of their operating costs being funded by the government. It was announced in April 2005 that NUS and NTU will be transformed into corporatised, autonomous universities like SMU as of 2006. Additional information

on institutions of higher education, vocational technical educations and in the arts in Singapore can be found at: [http://www.moe.gov.sg/corporate/post\\_secondary.htm](http://www.moe.gov.sg/corporate/post_secondary.htm).

### **Student Affairs and Student Services Personnel in Singapore**

The development of Singapore's student affairs programs and management in higher education is relatively recent. The National University of Singapore was the first to develop and evolve into the present day Student Affairs Office that provides services and programs for its students. The other two major but "newer" universities, NTU and SMU, followed the NUS student affairs model almost immediately from the time the institutions were established.

Contrary to the "monitoring" role for student affairs in Malaysia in the 1970's, the mission of NUS student affairs from the outset is to form "partnership" with students so that services and programs are provided to enrich their university experience. All student affairs offices at the other universities and polytechnic institutions share the common mission of providing students with services and programs aimed at enriching campus student life. The mission of the Student Affairs Office at NUS, simply stated, is "to provide, in partnership with our students, a total University experience that builds a strong NUS spirit" (<http://www.nus.edu.sg/osa/>). This statement reflects the goals of all these institutions.

Currently, the three major universities and the five polytechnics have a total student enrollment of 120,000, supported by about 355 student services personnel. Student services personnel are mainly administrators, who have at least one university degree. Personnel in counseling and physical education have relevant qualifications specific to their fields of practice. In recent years, a trend has developed among these institutions to appoint academic staff as Deans of Students and Heads of student affairs departments. Although currently there is no professional association for student affairs personnel in the country, the universities and polytechnics generally enjoy good relations and cooperate fully with each other on major projects. Some of them are members of the Asia-Pacific Student Services Association (APSSA). There are no formal academic programs or training, except in areas where specific skills are needed (e.g. counseling).

### **Scope of Services and Organization of Student Affairs Departments**

In the universities and polytechnics, the Department of Student Affairs is usually in charge of the non-academic life of students, and entrusted with the mission of enhancing students' university experience by providing them with the environment and opportunities for leadership and character development. Services normally include the following, using examples of services provided by the National University of Singapore: 1) Support and guidance for student organizations and student activities; 2) Student Counseling Service; 3) Careers & Employment Service; 4) Student Housing Services; 5) International Student Services; and 6) Sports & Recreation. For additional description of student services provided at the National University of Singapore, see [http://www.nus.edu.sg/osa/svcs\\_main.html](http://www.nus.edu.sg/osa/svcs_main.html). The Student Health Service has never been included as a service within the Student Affairs Office at all three universities. At NUS, student health provides comprehensive outpatient medical care to the entire campus community (for details, see <http://www.nus.edu.sg/uahwc/>).

A Vice Dean of Students oversees three Divisions: the Student Services Division (e.g. student activities, careers & employment, and personal guidance & counseling), Housing and International Students Division (e.g. international student services, residential services and residential life), and the Sports and Recreation Center (e.g. sports facilities, programs, health lifestyles, sports clubs). Each division has a team of staff comprised of administrators and support staff. Administrators are appointed by fixed terms and are compensated with free accommodation in student residences. The Vice Dean of Students reports

to the Dean of Students, who in turn, reports the Vice Provost for Education. The Vice Provost for Education reports to the Deputy President and Provost of NUS. Administrators are less recognized and enjoy lower status on campus. They are perceived by students and student leaders as disciplinarians rather than student advocates. The road ahead is still long for student affairs administrators to be respected as professionals, but they hope to see the day soon when all three parties – student affairs practitioners, faculty, and student leaders working hand-in-hand as equal partners to develop Singapore’s students not only in their intellectual potential but also their social and leadership skills.

**Mainland China** [Authors: Heidi Huang Yu, Student Affairs Counselor, School of Foreign Languages; Ouyang Ke-Quan, Lecturer and the Associate Vice-secretary, Communist Party Committee, Executive Director for the Student Affairs Office, Ling Nan (University) College, Sun Yat-sen University. Concluding remark: Howard S. Wang, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, California State University, Fullerton, USA.

