CHAPTER FOUR

CURRENT CONDITIONS OF EXPORTING HIGHER EDUCATION IN HONG KONG

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative findings concerning the conditions of exporting higher education services. They have been collected by interviews, focused group interviews and documentary analysis. The first section reports findings on the existing promotion strategies employed by higher education providers to attract non-local students. The next two sections summarize the respondents' view on the inadequacies and attractions of Hong Kong in relation to exporting higher education services. Then the promotion strategies recommended by the respondents are outlined. The chapter ends by highlighting recent development in policy infrastructure to support the recruitment of non-local students. It is worth mentioning that these findings are primarily based on the views of various individuals and institutions.

4.2 Current promotion strategies employed by higher education providers

Currently, the strategies employed by HEIs to promote higher education services to the international market broadly fall into three categories: (1) programme strategies, which refer to those academic activities and services that integrate an international dimension into their main functions; (2) marketing strategies, which are the promotion and publicity measures used to attract students from the international market; and (3) organizational strategies, which are the structural means used to institutionalize the programme and marketing strategies.

4.2.1 Programme strategies employed by the HEIs

4.2.1.1 Provision of student exchange programmes

Most of the HEIs studied have developed student exchange programmes with overseas universities, which help to promote the image of the institutions. Some overseas students came back for postgraduate courses after experiencing academic exchange in Hong Kong (Appendix C, R1).

4.2.1.2 Scholarship and other forms of financial support

The provision of scholarships is a widely used strategy which succeeds in attracting students from the Asian markets. Studentship or stipend serves a similar role (Appendix C, R2).

4.2.1.3 Establishing high quality higher education services

It has been stressed that the brand name of the programmes and the academic standing of university faculties play a major role to attract overseas students to do postgraduate studies in the institution (Appendix C, R3).

4.2.2 Marketing strategies employed by the HEIs

Publicity strategies to promote higher education in the Asian markets broadly fall into four categories, namely on site visits and expos, multi-media publicity, organization networking and people networking.

4.2.2.1 Education expos and site visits

Individual HEIs join education expos and undertake school visits in the Asian countries. Information related to higher education programmes, incentives for the studies, learning facilities and environment, application details, etc. are disseminated to target audiences by on site school visits, joining education expos, or selective tours in the Asian countries. China's rising power and the connections of the university with the Chinese Mainland are emphasized to attract students in the Asian countries. Non-local student representatives' sharing of experiences of studying in Hong Kong in these visits and expos can help promote Hong Kong's higher education to potential students in the Asian countries (Appendix C, R4).

4.2.2.2 Multi-media publicity

A wide range of marketing tools has been used to disseminate information, including sending letters, booklets or advertisements to target schools and institutions, putting up banners in websites; advertising in newspapers and on the web, broadcasting road shows in acclaimed high schools (Appendix C, R5).

4.2.2.3   Organization networking

A couple of HEIs are able to get access to Chinese high schools in the Asian countries through connections with partner organizations such as the United Chinese School Committees Association, also known as Dong Jia Zong, in Malaysia (Appendix C, R6).

4.2.2.4   People networking

Students who have attended exchange student programmes and alumni of the institutions play an important role in promoting the academic programmes. The international students in the campus are also useful resource persons. It has been proved to be very helpful to take Malaysian students currently studying in Hong Kong to the expo as they provide first hand information about Hong Kong and can help potential students understand the situations.   Personal connections of university staff have also proved helpful (Appendix C, R7).

4.2.2.5   The first Hong Kong higher education mini-expo

In November 2007, HKTDC organized the first Hong Kong higher education mini-expo in Mumbai and New Delhi, India. At the mini-expo, the HEIs of Hong Kong sent delegates to promote various aspects of their higher education services through exhibitions, talks, and visits to international schools. These promotion activities attracted hundreds of interested students / parents and served the function of "planting seeds" in the Indian community. Newly announced policies related to non-local students' pursuit of higher education in Hong Kong were introduced to students and parents. Organization networking took place with a number of education agencies and a career consultant of a newspaper. The HEI delegates highly appreciated the advantage of running a mini-expo that focused on Hong Kong's higher education over the participation in large-scale expos organized for HEIs by other countries (Appendix C, R8).

