

Evaluating Sub-Degree Programs at Caritas Francis Hsu College

An Interactive Qualifying Project Program

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Abstract

An evaluation of the sub-degree programs at Caritas Francis Hsu College was conducted through a study of opinions and attitudes of students, faculty, and administration both on campus, and in relation to other institutions throughout Hong Kong. Data collected on site indicated the need to bolster name recognition, improve facilities, and increase the number of internships available to students.

It is recommended that the college seek more effective means of advertising, increase summer employment opportunities, and enhance on-campus facilities.

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We offer a special thanks to participating Hong Kong institutions, as well as a former Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation member, whom all chose to remain anonymous while providing us with a broad sense of knowledge regarding the

sub-degree programs, as well as a foundation for our comparisons of the programs. With much of our archival research conducted on site at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University library, we express our many thanks for allowing us access to their expansive research facilities.

The success of this project is a direct reflection of the tremendous support given, opinions offered, and assistance received during our stay in Hong Kong.

Executive Summary

Sub degree programs offer a student another option of intermediary higher education upon the completion of secondary schooling, allowing the potential for further study or workplace entrance upon graduation. With the inception of the Associate Degree programs in Hong Kong in 2001, a careful look at both these and other sub degree programs was needed to ensure the continued overall quality of educational programs offered in the city. The goals of this project are to provide Caritas Francis Hsu College with an evaluation of their sub-degree programs, and to determine the subsequent recommendations that will help them continue to maintain the quality of their current sub-degree offerings.

To complete this evaluation for Caritas Francis Hsu College, our team surveyed students, faculty, and officials from both our liaison college and from other universities and organizations within Hong Kong. This surveying was primarily conducted through the distribution of an anonymous questionnaire, given to students at Caritas Francis Hsu College and students at two additional institutions. A number of interviews were also conducted at Caritas Francis Hsu College, with a few supplementary interviews taking place at other local universities and with an official in a government related organization.

Through the analysis of interview responses and the questionnaire data from all participating institutions, it was concluded that a series of recommendations were in order for Caritas Francis Hsu College. One of the most prominent issues expressed in the data was the lack of significant name recognition of C.F.H.C., without which, a smaller

private institution may remain at a disadvantage compared to larger, more well know public institutions offering sub-degree programs.

A second concern borne out in the data was student's desire for an increase in the number of internships made available through the institution. Two of the departments offered summer job placement/internships (one of which was through a personal contact), and both rated higher on the students' perceived job opportunities. An increase in Caritas assisted internships and summer positions could increase the marketability of students and provide them with a greater chance of obtaining jobs upon graduation.

Facilities also came under the scope of our review. Students, as well as faculty, made some specific points on what they would like to see improve with the campus. For example, there was a disparity between departments over the satisfaction of available computing facilities; while some departments mentioned that there was plenty and there were often unused computers, other said there weren't enough for each faculty member to have their own workstation or to have one in every classroom. Computer science students actually mentioned that they worked at the Caine Road campus to do their work, as the available computers at the main campus were far too slow. Another slight concern is the lack of an elevator on campus, which, besides the mere matter of convenience for students, makes the school handicap inaccessible. Also noted is the lack of the ability of students to reach online supplemental materials, such as lecture notes and discussion boards, from off campus locations, which is where they do most of their work. Students also desire a canteen or small shop to buy food and stationary while on campus.

It is the recommendation that Caritas Francis Hsu College consider taking direct action in responding to concerns about their facilities by devoting current available time

and finances towards improvements to these areas. Name recognition can be addressed through targeted advertising and favorable reviews of the college by program graduates. The matter of increased computing services for both teachers and students would be a point to consider addressing in the short term, since possible solutions may involve just a simple relocation of units. By considering the above recommendations, it may be possible for Caritas to continue to expand their educational base while remaining a competitive sub-degree institution in years to come.

Authorship Page

The work was divided equally among team members in carrying out the research and writing the report.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Countries around the world place a significant emphasis on the higher education system as an important foundation for a globally active economy. Education in the world today is in high demand due to the gradual change from a manufacturing based economy to a highly specialized technological industry common to developed nations. With the dawn of the information age, technical expertise has shown its importance with relevance to the economic growth of a country (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2000). The world economy has evolved so that a postsecondary education is necessary to succeed in a competitive job market.

With success heavily dependent on higher education, there has been an increased interest globally in postsecondary degree programs (U.N.E.S.C.O. Institute for Statistics, 2005). Hong Kong has been affected by this new global economy, and as interest grew in higher education (U.N.E.S.C.O. reports 141,044 enrolled students in 2000/2001 and 151,519 in 2001/2002) a new problem arose. The lack of availability/accessibility of higher education programs has become more pronounced with ever-increasing population and burgeoning demand for educational services. In order to solve this predicament, Antony K.C. Leung, the Chairman of the Education Commission of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, proposed an education reform that, among other goals, identified the goal of making postsecondary education available to 60% of high school graduates by the 2010/2011 school year (Hong Kong S.A.R. Education Commission, 2000).

The expansion and development of Associate Degree and Higher Diploma programs was one way to facilitate increasing participation. Our Sponsor, Caritas Francis Hsu College, is one institution that is offering these sub-degree programs. The

government has planned to increase public awareness for post-secondary education options (handbooks and expos have been made available), but plans for sub-degree specific programming to increase public understanding of the qualifications of these new options had not been completed as of 2004 (Hong Kong S.A.R. Education Commission, 2004). Recently, these programs have come under public scrutiny; criticisms include issues with quality control, collaboration between institutions, cost, and governmental control.

As these programs are fairly new and only recently have become widely available, an evaluation is necessary to see if they are accomplishing their goals. The criticisms aforementioned were noted and investigated. Currently there is a lack of information regarding analysis of these programs. This is due to the fact that Associate Degree programs were not accredited in Hong Kong until 2001 and statistical information regarding graduates of the program are slim. Specifically, industry leaders need to acknowledge the benefits of the programs and put their trust in graduates. If the student cannot be employed or does not have a distinct advantage, there is no value in the curriculum.

The goal of this project is to make recommendations for further improvement of the Associate's Degree and Higher Diploma programs to the Caritas Francis Hsu College, so that the college may provide increasingly beneficial educational services. The research and evaluation conducted in this project will provide valuable information as to the state of these sub-degree programs, including research into the validity of any published criticisms. This information will be invaluable in the continual improvement and development of these programs to better suit the public's needs.

Chapter 2: Background

Hong Kong's unique history has helped to shape its educational sphere. After being under British control for many years, it now has its own independent legal system that operates with very little government interference from the Mainland. Due to its economic growth, Hong Kong has had the ability to spend money towards its educational system, and has thus integrated Education Reform into its own system. This system is similar to that of the British model, where the students begin their schooling in primary education, continue on to a few years of secondary education, and if accepted, may receive an opportunity to attend further tertiary education. One of the Educational Reform's main goals is the direct increasing of the number of students enrolled in tertiary education. It is important to compare the Hong Kong educational system to other relevant systems, such as those from the United Kingdom and the United States, which have unique differences between them, but exhibit an overall resemblance to the structure of the Hong Kong educational system. The U.K. educational system provided the basis for the Hong Kong educational system early in the history of British rule, while the U.S. system provides a useful comparison to the new associate degree programs just beginning existence in Hong Kong.

2.1 History of Hong Kong

The British took over the small quiet island of Hong Kong during the Opium Wars of the 19th Century. As the population of the small island began to grow due to its

industrialization and the flow of refugees escaping China, Hong Kong began to play a vital role in the international economy, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established. In 1984, China and the British came up with an agreement known as "One Country, Two Systems" (Hong Kong Government/The Handover, 2005). It was decided that in 1997 the British would relinquish control of Hong Kong, as long as China allowed Hong Kong to maintain its own internal economic and political system for the following 50 years. This meant that the Mainland could not control Hong Kong's internal economic system, finances, or planning systems, and Hong Kong would retain an independent legal system with very little Mainland government interference.

2.2 Educational System

The economic growth of Hong Kong acted as a catalyst for its own educational growth. The Hong Kong government realized that education is one of the main factors to having a successful economy, and was subsequently willing to spend money in its public education system. During the years in which Britain was actively ruling over Hong Kong, the government based the schooling system on the United Kingdom model, which is also relatively similar to the American model (Education in Hong Kong, 2005). Starting in kindergarten, students enter a six-year program, which serves as a primary education. They then proceed onto five years of secondary education, that when completed, leaves the student prepared to take the exam called the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (H.K.C.E.E.), which serves as an evaluation and determines whether or not they can continue on to a higher level of tertiary education (Education in

Hong Kong, 2005). Different forms of education evolved in Hong Kong, including one funded by the government, which is relatively rare. The most common schools are run by charitable organizations, and some are completely private, which sometimes are also paid for by charitable organizations. Enrollment, however, is based on merit, and not financial status. It is customary for students to wear uniforms, and the style of learning is “force-fed” meaning that what they learn is pure memorization (Education in Hong Kong, 2005). After their secondary education, and if students are accepted, they can move on to tertiary education. This could include a higher-level education at a university or college that² usually requires about four years of study, or they could choose the path of an associate degree. The associate degree education has a duration of usually only about 2 years (Education in Hong Kong, 2005).

2.3 Education Reform

After reunification with China, the H.K. S.A.R. Education Commission proposed a large-scope education reform that would affect all levels of schooling and span over a decade. After careful review of the processes in place, the Commission came to the conclusion that many aspects needed to change in order to further Hong Kong’s economic and cultural progress (H.K. S.A.R. Education Committee, 2000).

2.3.1 Basis for Reform

In “Learning for Life Learning through Life: Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong” the H.K. S.A.R. Education Commission (2000) explains the necessity of education reform on multiple levels.

One is the noticeable change in global economies. Knowledge-based economies now have a distinct advantage, and to continue to have a thriving economy, Hong Kong’s educational system must adapt to these changes. The proposal wishes to focus on “Life-Long Learning” and “All-round Development”. The current “Monolithic” educational system will produce students of narrow focus, whereas Hong Kong needs educated individuals that are multifaceted and skilled in many fields. Multi-talented graduates are expected and needed by society. An integral part of fulfilling this need is to increase tertiary level education involvement. To give an idea of the importance of a highly educated populous, here is a simple comparison of global tertiary enrollment rates, with data gathered by U.N.E.S.C.O.’s (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Institute for Statistics on various economic superpowers:

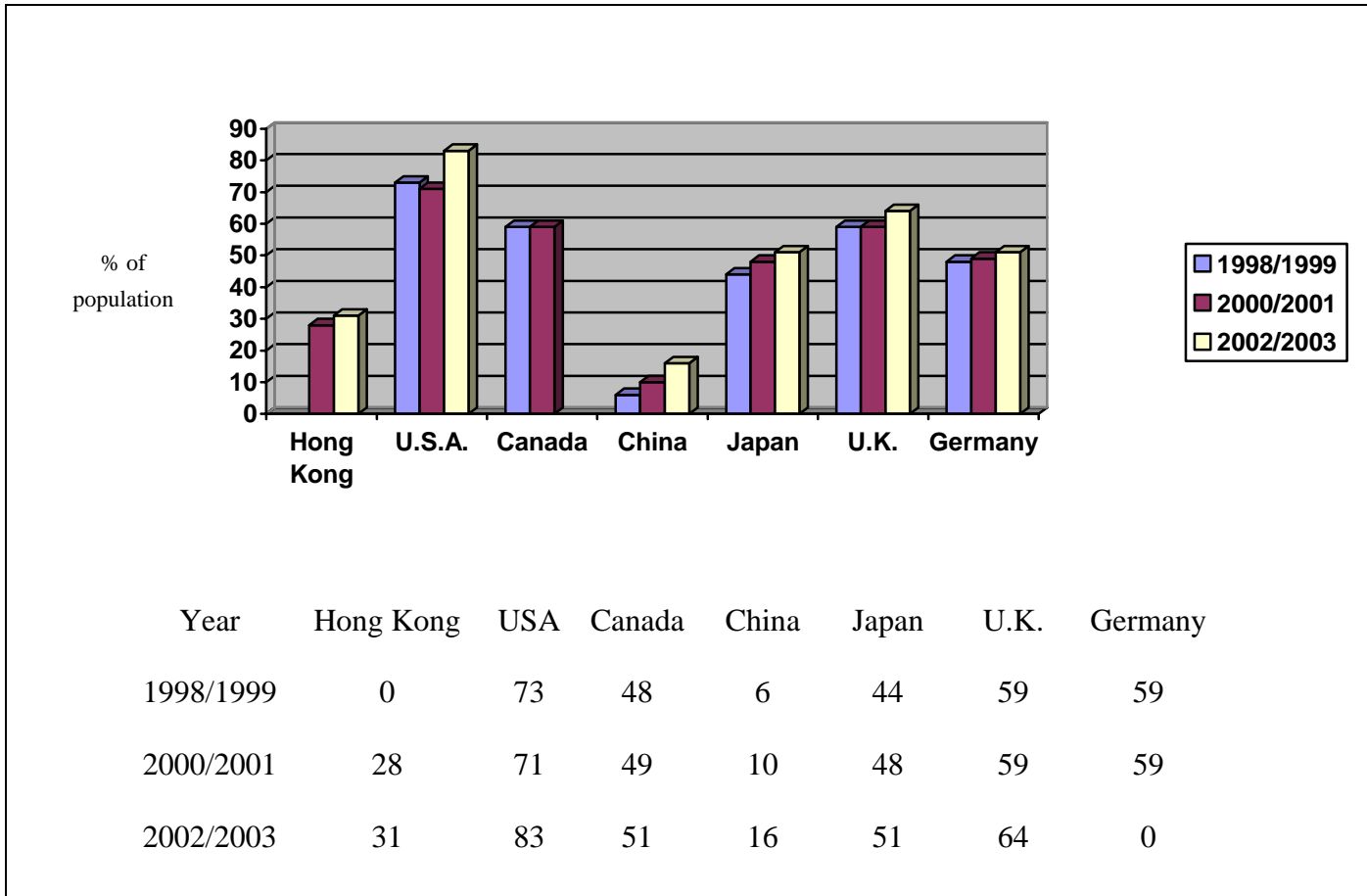


Figure 2.1: Hong Kong Tertiary Enrollment Rates compared to other countries (UNESCO, 2005)

Although no data were included for enrollment rates in 1998/1999 for Hong Kong, other countries' rates were displayed to help show how quickly higher education has become important. As one can see, to keep pace in the new knowledge-based economy Hong Kong's education system needs to increase the amount of its citizens who pursue higher education. The data is compiled into two-year segments as can be seen by the figure above.

2.3.2 Proposed Actions

The reform proposal published in 2000 goes into detail about what needs to be accomplished in order for the reform to be successful (HK SAR Education Committee,

2000). As it is a review of the entire educational system, it goes into great detail of the changes that need to be made on each and every level, and each will be mentioned cursorily.

Of specific interest for our project are the reforms pertaining to post-secondary education. The Education Committee wants to increase the availability of tertiary level education to the general population; 60% availability is expected by the 2010/2011 school year (Hong Kong SAR Education Committee, 2000). This is to be accomplished through the re-evaluation of university entry requirements and the establishment of new post-secondary institutions. Community colleges are specifically mentioned as a system to be established, along with the appropriate sub-degree programs (Associate and Higher Diplomas, along with Bachelor Degree curriculum placement). The importance of increasing tertiary enrollment to compete in the new global knowledge-based economy can be seen by the information available in Figure 2.1. For example, the United States had a 71% tertiary enrollment rate, while Germany and the United Kingdom boasted a 49% and 59% rate respectively (in the 2000/2001 school year)(UNESCO, 2005), compared to Hong Kong's 28% tertiary enrollment rate at the time of the education reform proposal.

2.3.3 Changes to Date at the Post-Secondary Level

The Education Commission has reported annual progress reports on the accomplishments made by the Education Reform from 2001-2004. To retain pertinence

to the project, only the reforms accomplished at the post-secondary level will be explained in detail.

Common descriptors for Associate Degree programs were announced in June 2001, to help develop a consistency of standards for the programs. Also in June 2001 the government supported the sub-degree programs by offering employment in civil service positions to Associate Degree and Higher Diploma graduates (Hong Kong SAR Education Committee, January 2002). Financial aid was established, as well as support for financial aid non-profit programs that help self-financing accredited programs. However, students must enroll in a program that meets accreditation requirements in order to receive aid (to provide student quality assurance). These programs are known through a compiled list that has been made public of all accredited post-secondary programs.

U.N.E.S.C.O.'s statistics put the higher education participation rate (in 2000/2001) in Hong Kong at 28% (U.N.E.S.C.O., 2005); while an Education Statistics report (Hong Kong S.A.R. Education Committee, 2004) placed the rate at 38%. However this discrepancy may be explained by the fact that the Committee's statistics were taken for the 17-20-age range only.

2001/2002

The report states the tertiary level participation rate in Hong Kong at 42%; this is in conflict with U.N.E.S.C.O.'s data for the time period, which placed the rate at 31%. Aid to non-profit groups and accreditation programs increased as their participation became more necessary. Post-secondary students began receiving financial aid, thus

increasing further education opportunities to those that need financial assistance (Hong Kong SAR Education Committee, June 2003).

The tasks planned at this point solely focus on the increasing awareness and credibility of sub-degree programs, by making space available in appropriate undergraduate classes to facilitate sub-degree to Bachelor's Degree articulation and increasing public relations specific to the sub-degree level (Hong Kong SAR Education Committee, 2003).

2003/2004

In the 2003/2004 Progress report, the level of availability of higher education in Hong Kong was stated as 53% with an actual enrollment of 42%, compared to the 31% actual tertiary enrollment reported by UNESCO. The Education and Manpower Bureau and the University Grants Committee are creating a committee to review and broaden entry requirements as the institutions transition during the reform; this will be done prior to the expansion of places available in accepted programs.

At the time the 2003/2004 progress report was compiled by the Education Commission, there existed 20 accredited post-secondary institutions (14,200 places), and more effort was being pooled into assessment of higher-degree programs (Hong Kong SAR Education Committee, December 2004). These programs were made known to the public through media advertisement, Internet databases, and informational handbooks and expos. As had been done previously, funding increased towards aid of self-financing accredited programs, hoping to strengthen the system and promote expansion.

Besides the usual increase and funding for financial aid and institutional support, the upcoming agenda again states the sub-degree specific tasks of securing upperclassmen places for transfer students and increasing publicity (Hong Kong SAR Education Committee, December 2004). This is important to note, as it seems that there is still much to accomplish regarding establishing public knowledge.

One of our objectives in this evaluation was to determine the government's opinions and attitudes on the topic of sub-degrees. The Education Reform lays a foundation for what to expect from the government. However, since many of the above facts came from government sources, they may be biased and it was informative to see it from the academic standpoint.

With the current reevaluation, admissions requirements came under investigation. Depending on the need of students and the factual informational available on-site (most notably Education Committee and accreditation board reports), the resulting evaluation may include suggestions for admissions procedures.

As public awareness/opinion and the credibility of the sub-degree programs are one of the project's main foci, we determined the reform's progress in this regard and presented our perspectives to Caritas. Without general knowledge and trust in the quality of these options, the development of the institution will suffer. This role must be filled largely by the government as it increases support. The level of promotion in secondary schools and industry will have a profound effect on the success of any new post-secondary program (e.g. technical classes and certifications as well as sub-degrees).