### **Impact of Higher Education Institutional Reform on Student Affairs in China**

Since 1992, approximately 300 Chinese higher education institutions merged and upgraded into “comprehensive universities.” They were given greater autonomy promoted by the central government. This expanded both the scope of the programs and the size of the campuses. For the next five years, higher education has been expanding rapidly under governmental mandates. In 1994, “tuition and employment” reforms were implemented. Since then, all students attending higher education institutions are required to pay tuition. Students are now able to choose his/her academic major of interest. They will not be assigned specific jobs or employment after graduation, and they are free to choose their preferred career paths. The impacts of such landmark reforms resulted in a greater differentiation of student affairs work such as the establishment of career centers to assist graduates in seeking employment on their own, as stipulated by the 1997 State Education Council declaration of “*Temporary Regulation of Common Higher Education Institution Graduates Employment*” (国家教育委员会, 普通高等学校毕业生就业工作暂行规定, 一九九七年三月二十四日颁: see <http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/info4252.htm>) which mandates that all graduates venture into the job market on their own merits and the total abolishment of college student employment allocation system.

Another impact of higher education reforms resulted in the 1999 declaration by the Central Committee of China Communist Party and the State Council of China entitled the “*Decision to Deepen Educational Reform and Boost Quality Education* (中共中央国务院关于深化教育改革和全面推进素质教育的决定).” Section 9<sup>2</sup> of the “Decision” sets a goal for higher education attendance rate of 15% by year 2010 from 9% set in 1998. The Ministry of Education encourages expanded enrollment and establishment of new universities and colleges. In year 2001, the Ministry of Education abolished the restrictions on marital status and age of entering students<sup>3</sup>. This provided the impetus for the expansion and broadening of the range of candidates participating in university entrance examinations.

Such expansion resulted in many challenges to student affairs administration such as: (1) establishing an effective multi-campus student affairs administration; (2) addressing behavioral problems due to increased enrollment, especially among “older” students, who are, for example, required to live in campus

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<sup>2</sup> Section 9 of the “Decision” in Chinese: 调整现有教育体系结构, 扩大高中阶段教育和高等教育的规模, 拓宽人才成长的道路, 减缓升学压力。通过多种形式积极发展高等教育, 到2010年, 我国同龄人口的高等教育入学率要从现在的百分之九提高到百分之十五左右

<sup>3</sup> According to the previous regulation, the eligible candidates must be single and under 25 years old.

residence halls where conflicts tend to occur more frequently; (3) increased ratio of student affairs practitioner to students from 1:250, as prescribed by law, to 1:400 or even 1:600; (4) increased workload as well as reduced quality of services to the students; (5) increased proportion of underprivileged students increased requests for financial assistance; (6) increased number of students having to face and experience differences in lifestyles and clashes in values among the diverse peer groups, resulting in extensive personal counseling for those who are more vulnerable to psychological disturbances; (7) mental health incidents and issues in recent years also caught public attention; and finally (8) fierce competition for employment among graduates is one the most concerned political and social issues since the first year of enrollment expansion in 1999, despite government measures taken to stimulate more domestic supply of jobs and to defer the employment demand of graduates by issuing population mobility measures to compensate for over-abundance of jobless graduates<sup>4</sup>.

### **Concepts and Definitions of Student Affairs Work in China**

Student affairs work in the Chinese context is a mixture of various terms widely adopted in student affairs practices in China's higher education setting: terms such as "Ideological and Political Education (IPE)" used predominantly in the 1950's; "Moral Education (ME)" of the "post-Cultural Revolution Era" (1977-1980's); and "Student Affairs Administration" or "Student Work" used since the "Reform" of the 1990's. More appropriately, "student affairs work" refers to the university's exercises to exert educational influence on its students in non-academic or extra-curricular activities. This term is widely adopted for use in China nowadays for the sole purpose of communicating with international colleagues in this field. The term "student administration" focuses on regulating student behaviors or conducts; whereas "student affairs administration" connotes the idea of "serving students' needs." The general definition of "student affairs administration" excludes academic experiences but including daily counseling, extra-curricular activities, medical care, psychological counseling, career counseling, financial aid, campus order, and awards/punishment sanctions.