4.2.3   Organizational strategies employed by the HEIs

4.2.3.1 Establishing organizational structures to support international education

Some HEIs have established administrative units such as academic exchange offices, international education centres, international recruitment teams, etc. to coordinate efforts in recruiting international students at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. For others, programme promotion is the responsibility of individual academic departments. One of the HEIs has established a Global Lounge to facilitate cultural activities and exchange in the campus (Appendix C, R9).

4.2.3.2 Establishing branches of the institution

At present, the eight UGC-funded HEIs are not keen about establishing branches in the Asian countries, though some of them have established branches in the Chinese Mainland (Appendix C, R10).

4.3   Inadequacies in exporting Hong Kong's higher education services

While HEIs in Hong Kong have undertaken strategies to help export Hong Kong's higher education services, various stakeholder groups expressed the difficulties that they faced. This section outlines the inadequacies that impede the export of Hong Kong's higher education services. These inadequacies are multi-faceted and exist at policy formulation, co-ordination and implementation levels across sectors and within the local higher education sector.   Caution is needed when reading the views expressed by various stakeholder groups reported in this section, as the interviews were conducted from April to December 2007 but the higher education environment in Hong Kong has been changing very fast.

4.3.1   Diverse views towards developing Hong Kong as a regional education hub

4.3.1.1 Diverse views across sectors

The successful development of Hong Kong as a regional education hub relies on a shared vision and concerted efforts among various sectors of society. Hong Kong is at the stage of framing and clarifying the aims of such a pursuit.

A couple of policy-making stakeholders (e.g. senior officers of Immigration Department and the EDB) indicated that the development of Hong Kong as an education hub has far reaching implications and it touches on different areas such as education, immigration, and public finance, etc. (Appendix C, R11). The HUCOM representative considered that the development of Hong Kong as an education hub has to be examined in the context of internationalization of higher education which is multi-faceted and can carry different policy aims, e.g. exporting higher education services for profit-making, attracting talents to Hong Kong, nurturing global citizenship in the globalised world, etc. Different aims match different promotion strategies (Appendix C, R12).

Currently HEIs in Hong Kong focus on the recruitment of non-local students who mainly come from the Chinese Mainland, and lag behind in internationalizing their campuses. HEIs need to explore the development of common overseas markets for Hong Kong's higher education services (Appendix C, R11 & R12).

4.3.1.2 *Diverse views within the local higher education sector*

Some HEI stakeholders expressed the need to develop a shared vision across and within HEIs. There is a dilemma on the one hand that different HEIs need to work together in promoting Hong Kong's higher education to overseas markets while on the other hand they compete with one another on the recruitment of overseas students (Appendix C, R13). Within the organizational environment of an HEI, it is doubtful whether academic staffs at various levels have a shared vision of bringing in overseas students to their institution (Appendix C, R14).

4.3.2 Inadequate visibility of Hong Kong's higher education services in the overseas markets

4.3.2.1 *Visibility problem*

Various stakeholder groups identified the "visibility problem" as the key inadequacy of exporting higher education services. Hong Kong's higher education is not widely known to overseas markets. This is especially true when compared to the reputation of higher education of Australia, the U.K., the U.S.A., Singapore, etc. in the Asian markets (Appendix C, R15).

4.3.2.2   Lack of government-led promotion

A couple of HEI stakeholders stated that there is inadequate government-led promotion for Hong Kong's higher education services to overseas markets. As a result, such promotion work is left to individual HEIs and is currently assisted by the HKTDC (Appendix C, R16).

4.3.2.3   Lack of understanding about specific overseas markets

Overseas markets vary. Some HEI stakeholders expressed concern about their lack of connection with / information about / understanding of different aspects of specific Asian countries, including information about the recognition of qualifications granted by HEIs in Hong Kong. Some HEI stakeholders also showed concern about the inadequate resources for individual HEIs to promote their programmes to the Asian Pacific region (Appendix C, R17).

4.3.3   <u>Inadequate policy infrastructure to support the recruitment of non-local students</u>

4.3.3.1   Limited admission quota for non-local students

Some HEI stakeholders were of the view that HEIs have problems with the limited quota for admission of non-local students. There has been advocacy for an increase in this quota. Yet careful consideration for the implementation details and implications should be made. An increase in admission quota for non-local students, even though the additional student number targets fall outside the UGC-funded places, may lead to possible elevation of the actual admission standards for those highly competitive programmes that are very attractive to both local and non-local students. Whether this possible elevation of actual admission standards will imply greater difficulties for local students to get admitted into these highly competitive programmes is worth paying attention to (Appendix C, R18).