2.4 Post-Secondary Education Systems

The educational systems in Hong Kong are a physical embodiment of its governments' objectives. The educational systems discussed in this section are from the United Kingdom and the United States. The base structure of Hong Kong's educational system was derived from the United Kingdoms' model, due to an extended period of colonization under British rule. The Higher Diploma program was initiated during this time of British rule, and Hong Kong used the British tertiary educational system as a foundation for their tertiary program. The Associate Degree programs, which are much younger than the Higher Diploma programs, were partially based upon the community college programs in the United States. Although the Hong Kong educational system and its mandates have evolved along its own path, it has its origins in the older, tested and tried systems of the United States and the United Kingdom.

2.4.1 United Kingdom (England, Wales, and Northern Ireland)

The United Kingdom (excluding Scotland) education system, as shown in Figure 2.2, is applied in the following countries and region: England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. These follow the same rigorous rules regarding the programs and organization structures. The mandatory years of school are from age 5 to 16 where a student will theoretically accomplish primary school and part of secondary school. After the compulsory years students have to take the G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) that will permit them to continue their studies and complete their secondary

education. As you can see from Figure 2.2 below, a student at the age of 16 has two options, they can either enter a secondary school / further education or they can enter a further education institute. After that, at the age of 18, they have the option of pursuing a higher education.

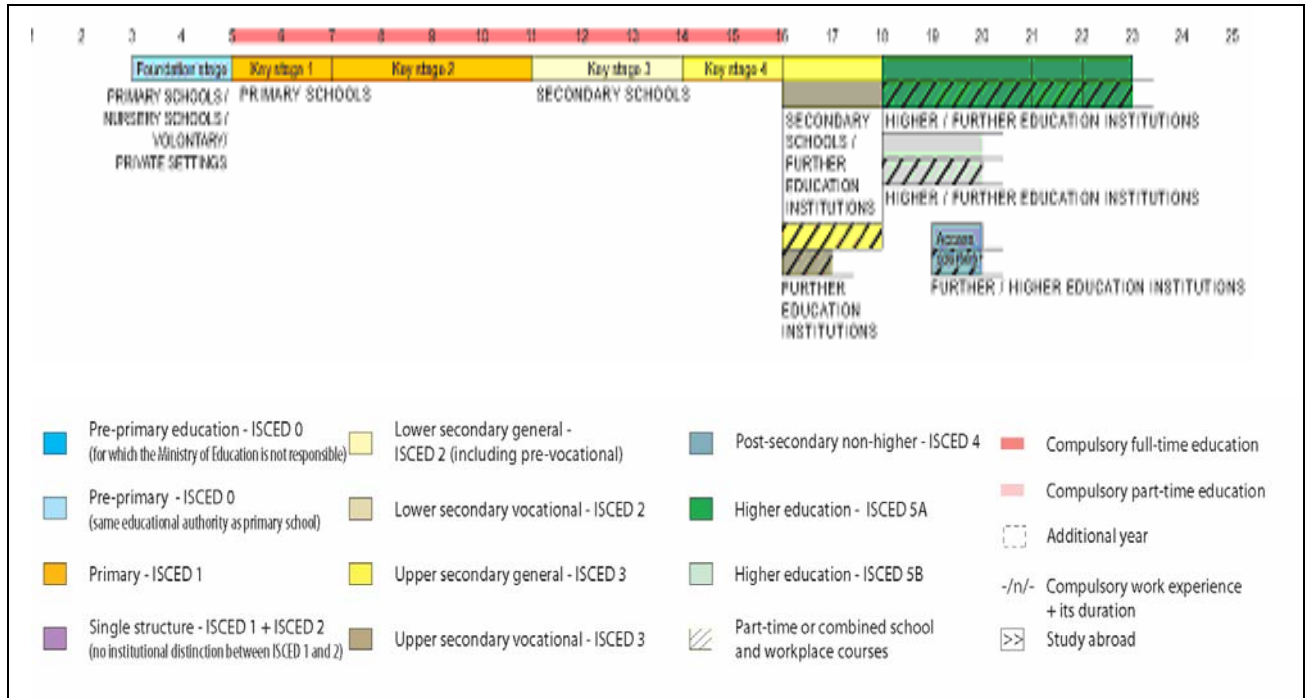


Figure 2.2: Organization of the Education System in the UK (excluding Scotland)

(Eurydice, December 2005)

After the G.C.S.E., students who want to complete their secondary education are required to take two other examinations, one of which is the A.S. (Advanced Supplementary) and the other being the G.C.E. A-Level (General Certificate of Education Advanced Level). The A.S. is of the same standard as the A-levels but is less detailed than the A-levels and therefore was created to give a broader knowledge and certification

to students. The A-Level usually requires the A.S. (the requirement depends on the institution) and is taken after the A.S. The A-Level certification will qualify students for completing the secondary school and, being a standardized test, will help students demonstrate their academic potential for entering tertiary education programs. The I.B. (International Baccalaureate) is also offered in most of the secondary education institutions. The examination is usually around the 18th year of age, or 13 years of school, as are the A-levels but does not require any background qualification. Students usually make decisions whether they want to take the A-Level or I.B.

If students do not desire a higher educational level they have the possibility to continue their studies in vocational institutions. The G.N.V.Q. (General National Vocational Qualifications) is the alternative path for those who want to continue their studies. This qualification combines general education with vocational education aimed towards employment. Students will be trained and educated in the skills required for the desired working subject. This career-based qualification will enable the students to enter university and is a common qualification offered in educational institutions.

There are various paths that a student can follow. Example paths are: to immediately apply for a low skilled job; another is to complete secondary school to enter university or to take the G.N.V.Q. to have a job but without entering university. The education institutions could be considered as two divisions: the Further Education and the Higher Education.

Further Education (including career based courses and some degree courses) is used for education institutions that train students who left mandatory school. There are about six hundred F.E. colleges, state funded and independent. These institutions offer

programs for students to obtain the G.C.S.E. A-levels, and equivalent qualifications but are not as prestigious. These institutions also offer career-based courses, access courses to be admitted to degree programs, as well as degree programs. Private colleges usually tutor students to prepare and improve their skills and qualifications for their eventual courses. Private institutions may decide to be qualified by the British Accreditation Council (B.A.C.) that assesses the college for their quality. Government funded colleges instead are controlled by inspections and focus on specific sections of the institutions' system.

Higher Education (including degree courses, postgraduate programs and MBAs) is the highest education a student can obtain in the U.K. It is composed of universities, colleges, degree level institutions, and higher education level institutions. This division is very delicate due to the fact that it is illegal to offer degrees or qualifications without proper authorization, which has to be granted from the Royal Charter.

There are over 3,000 educational institutions and 330 UCAS recognized. U.C.A.S. (Universities and Colleges Admission Services) is an admission organization for full-time first degrees, H.N.D.'s and university diplomas in the U.K. It is the organization that helps students to enter university.

2.4.2 Hong Kong and United Kingdom Schooling Comparison

Hong Kong requires mandatory schooling for eleven years, including six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, and two years of senior secondary education. Students will usually start at age 5 and finish around age 16, which

is very similar to the U.K. system it was derived from. After the mandatory school years students are expected to continue their studies and qualify for the Advanced Level examination such as the U.K. but without a similar A.S. qualification. Hong Kong students, as well as those studying in the U.K., must complete an examination at the conclusion of their senior year. This examination is on general topics that will be narrowed down in the next years.

As for tertiary institutions, Hong Kong offers students Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorial degrees, as well as alternative diplomas and degree courses. There are three types of institutions in Hong Kong: the public schools, the subsidized schools, and the private schools. Private schools are the most competitive schools and therefore will require more academic skills and financial status to attend. The difference between Hong Kong and the U.K. is that most of the students attend governmental schools due to the infrastructure already established. A direct comparison would not be precise due to the size of the two countries and as well as the population versus number of schools available.

Students in Hong Kong have to struggle for a place, and examinations identify the students by their grades. The H.K.A.L.E. (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examinations), one of the tests administered in Hong Kong, covers many different subjects of study, from the sciences to art. It is rare for students to obtain an A (highest grade) in the H.K.A.L.E. and is markedly different from tests encountered by students living in other countries. Before Hong Kong students can progress to the high level H.K.A.L.E. tests, they must first prove themselves on the H.K.C.E.E. There are about three hundred to four hundred students who are able to pass the H.K.C.E.E. examination and gain

acceptance to Form 6, but the educational structure does not allot them equal possibilities. The Hong Kong secondary qualification is not largely recognized among students due to the fact that other international qualifications like the S.A.T. (U.S.A) and A-Levels (U.K.) are preferred.

The main difference between Hong Kong and European countries is that in Hong Kong there is a large question as to what to do following the completion of mandatory schooling. The demand of continuing studies in Hong Kong is relatively high, and the number of available admission openings does not meet the demand. In European countries after the completion of mandatory schooling, a student can make a relaxed choice as to what to do due to the ample number of paths offered them upon graduation. Some of these options will not allow you to enter a university or gain easy entrance to a university respective to other educational paths, but students can always transfer to other schools if they desire. Hong Kong does not even provide students the flexibility to choose their academic career from a wide range of options.

The Associate Degree and the Higher Diploma certificates are two-year programs that remain comparable to the Further Education program in the U.K. These programs have the same goals as other institutions in the U.K., and the main goals are to help students continue their studies in order to obtain a job or gain entrance to a university, and the programs offer similar topics and methods of instruction. There are both vocational and non-vocational programs available to fulfill the students' needs. Due to the high numbers of these programs in Europe, many of them may remain un-recognized by the government or private universities, while in Hong Kong such sub degree programs are recognized by the government as long as they go through the accreditation process.

The sub-degree programs in Europe have been actively providing education alternatives longer than the related programs in Hong Kong (Eurydice, 2005). These structures are similar in their foci and selection of subjects of study. The education situation is different in Hong Kong than in other countries, and while the purpose of the sub-degree programs in each country are dissimilar; their objective to provide alternative education to students remains the same.

2.4.3 Community Colleges in the United States

Associate degree programs in the United State exist to provide an alternative education avenue for students wishing to continue their education after high school, but who do not attend a four-year university for whatever reason. These degree programs, available at both community colleges and four-year universities alike, are intended to be a full-time two-year degree, but since students will pursue such a degree on a part-time basis to allow for a job or other commitment, the program can sometimes take a few years to complete (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). This ability to delay the required courses over a period of a few years is an instrumental part of the system, which seeks to provide a sufficient alternative for students who wish to work and learn concurrently.

With over 1000 community colleges in the United States, these institutions provide education for the 11.6 million students enrolled in their programs (American Association of Community Colleges, 2005). These community colleges are well established in their societal niche, providing a specific service to those students who choose to turn to them for their educational needs. Programs in Hong Kong, however, do

not have the long history of the sub-degree programs in the United States, and do not have a comparable scope of operations. This is partially due to the structure of the Hong Kong Education system, which favors 3 year university learning, but is now moving towards a four year program (Institute of International Education, 2005).

United States community colleges, in general, tend to have entrance requirements that encourage students to study with them in a comfortable setting. As is the case at Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester, MA, some of the Associate Degree programs only require a high school diploma or equivalent, and one program has no prerequisites required for entry (Pat Toney, 2005). There is a significant monetary consideration that favors taking a sub-degree course track, since average tuition for a community college in the United States is about \$2,000, compared to a hefty \$40,000 that some private four-year institutions might charge (American Association of Community Colleges, 2005). These two-year programs may sometimes have agreements with four year institutions that allow for a considerable amount of credit transfer to a four-year university, and may even have a formal transfer agreement guaranteeing full use of all courses taken at a community college.

In much the same way as Hong Kong must now grapple with a transitory phase of its history, so too did the United States community college system during its inception. As calls for a more skilled workforce resounded at the beginning of the 20th century, the prevailing thought was that the community college might provide such an education to the willing in the United States (American Associate of Community Colleges, 2005). Although very small initially, and with a limited class size, these community colleges, where students could come to further themselves in an education modeled around

university learning, flourished into the organizational web that exists today. No doubt Honk Kong seeks to find some measure of success in the same way that United States did with its community college system, hoping to bridge the gap between limited university entrance openings and the vast number of students who wish to further their education beyond Secondary Five.

2.5 Caritas Francis Hsu College

Our sponsor, Caritas Francis Hsu College, is a Community College in the Kowloon Tong region of Hong Kong and offers both Higher Diploma and Associate Degree programs. This project evaluates the sub degree programs at the college and presents our results and conclusions, so that the institution may adjust their programs if necessary to better serve their student base. Thus, some background information on C.F.H.C, enrollment requirements, and financial aid policies is appropriate, considering the institution was the main subject of the study.

2.5.1 History

Caritas Francis Hsu College was founded in 1985, originally offering two-year accounting, computing, and management diploma programs and advanced level courses (Caritas Francis Hsu College, 2005a). The Hong Kong government approved of the college providing post-secondary education in 1990, and shortly thereafter the institution began offering 3-year professional diploma programs (Accounting Studies, Translation and Interpretation, Computing Studies, and Company Secretary staff and Administration). C.F.H.C. became an Approved Post Secondary College on August 8,

2001, and it modified these professional programs into its Higher Diploma programs, which have been accredited and remain comparable to similar programs both local and overseas. From that point, C.F.H.C. added a variety of Associate Degree and Bachelor Degree top-up programs, and this year has seen the extension of the institution's second Campus on Caine Road. The institution seeks eventual self-accreditation status, and is a private, non-profit, self-financing institution.

2.5.2 Admission Requirements

As a community college, Caritas Francis Hsu's Associate Degree admission requirements are minimal. C.F.H.C. requires 5 passes on the HKCEE, including Chinese and English Language (if 5 passes are obtained without the Languages, they are still accepted under the grounds that they must take intensive programs on the subjects prior to year 1 during the founding year) to be accepted into their programs (Caritas Francis Hsu College, 2005a). Students may also be accepted upon the completion of Project Yi Jin (an alternative education for those who do not perform well on the HKCEE) with the same Language requirements.

Higher Diploma requirements are the same, with the addition of a Mathematics pass requirement in addition to the Language passes requirement. On completion of a Higher Diploma program, graduates are admitted into the relevant Bachelor's Top-Up program if they so desire.

Students older than 21 years old prior to the 1st of September in the year which they apply, can remain exempt from the other requirements with proof of experience in their chosen field of study or the ability to pursue those studies (Caritas Francis Hsu

College, 2005a). Transfer students are accepted and may apply for exemption of certain classes if they were taken elsewhere, and are also offered at CFHC, as long as they do not add up to more than half of the graduation requirements.

2.5.3 Financial Aid

Financial Aid is given in several forms at Caritas Francis Hsu College (Caritas Francis Hsu College, 2005a), based on academic standards and by social status. The first method is through scholarships, which are given to the top 3 GPA's in the Foundation (A.D.)/First (H.D.) Year of their studies. One scholarship is given to the highest GPA in the Year 1 (A.D.)/Year 2 and Year 3 (H.D.), unless the number of students enrolled in that year of study is greater than 40, in which case one will also be given to the second highest GPA.

Grants may be acquired through the Diocesan Lenten Collection Allocation Committee (Caritas Francis Hsu College, 2005a). This is given to students that genuinely require financial assistance, and pays for a portion of the next round's tuition fees. Under the Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students (FASP) provided by the Student Financial Assistance Agency of the HKSAR Government, students may also apply for grants, but only if they are eligible for 100% assistance.

Loans are also provided by FASP if a student is not eligible for 100% assistance, at a rate of 2.5% interest per annum (Caritas Francis Hsu College, 2005a). Students may also apply for student loans from the government under the Non-means Tested Loan Scheme (NLS). This loan, like many student loans, has a low interest rate that only covers administration charges and risk factors.

Financial aid an integral part of any community college system. Students do not only attend community colleges because of the inability to gain access to local universities; at times they attend these programs because they are unable to meet the financial obligations of universities. If students are unable to attend C.F.H.C. for financial reasons, the College has failed one of its goals, which is to provide any eligible student an opportunity to further their studies.

As Caritas Francis Hsu College is the center of our studies as well as our sponsor, a basic background is necessary. It will be easier to relate to the information in following sections with some general knowledge of the institution, and will allow some understanding of why some results have been received.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The intention of this project was to provide Caritas with operational information concerning both their sub-degree programs and other external programs unaffiliated with the organization to allow them to adjust their own programs as necessary to fulfill the public need.

Multiple techniques were used to gather such data; questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and periodical research were utilized to evaluate the sub-degree programs in several areas. This diversity in techniques provided us with a wide variety of input that allowed us to make useful recommendations.

The specific steps used to meet each of our objectives are outlined below. The nature of the Government's involvement, the status of public opinion and feelings of those involved in the program, as well as current students' advantages and abilities in the workplace will all be explored.

3.1 Opinions and attitudes regarding sub-degree programs

Our first objective is to collect data concerning students', teachers', and administration's opinions and attitudes regarding the sub-degree programs, and whether or not these programs are meeting the needs of those involved.

A large part of the evaluation of these programs stemmed from the opinions of those involved. Input from students, faculty, and administrators was considered and analyzed through the use of questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. The areas of interest that we analyzed in detail were the cost/benefit of the program, the nature of

curriculum satisfaction, the state of the learning environment for the students and teachers, the student-faculty relationship, the available job opportunities after graduation, the possibilities for credit transferability, and the reactions to public opinions. Through the questionnaires and focus groups, we collected the student's opinions regarding their institution. Interviews with faculty and administration allowed us to view issues from the instructor's point of view, and raised several key concerns that we elaborated on in our study.

3.2 Government's role and attitude towards sub-degree programs

Our second objective is to ascertain the government's role and attitude towards these programs.

The governments' role and opinions towards the sub-degree programs are a foundation for their existence. Through interviews with the academic staff and individuals working with government-affiliated agencies, we were able to ascertain the government's influence on the programs.

The information regarding the government's involvement was collected mostly by noting the opinions and attitudes of those involved in the program; the most valuable resource was an interview with two Hong Kong accreditation board/educational quality assurance employees. Speaking with the most knowledgeable people available provided new perspectives and a great deal of useful information, not to mention a new perspective. The questions asked focused on: the government's attitudes towards the sub-degree programs, what the government perceives the role of these programs are in society, and what their expectations are. Interviewing students through focus groups was

another valid way to gather some perspective on how the government interacts with the educational system. Knowing the government's role and attitude towards sub-degree programs in Hong Kong gave us a familiarity with these programs, and showed us whether they have government backing, and detailed how such sub-degree programs are financed.

3.3 Public opinion regarding Hong Kong's sub-degree programs

Our third objective is to determine the public opinion in Hong Kong regarding sub-degree programs in tertiary education.

The current status of social recognition for sub degree programs (most notably the Associate Degree programs) was ascertained through the interviews with staff and students, as well as the analysis of this area on the questionnaire. Newspaper articles and periodicals were also a relevant source for gathering various public opinions. Were these programs considered effective, and were they seen as a respectable form of education? A student would rather look for a path that ensures a successful economic future, as opposed to one that will offer him/her little to no advantages.

3.4 Sub-degree representation in media publications

Our fourth objective is to determine how the media represents the Associate Degree and Higher Degree programs.

To complete this, we conducted archival research of newspaper articles at Hong Kong Polytechnic University library. We collected multiple articles on the subject of sub degree programs in the city, and used them to advance our understanding of the opinions of the Hong Kong population as represented in the writings of the mass media. This step allowed us to further explore some of the reasons for the current level of social recognition for these programs in Hong Kong, and some of the public's concerns reflected through the mass media.