However, the essence of ideological conversion and political unification has been, and still is, determining the structure and climate of "student affairs administration" both at the national and institutional level. Student Affairs personnel in China are essentially ideological and political education (IPE) practitioners, as emphasized in Document 16<sup>5</sup> issued by the Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party regarding "student work" development. They include: 1) university/college level administrative staff, the Communist Party Committee (CPC) and the Communist Youth League of China (CYLC) Committee in particular (学校党政人员和共青团干部); 2) student affairs counselors and the head instructors in each class (学生工作辅导员和班主任); and 3) instructors of "two compulsory

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<sup>4</sup> According to the previous Registered Permanent Residence policy in Mainland China, residency of college students is registered, upon entering the university, in the administrative zone where the university is located. Upon graduation, they must then register their residency in the administrative zone of their employer in order to be included as a community member of that zone. If graduated jobless, their "residency" will then be reverted back to their original home residence. In 2002, the central government declared the availability of a two-year extension of residency to relief the employment pressure graduates had to face immediately upon graduation. However, since 2005, this policy was eliminated in Guangdong Province because too many graduates would rather keep their residency with the university than seek employment. Statistics have shown that this practice has led to lower employment rate for the university than prior to the implementation of this policy.

<sup>5</sup> Document No. 16 was released by the Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party and the State Council (2004) entitled "Opinions of Strengthening and Improvement of College Students' Ideological and Political Education" (关于进一步加强和改进大学生思想政治教育的意见). This document is commonly referred as "Document No.16," named after its serial number.

courses” in Ideological & Politics Theories and Philosophy & Social Science 两课 ( 思想政治理论课和哲学社会科学课 ) 教师.

Qi Xiaoping<sup>6</sup> believed that student affairs work is political-oriented. He characterized the work to be open to diverse values and guided by a unified set of behavior codes. Student affairs work, according to Qi, is a trinity of Marxist theory education, ideological education and educational practice; of teaching, administration and service. Finally, it is a trinity of family education, university education and social education. Li Xiaolu<sup>7</sup> prioritized ideological and political education as important aspects, among other student affairs perspectives, in higher education institutions in Guangdong.

The vision and mission of student affairs and services in Chinese higher education institutions, whether prescribed by Chinese laws (e.g. Section 53<sup>8</sup> of Higher Education Law) or by university/college administration, requires that students should be the ones who must abide by all campus behavior codes and civil laws and regulations. They must respect faculty and seniors. They are patriotic, collectivistic and socialistic; knowledgeable in Marxism, Leninism, Maoism and Deng Xiao Ping Theories; and they must be devoted to the socialist China and supportive of the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Students must also be diligent in their studies and knowledgeable of modern science and culture. The mission of student affairs work, according to Qi Xiaoping, should at minimum include: 1) cultivation in morality, intellectuality and physical fortitude; 2) development of both students and student affairs practitioners, and 3) service for the university, students and society.

### **Typical Organizational Structures for Student Affairs and Services in China**

It is rather impossible to provide a universal depiction of a typical student affairs organizational structure in China, considering the fact that higher education institutions vary a great deal in each of their over all campus organizational structures.

In the “centralized model,” departments involved in career counseling, military training, or psychological counseling, for example, are under the University Student Affairs Office (SAO), while some others have such departments housed with the Faculty SAO, yet reporting to the former. In this model, student affairs administration is considered “democratic and centralized” (民主集中式管理) since it represents centralization of decision-making at the University level while taking into consideration of student opinions, yet democratic student affairs practices are under centralized University supervision (在民主基础上的集中和在集中指导下的民主相结合的方式).