4.3.3.2   Land scarcity and accommodation problem

Various stakeholder groups identified land scarcity and accommodation problems as the most critical areas that must be tackled for the recruitment of non-local students. While inadequacy of hostels and related facilities is viewed as a general problem across HEIs, the accommodation problem is more acute for specific groups of

non-local students, e.g. non-local students of TPg programmes, non-local students with spouse / family, students of sub-degree programmes, and RPg students (Appendix C, R19).

4.3.3.3   Lack of financial support for non-local students

A number of HEI stakeholders and student groups pointed out that there is a lack of scholarship and financial subsidy for overseas students' tuition fees. Financial support such as scholarship is important in the face of the high cost of living in Hong Kong. Specific groups of students, like those from less favourable backgrounds in the Asian countries, students with families, etc. are in need of financial support. Besides, self-financed TPg programmes find it not useful to be promoted to low-income areas of the Asian countries without scholarships (Appendix C, R20).

4.3.3.4   Immigration issues

A number of HEI stakeholders and student groups showed concern over immigration issues like engaging in part-time work, application for work visas after graduation and restrictions of visa issuance for students from certain countries and for non-local students undertaking part-time programmes (Appendix C, R21). The Chief Executive's 2007 Policy Address has announced a number of measures to address some of these issues. We shall examine these measures in Section 4.6 of this chapter.

4.3.4   Concerns within the local higher education sector

4.3.4.1   The "3+3+4" academic structure

Some HEI stakeholders and students anticipated that the launching of four-year university education in the new "3+3+4" academic structure in Hong Kong in coming years may make higher education in Hong Kong more costly and less attractive to students of some Asian countries, such as India and Malaysia which adopt the British education system, compared to our current three-year university education (Appendix C, R22).

4.3.4.2   Constraints in local higher education programmes

A few stakeholders identified some constraints in local higher education programmes that cause difficulties in recruiting overseas students. At the institutional level, one HEI stakeholder mentioned the difficulties in working with other (overseas) universities to offer joint programmes which are attractive to overseas students. Besides, the lack of flexibility in transfer of credits from overseas institutions can hamper the internationalization of certain programmes (Appendix C, R23). As far as funding is concerned, one of the HEI stakeholders pointed out that self-financed programmes are in need of funds to support the recruitment of non-local students (Appendix B, R16).

There are concerns about the curriculum and language use in teaching and learning. An HEI stakeholder mentioned that there are no foundation year programmes to support overseas students (Appendix C, R24). The problem of language use is two-fold. On the one hand, some students from selected Asian countries highlighted the inadequacies of the English-medium teaching and learning environment in Hong Kong. One of the students mentioned the limited choice of modules delivered in English in the HEI. Another student mentioned difficulties in a Cantonese-speaking Practicum environment in a professional preparation programme. Other students reported that they found difficulty with lecturers' spoken English and lecturers using a lot of Chinese in class. The lack of a good environment for communicating with and improving English is another problem (Appendix C, R25).

On the other hand, there are students who find difficulties with the English-medium teaching and learning environment. For example, students from the Chinese Mainland are good at reading and writing English but not proficient at "listening" and "speaking". Undergraduate Indonesian students also find English as a medium of instruction difficult (Appendix C, R26).

4.3.5   Social and cultural concerns

4.3.5.1   Social and cultural adjustment

Various groups of stakeholders referred to problems with non-local students' adjustment to life in Hong Kong. Air pollution and over-crowding were viewed as obstacles in attracting overseas students. Some non-local students found difficulties in adjusting their diet. Some students felt homesick and others found it difficult to

get used to life in Hong Kong (Appendix C, R27).

Some non-local students found the need to adjust their learning habits as the study / learning mode in Hong Kong was different from their place of origin (Appendix C, R28).

Language barriers appear in different forms for different groups of overseas students. On the one hand, some students expressed a wish for living in a better English-speaking environment in the face of fellow local students' inadequate English proficiency and the predominant use of Cantonese in daily life. On the other hand, some Asian students encountered a difficult time coping with the English language in the beginning (Appendix C, R29).