3.5 Sub-degree program graduates in the workplace

Our fifth objective is to determine if there is any correlation between obtaining a sub degree and advancing job opportunities. Also, to find how well sub-degree program graduates perform in the workplace.

Multiple email interviews were distributed to different industry sectors. We contacted these industry professionals through careful examination of information pertaining to the top companies in Hong Kong by browsing the World Wide Web.

Our email interview protocol included questions with regards to the number of students that participated in sub-degree programs that have been hired by the industry at large. Opinions of their performance overall, as well as comparisons of sub-degree hires in relation to those of a higher or lower levels of education were also sought.

As reiterated in the next chapter, we were unable to complete this objective due to time restraints, student privacy concerns, and the lack of assistance from those involved in industry.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

After the completion of the last of the interviews, the focus groups, and the cataloging of the questionnaire responses, the raw data was recorded and underwent a thorough review by the group. Some institutions requested that our group keep their identities anonymous, and in return they would distribute our questionnaire to a small sampling of their students. The data was collected over a period of seven weeks, at various universities including Caritas Francis Hsu College, Institution A, Institution B, and Institution C (whom did not distribute our questionnaires). Our contacts within these organizations were not at the highest levels of administration, and as such, the sampling size was rather small from the institutions besides Caritas Francis Hsu.

A problem with the collection of the data was the unfavorable timing of the residency in Hong Kong for our group. Approximately one week of data collection was lost, due to the closing of most businesses during the Chinese New Year, and because of the limited availability of contacts during the holiday. Many of the schools we worked with were either on break when we arrived, or proceeded to go on break during the middle of our stay. This reduced our time with both students and faculty at all of the institutions we worked with, and required us to settle for a smaller questionnaire disbursement than we had initially expected. In addition, since our time in Hong Kong was limited to the end and beginning of semesters, it was difficult to solicit assistance due to the busy nature of this time in academia.

4.1 Opinions and attitudes regarding sub-degree programs

Due to the nature of our evaluation, the opinions and attitudes of those with first-hand experience with the programs holds a great amount of importance. With their experiences, we gained a great amount of information on the performance of the programs at Caritas Francis Hsu College.

The first action we took to meet this objective was the distribution of questionnaires to CFHC and two other institutions (who wish to remain anonymous). The questionnaire (see Appendix A) asked students to evaluate their institution in several different areas on a numerical scale from 1-5. We received 391 returned questionnaires in total from C.F.H.C., 60 from Institution A (out of 70), and 72 from Institution B (out of 80).

Unfortunately, due to the nature of a student survey, a rating range with an odd number of responses may not have been the best choice, due to the tendency of students to move towards neutrality with the option of the dead-middle choice. However, some trends can still be observed from data that strays from the middle ground.

At the end of the questionnaire, students were asked an open-ended question on whether they had any additional comments or suggestions on how to improve these programs. There were several categories of responses. In C.F.H.C., 121 comments were made in total, while we received 14 from Institution A and 25 from Institution B.

After the questionnaires were collected, interviews with individual students were set up to delve into deeper detail as to why the areas of the questionnaire were rated in the

fashion that they were. This higher level of detail underlined several concerns raised by the open-ended questions and interviews with staff.

Interviews were held with faculty and administration to gain their perspective on the programs, and their strengths and weaknesses. We met with the department heads, as well as various staff members and teachers from the different departments. At C.F.H.C., the faculty and administration of the College is very confident in its programs' ability to prepare students for their endeavors after completion of the program. However, there were several concerns expressed by multiple members; these will be reviewed when the subject matter is discussed below.

4.1.1 Employment Opportunities

For most, the choice to continue education is motivated by a need to improve their desirability in the job market. The ability of the programs to deliver this advantage is one of the primary means to analyze their effectiveness. As can be seen in Figure 4.1, roughly one-third of all C.F.H.C. students plan to enter the workforce immediately after graduation.

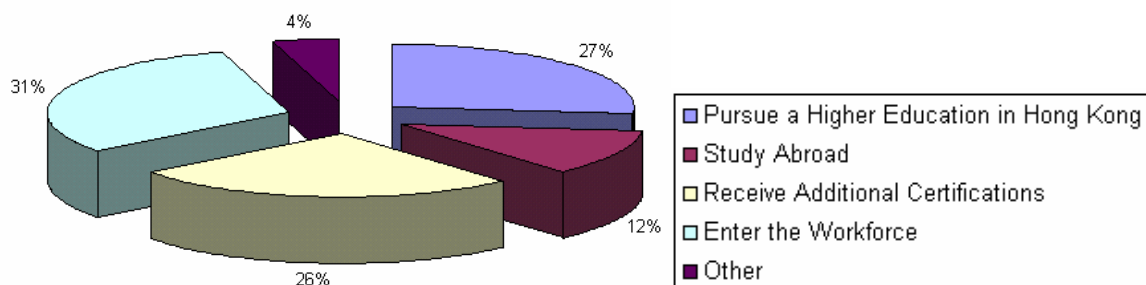


Figure 4.1 – Post-Program Aspirations of C.F.H.C. Students

One must note that this is only the number of students that wish to enter the workforce after completion, and does not include the number of students that are not accepted into higher degree programs due to a lack of places (a problem discussed later in this chapter). This emphasizes the importance of industry recognition of these programs.

When asked to rate the employment opportunities available through attending programs at C.F.H.C., students replied quite positively. As observed in Figure 4.2, students at C.F.H.C. actually responded more favorably than those in Institute A and B.

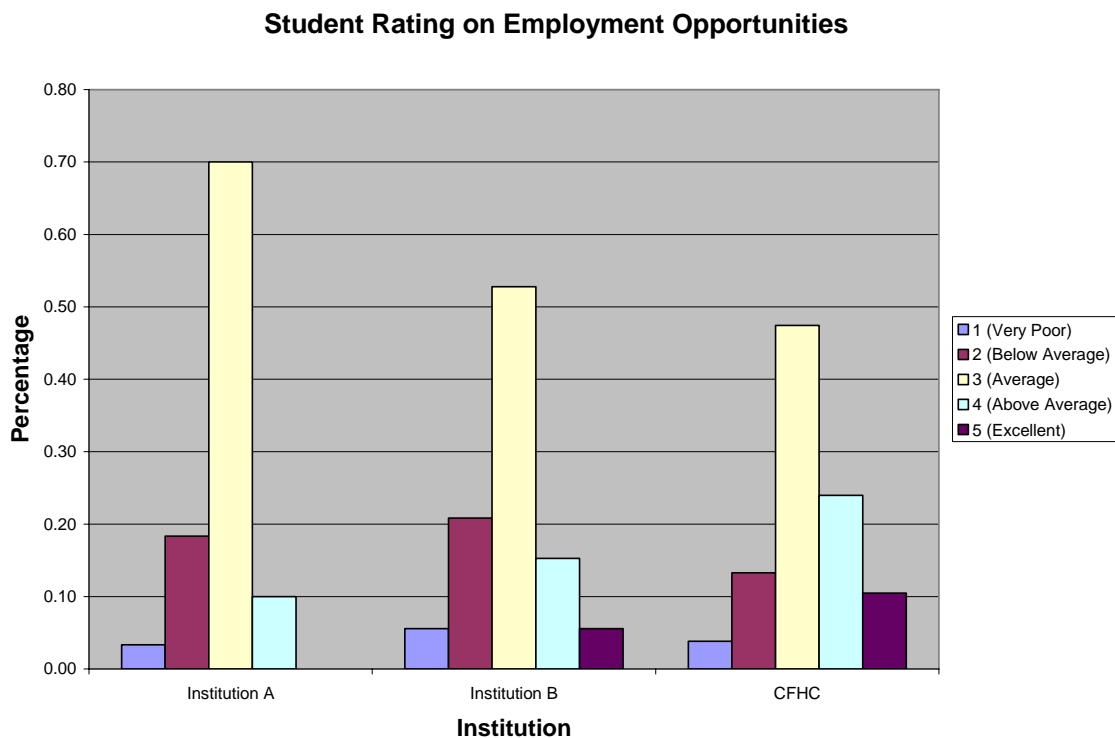


Figure 4.2 – Student Rating on Employment Opportunities

In this regard, Caritas Francis Hsu College did quite well. However, in interviews with faculty and student groups, there were some concerns that fall into this category.

Five of the open-ended question answers first brought our attention to internship opportunities at C.F.H.C., noting that they would like to see more available. Our liaison,

Dr. Thomas Chan, agreed with this, noting that he would like to see the organization as a whole work to increase communication and proactive collaboration between industry sectors and the College. Interviews with other department heads and students gave us more information as to which departments offer internships and how many. The Business Administration department offers summer job placement to approximately 40 students a year, and the Accounting department offers 10 internships through personal contacts with the department head, Bosco Law.

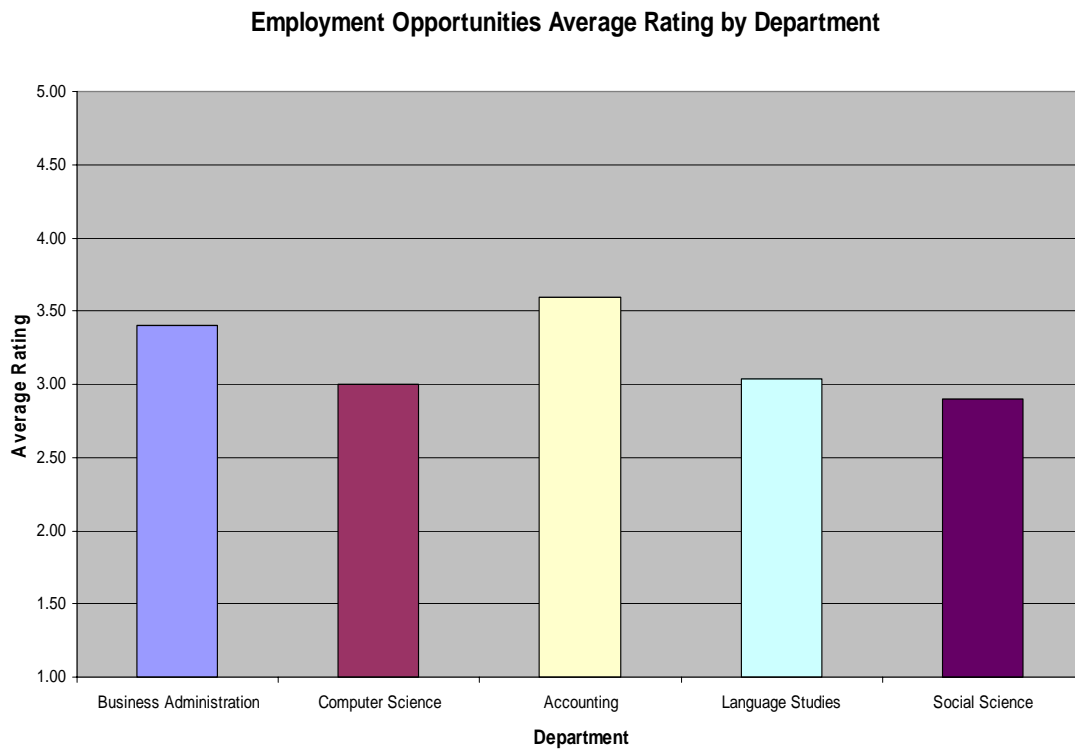


Figure 4.3 – Employment Opportunities Average Rating by Department at C.F.H.C.

As can be seen in Figure 4.3 above, the departments mentioned that offer internships through the institution or faculty assistance rated higher than the others in this area by about half a point on average. This shows that the internships available to

students has a direct effect on their perceived job opportunities, and likely affects their satisfaction with the program they are enrolled in.

4.1.2 Facilities

The facilities on campus are often important to students' satisfaction with the institution. When we received the results from the numerical ratings on the questionnaires, we noticed that the facilities available were a concern of students. Figure 4.4 shows how, compared to Institutions A and B, students at C.F.H.C. are dissatisfied with what is provided.

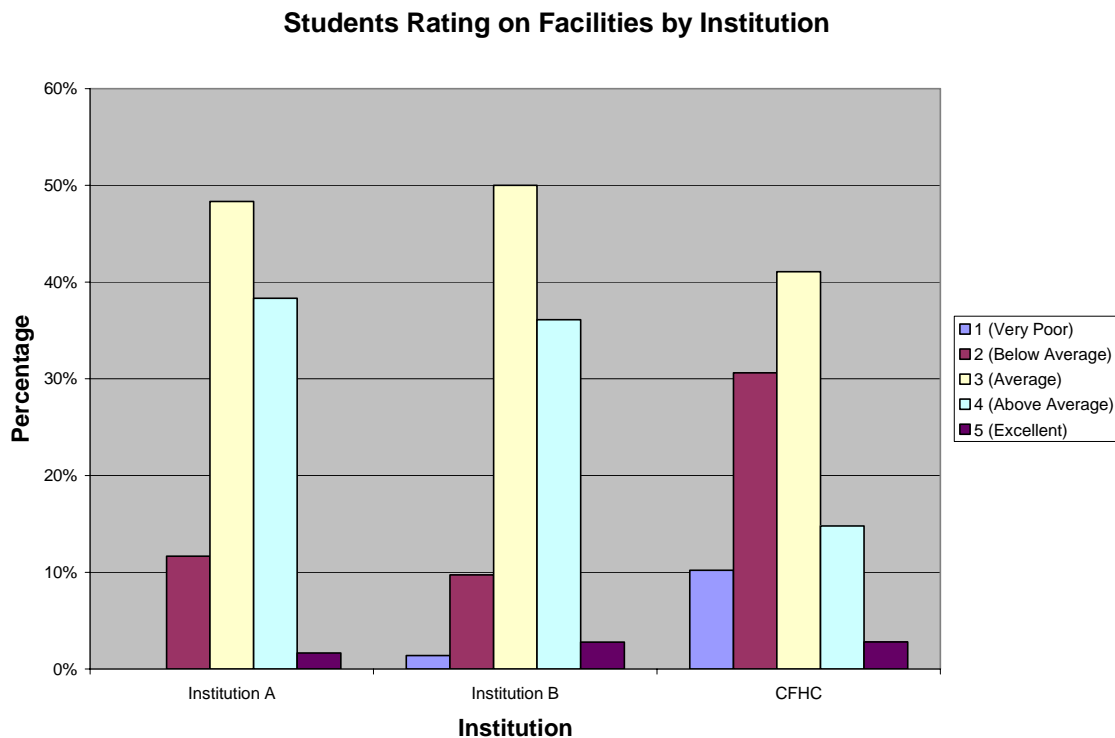


Figure 4.4 - Student Rating on Institution Facilities

Unique to C.F.H.C. are the comments and complaints on its available facilities on the open-ended question from the survey; there were eleven such responses. These gave

us our first look as to why students rated this area so low in comparison to others. One comment, besides the others, caught our attention right away. In mentioning that there was no elevator, it brought to our attention that there is a large lack of accessibility for the handicapped on campus. However, at this point in time, the financial obligation involved in installing an elevator would deal a large blow to C.F.H.C.

The student interviews went into greater detail as to what students were looking for in the campus facilities, and largely agreed with the written comments. From speaking to Dr. Chan, we were informed that students had complained of the lack of a place to buy food or stationary on campus, and in the focus groups students responded enthusiastically to the idea of a canteen on campus. They noted that as long as it offered variety and quality, such a shop would be used quite often by students. It would also improve the attractiveness of the campus to potential applicants.

Opinions on computer resources conflicted by department. In some departments, such as Language Studies, faculty felt that the numbers of computers available were not adequate (one even mentioned that was not enough to have one for each faculty member), while in other departments students and faculty were quite satisfied, and even mentioned that the computer laboratories were scarcely populated at times with plenty of free computer. Judging from this input, the distribution of computers on the campus has not been thoroughly evaluated and changed according to student and faculty use and necessity.

Students had complaints over computer quality as well, with those who used the available resources on campus reporting that the computers are too slow and outdated. The computer science students in particular mentioned that they had spent the entirety of

the previous semester doing work at the Caine Road campus, because the computers at the Oxford Road campus were too slow to do their schoolwork on. While the Caine Road campus's resources may be more recent due to its recent establishment, those on the main campus need updating to make sure students aren't using obsolete machines.

4.1.3 Learning Environment

At any academic institution, the learning environment is of utmost importance. Therefore, it was important to discover the opinions and attitudes of those with experience in the program; to discover in what areas they believed it was succeeding and what areas they were concerned with. Figure 4.5 shows the students' rating of the learning environment at Caritas Francis Hsu College.

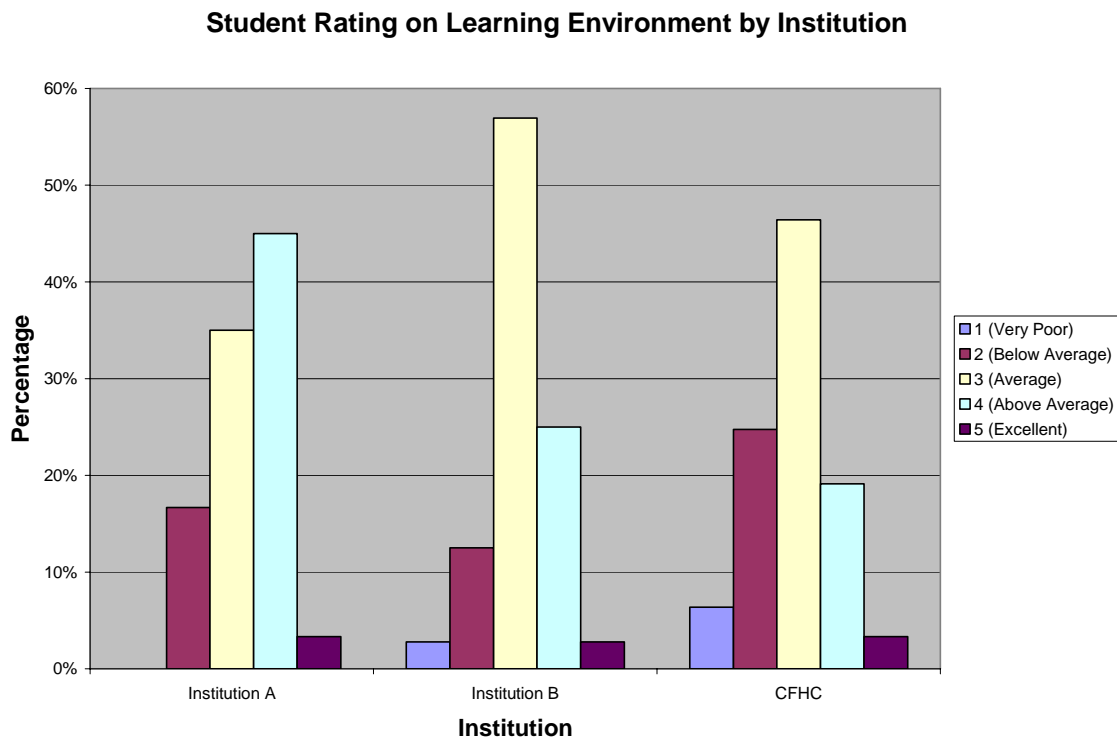


Figure 4.5 – Student Rating on Learning Environment

Here, Francis Hsu does not seem to do as well as the other institutions that we distributed questionnaires to. This may coincide with some of the negative comments, which pertain to the quality of instruction and lack of facilities. However, when surveys such as this are taken at academic institutions there will always be a number of unsatisfied students (10 of the 121 comments focused on staff, not a large proportion). This has been seen by personal observation at our institution as well as the distribution of comments of this nature at all the institutions queried. There were 47 comments of this nature (7 of which came from the “other” section in the numerical rating part of the questionnaire and not the actual open-ended question at the end), and only 4 were positive in regards to C.F.H.C. Four were made by Institution A students, one of which was positive and 9 by Institution B students (which are near the same proportion as the C.F.H.C. comments).