In the “faculty level model,” all the full-time undergraduate students are overseen by the “Faculty Student Affairs Office” administration where administrative responsibilities are assigned to the “Class Committee” and the “Head Student” in charge of “dormitory rooms.” Students who are in the same year and the same major are grouped into “administrational” classes overseen by the “Class Committee” and the “CCYL Branch,” which in turn report to the Faculty SAO administration. University administration plays no role in student affairs.

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<sup>6</sup> Qi is a veteran student affairs practitioner in Sun Yat-sen University. He is now the Director of Student Affairs Office at Sun Yat-sen University.

<sup>7</sup> Li is the vice-director of the Office of Education of Guangdong Provincial Government. He was quoted from his preface of the corpus of Guangdong student affairs practitioners titled “The Education and Management of students after the expansion of enrollment.”

<sup>8</sup> Section 53 of Higher Education Law in Chinese: 第五十三条 高等学校的学生应当遵守法律、法规, 遵守学生行为规范和学校的各项管理制度, 尊敬师长, 刻苦学习, 增强体质, 树立爱国主义、集体主义和社会主义思想, 努力学习马克思列宁主义、毛泽东思想、邓小平理论, 具有良好的思想品德, 掌握较高的科学文化知识和专业技能.

Student services at Sun Yat-sen University (or Zhongshan University) is a “hybrid” model where the CCYL Committee, Career Counseling, Psychological Counseling Center, and Armed Forces Department are each running as independent units under Faculty SAO rather than as subordinates to the University level SAO administration as in some other universities. Typical functions and services provided by Student Affairs include: (1) Freshmen Orientation; (2) Financial Aid; (3) Awards and Punishments for Student Conducts; (4) Graduate Employment; (6) Service Learning; (7) Ideological and Political Education; and (8) Psychological Counseling. Faculty and University work collaboratively for the benefits of students. For example, in providing financial aid services, money is allocated by the University SAO, where application processing is managed by the Faculty SAO.

### **Challenges for Student Affairs Practitioners in China**

As enrollment begins to burgeon, student affairs and its practitioners seem to be experiencing growing pains. Challenges include high turn-over among student affairs practitioners, lack of prerequisite professional preparation specific to managing students, ambiguous roles between serving as teachers in ideological and political education and as administrators and counselors, perception of their roles by faculty colleagues as secondary or unimportant. These challenges may be the result of a lack of focus or clear direction from the central government, namely, the Ministry of Education, about student affairs and their role in the total and developmental education of university students. Yet, dedicated student affairs practitioners continue to seek out best practices from other countries throughout the world, and attempt to adapt those practices to meet student needs within the current socio-economical, political and cultural context in China.

**Hong Kong** (Authors: Carol Tang, Head of Student Affairs, Hong Kong Institute of Education; Lai Kwok Hung, Senior Student Affairs Officer, Hong Kong Institute of Education)

### **Higher Education in the Era of Change in Hong Kong**

Hong Kong, having been a British colony for over 150 years, inherited much of the political, legal and economic systems from Britain. The education system in colonial Hong Kong, without exception, was basically monolithic, elitist, apolitical and examination-oriented in nature, emphasizing on economic and pragmatic values of education. However, in response to the signing of the *Sino-British Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong* and the transfer of sovereignty to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1997, there is a pressure for the Government of the newly designated “Special Administrative Region” (SAR) to prepare pupils to become competent citizens due to changing political and social environment. The new government plans to develop a politically literate and active population in order to function as an autonomous political and economic entity after 1997.

The recently adopted Education Commission report (Education Commission, 2000), entitled “Learning for Life, Learning Through Life: Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong,” clearly stated that the overall goal of education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should emphasize the all-round development of students that includes solidifying students’ abilities and attitudes for life-long learning, nurturing them to become confident, instilling in them a sense of justice and social responsibility, and enabling them to have a global outlook.