4.3.5.2   *Social integration of non-local students*

Most interviewed non-local students expressed that they meet nice people, including their fellow local students, in Hong Kong. Yet a few HEI stakeholders and some students indicated problems with social integration between local and non-local students. In general, there was limited interaction between local and non-local students. On the one hand, perceptions like local students not having great interest in interacting with non-local students, local and non-local students being competitors after graduation, Hong Kong not being safe for Muslims, etc. existed (Appendix C, R30). On the other hand, there were perceptions that local students have very different lifestyles and study habits, and are materialistic, luxury-obsessed, immature, and short-sighted, tend to blame others and lack self-reflection. In the worst scenario, discrimination against students from Africa and the Chinese Mainland was felt (Appendix C, R31).

4.4   Factors facilitating the export of Hong Kong's higher education services

We have explored the inadequacies identified by various stakeholder groups that need to be addressed if Hong Kong is to develop itself into an education hub in its recruitment of students in the international market. What follow are various stakeholder groups' views about Hong Kong's attractions that facilitate the export of higher education services to overseas students from the Asian countries. The attractions are two-fold: (1) the attractions of Hong Kong itself; and (2) the attractions of Hong Kong's higher education services.

4.4.1   Attractions of Hong Kong to overseas students

4.4.1.1   International City and Political Stability

Some HEI stakeholders and non-local students stated that being an international city and a regional financial centre, Hong Kong is attractive to overseas students (Appendix C, R32). They believed that the economic environment and better pay in Hong Kong provide them opportunities for future career development (Appendix C, R33). To some non-local students, studying in Hong Kong could serve as a stepping stone for career development and further study in other countries. Besides, getting permanent residency after seven years of stay in Hong Kong was an attraction to some non-local students (Appendix C, R34)

Interviews with non-local students show that Hong Kong being a safe and politically stable city is an important factor for attracting overseas students (Appendix C, R35). Indeed, one of the Indonesian students indicated terrorism in his / her home country discourages him / her to go back after graduation (Appendix C, R36).

4.4.1.2   The Chinese Mainland factor

Hong Kong's geographic proximity to, and business and cultural ties with, the Chinese Mainland are major attractions to overseas students. Various groups of stakeholders saw these as providing a gateway / springboard to business opportunities in the Chinese Mainland. Future career opportunities in business fields in the Chinese Mainland make programmes related to Business and Management attractive to overseas students (Appendix C, R37).

Some stakeholders regarded Hong Kong's proximity to, and cultural ties with, the Chinese Mainland and its being a crossroad of Chinese and Western cultures, as providing a good environment for non-local students to learn Chinese culture in English and learn the Chinese language (Appendix C, R38).

4.4.1.3   Social and cultural attractions

Various types of freedom, e.g. academic liberty, freedom of speech, are seen as an important asset of Hong Kong as a city in China. Efficiency in different walks of life and work ethics are also attractive to non-local students (Appendix C, R39).

A couple of HEI stakeholders and non-local students from selected Asian countries found that English-speaking in education and business as well as daily life constitutes a facilitating condition for overseas students to live in and communicate with people in Hong Kong (Appendix C, R40).

A couple of HEI stakeholders and non-local students from selected Asian countries stated that different aspects of daily life, like people, food & living environment, are fine (Appendix C, R41). Proximity of Hong Kong to other Asian countries, family and social connections with Hong Kong facilitates students from these countries to pursue higher education in Hong Kong (Appendix C, R42).

4.4.2   Hong Kong's higher education services

4.4.2.1   Quality of Hong Kong's higher education

Some HEI stakeholders and overseas students indicated that the high quality and good reputation of Hong Kong's education attract overseas students. The quality of Hong Kong's higher education is reflected in the international ranking and reputation of individual HEIs, individual programmes, individual research areas, and individual academic staff, as well as good facilities and study environment.   The international networks of certain programmes and academic staff, as well as incorporating Chinese elements into study programmes are also seen as advantages of higher education in Hong Kong. Scholarships for top students are attractions to non-local students (Appendix C, R43).

The quality assurance measures and mechanisms in the Hong Kong higher education sector, at the institutional and system levels, form an important basis of the credibility of quality higher education services. Various bodies are responsible for the quality assurance of different types of higher education programmes in Hong Kong.