Other comments in this area include education timeline (courses are taught too fast, higher diploma should be reduced to three years, school year should be extended), workload, and the practicality/applicability and program focus. Some students felt that the focus was too broad and did not prepare them for a specific line of work or a specific skill set. In focus groups, some students mentioned that they would like to see more field work to develop real world skills.

There were a few students that mentioned that they would like to see some distance education tools available as well. Through faculty interviews we discovered that C.F.H.C. has its own Intranet (for faculty to post notes and discussion boards). However, through the focus groups we found that students cannot use the Intranet off-campus, which greatly cuts down on its functionality; most students do not stay on campus

between classes and do most of their work at home. In order for any type of course management system to be efficient in this setting, supplemental materials must be available on the Internet from off-campus locations.

Student-teacher relations do not seem to be an issue for Caritas Francis Hsu College. On the contrary, interviews with students and collaboration with faculty gave the group a very positive outlook on the staff on campus. During our stay at the institution, the faculty was very helpful and approachable, and was very dedicated to their students. The questionnaire data largely agrees with this as well, as can be seen in Figure 4.6:

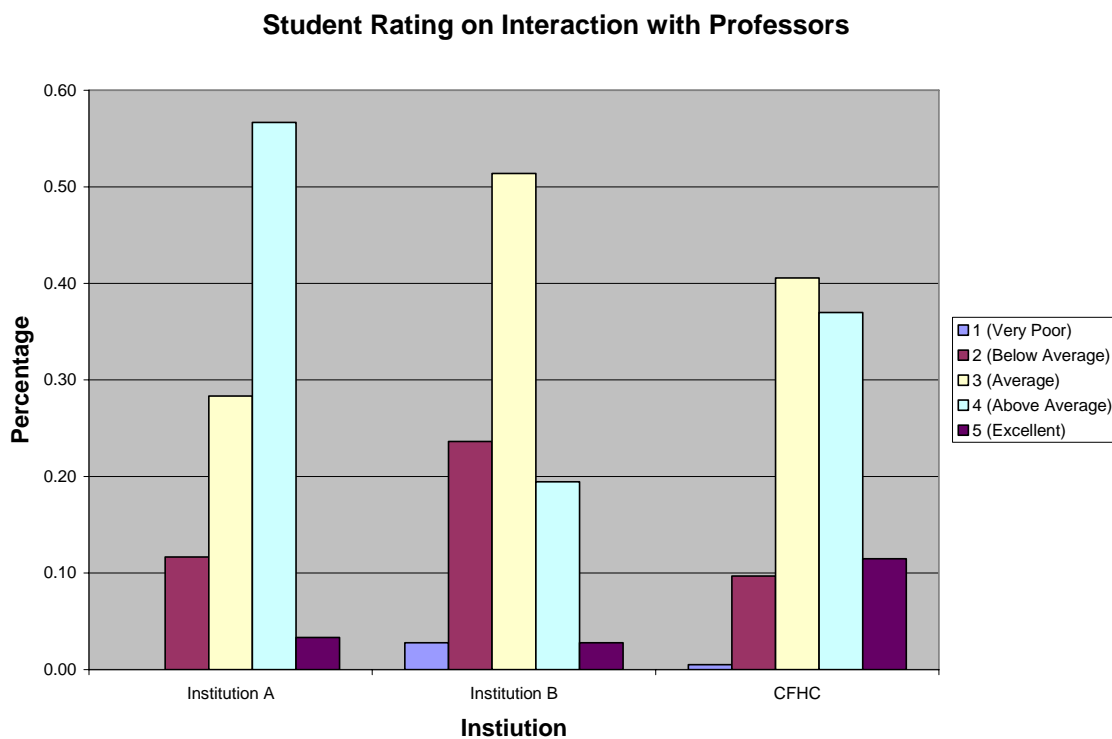


Figure 4.6 – Student Rating on Interaction with Professors.

The data shows that C.F.H.C. surpassed Institution B in the category of instructor interaction, while remaining second to Institution A. This may be because Institution B is

much larger than Francis Hsu College, and thus students do not feel they get the one-on-one attention they need. Classes at Francis Hsu are approximately 20-35 students large (excluding times when they double up classes), allowing more individual interaction with professors. Face-to-Face interaction was emphasized by the faculty as the more effective way to connect to students.

We explored student workload, as this is typically another indication of satisfaction within the program. From these statistics (Figure 4.7), as well as information from interviews with staff on typical workloads expected from students, it is not seen as an issue. C.F.H.C. students are expected to work approximately 20-30 hours a week.

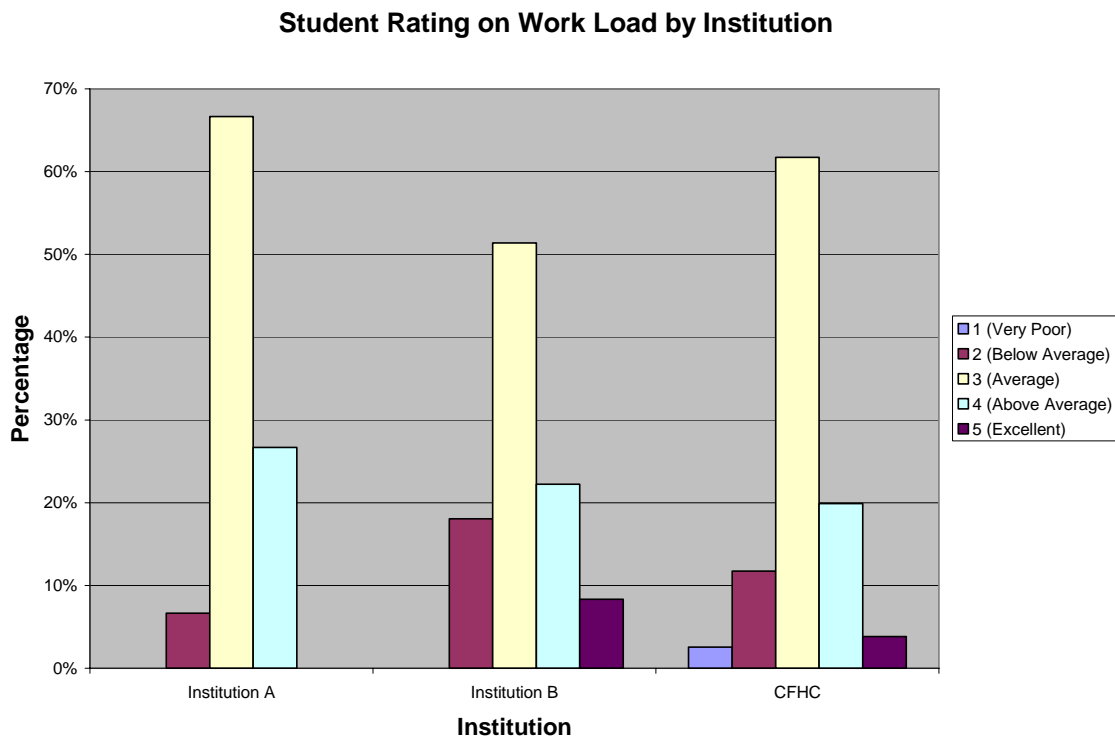


Figure 4.7 – Student Rating on Work Load

Peer interaction and social life is important to many students for their general welfare. Francis Hsu College is doing quite well in this department, as students rated it the highest of the three institutions surveyed, as is highlighted in Figure 4.8. Some comments and individual interviews pointed towards the lack of extracurricular activities or places for students to congregate between classes, and these were looked into in interviews but were not seen as major issues by the students we spoke to. The high rating most likely corresponds to the small class size and the encouragement by professors to work cooperatively rather than competitively.

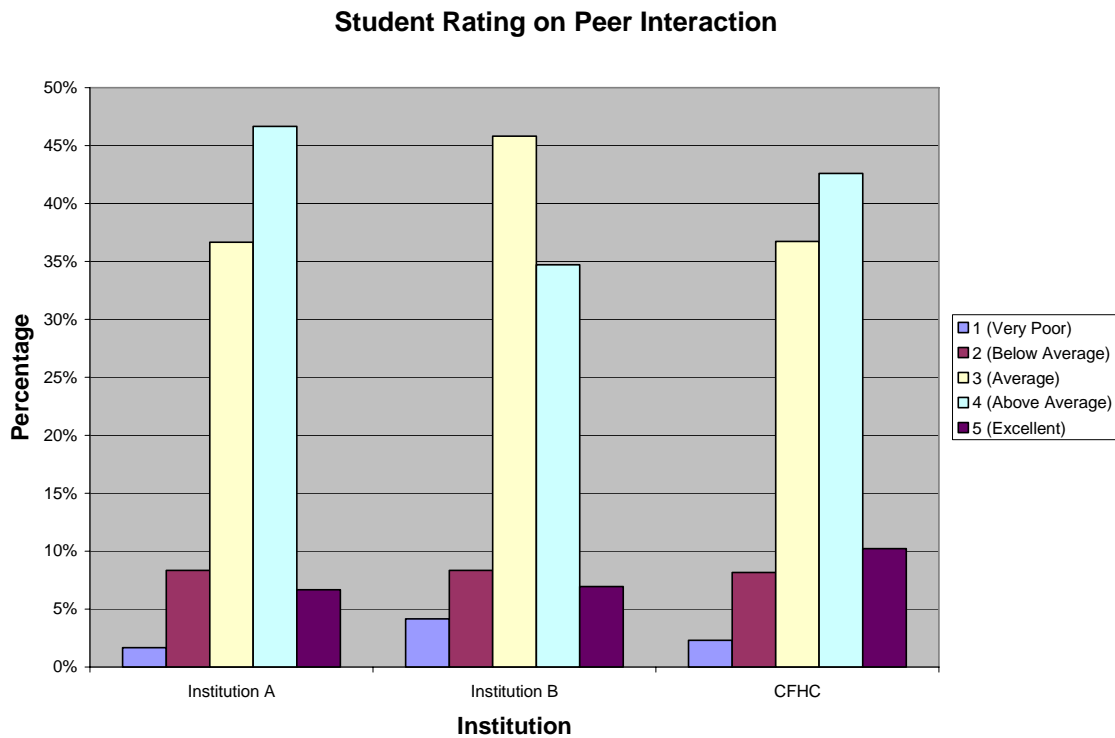


Figure 4.8 – Student Rating on Peer Interaction

4.1.4 Transferability of Credits

This is another area in which C.F.H.C.'s students felt there was room for improvement. However, this area is also a problem at other universities as well; matriculation to higher degrees is a large topic of concern from students at all institutions. In the interview we held with those involved in the accreditation process, they noted that a lack of student slots in higher degree programs troubled students of community colleges affiliated with public universities as well as students of private institutions.

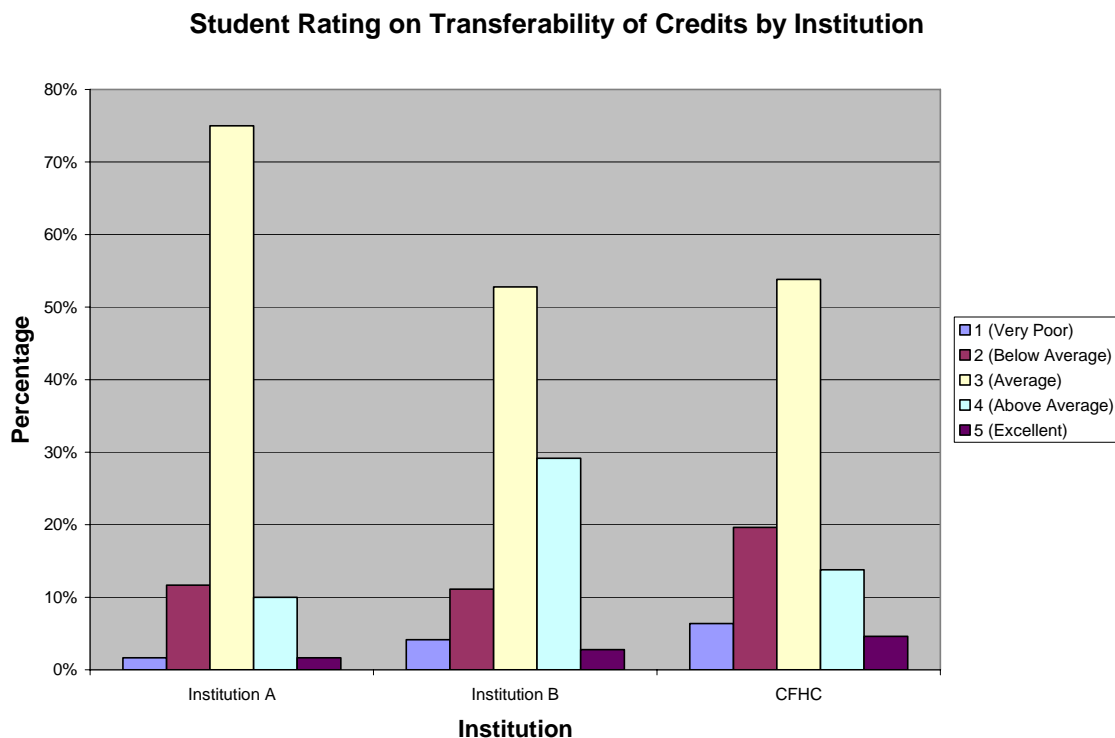


Figure 4.9 – Student Rating on Transferability of Credits

C.F.H.C. had 18 (although some responses were confusing) comments that stressed the need to prepare students for continued education and to increase their post-graduation opportunities in that regard. Institution A had 7 (half of its responses), and Institution B had 12 of its 25 focused on this topic. The substantial number of responses

on this topic may not be surprising, due to the fact that at both anonymous institutions, the community college is a branch of a larger, more respected university. Thus, these students may not constantly have promotion to higher degree programs on their minds. C.F.H.C. students, however, are at a disadvantage when applying to transfer to local universities. In our interview with Dr. Thomas Chan, he mentioned that local public universities were not able to accept many outside transfers because of limited places within the program set by government regulations when funding these institutions. As Institution A and Institution B are part of these larger local universities, there are more opportunities to transfer from sub-degree programs to higher-level programs within the organization; the universities would have a tendency to select graduates from its own community college system rather than outside institutions to fill any available places. Students such as those in C.F.H.C. tend to attend top-up degree programs that have been developed with the cooperation of overseas institutions, but these are only available to Higher Diploma graduates.

The problem of limited spots within local universities seems to be one of government concern rather than the fault of the College, which will be discussed in the following section on government attitudes toward sub degree programs.

4.1.5 Cost vs. Benefit of Program

For Caritas Francis Hsu, this was the lowest rated area on the questionnaire, and was one of the few areas in which C.F.H.C.'s ratings were much different from the other institutions. Students felt that the cost of attending the College was far too high, as can be seen in Figure 4.10.

Student Rating on Cost vs. Benefit by Institution

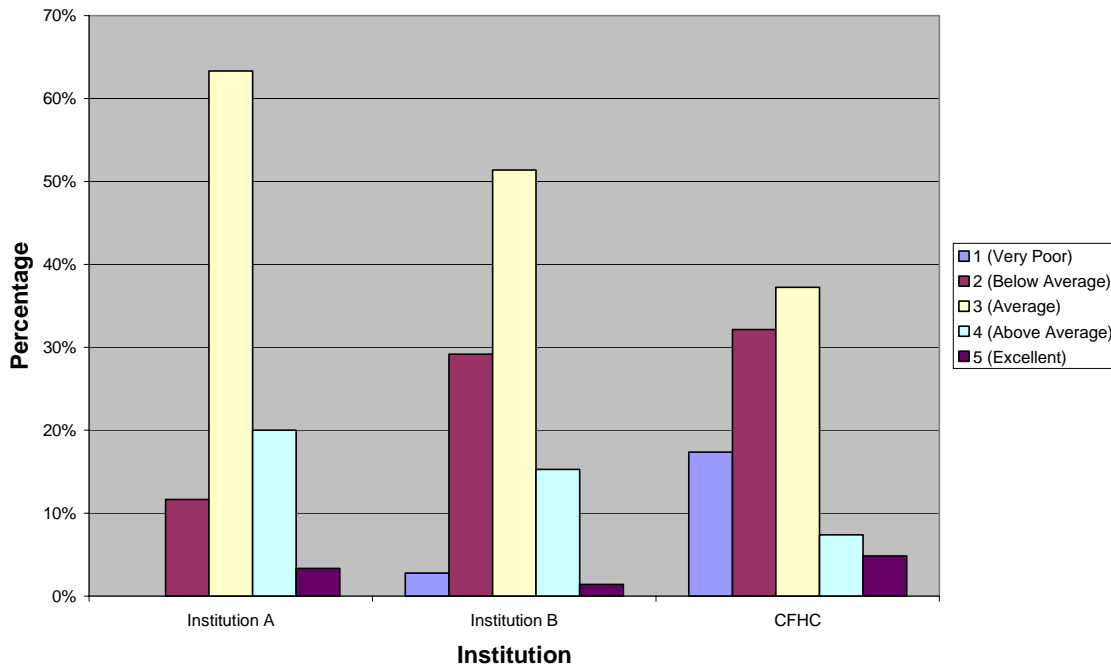


Figure 4.10 – Student Rating on Cost vs. Benefit of Program

This question had a slight problem in its translation from English to Traditional Chinese, where it read as “Cost and Benefit of Program”. However, both the phrases have roughly the same meaning and it should not have affected the results immensely.

38 of C.F.H.C.’s (and 2 of Institution B’s) comments stated that the tuition was too high and needed to be reduced. C.F.H.C., as you can see by the number of comments on the subject, had a large amount of complaints compared to the other two institutions. Many of these comments were tied in with complaints that the government needs to be more supportive of sub-degree programs. As Caritas is a non-profit institution, this seems again to be another government concern, as students and media report dissatisfaction with the level of financial aid granted to students.

4.2 Government's role and attitude towards sub-degree programs

The government was responsible for the installation of Associate Degree Programs in Hong Kong through the Education Reform proposed in 2000. Thus, the government publicly supports sub degree programs as necessary to improve the general public's education. There are some beliefs that the motivation behind the formation of these degrees was to curb unemployment after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, however despite the motivation an increase in a population's education levels is always beneficial.

The main concern with the government is that they do not provide enough financial support to sub degree programs across Hong Kong, especially concerning private institutions. Although the community colleges in public institutions are self-financed as well (confirmed by Miss WS Wong), they are working out of a university that have superior facilities and available staff already established.

Data gathered from the students and faculty shows that the majority of participants in the sub degree programs at C.F.H.C. believe that the government should be more involved, especially with their stance. More financial aid and subsidization is desired, if the Hong Kong government financially supported more accredited institutions the option of sub degree programs would be more attractive to those who are less affluent. It is true that students may apply for grants (mean-tested) and loans (non-means tested) however grants are rarely given and there have been conflicting reports from separate individuals as to whether the non-means tested loans have too high of an interest

rate or an acceptable one. Realistically, an increase in funding from the government is unlikely (Miss Wong noted that there were not any current plans to increase government spending on sub degree programs in Hong Kong), however it should be a goal that it works towards gradually to ensure the survival of the community college system.

