

Effectiveness of Quality Management in Self-financed Taught Postgraduate Programs in Hong Kong Higher Education: Perspectives of Multi-Stakeholders

Self-financed taught postgraduate (TPg) programs have grown rapidly in Hong Kong's higher education sector over the past few years. These programs cater to both local and international postgraduate students and play a crucial role in the financial sustainability of universities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, travel restrictions and discriminatory behaviors against Asians have led to an increase in non-local (mostly Mainland Chinese) students enrolling in self-financed TPg programs in Hong Kong. However, with the end of the pandemic, TPg programs must evaluate their quality to maintain their appeal, especially since non-local students may return to traditional Western destinations for their studies. Both research and practical gaps exist in the need to explore customized quality management mechanisms suitable for the market-oriented nature of these self-financed TPg programs, which are now generally following the quality management practices of University Grants Committee (UGC) funded postgraduate programs. Therefore, this study proposes a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of quality management in self-financed TPg programs across the eight UGC-funded universities. Going beyond examining the quality management policies followed by self-financed TPg programs, this proposed study will adopt a pragmatic perspective to explore an in-depth image of the perceptions of and reflections on the program quality from four groups of stakeholders, including students, faculty members, program leaders, and relevant senior administrators. Particularly, the customer-oriented research framework will focus on the learning experiences and reflections of self-financed TPg students, who are the primary stakeholder group. To achieve the research objectives, this proposed study will first conduct a policy review by analyzing institutional policy documents and interviewing relevant administrators to demonstrate the quality management mechanisms of self-financed TPg programs at the institutional level of eight UGC-funded universities. A mixed-methods approach will also be used to survey and interview self-financed TPg students, faculty members, and program leaders to explore their experience and perceptions of the program quality. The proposed study also aims to contribute to the theoretical understanding of students' self-formation in self-financed TPg programs and to provide empirical evidence to improve self-financed TPg program quality and offer policy recommendations for quality management in Hong Kong's higher education system. Moreover, it hopes to contribute to the discussion on the impact of neo-liberalism and the widespread adoption of economic rationality in the higher education sector.