Higher education in Hong Kong has existed for more than a century. It began with the University of Hong Kong, founded in 1911, and the establishment of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1963 by merging three tertiary colleges. Tertiary education in the past decade can be characterized by its rapid

expansion, following the transformation of two polytechnics into universities, upgrading another three tertiary education institutes to become self-accredited universities, merging four teaching training colleges into one university, and establishing two new technical colleges to offer sub-degree vocational training courses. Altogether, the total number of government-funded institutions increased from two to eight. For a brief summary of higher education in Hong Kong, see <http://www.info.gov.hk/yearbook/2001/ehhtml/09/09-21.htm>. Seven of the eight are universities and the 8<sup>th</sup> one is a teacher education institution. Although the Chief Executive, in his *Policy Address 2000* (for the full text of the Policy Address, please visit: [http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/pa00/pa00\\_e.htm](http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/pa00/pa00_e.htm) or highlight of the address at [http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/pa00/hlight\\_e.htm](http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/pa00/hlight_e.htm)), has targeted 60% of Hong Kong's senior secondary school graduates to receive tertiary education by 2010, only 18% of the cohort attended the full-time first degree programs funded by the government in 1994. The participation rate has remained unchanged since 1994 due to budget cut after the "Asian financial crisis" in 1997 and the economic downturn in the 2000s.

### **History of Student Affairs and Services**

The emergence of student affairs as a defined area of work in universities did not take place until early 1970s. The "Student Movement" in Hong Kong in 1967 prompted the need to improve communication between the university and its students so that students' needs could be identified and better addressed. As a result, the University of Hong Kong appointed its Dean of Students, and the Polytechnic University appointed its Head of Student Services Unit, in the early 1970s. Under their leadership, small scale student services with focus on careers and employment began. Some form of student services were also offered at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Student Affairs Offices were gradually established at other universities from the 1970s to 1980s. At some universities, the functional "sections" within the department were very independent, each staffed with field specialists. However, there was resource sharing within the departmental structure. Many other universities took a more generalist approach and staff members were expected to have job rotation except for counseling services. At the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE), for example, its sections for Civic Education, Student Counseling, and Physical Education were merged into one "Student Affairs Office" in 1998 ([http://www.vtc.edu.hk/ive/ky/KY\\_frameset.htm](http://www.vtc.edu.hk/ive/ky/KY_frameset.htm)). Student affairs offices in all institutions are funded by the government, either through the University Grants Committee (UGC, see a brief description of this committee at <http://www.info.gov.hk/yearbook/2001/ehhtml/09/>) or the Education and Manpower Bureau (<http://www.emb.gov.hk/>), in about the same way. These offices are responsible, either directly or indirectly, for more or less the same areas of work that include student guidance & counseling, career & employment, financial assistance and scholarships, sports & recreational facilities, student amenities, residential halls, health service, food services, co-curricular activities, students with disabilities and international students. Some scholars characterized "student affairs" in Hong Kong as "an US concept being implemented in a UK higher education system."

### **Student Services Delivery Model in Hong Kong**

Although all higher education institutes in Hong Kong offer similar student services, student affairs organization, management, delivery systems, concepts and approaches, and methods in measuring outcomes differ significantly. In recent years, however, student affairs has evolved from emphasizing "service and management" to the "total education" of students. The common trend is to follow the general direction of enriching the campus life of these institutions towards whole person development.

For example, at the City University of Hong Kong, a request by the Student Affairs Office (<http://www.cityu.edu.hk/sds/contents.htm>) was approved by the University President to change its name to "Student Development Services" (SDS) to better reflect a change in emphasis from a more service-oriented, remedial and maintenance-focused office to one that provides activities and programs that are

development oriented, proactive, and focused on the enrichment of students' educational experiences, and based on the concept of whole person development. The "Student Whole Person Development Model" includes seven areas: spiritual development or [德], intellectual development or [智], physical development or [體], social development or [群], aesthetic development or [美], career development or [事], and emotional development or [情] (see <http://www.cityu.edu.hk/sds/wpd/index.htm>).