The high quality of Hong Kong's higher education is built on the UGC's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the quality of UGC-funded institutions and their activities up to international standard. International benchmarking in research performance of UGC-funded institutions has been in place. Besides, the UGC has performed the quality assurance role through conducting the Management Review (1998-1999), Teaching and Learning Quality Process Reviews (1995-1997 and 2001-2003), and the Performance and Role-related Funding Scheme (2004).

These reviews / schemes have served to ensure effective quality assurance (hereafter, QA) mechanisms in place in each UGC-funded institution. In April 2007, the UGC set up the Quality Assurance Council (hereafter, QAC) under its aegis to assist it in its QA responsibilities, including the QA of publicly-funded programmes at various levels of study and self-financed programmes at undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (hereafter, HKCAAVQ) has been responsible for accrediting non-university tertiary institutions and the programmes of study run by them at degree and sub-degree levels. As more and more non-local students have come to Hong Kong for the study of Associate Degrees, there is a need to uphold the standard and quality of these courses. In addition to the work of assessment for accreditation contributed by the HKCAAVQ, the Joint Quality Review Committee Limited (hereafter, JQRC), an independent quality assurance organization, was established in August 2005 by the HUCOM of Hong Kong constituted by the eight institutions under the aegis of the UGC. The major objectives of the JQRC are to provide for and implement a framework for peer review capable of assuring the quality of self-financing, sub-degree programmes of the continuing education sections and other departments or colleges of the members.

The Registrar of Non-local Higher and Professional Education Courses (hereafter, NLHPEC) and the HKCAAVQ have worked together for the QA of those non-local courses offered by non-local HEIs leading to the award of non-local higher academic qualifications (i.e. sub-degree, degree, postgraduate or other post-secondary qualifications) or professional qualifications.

4.4.2.2   English medium teaching

Though some non-local students found that English speaking is a communication barrier on occasions as described in the previous section, on the whole, English medium teaching is seen as a favourable condition for opening up higher education to overseas students as expressed by many students being interviewed (Appendix C, R44).

4.4.2.3   International exposure

Some non-local students from selected Asian markets regarded opportunities of international exposure as invaluable advantages of studying in Hong Kong HEIs. These opportunities include joining overseas exchange programmes, having workplace learning in overseas internship, attending international conferences (including conferences in the Chinese Mainland), and interacting with an international student body (including overseas students from student exchange programmes), etc. Apart from being a benefit to non-local students, the presence of international students benefits local students in learning and in cross-cultural experience (Appendix C, R45).

4.4.2.4   Tuition fee lower than that of the Western counterpart

Some non-local students from selected Asian countries pointed out that the tuition fee of higher education in Hong Kong is lower than that in the Western countries. Besides, financial support in the form of scholarships, studentships, etc. also attracts them to pursue studies in Hong Kong (Appendix C, R46).

4.4.2.5   Support services offered by the HEIs

One of the HEI stakeholders and some non-local students from selected Asian countries mentioned that the provision of counseling services, Cantonese and English classes, and activities that offer social support can facilitate overseas students' lives in Hong Kong (Appendix C, R47).

4.5   Strategies recommended by various stakeholder groups for promoting Hong Kong's higher education services in the Asian countries

Having acknowledged the inadequacies and incentives involved in exporting Hong Kong's higher education services, the stakeholder groups recommended a number of strategies for promoting Hong Kong's higher education services in the Asian countries. These recommended strategies fall into two broad types: (1) strengthening the government's leading and coordinating roles in developing Hong Kong as a regional education hub; and (2) furthering the programme, marketing and organizational strategies undertaken by HEIs in exporting their higher education services.

4.5.1   The government's role in developing Hong Kong as a regional education hub

4.5.1.1   Leading and managing the development of Hong Kong as a regional hub

The government is expected to play an active and leading role in the promotion of higher education in the Asian countries, including clarification of the objectives of developing Hong Kong as an education hub, identification of the Asian markets, provision of resources, establishment of necessary infrastructure and marketing thrust (Appendix C, R48).

a.   **Clarification of the aims of developing Hong Kong as an education hub:** The government is expected to clarify the aims of developing Hong Kong as an education hub. Specific objectives, for example aiming at promoting internationalization or making profit from exporting education, will entail different strategies (Appendix B, R10). It is also recommended to relax the quota for the international students in HEIs (Appendix C, R49) and to expand the scope to other sectors of education; say, to include internationalization of secondary school education.

b.   **Establishing promotion infrastructure in the public sector:** Some higher education representatives considered that the best strategy in promoting Hong Kong as an education hub is to continuously enhance the academic excellence and visibility of the higher education sector as students and academics from other parts of the world will be attracted to institutions which are competitive in the international arena (Appendix C, R50).