Another problem is the lack of places in local public universities for articulation. The inability of most students to continue their education in a higher degree program leaves students disillusioned with the community college system.

Eight of the comments made by C.F.H.C. students stated that they would like to see more government involvement and financial support, while there were no comments on this from the other two institutions. This is not surprising, however, as both Institution A and Institution B are government funded/subsidized institutions, while C.F.H.C. is self-financed. This may also be why there were so many cost complaints from students at Francis Hsu.

4.3 Public opinion regarding Hong Kong sub-degree programs

Our third objective was to determine the public opinion in Hong Kong regarding the sub-degree programs in tertiary education. Sub-degree programs throughout Hong Kong are unique in that the Higher Diploma programs have been around for a longer period of time than the Associate Degree programs, which were implemented only a short time ago in 2001. The numerical data from the questionnaires did not raise any concerns; in fact it seemed from the data that Caritas Francis Hsu College was on the right track (see Figure 4.10 below).

Student Rating of Perceived Recognition from Society by Institution

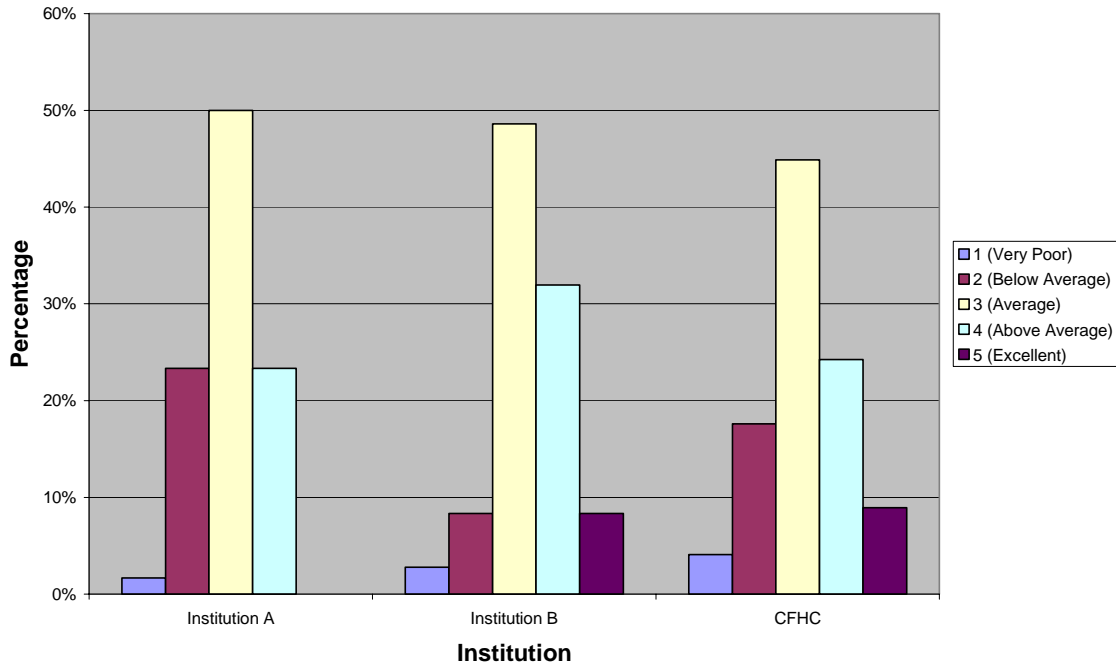


Figure 4.11 - Student Rating of Perceived Recognition from Society

These results are somewhat surprising, given C.F.H.C.’s comments on societal recognition and the fact that it is a private institution unlike the other two (public institutions in Hong Kong, supported by the government, have more name recognition and credibility unlike in the United States). The faculty and administration’s comments during interviews are also in direct disagreement with this data, as many expressed concern over C.F.H.C.’s name recognition, which they considered highly important. This was echoed in student interviews, who noted that C.F.H.C. is not well known.

Both students and faculty were not satisfied with publicity of the institution. An interview with John Cannon informed us that C.F.H.C. advertises through television, the radio, and newspapers; however, only one out of the 23 students we spoke to heard of the

institution through print (one other heard through the internet, all others through word of mouth of teachers/advisors and other students).

On the same topic, through these interviews we also found that advertising on the World Wide Web is scarce; most faculty and students are not even aware that such publicity exists for the institution. This is surprising, given the prominence of internet use in Hong Kong, as can be seen below in Figure 4.11, which was derived from a telecommunications study completed in 2003.

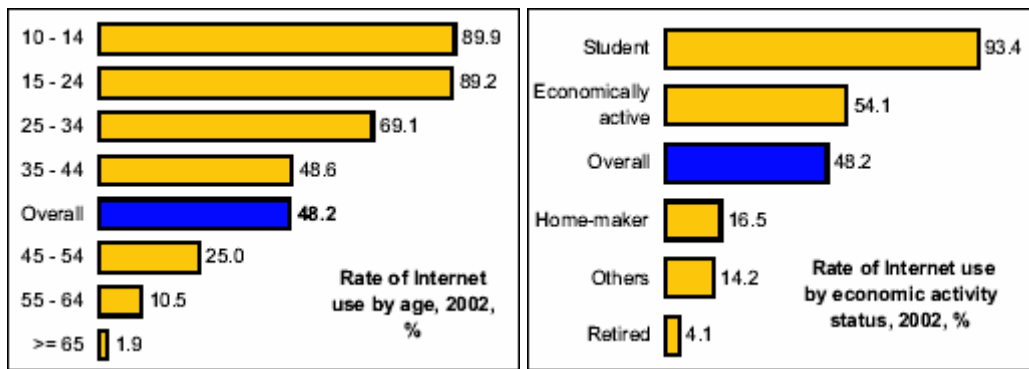


Figure 4.12 - Rate of Internet Usage by Age and Economic Activity

(International Telecommunication Union, 2003)

As can be seen, in 2002 roughly 90 percent population that fell into the age range of 10-24 years old used the Internet; a 93.4 % use rate was found in the population that classified themselves as students. Making an assumption based on global trends, these numbers have most likely grown since 2002. This should make it a prime channel to advertise to the prospective student applicant target market. The data range for the population aged 25 – 44, which would correspond to the ages of parents of prospective

applicants, noted that approximately half made use of the Internet (which has most likely increase since 2002 as well).

Also, through an interview with Bosco Law, head of the Accountancy department, we found that at times Caritas grouped its institutions together to make blanket advertisements as the umbrella organization that it is. This detracts from the usefulness of these advertisements to improve name recognition for its individual institutions.

4.4 Sub-degree representation in media publications

Determining how the media represents the higher diploma and the associate degree programs was another one of our objectives which was achieved through interviews with faculty and administrators, and by conducting archival research by searching daily newspaper articles at the H.K.P.U. library.

Televised coverage of sub degree programs in Hong Kong were not available; however there were several English newspaper articles found on the subject by searching through H.K.P.U.'s database. The reviews of Associate Degree programs in these articles varied, some with direct criticisms and others with support and praise. However, the criticisms offered targeted the government more than the institutions themselves, and agreed with many of the complaints the students had on lack of financial support.

For example, one article mentioned a survey that concluded that 25.33 % of students in self-financed institutions receive grants, while 41.73 % of those in government-subsidized institutions (The Standard, 2005a). Another mentioned statistics of 28% and 84%, respectively (The Standard, 2005). There is a large disparity between

both sets of data, but the subject of both articles was the feeling of students enrolled in self-financed programs that they were being discriminated against, and were forced to apply for non-means tested loans which is charged a much higher interest. In an editorial found in the South China Morning Post, the journalist comments that "...although their growth is in line with the government's policy of lifting the proportion of young people receiving post-secondary education to 60 per cent, they receive very little public funding. That seem patently unfair."(South China Morning Post, 2005)

On the positive side, many of the articles champion sub degree programs, more specifically the creation of the Associates Degree program, as more possibilities for continuing education. These were seen in both the South China Morning Post and in press releases made by the Hong Kong SAR government.

4.5 Sub-degree program graduates in the workplace

Due to several constraints, we were not able to interview industry personnel or graduates of the programs for our studies. It was near impossible to contact graduates through the institution, as the Caritas Francis Hsu College did not wish to violate their privacy. We attempted to set up interviews with industry personnel, and later on sent out email questionnaires when personal contact was impossible, but none answered our solicitation for assistance (besides one that said it was unable to help).

Because of these obstacles and the short time available in Hong Kong, we were unable to receive opinions and attitudes from the industry sector.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Through the analysis of our questionnaire results and the data gathered through interviews and other types of contacts with those in academia, multiple conclusions can be made. These are drawn from the input of students, faculty, and administration in several areas at C.F.H.C (and a sampling of a few other institutions as well), as well as some of the opinions and attitudes of those outside the academic sector.

As can be seen by the Education Reform, the Associates Degree and Higher Diploma programs are extremely important in giving students paths to higher education besides entrance to local universities; Caritas Francis Hsu College has made a significant contribution to this cause. In their practice, the admission requirements are quite conducive to the institution's goals and their mission to provide education to those able and willing to continue their studies. Their small class size is optimal for interaction between students and professors, and each professor has consultation hours for students who need extra help. Peer interaction rate particularly well, and students seem to have a solid idea of their plans after graduation.

In addition to the positive qualities found within the institution, those involved in the programs had some concerns as well, the general conclusions and suggestions of which will be explored in this chapter.

5.1 Name Recognition

C.F.H.C.'s name recognition is a major concern. Higher Degree programs sustain a greater reputation than sub degree programs, in particular Associate Degree programs which were recently instated. As local universities that offer these programs are also offering sub degree programs, private institutions such as C.F.H.C. are not well recognized in Hong Kong. Some students and faculty do not believe the advertising program is efficient, judging by questionnaire comments and interviews done with all sections of academia. Interviews with department heads have also informed us that Caritas advertisements are done as a whole at times, not by separate institution, and are promoted in newspaper, television, and radio, but not the Internet.

Therefore, we suggest that to build up name recognition for its sub degree programs Caritas could begin advertising its institutions separately rather than as the umbrella organization that it is. In addition, C.F.H.C. may benefit from a reevaluation of its traditional advertising channels.

Also, given the data on Internet usage, it would be beneficial to Caritas Francis Hsu College to explore extension of advertising to the World Wide Web, with careful attention to locations that will reach their target market.

5.2 Employment Opportunities

Those involved with the programs at C.F.H.C. would like to see more internships and workforce connections made by the institution. Interviews with students from

several of the departments show they desire more workforce experience, real world practical experience outside of the classroom.

Therefore, C.F.H.C. as an institution should continue to develop a rapport with industry to set up further internship opportunities (as well as field work at job sites), thus allowing more students real-world experience and developing name recognition of C.F.H.C. in the industry sector. Also, C.F.H.C. might wish to look into requesting assistance from Caritas Hong Kong in providing such internships, even if unpaid.

5.3 Facilities

Students and staff desire improvement of facilities on campus. This was prominent on the results of the questionnaire numerical data, and confirmed by interviews with faculty and students.

In order to provide the best learning atmosphere, the collected opinions and attitudes of those involved in the sub degree programs points towards the need for Caritas to ensure there is at least one computer in every classroom, as well as one for each professor. This can be done by studying computer usage by department and redistributing resources as necessary. Also, we recommend that the institution check its systems (hardware and software) continuously to make sure students do not work with outdated tools.

In order to fulfill the institution's goals, Caritas may also wish to look into how to make the campus more handicap accessible.

We also recommend Caritas Francis Hsu College seeks to establish a shop on campus. This could be done in one of two ways: by approaching a franchise and giving them the opportunity to put a shop site on campus, or establishing a small C.F.H.C. run small canteen.

5.4 Learning Environment

Some students at C.F.H.C. had some concerns with the quality of instruction; mainly students had worries over the speed at which the classes were taught and course preparation. These concerns were gathered through the questionnaire open-ended question, and can be insinuated by the numerical data from the learning environment area, although this opinion varied throughout the interviews and some students were very satisfied with their professors.

Students' workload is neither too high nor too low, and seems to be the correct amount for community college programs, as shown by its corresponding questionnaire data as well.

We recommend that Caritas Francis Hsu College looks into a replacement of its Intranet usage with Internet web enhancement tools, and run workshops for its faculty in the replacement's use to ease disparity between learning styles and speeds.

5.5 Cost & Government Involvement

Students are concerned with the cost of tuition to attend sub degree programs at C.F.H.C, and the financial obligation causes some students to drop out of the program. We were informed of this by the questionnaire values and about inquiring after the graduation rate in focus groups.

Those involved with sub degree programs are dissatisfied with the level of government involvement. Students and faculty wish to see more government financial support and publicity of sub degree programs, and more places in local universities for matriculation from sub degree programs, as expressed in interviews and multiple open-ended comments.

We perceive that C.F.H.C. should continue to apply for government aid whenever possible, and ensure that students know the avenues and procedures for applying for government aid.

Again, Caritas Francis Hsu College's staff is very dedicated to their students and to the mission of C.F.H.C; they emphasize face to face interaction and their class size is optimal to this end. These other conclusions were the areas of greatest concern to those involved with the institution. By concentrating on these areas, Caritas Francis Hsu College may improve the satisfaction of its students and its attractiveness to possible applicants. Most are interrelated with the name recognition issue, which seems to be the most pressing.

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Appendix A – Interview Notes

Institution C - Interview

Administrator of Institution C

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Institution C

Although the associate degree programs were introduced in 2001, the sub degree programs in general are not new. Hong Kong has always offered vocational training as well as Higher Degree programs. The Associate Degrees were developed to try to promote more students to pursue a tertiary education. In the year 200, the Chief Executive of HKCAA said that Hong Kong needed to “expand tertiary education from 30 to 60 percent over the next 10 years.” A year later, the AD programs were initiated to try to reach this goal

The public opinion of the sub degree programs started off at a very low level, however it continues to improve over time. The governments increased publicity, and the increased financial support to students and local universities has lead to this improvement of public opinion. The public had a lot of concern over the future of the sub degree graduates, as to what they would do after graduation. Would they be able to join the workforce, or would they further their studies?

Advertisement is a big factor for the well being of the sub-degree programs, and therefore many institutions advertise their programs in Hong Kong newspapers. The government and Hong Kong newspapers often talk or have articles about the sub degree programs, and their progress, or people concerns. Sometimes these stories can show a negative attitude towards the programs, creating bad advertisement.

The government’s goal with the sub degree programs is to give more students the opportunity to pursue a post-secondary education. The Hong Kong government has a subsidized policy, and so if a school wanted to expand, they would have to ask for the money. There are a limited number of available places in many of the programs. The Hong Kong people hold a mentality that colleges only accept the most elite students from the secondary schools. With a 60% participation rate, there is only a 18% admittance rate

to the degree program. The government continues to provide money toward the sub degree programs because of the mentality that “if they [the sub-degree programs] have money, they will expand”, thus providing more students with a post-secondary education.

The government can do a lot to help lend support or exposure to these institutions. One of the greatest things they government should do to provide support or exposure is to help increase the programs popularity for the students and make them more appealing. If they were more appealing then it would attract more students, and create a better reputation for the sub-degree programs.

As the sub-degree programs reputation has become better the students now consider them an acceptable alternative, however not a preferred alternative. The sub-degree students are still portrayed through the media as second-class students.

There definitely is a difference between the sub-degree graduates and the degree program graduates. Chan was unable to say whether or not the industry welcomed the sub-degree graduates or preferred the degree graduates, and mentioned that we will need to ask someone in the industry to get an answer to this question.

Due to the fact that Institution C has low funding the provisions within the school and its facilities are very limited. As far as the learning environment within the school, it is not a very competitive atmosphere for the students. They are not competitive with their colleagues, and they help each other out so that they can all be successful. There is however a very competitive atmosphere between different institutions in Hong Kong offering the same programs. This competition is based on who has the best facilities, success rates etc.

The number of students per classroom can vary depending on the institution as well as the department being analyzed. Larger institutions tend to have larger class sizes which can contain 100-200 students. These large classes tend to receive complaints due to the lack of attention given to each student. Institution C and Caritas Francis Hsu, which are representatives of the smaller institutions, typically have much smaller class sizes that are not larger than 30-40 students.

-Students take 5 subjects at once, and therefore have a larger workload. They are often working on the side as well to help pay for expenses.

-Students at Institution C have 20 hours of homework and 10 hours of class per week = 30 hours spent on school per week.

Overall the sub-degree students have a relatively large workload. Each student takes five subjects at once, and on top of that they are often working on the side to help pay for the tuition expenses. Students at Institution C have approximately 20 hours of homework to complete each week, and the 10 hours of class time per week. Therefore once added up, the students spend a total of 30 hours of work per week towards their sub-degree courses.

Caritas Francis Hsu College - Interview
Language Studies Faculty Member

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Caritas Francis Hsu College

Emil is a language instructor in the Language Studies Department, which he joined in September 2005. His largest class is composed of 48 students, with two other classes sporting populations in the mid twenties.

The former Chief Executive of Education promised Hong Kong students more post-secondary options and places. Currently, after the completion of Form 7, students can continue on to a Bachelors Degree. The sub-degree programs exist at a qualification level for the Bachelors Degree and upon completion of a sub-degree, a student should be ready for the learning associated with a more intensive degree.

In his classes, students are required to complete about five hours of homework each week and Emil himself offers ten hours devoted to the students for questions and help outside of class. One large campus would eliminate the problem of having to travel back and forth between campuses, but at the moment, students will sometimes be required to split time between the Oxford Road and Caine Road locations.

Student surveys have been conducted by Caritas to understand both students' perspectives on the program, and to find their overall level of satisfaction with the school. In the Language Studies Department, the learning style is largely lecture based. An additional request was for having more computers in the classrooms as a whole, since it is difficult to schedule one of the few rooms with such facilities.

With regards to the workforce, it seems that most students are prepared for the next step after school. It was noted that Caritas should allow more opportunities for internships with their current students, since most students will move into the workforce after graduation.

Some students were unable to continue the program after the initial year, due to cost considerations.

The government needs to promote sub-degree programs as a whole, since secondary school leavers are often unaware of how to choose the correct program for their needs, unsure how to pay the tuition associated with it, and unaware of the particulars of the sub-degree in general. Although the government guarantees the acceptance of the sub-degree program for any of their government positions, there are not necessarily any open positions for students after graduation. In the beginning, students are excited about the program, but this fades the further into the program they continue.

Caritas Francis Hsu College - Interview
Language Studies Faculty Member

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Caritas Francis Hsu College

Hugo is an instructor in the Language Studies Department, where he teaches Chinese and Mandarin. He has been at Caritas Francis Hsu College since September 2005, and was previously a secondary instructor at Queen's College, and a research assistant at Hong Kong City University.

A normal class will have a max of 60 students however the usual range is 35-40. Caritas is a more teaching focused institution, with very little avenues for research from their faculty. Most students at the school will have 1-2 hours of homework each evening, and Hugo offers students six hours per week to visit him at his office.

A teaching evaluation is conducted after the conclusion of each course at C.F.H.C.

Although he has not been here previously, other colleagues in the department say that the students' ability as a whole is lower than previously. Some students don't work as hard as they could.

Most students are able to find jobs after completing the program, but they still lack the ability to compete directly in the workforce.