The Student Services Centre (SSC) at Lingnan University ( <http://www.ln.edu.hk/ssc/> ) provides administrative support in implementing part of the Integrated Learning Program (ILP) that aims at enriching students' learning experiences, enhancing their way of thinking and judgment, enabling them to interact with others, inspiring their creative thinking as well as expanding their cultural horizon through the following five areas: (1) civic education; (2) intellectual development; (3) physical education; (4) social and emotional development; and (5) aesthetic development (for additional details, see <http://www.ln.edu.hk/ssc/ilp/five/index.shtml>).

The Student Affairs program at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) adopts an integrated or holistic approach since its establishment in 1990. Its mission emphasizes on personal growth and development, quality of campus life, services to students to help with problem solving and support academic learning, serving as communication liaison between students and the university (<https://www.ab.ust.hk/sao/dir1/samission.htm>). At HKUST, there is less emphasis on professional boundaries among the units, thus providing greater opportunities for collaborative efforts and team work. Job rotation is being practiced.

There is a great deal of collaboration among student affairs practitioners in Hong Kong, sharing best practices amongst institutions. Collaboration with teaching faculty varies a great deal from institution to institution. Change, as expected, seemed to be easier for newly formed institutions. It is noteworthy to mention that the Hong Kong Student Services Association (HKSSA), in organizing its first international professional conference on student affairs in Hong Kong in 1988, provided the impetus for the formation of the Asia Pacific Student Services Association (APSSA) at the conclusion of that conference, 10 years after student affairs practitioners of the then four major tertiary institutions gathered together to share common concerns and resolve issues, leading to the official formation of HKSSA in 1984. APSSA currently has almost 40 members from 9 countries, including the United States and Canada.

## Comparisons

While basic student services provided to students are fairly similar across all the countries, challenges in student affairs work are also similar. Limited governmental and/or institutional funding, preferential priority for academic work versus non-academic/professional work at the institutional level, lack of understanding of the importance or relevance of out-of-classroom experience and skills, culminating in a lack of respect by some faculty colleagues and students, as well as a lack of collaborative efforts between academic and student affairs practitioners in providing a total education of students, are all reflected in the writings from these countries. Moving away from "student services" and "student management" to "student development" is also among one of the similarities, albeit development is defined slightly differently depending on socio-political as well as emerging economic and other needs of the country.

I truly hope that after reading about such brief accounts of student affairs developments among these Asian countries, one would be able to reflect upon some of the similarities and nuances, and conclude that student affairs in each of the countries is indeed unique. Comparative analysis at the technical level would seem to be meaningless here, unless discussions can be generated at the conceptual and philosophical level, if one wishes to do so.

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#### **About the Author:**

1992 Ph.D. Higher Education Administration, **University of California, Los Angeles**  
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Dr. Howard Wang has been the associate vice president for student affairs and acting director of Student Affairs Research Center at the California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) since 2003. He became the acting executive director for the Student Health and Counseling Center at CSUF since 2004. Previously he served as the assistant vice president at Cal State San Bernardino from 2001-2003, and as the chief executive officer to the assistant vice chancellor for student development and health at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) for more than a decade prior to 2001. His tenure in student affairs work includes managing or supervising student housing, conference services, residential life, student health services, counseling and psychological services, women's center, services for disabled students, career center, student union, student activities and government, recreation and sports center, student leadership development and programs, campus special events, financial aid, and a scholars program for foster youths. He currently also serves as an advisor to several student groups, including the International Golden Key Honour Society.

He has been a member of the Asia Pacific Student Services Association (APSSA) since 1998. He regularly presented papers and served as a panelist at APSSA's biannual international conferences. He also provided training on student development theories, student affairs administration and governance, and other selected topics to student affairs administrators from the greater Beijing area in 2002 and Guangdong Province in China in 2003. A summary of his most recent training presentation can be found in "Student Affairs Management in Higher Education," published in 2005 by the Zhongshan University Press, Guangzhou, China. He is also a member of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and the American College Personnel Association. His article, "Student Affairs in China," was published in the Fall 2004 issue of the Leadership Exchange, a NASPA publication.