It was suggested that an organization like the British Council in the U.K. should be set up to promote the internationalization of Hong Kong education (Appendix B, R10). Some HEI stakeholders concurred with this view, yet cautioned that it would not be appropriate for the UGC, which is involved in funding in the higher education sector, to take up this role (Appendix C, R51).

Indeed, there is a common view that government should set up offshore offices in the Asian countries to promote higher education. Hong Kong universities can set up enquiry desk in these offices (Appendix C, R52). The EDB representative suggested that a formal link with relevant organizations such as Overseas Economic and Trade Offices can be established at the government level (Appendix B, R2).

c. **Communication with the governments of the Asian countries: T**he Hong Kong government is suggested to initiate communication and cooperation with the governments in the Asian countries. Recognition of qualifications has to be sought at the government level between Hong Kong and selected Asian countries. The Hong Kong government needs to develop links for market research between countries and initiate country analysis (Appendix C, R53).

d. **Review of immigration / labour policy:** The government is expected to clarify its immigration policy (Appendix C, R14). If Hong Kong is meant to build up an international environment, then the government should allow students from the restricted countries to study in Hong Kong. The visa policy, the labour policy, etc. should be reviewed (Appendix B, R10). Indeed, many students expressed the need for taking up part-time jobs to lessen their financial burden for the tuition fees and living expenses (Appendix C, R54). The government should be more generous in giving work visas so as to attract talent to work in Hong Kong after graduation. Likewise, some students from the Asian countries said that it would be helpful if there was assistance, including the provision of a grace period for job search, for graduates to get a job after graduating in Hong Kong (Appendix C, R55).

e. **Accommodation and land use policy:** Land is scarce in Hong Kong. HEI stakeholders expressed a desperate need for the government to solve the problem of accommodating non-local students. Some of them suggested that the government should build a university dormitory city for students of all the universities in Hong Kong. This would not only solve the problem of hostel shortage but also facilitate cultural exchange among local and non-local students. Other suggestions include investing more money for hostel building in universities, distributing land to the universities to build their own hostels, or subsidizing the students to rent a room outside the campus (Appendix C, R56).

f. **Private university policy:** The government is suggested to develop a clear private university policy to encourage the establishment of a strong private sector of universities in Hong Kong which recruits international students (Appendix C, R14).

g. **Incentives for the HEIs:** Each one of the universities in Hong Kong has its significant roles and the government or UGC needs to promote the specialty of every university and extend the scope of its development. It should provide more

incentives and resources to encourage academic departments and their staff to develop suitable programmes to attract overseas students. The universities should be given enough support and facilities in the campus for the international students. More financial support is also needed for promoting higher education outside Hong Kong if we want not only a regional but also a global education hub (Appendix C, R57).

h. **Central scholarship:** Currently the government does not provide central scholarships although the EDB representative pointed out that part of the 200 million dollar matching fund granted to institutes in 2006 could be used as scholarships. Many HEIs emphasized that more scholarships for international students would secure more overseas students. They stressed that the establishment of a central scholarship would have a greater impact than scholarships offered by individual universities (Appendix C, R58).

i. **Driving marketing strategies from different dimensions:** The government should take the lead to drive marketing strategies in different directions. Firstly, Hong Kong as a financial city with a world class economy that helps improve life should be promoted. Hong Kong as a city with an international image should be promoted in the Asian countries. Secondly, the image of Hong Kong as an education hub has to be promoted in the Asian countries because Hong Kong has only been well-known to them as a tourist centre. Thirdly, the academic excellence of Hong Kong's HEIs has to be promoted in the Asia countries as there is little information about the high standard of higher education in Hong Kong known in the Region (Appendix C, R59).