The facilities are acceptable, but the school is small. Not all staff members have their own computer, and not all classrooms have a computer. Although not a required addition, computers in every classroom would help substantially with lessons, as there are only three rooms currently with computer hardware.

At times, a teach will move on after just a few years of working with Caritas.

Caritas Francis Hsu College - Interview
Department Head of Language Studies – Thomas Chan

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Caritas Francis Hsu College

Worked at HKPU (20 years) – most of these years he was a German teacher and worked as an officer for education technology in IT education, before he was a teacher in philosophy at HKPU, he was responsible later on for German for the higher diploma in trilingual secretarial studies and taught philosophy in HD in translation – 12 years taught to sub degree students to sub degree students, higher diploma programs. Before he was a project coordinator for a very large scale of IT for university grants committee stationed at Lingnan Universities. Also an officer of registrar of HKCAA – then stopped working for accreditation organization and went back to teaching at Hong Kong City University.

Differences with other institutions:

HKU was and still is very academic institution, purely academic, research oriented university. Teaching was not considered a major task, it was something that went on but students were quite free in coming to class and have to attend tutorials and not necessarily lectures. He was a fresh graduate and doing his MA and at the same time he was a tutor for money. His major was in philosophy and then he started second school teaching and then went to the UK for a Bachelor.

HKPU he was assistant lecturer and then promoted to senior lecturer for German which put him in charge of the program. Very happy to have joined it because he assisted HD students who had well results and were able to get to universities. He taught to students and came across in being dedicated and hard working, compared to HKU there is a slight difference in programs.

City U he was only for 8 months and had a great spoken English and well prepared and engaged in studying. Much better than CFHC level which have students admitted due to their results were not as good for the standards of other colleges and universities. With a couple of exceptions most students are hard working and have an ok English. The attitude is great.

The industries opinion:

For employers, since there is a great number on the market of graduates, there is a great choice for them. It doesn't really matter whether some prospective employee is a degree holder or sub-degree holder, as long as the candidate can prove themselves to be capable of the job. Appointing a sub-degree holder will save the employer some money. Since there are many graduates from private institutions, there are many non-credited institutions (such as Taiwan degrees). There isn't much consideration for what degree, more for what qualification and from which institution it is from. It is important for the employee to have critical thinking and flexibility, adaptability for adjusting to work places. In the past employers complain about graduates who possess academic knowledge but inflexible and rigid that unable them do the job properly.

Relationship workforce vs. institutions

More placement is needed than what is going on now. Especially for programs that are industry based or vocational (practical nature) such as accountancy, tourism, hospitality, medical programs, UGC institutions. A lot of more work has to be done to engage industry with institutions. Some institutions such as City U and Poly U a lot of work is done and is effective but CFHC a lot of work has to be done such as liaison and pro-active collaboration between companies industry and colleges.

Media

The media is varied. Difficult to say, sometimes the media does not have anything nice to say as all Hong Kong. For sub-degrees HD enjoys a better image due to their history due to their nature at the polytechnics. No one else was authorized to offer HD programs therefore they began there. AD started five years ago. Polytechnic HD programs were highly quite well received by the community by a large scale such as companies, specialty factories and also government departments (happy to take on Poly HD graduates). AD programs when they came to the market, actually its quite early to judge people whether these programs are well received or not. With time there is quite prolific, too many sub-degree programs offered in Hong Kong. Things will get better.

HD programs are usually three years but here are 4 years because they are missing A-Levels but AD is three years because students need a foundation year. Not big difference in duration, CFHC is in disadvantage because it's the first one to be accredited several years ago and HKCAA was not clear about how many years it was supposed to last the HD, later on for some other institutions they gave different requirements and had

them last less time. There is a revalidation process every four intakes plus one and three years plus one for AD.

Media Promotion

Not sure about how the college promotes itself but knows it's insufficient because the population is ignorant about the college. They have to spread the word about the college.

Credibility

Generally OK, the public has a good opinion on most learning programs in Hong Kong, they believe education is a valuable investment but most people will opt for a degree. Sub-degree is considered second choice.

Short-Comings

As in the questionnaire, school fees too high, facilities, campus life, not good enough for the students. This campus is not bad if the college can invest more on expansions on the facilities such as a shop downstairs or a small cafeteria. Students also complain about they don't know what to do during breaks without a place to go between classes.

Students post-program

HD are ready for what they desire but not too many of them would want to continue their studies because it costs money. There are invitations from UK and Australia to have them continue their studies but it costs money. For work students should be ready, based from their programs, the translation program prepares students really well because it is linked with the UK linguistic institute who have a GPA of 3.0 or above will get a joint diploma from the college and institute of linguistics (IOL). Students who get score good results in some subjects may get part of the exam exempted for the membership. The programs equip students quite well for the work place, for translating and interpreting; it's a very good field with great job opportunities.

There is not so much reluctance, its government policy, for every university place in a degree program the tax payers' contribute so much. The university places are not self financed, they are financed by the government. Community colleges are self-financed such as CFHC which is backed up by Catholic Church. These university places are very precious and cannot be given out very quickly, every year a fixed quota of students are admitted to a specific program. It is unlikely that students drop out; there aren't so many places available for AD graduates. It is a practical reality for AD graduates or for HD graduates in degree programs so they do top-up degrees which are offered by overseas universities and non-local courses.

The relationship between other universities and CFHC is not bad. They can't accept graduates because of lack of spaces and is not a relationship issue.

Two teachers are graduates from CFHC; they were two of the best graduates. Positive feedback is received from graduates.

Student teacher relationship is normal even though sometimes students get naughty. At the beginning it is hard for students to accept a teacher as well as the teacher accepting a new student. They both will have to adapt with time with each other, students will find some teachers really good, and with time they will appreciate their teaching. It is like a mirror between the teacher and the student. It is on the hold to generalize about students and teachers because it varies between everyone. Teachers have office hours two afternoons a week and with the help of the intercom students can ask teachers help.

Collaborative more than competitive between students. Competitive between institutions. Caritas does not use distance education, they are a very small institution. Disciplines are more usefully when taught face to face. Typical class size is 30-35 for language classes but for economy two classes may be grouped together up to 50-55. Large class teaching is also done but for language teaching its preferred small classes.

At the beginning of each semester students are told the amount of assignments they are expected to work on each course. Maybe some extra class work and some homework. Students are not over worked. It is also not wanted to give them light work.

There is always space for improvement, computer facilities can be booted up more. The college needs a bit better life, Cane road has more. Publicity should increase so that the numbers of students increase, but they have a large mass of students at the moment. Attract students to build their programs. Computer should be more available to students.

The government is not helping the sub-degree programs. The government is confused about the educational policies. They are not funding any sub-degree programs apart from those UGC institutions. Two categories: 1 offered by universities (UGC) are financed by tax payers' money; 1 community colleges self financed and not financed by government. Public do not have a clear idea of these things, so anything that comes out of the universities is good. The government is not funding any self-financed sub-degree programs, they are funding only some sub-degree programs offered by the institutions that are publicly funded or that have publicly funded programs. General public do not know if the programs are funded by government or not nor their quality. The private institutions are having a very hard time, which is unfair to the private sector even though they are very courageous. As long as the government continues to say something and doing something exactly the other way around the situation won't improve too much. The government is not doing anything at the moment.

Financial aid has two categories: 1 student who are enrolled in government funded programs – they apply for loans and grants from government and then will pay back their loan on graduation. For loans they will pay back by installments within 5 years or more. Any student in any program can apply for loans but interest rate is very high, non-means tested loans are that you don't have to show that you actually have money while having money. Government does not offer many grants to non government funded school. Students from private institutions are not getting too much financial help; CFHC does give them financial help but is not too much.

There are words of bringing a new agency of accreditation to bring on the field more players. Last year the qualification framework was introduced and sooner or later each program will put on the framework each program has to be accredited.

Caritas Francis Hsu College - Interview
General Studies Coordinator – John Cannon

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Caritas Francis Hsu College

-In 1985, Prof. Cannon took a trip to Hong Kong and had a friend at C.F.H.C. at the time. He notified Prof. Cannon that there was a teaching position available, Prof. Cannon applied, and was hired by the organization. He officially started in July 1986 after settling his affairs in Canada in the interim. Prof. Cannon mentioned that there were not a large number of students in Canada at the time, and that it was not a secure place to hold a position. In Canada, Prof. Cannon taught Canadian history at a secondary school, the equivalent of secondary form in Hong Kong.

-Prof. Cannon began his time with Caritas teaching English education at the College, and was there in 1990 when Caritas began offering the Higher Diploma program.

-As of this time in his career, he is the General Education Course Coordinator. His position oversees the expansion of the student's knowledge in the general courses of the university.

-When the Higher Diploma program was first offered, it allowed students the choice of University schooling, or the HD program, but beyond this, there was no other option. The new sub-degree programs, also called the associate degree programs, were a political inception rather than an educational one. The government called for the program as a way to curb unemployment in the recent aftermath of the Asian financial crisis by educating students to be better prepared for the work force.

-The sub-degree program in Hong Kong is recognized by the government, since it was in fact a government suggested creation, however, this only directly helps the student if there is a corresponding opening within the government positions.

-Additionally, since the program is only a two year program, aside from the academic rigors of the program, students may not have sufficient time to mature in other areas of their personality to understand exactly where they would like to end up as a career.

-A large percentage of students taking part in the Caritas Francis Hsu College sub-degree programs come from a primarily Chinese education background.

-C.F.H.C actively promotes their associate degree programs in the newspapers, on T.V., and in some radio announcements. Prof. Cannon also mentioned that he will be attending an exposition where Caritas will have a booth setup to promote their program during the month of February. Caritas usually has personnel at the expositions between three and five times per year. Prof. Cannon noted, however, that word of mouth is generally the best way to spread the word about the programs that Caritas offers.

-Universities in Hong Kong are seen by the public on the basis of their name recognition. Caritas was one of the first organizations to offer the sub-degree programs, and their name recognition was enough for students to attend their program. However, when the large name Universities started offering similar programs, their name recognition kicks in and students are sometimes more likely to attend their programs.

-The class size of courses at C.F.H.C. is usually between 35-42 for the core classes, and about 25 students for the general education classes, depending on enrollment for each progressive class. The composition of these classes usually depends upon the class size, since the larger classes can only effectively use lectures. Discussions and student presentations are used wherever possible within C.F.H.C.

-Largely within the classroom, students appreciate when the teachers know their name and know enough about them to pay attention to them. In most cases, this will lead to a greater respect within the class, although there are some teachers from a different generation who feel that the students should only show deference to the teachers and not the other way around.

-In rare cases, students at C.F.H.C. are there because of their parents. In such cases, they don't really know what they want to do with their lives, and are sometimes only going through the motions.

Caritas Francis Hsu College - Interview
Department Head of Accountancy – Bosco Law

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Caritas Francis Hsu College

Department head of Accountancy for 10 years

Program coordinator and upgraded to department head around 2000 during the validation.

Started his first job in the government and he spent three years to have some training in a certified accountancy department. He decided then to teach rather than continue his job.

The public has no choice because the government tried to expand to reach the target but it is hard to define higher education. So the definition is degree entrance. Contradicting objectives of sub-degree programs.

In 2000 a survey was conducted for accounting related to education in Hong Kong. Knowledge and academic is not the most important criteria but attitude, it is a better idea to have better knowledge rather than having a degree or not. So therefore it is better to have better positive attitude, due to the change of knowledge every year it is important more to have an attitude toward the field of study.

Advertisement on internet is not known. Advertisement is efficient, the policy of Caritas is quite strange and confusing because sometimes they have to join advertisement and rare to have singular advertisement for just CFHC.

Every year juniors are academically not good enough so that when they join CFHC they do not know what to do in terms of career or future studies. Students come here to avoid work and pressured by parents, they do not have a clear motif. Senior students actually have more set motifs, throughout their last years they will have better clear ideas of their future. Especially after the summer internship given to 10 best students between their 3rd and 4th year, there is no internship between the year due to insurance problems and payments. The brand of the college is still not very well known to third parties because they have plenty of competitors who have better brands. Better brand means better

probability to get internship. Students work through connected friends rather than Caritas assistance for them to join workforce.

There is an exemption for the student body for the financial aid. There is a successful networking from other universities donations and connections. Bosco is a board member of the Hong Kong Society of Accounting Technician, inside the committee there are representatives from other institutions and universities. He represents the student body.

In terms of the knowledge they are competitive with other sub-degree due to the fact that they HD or AD is one more year of study on the subject of interest.

Teacher evaluation forms are passed out every semester to their own teachers and also as department head he knows also the feedback from graduate students to help teachers and improve program. Graduates feedback said that they have a better knowledge than other graduates from other institutions. They are glad to come back and accepted to share their experience in the school and help the professors in improving.

The school size is small and therefore the teachers and students have a good relationship. Teachers have contacting hours outside of their offices so students may ask for their help. 30+ class size, student work load varies.

In sub-degree the students are required to do some team in their final year of studies; the course design is aimed towards collaborative learning and studying for their experience.

At the moment the college teaches by phase and not by distance learning. Internet usage incorporated in the course will help students by having notes and information for the course.

The sub-degree programs (AD) can serve the purpose for a stepping stone in a higher degree, just by taking the path of a college after their diploma year they can use it as a stepping stone for overseas studies.

Campus facilities are limited due to the great number of students and student life, not as overseas campuses. Students are limited by the facilities in between their hours between classes.

Caritas has devoted a lot of resources into this college, the first time he came here it was a secondary school campus and therefore its infrastructure is as a secondary school. The condition is changed every year, no air conditioning, but is renovated year by year but is still subject to the financial resource department.

Caritas Francis Hsu College - Interview

Department Head of Business Administration – John Chung

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Caritas Francis Hsu College

Currently, there are 3 such Business Administration programs offer at Caritas Francis Hsu College, focused in corporate management. These programs were designed for students who wish to join the administration field. Additionally, there is a tourism and marketing program offered by the department, as well as a hospitality and management program. Most of the students hope to work in a travel agency, in hotels, or in shopping malls. At this time, there are 40 students enrolled in these courses.

There are no internships within the Business Administration department that are provided by Caritas, since it is up to each department to find internships for students over the summer.

Distance learning would not be a good option for C.F.H.C., because students at the institution need more guidance, and a self-study program would interfere with this guidance. A few teachers post lecture notes and other materials online, but use is not widespread. Within the classrooms, English is only used the very last years of the program, and most courses are taught in Chinese or Cantonese for the first few years.

Students sometimes leave because they cannot cope with the program at C.F.H.C., some leave because they need money. Most students who do leave do not have a chance to transfer their credits elsewhere. If students cannot perform up to the standards at C.F.H.C., there is little chance for them to make it elsewhere.

The overall system has to be improved in the way of personnel choices, and offering incentive for teachers to stay. The institution should inspire teachers to be more devoted, and as such, a reward system for the teachers would be a good idea. The program itself is good, but the teaching resources have room for improvements. Most students like the Oxford Road campus better than the Caine Road campus. The long term plan for facilities is to have a single, united campus where students can learn.

**Interview Notes from session at Tai Po Government - Interview
Department Head of Accountancy – Bosco Law**

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Caritas Francis Hsu College

To obtain accreditation, an institution will approach the HCKAA with prepared documents, stating their intention. The HKCAA then draws up a contract stating the duties of the involved parties, the inherent, fees, and other such considerations.

The HKCAA then forms a panel to review the private provider, which is selected from pertinent individuals selected from industry, overseas, and from other area schools, depending upon the specific institution applying. The HKCAA then brings the panel to the school, commonly composed of 5 members, with a chairperson and the four others. If supplemental information is needed before the panel arrives on site, HKCAA will request such items from the school ahead of time. Once on site, the panel holds interviews with teachers, potential students, principals, and others, attempting to find out exactly how the program exists. After such interviews, the panel spends a half-day deliberating on the length of accreditation, the requirements there within, and will make a decision as to whether the institution achieved accreditation or not.

A new ordinance coming up for a vote would allow the HKCAA to accredit professional programs, not just academic sub-degrees. To date, there are no standards for any of the professional programs offered in Hong Kong, namely, the vocational certification programs.

Recent standards for the sub-degree programs have not changed; however, the procedures have been simplified for accreditation. There is a desire to move to a smaller accreditation panel, and to move towards no longer requiring an institutional review to accredit single program offerings. Within the private sector, there is a great demand for accreditation. The success of these private institutions is entirely based upon market forces, where those institutions that find students, and maintain their membership, will continue to survive.

Interview Notes from Language Department Focus Group

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Caritas Francis Hsu College

Most students in the group are looking to attend higher education after their graduation from Caritas Francis Hsu College. There are 2 student advisors, in addition to a lecturer for each class. The classroom teaching is well balanced; however, there is not enough government help offered to the students financially and otherwise.

On campus, the addition of a canteen would be nice to buy food and drink, and the library does not have enough books for the students. The teachers do not use the online discussion boards, but the general thought is that not many students would use it even if materials were posted there more often. There are not many summer employment opportunities offered. The campus itself is very small, and it would help with the campus life if there could be a newspaper for the students to read and somewhere to go between classes to be with friends and acquaintances.

Interview Notes from Computer Science Department Focus Group

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Caritas Francis Hsu College

The Caine Road campus has better computing facilities than the rooms at the Oxford Road campus. In general, there are not enough computers for all students to make use of the them. The computers in room 208 are not powerful enough for the students to use.

A canteen would be a good addition for campus, since currently students have no where to buy food and drink on campus.

The students spent the first term of this year working on the computers at the Caine Road campus. The CS department uses the Intranet, but not many of the other departments make use of the program. There is also a WebTL program that allows off-campus accessing of files.

The students in the CS department have a large workload, and the fees are too high because they cannot get refunded by the government. Because of this, the students would like to see more financial support from the government. The students would like to pursue higher education after the completion of their program. More funding from the government and a chance for a top-up program would be greatly appreciated.

Before coming to Caritas Francis Hsu College, the students were participating in a program that was tied to Caritas.

Interview Notes from Tourism, Business Administration Department Focus Group

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Caritas Francis Hsu College

The students are first years in the tourism and management program. At the moment, they feel that the Hong Kong tourism industry is very popular, and is a good place to work. All of them noted that they wish to enter the workforce directly after graduation, and that the courses offered at Caritas Francis Hsu College can help them to work better once they finish the program.

They would like to learn not just about tourism, but also about hotels and business administration, and are seeking job placement for this summer. There are roughly 30 students seeking summer employment, and some are paid positions, whereas others are unpaid positions.

Teachers do not offer a lot of time to talk outside of class, and while there are office hours, there are not enough of them. Within class, there is a good amount of group work. More activities and more chances to see hotels and possible places of business would be something desired by the students.

The government doesn't pay attention to the sub-degree programs, and they cannot give them financial support. For the government to take a more active role in the programs, they must offer more funds to students.

On campus, there are not enough computers, there are not enough books at the Oxford Road campus, and the campus itself is small. Some teachers post their notes for the students, or utilize discussion boards, but not all of them make use of these tools. Not all the students at the school will use the internet on campus. If more teachers were to use the internet to post content, it is possible that more students would then in turn use the internet. The students also understand that there is not a lot to do on the campus site, and would like a place to buy food and socialize in between classes.

Some students drop out of school because of lack of money or lack of time to complete the work.

Interview Notes from session at Tai Po Government Offices
Prof. Andrew Ho, Acting Academic Vice President

Interviewers: Rich McGuinness, Liz Marcks, Ivan La Bruna, Steve Starowicz

Location: Caritas Francis Hsu College

Prof. Ho began his career at Caritas as a lecturer in the Computer Science department, where he held a position for 10 years. He currently oversees the development of the Higher Diploma and Associate Degree programs in the CS department, and of other Associate Degree programs at Caritas Francis Hsu College. His first employment in the educational field was at Caritas Francis Hsu College.

The Associate Degree program in Hong Kong differs from the United States system, since the Hong Kong sub-degree is focused on career success after graduation, whereas the U.S. sub-degree is a step towards further learning, with less emphasis on work immediately upon completion. The Caritas Francis Hsu College degrees are focused upon both learning and work oriented, with the option for either.

Public opinion has been shifting in relation to the Associate Degree programs, since there are not enough spots to continue to a full degree. Only the best of the best receive spots in the full degree programs, and because of this, many students are now going directly into the workforce after graduation. Since the Associate Degree is based off the H.D., industry is rather comfortable with the H.D., and their acceptance towards the Associate Degree has been growing, although they were very skeptical upon its creation.

The media was very supportive of the A.D. programs initially, but have now held back their support, since students do not have anywhere to continue their learning after the completion of an A.D. program. The media warns that the A.D. programs may not be what they appear to be, and students should exercise caution when applying to them. Recently, the media has been rather quiet on the topic of sub-degrees in general, and A.D. advertising in various media formats has not been as effective as intended.

Most students find out about C.F.H.C. by word of mouth, either from fellow students, or from teachers who offer recommendations about it.

Distance learning would be difficult to implement at C.F.H.C., because such an educational arrangement requires a large amount of self-motivation and discipline. Because those attending A.D programs are looking for an alternative form of education if they are unable to get into a full university, distance learning would be a very risky strategy to pursue by a sub-degree offering institution. It would remain quite a challenge to move from a secure classroom setting to an internet course for some students.

A few students are unsure why they attend C.F.H.C., but after some time within the program, they usually have a better idea of what they want out of the school. Students do not usually question the program, while engaged actively in their studies, but instead will question it after they leave. At times, students leaving the program are not entirely confident in their own abilities, and may question whether they are ready to venture out into the workforce directly upon graduation. Feedback has been positive from students that enter the workforce, however, and there is a general feeling that they may be better suited to their job than university students.

The teachers remain close to the students during the time at C.F.H.C., but they would like the students to spend more time talking to the faculty, not just about education, but about career and other decisions. Some teachers even offer extra classes for students who are having a difficult time with the material.

The C.F.H.C. hardware is not as competitive as the larger universities in Hong Kong, but they college attempts to provide as many resources as possible. There are a few recreational shortcomings at C.F.H.C., but the academic rigor and atmosphere of the school is fairly sufficient for students needs.

The government lends students money for the program, and sometimes this results in the students leaving because of financial trouble. The downside to leaving is that the loan becomes due in full almost immediately upon leaving early, whereas the students who finish their studies are allowed to pay back the loan in installments after graduation. Many of the students are part time students, most likely to help offset the financial burden.

Maximum class size for students is capped at 44 students, which is due to the fire codes of the area. Language classes tend to be smaller, with around 20 students, but this in turn gives teachers a larger work load. With more classes composed of fewer students,

teachers are busier and have more classes scheduled in the day. The student workload is not evenly balanced, with more work and projects being assigned at the end of the term, compared to the beginning of the term. The students themselves have a very strict list of courses, which are decided by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation certification.

For the many other institutions offering sub-degree programs, they are often not as good as they think they are. Many institutions are pushing sheer numbers of students in order to survive, and may not be as concerned about the quality of the courses within the programs. There are no media reports that are strictly policing whether the Associate Degree programs are meeting their goals or not. C.F.H.C. must work with the government to gain more space, and must also present their educational programs under the Caritas heading to enrich and expand the program.

Space is one of the largest issues within Hong Kong, and also at C.F.H.C. It would be convenient for Caritas to try to bring together Bianchi, C.F.H.C., and the other organizational colleges together into one single site. Caritas wants community service done by location, but the lack of a large, central campus affects the overall program.

Caritas has contacts in industry, but does not actively pursue agreements with corporations after the students graduate. Given a choice, students would most likely choose a local university, but there are more choices for them abroad. However, the students still encounter the lack of university spaces, and those who try to stay within Hong Kong often find themselves with few options. As such, students are willing to remain inside the Caritas educational offerings if they are able.

Sub-degree programs will change in a few years, since the Hong Kong educational system is switching to a system based more on the American system than on the United Kingdom system. Because of this, it is very difficult to predict where sub-degree programs will be in 2010.

The government as a whole has left the educational programs to the whim of market forces, and some programs simply cannot compete with the larger schools financially. As such, there is a very narrow educational offering within the system, since schools cannot afford to offer many programs outside the core curricula. It is risky for a small school like C.F.H.C. to offer a wide range of courses.

Social Sciences Department Student Interview

The students are part of the first graduating class, and most are going straight into the workforce upon graduation from Caritas Francis Hsu College.

Tuition is too high at C.F.H.C., and since the A.D. course system is just starting up, the interest rates on loans for the students are very high, and fluctuate freely with the market. To make the program viable for more students, there needs to be an increase in the number of available loans and a much lower interest rate for these loans. Another option is to find more financial aid or college assistance like the public universities in Hong Kong.

Most students do not use a computer on campus, but rather, will leave campus and use their computers at home to access anything they need to do for school. Not many of the professors post their notes online, and the students cannot access anything posted in the Intranet from home, because the C.F.H.C. Intranet is not accessible from off-campus. If there was a way to access these pages from home, the system would be much more useful for students.

A canteen on campus would be a good addition. A few of the translation students will travel to Caine Road, but most other students will not have to travel away from the Oxford Road campus.

The students heard about C.F.H.C. by word of mouth, from a social worker, and from a website. The students are very close with their instructors, and they even have consultation hours; usually there are enough of these, and most of the students have the instructor's number if they have questions or concerns. The instructors have individuals from industry come in to talk to the students.

Certain clubs are unique to each program, and most students don't stay on campus once classes are complete. Clubs in general are a difficult thing to have on campus, since there is no general place for them to be. Graduates themselves are a huge way of advertising.

Appendix B - Questionnaire

Student Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. What programme are you pursuing?
2. How much of the programme have you completed so far (Year, Semester)?
3. What do you plan to do on completion of the program?
 - a) Pursue Higher Education in Hong Kong
 - b) Study Abroad
 - c) Receive Additional Certifications
 - d) Enter the Workforce
 - e) Other _____
4. On a scale of 1-5 (1 = very poor and 5 = excellent), how do you rate the programme in which you are enrolled in these areas?

a. Entrance Requirements		1	2	3	4	5
b. Recognition from Society	1	2	3	4	5	
c. Variety of Subjects/Programmes		1	2	3	4	5
d. Interaction with Professors	1	2	3	4	5	
e. Learning Environment		1	2	3	4	5
f. Use of Technology	1	2	3	4	5	
g. Peer Interaction	1	2	3	4	5	
h. Transferability of Credits	1	2	3	4	5	
i. Work Load	1	2	3	4	5	
j. Quality of Courses	1	2	3	4	5	
k. Employment Opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	
l. Facilities	1	2	3	4	5	
m. Cost vs. Benefit of Programme	1	2	3	4	5	
n. Other _____	1	2	3	4	5	

5. Of the areas listed above in Question 4, please mark the THREE MOST IMPORTANT (1 = Most Important, 2 = Second Most Important, 3 = Third Most Important).

a)___ b)___ c)___ d)___ e)___ f)___ g)___
h)___ i)___ j)___ k)___ l)___ m)___ n)___

6. Are there any specific comments you'd like to make, or suggestions to improve the quality of sub-degree programmes?

Thank you for your time!

明愛徐誠斌學院
學生問卷

請回答下列問題

1. 您就讀甚麼學科？
2. 到目前為止，你已經完成了多少 (年及學期)？

3. 修畢課程後，您會有甚麼計劃？

- i. 本地升學
- ii. 海外升學
- iii. 繼續進修，以提升資歷
- iv. 投身社會工作
- v. 其他_____

4. 按照 1-5 的順序 (1 為最不好，5 為最好)

您如何評價所讀的專業？

i. 入學要求	1	2	3	4	5
ii. 社會認可程度	1	2	3	4	5
iii. 專業多樣性	1	2	3	4	5
iv. 與教師的交流	1	2	3	4	5
v. 學習環境	1	2	3	4	5
vi. 技術應用	1	2	3	4	5
vii. 與同學的交流	1	2	3	4	5
viii. 學分的可轉移性	1	2	3	4	5
ix. 工作量	1	2	3	4	5
x. 課程質量	1	2	3	4	5
xi. 就業機會	1	2	3	4	5
xii. 教學設備	1	2	3	4	5
xiii. 學費及得著	1	2	3	4	5
xiv. 其他_____	1	2	3	4	5

5. 問題 4 所列各項中，請選擇三項最為重要的，然後按序分級，並列出來

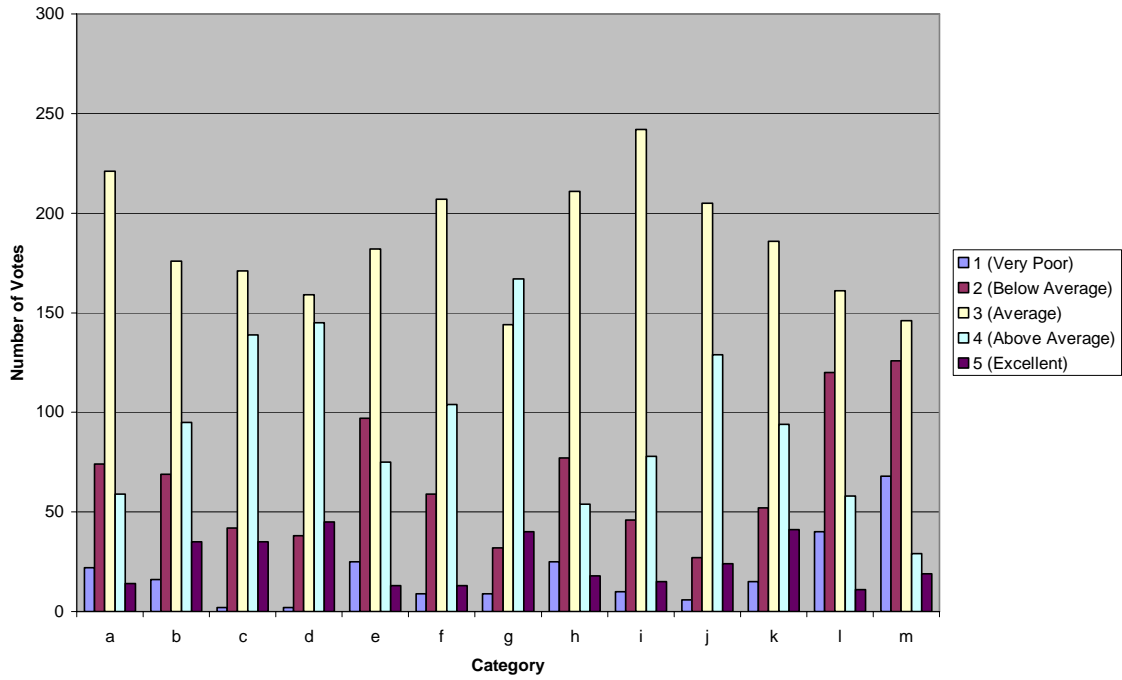
(1 為最重要，2 為次要，3 為第三重要)

(i)___ (ii)___ (iii)___ (iv)___ (v)___ (vi)___ (vii)___
(viii)___ (ix)___ (x)___ (xi)___ (xii)___ (xiii)___ (xiv)___