4.5.1.2 Coordinating various stakeholders and bringing synergy of concerted efforts

a. **Coordinating the efforts of the HEIs:** A number of HEI stakeholders thought the government should provide a platform for the local institutions to exchange views concerning the internationalization of higher education with the government. Some HEIs believed that a more visible image could be created in promoting higher education in the Asian countries if the Hong Kong government could take the lead to coordinate systematic joint universities promotion at the right time. Overlapping efforts could be minimized and more effective use of resources would result (Appendix C, R60).

b. Strengthening the role of HKTDC: HKTDC could be developed as an agent to promote the education of Hong Kong as they already have offices, networks and connections in the world (Appendix B, R10). Continuous support from HKTDC was considered to be very important. HKTDC could provide promotional support and advice to the universities in Hong Kong. Some HEI stakeholders suggested that HKTDC should participate in key education expos in other countries in collaboration with the eight universities. It was also suggested that HKTDC office could connect with schools and universities in the Asian countries to publicize Hong Kong as an education hub (Appendix C, R61).

With regard to the role of HKTDC, it was considered that expertise in trade promotion overseas is a valuable asset to assist the higher education sector in promotion activities for exporting its service (Appendix C, R8). Currently, the HKTDC has a representative sitting in the HUCOM Standing Committee on Internationalization (Appendix C, R62).

4.5.2   Strategies to be strengthened by higher education service providers

*4.5.2.1 Programme strategie***s**

a. Continuous enhancement of academic excellence and visibility of Hong Kong's higher education: The best strategy for promoting Hong Kong as an education hub is to continuously enhance the academic excellence and visibility of the higher education sector as students and academics from other parts of the world are attracted to institutions which are competitive in the international arena (Appendix C, R50).

b. Development of a variety of customized academic programmes: More various and customized academic programmes should be developed. Suggestions included Business programmes plus Chinese study; dual-degree programmes jointly offered by two universities; exchange student programmes; university faculty exchange programmes; sandwich programmes, programmes including components of Putonghua learning; part-time programmes targeting the South East Asia market; collaboration with companies to offer student internship opportunities; providing foundation courses to help bridge Secondary 5 graduates to undergraduate studies (Appendix C, R63).

c. **Provision of scholarships and financial assistance:** All inbound students from the Asian countries stressed that attractive scholarships or financial assistance is of vital importance for them to come to study in Hong Kong. It was suggested that banks in Hong Kong should tie up with the universities in Hong Kong and provide loans to non-local students (Appendix C, R64).

4.5.2.2   Marketing strategies

a. **Joint efforts of the HEIs:** HEI stakeholders and students from the Asian countries suggested that the eight UGC funded HEIs should pull resources together to have some joint promotion activities through various means such as a mini expo, massive exhibition, talks in schools, advertising on TV and internet (Appendix C, R65).

b. **Establishing clear Asian markets:** It is important for the HEIs to have clear targets for promotion. HEI stakeholders and students from selected Asian countries made some recommendations. In Indonesia, Indonesian Chinese in Meden and Subiyar; government officials' children; students in Christian, Catholic and international schools; and students in Christian universities were suggested as promising targets. In Malaysia, Sabah should be explored as there would be keen competition with the Chinese Mainland and Taiwan if Hong Kong HEIs target Kuala Lumpur. Apart from Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Joho are potential markets in Malaysia. In India, New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Ahmedabad could be potential markets. Apart from geographical consideration, HEIs need to get hold of information about at what time(s) of the year overseas students at individual Asian countries make critical decisions for further study at different levels, namely SD, Ug, TPg and RPg levels. Such information is important to the scheduling of promotional activities. (Appendix C, R66).

c. **Critical information dissemination:** Some critical information, which has emerged as part of the unique attraction of studying in Hong Kong, has to become more visible to potential service users. This includes the opportunity for graduates to work in Hong Kong and the benefit of Hong Kong's ties with the Chinese Mainland to their future career development. The good learning facilities and rich learning experiences in Hong Kong should also be clearly conveyed. It is also important to facilitate potential non-local students to develop realistic expectations about studying in Hong Kong (Appendix C, R67).

d. Networking with organizations: Students from Malaysia recommended that Dong Jia Zong, which has connection with Independent High Schools and universities for the Chinese communities, should be enlisted. Building networks with schools in the target cities would also be helpful (Appendix C, R68).

e. People networking: It is useful for students to meet academics in the expos. It was suggested that academics should go to conferences in the regions. Other possibilities include arranging student tours to Hong Kong, and seeking help of non-local students who attend exchange programmes in Hong Kong to disseminate information about higher education in Hong Kong in their home countries (Appendix C, R69).

4.5.2.3 Organizational strategies

a. Provision of support services to facilitate non-local students' cultural adjustment and social integration: Some HEI stakeholders suggested that the university should organize more activities for overseas students to enable them to mingle one with another. More activities and social gatherings conducted in English should be organized to foster a friendly environment for international students (Appendix C, R70).

b. Provision of support services to non-local students on visa application, career counseling: Supporting services such as placement, facilitating career-path planning and assistance in student visa application were considered to be very useful to attract students to Hong Kong (Appendix C, R71).

4.6 Recent development in policy infrastructure to support the recruitment of non-local students: The 2007 Policy Address

The Chief Executive's 2007 Policy Address, promulgated on 10 October 2007, has been an important step to address some of the issues related to exporting Hong Kong's higher education services. A number of measures have been recently introduced to facilitate the attraction and retention of non-local students with a view to further developing Hong Kong as a regional education hub. Apart from promoting the development of private universities in the long run, the following measures have been undertaken.

4.6.1   Increasing admission quota for non-local students

Starting from 2008-09 academic year, the non-local student quota for publicly-funded programmes at SD, Ug, and TPg levels will be increased from 10% to 20%. The additional 10% of non-local students are on top of the approved student number targets. There is also relaxation of the restrictions regarding the recruitment of non-local students for self-financed programmes at the SD and Ug levels, and short-term studies at HEIs (excluding the CPE arms).

4.6.2   Establishing a fund to provide government scholarships and student hostel
         provision

Parallel to the increase in admission quotas, the government will establish an endowment fund of $1 billion to provide government scholarships to local and non-local students, and to explore the feasibility of constructing "joint hostels" to address the student accommodation problem.

4.6.3   Relaxing immigration restrictions

Immigration restrictions regarding employment-related initiatives as well as stay and work after graduation will be relaxed. Non-local students will be allowed to take up study-related internships arranged by HEIs. They will also be allowed to take up part-time on-campus jobs for up to 20 hours per week and off-campus summer jobs during the summer months. The immigration control related to non-local students' stay and work after graduation is also relaxed. Their applications for visa / entry permit will be favourably considered so long as the job concerned is at a level commonly taken up by degree holders and the remuneration package is set at the market level. They may be granted a 12- month stay on time limitation without any condition.

4.6.4   Establishment of a Research Endowment Fund

The Financial Secretary announced the creation of an additional 800 research postgraduate places and the establishment of an $18 billion Research Endowment Fund (REF) to support research and research student training at the UGC institutions. The $18 billion new REF and its investment income will replace the current recurrent grant for earmarked research, and fund appropriate research projects on specific themes.

4.6.5   Possible implications

At the time of writing this report, the aforementioned measures are in the process of being operationalized. While it is envisaged that they would partially help to address some of the inadequacies in exporting Hong Kong's higher education, it is important to inquire further into the implications of these measures for the local higher education sector and other sectors of the local society.

4.7   Summary

This chapter presented (1) the various stakeholder groups' views towards inadequacies in and factors facilitating the export of Hong Kong's higher education; (2) strategies recommended by various stakeholder groups for promoting Hong Kong's higher education services in the Asian countries; and (3) the recent development in policy infrastructure to support the recruitment of non-local students.

The findings presented in this chapter inform our understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the export of Hong Kong's higher education. At the system level, favourable factors include the attractions of Hong Kong as an international world-class city, its close ties with the Chinese Mainland, its unique position where the East meets the West, and its global trade networking. At the institutional level, the high quality of higher education services is regarded as a major attraction to potential students in the Asian countries.

Despite these strengths, Hong Kong has yet to overcome many challenges in exporting higher education services. Unfavourable factors at the system level include diverse views towards developing Hong Kong as an education hub, inadequate visibility of higher education services in the Asian countries, inadequate policy infrastructure to support the recruitment of non-local students, as well as social and cultural barriers. The medium of instruction (MOI) issue constitutes the major challenge at the institutional level. These favourable and unfavourable aspects, together with the strategies recommended by local stakeholder groups for promoting Hong Kong's higher education services and the recent policy development reported in this chapter form an important basis for consideration of recommendations in the next chapter.