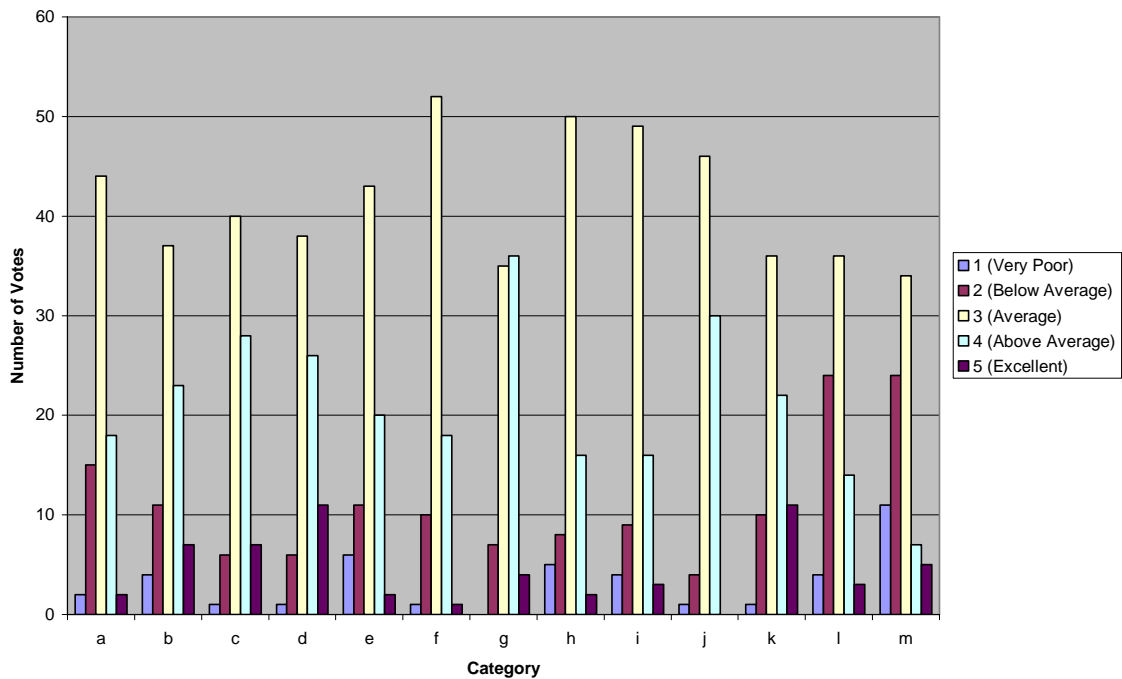
6. 就改善非學士學位課程，您有何評論或建議。

Appendix C – Data Graphs

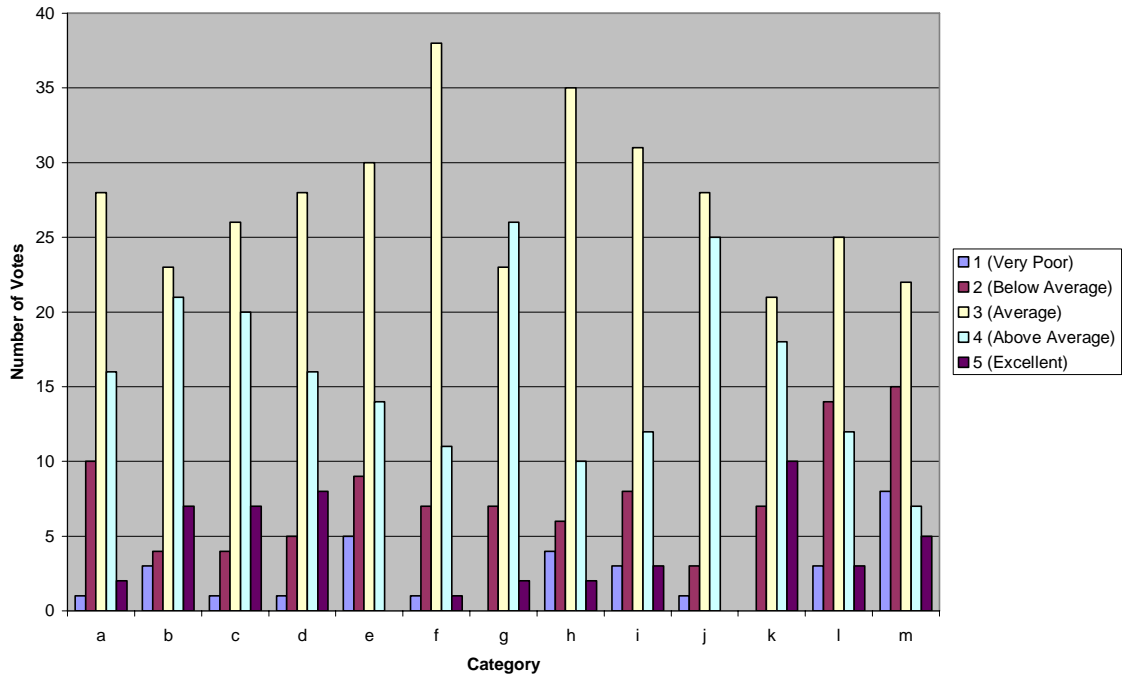
All Departments' Data



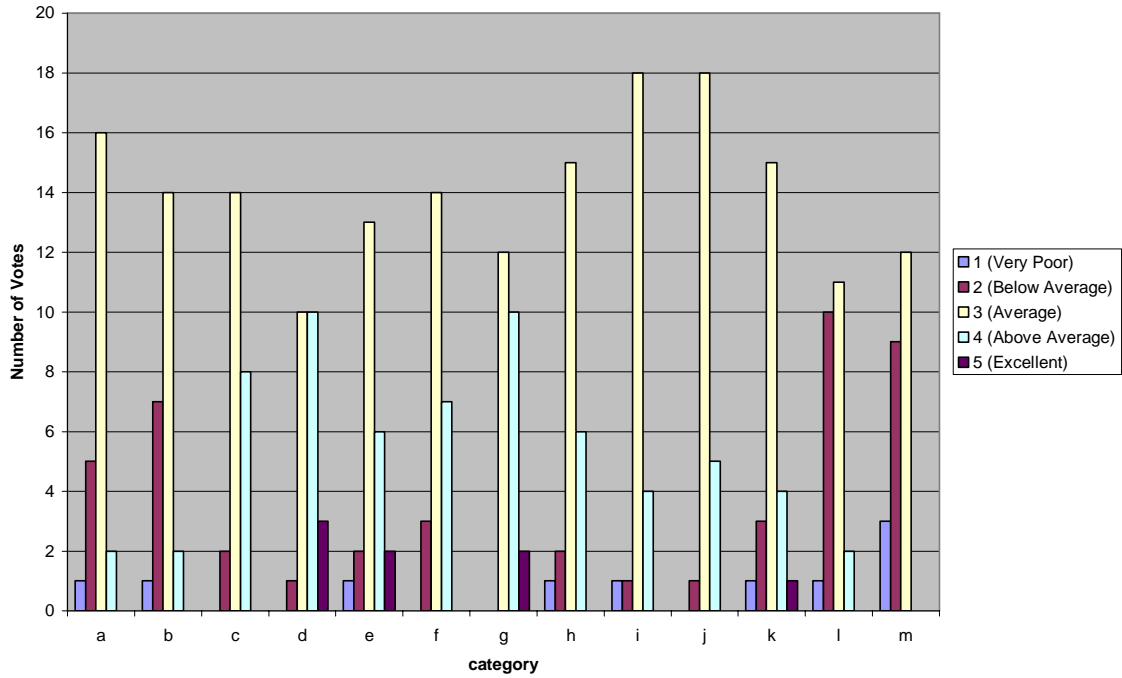
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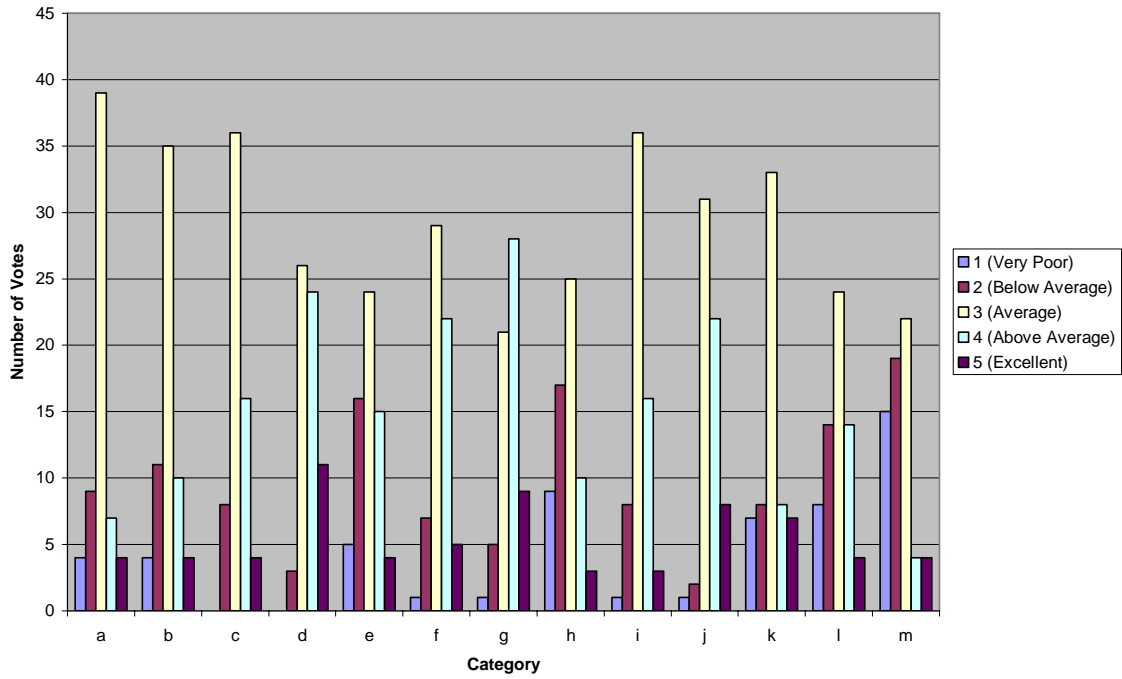
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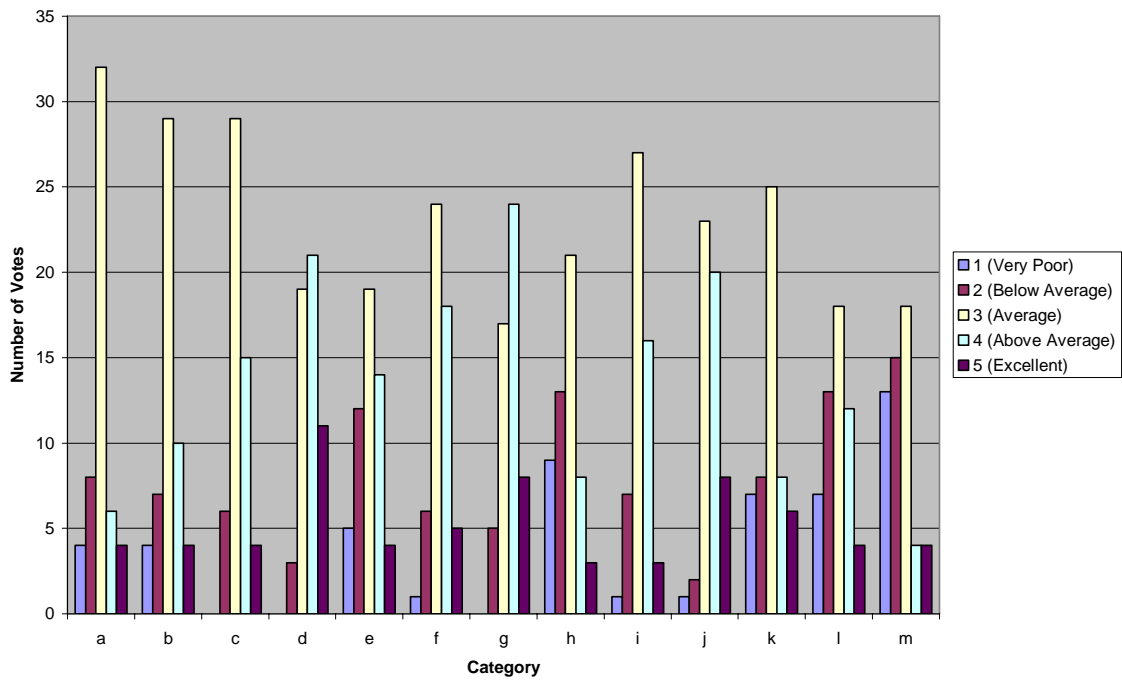
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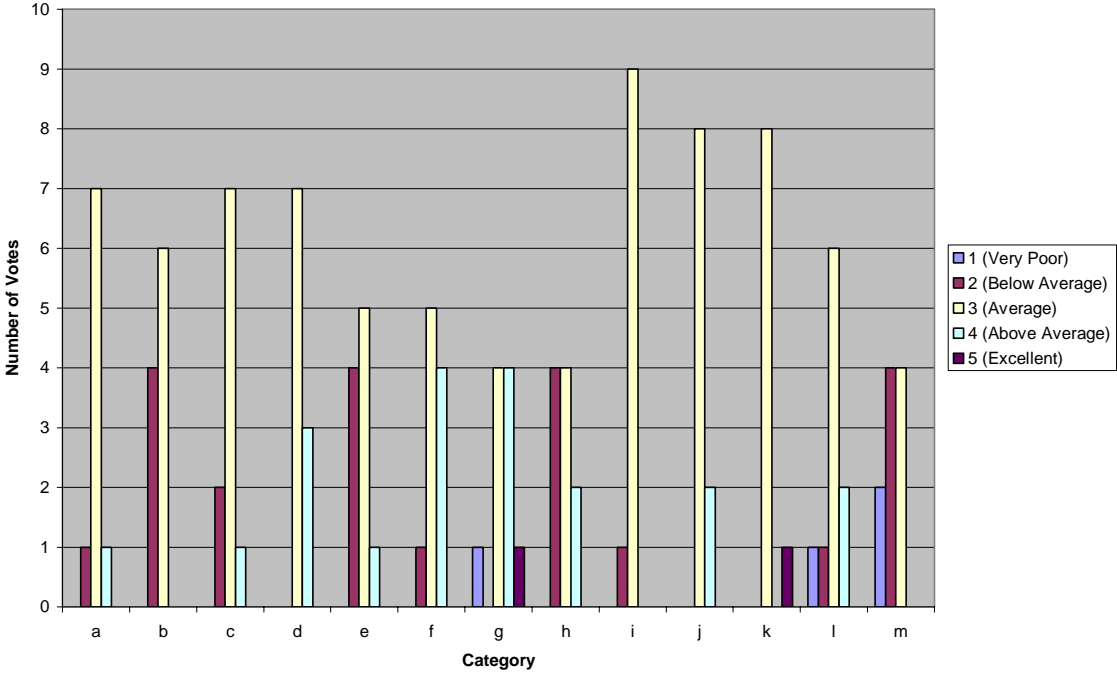
Computer Science Department Data



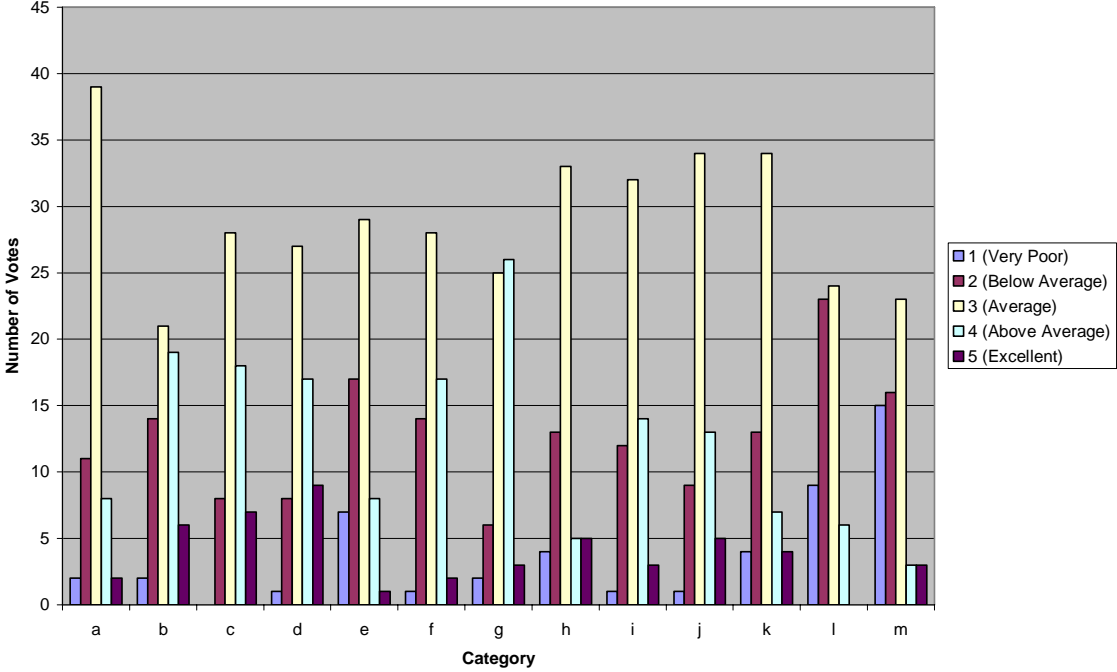
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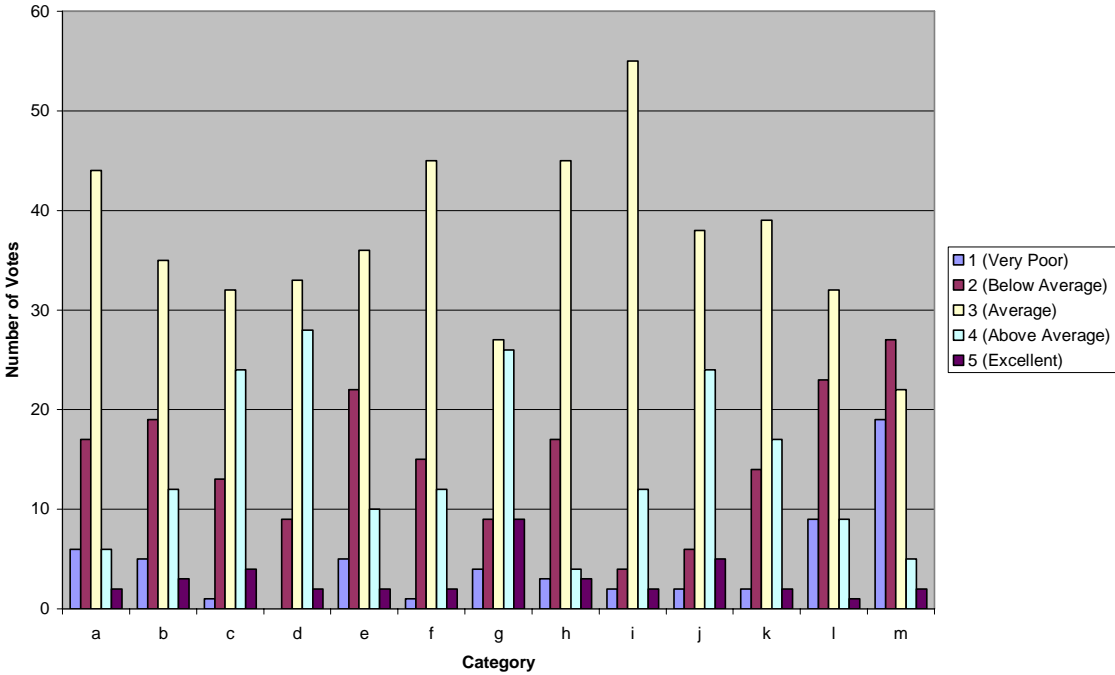
Computer Science Associate Degree in Business Administration in Financial Studies Data



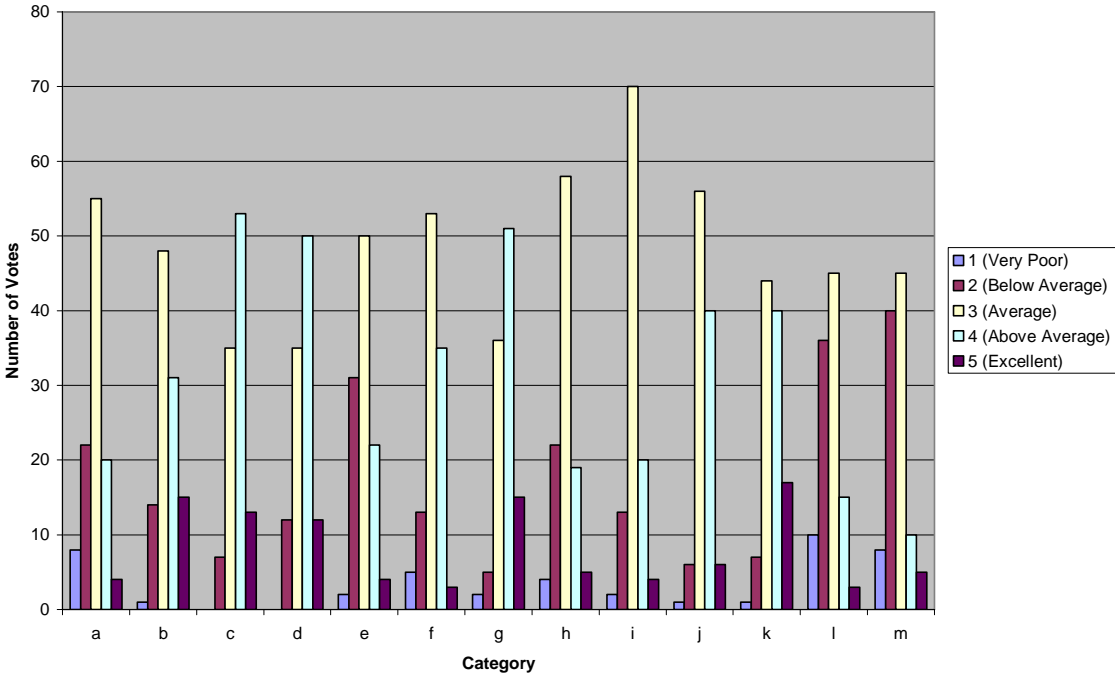
Social Science Associate Degree in Social Work Data



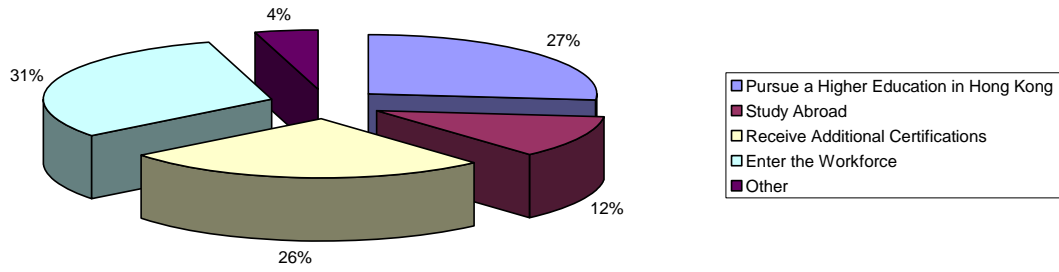
Language Studies Higher Diploma of Translation and Interpretation Data



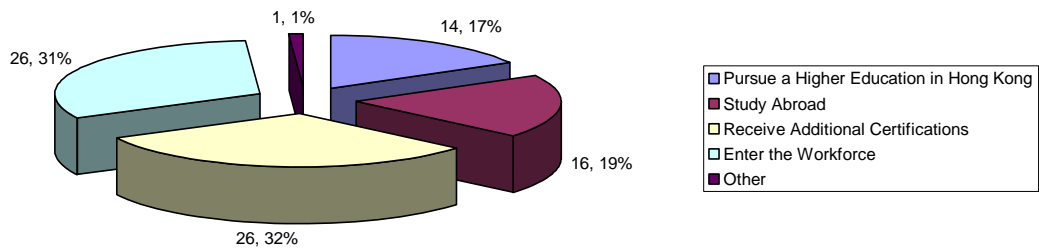
Accounting Department Higher Diploma in Accounting Studies Data



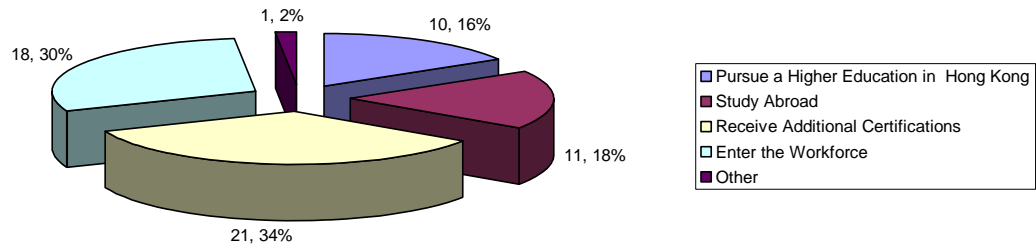
Caritas Francis Hsu College Post-Program Ambitions
392 Questionnaires



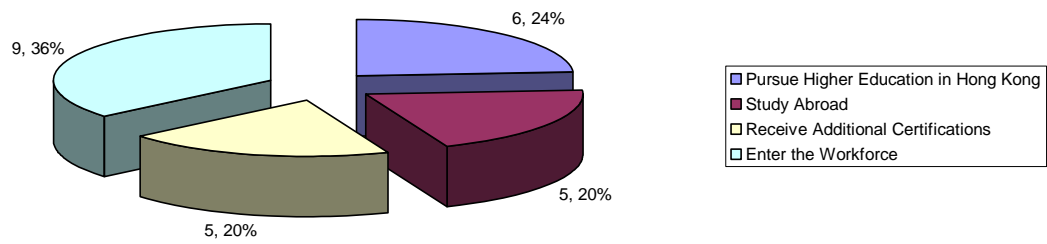
Business Administration Post-Program Ambitions



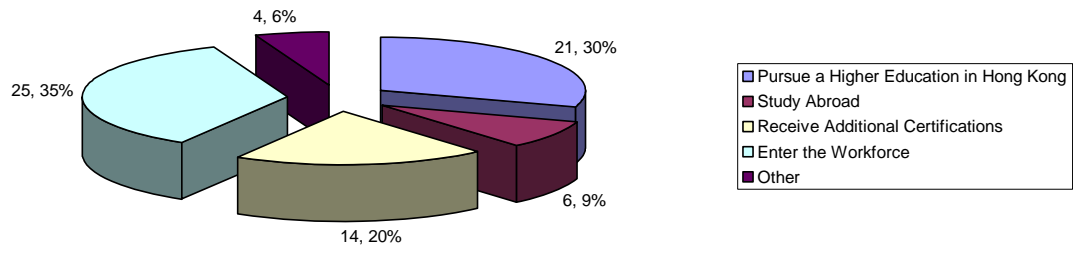
B.A. - H.D. Post-Program Ambitions



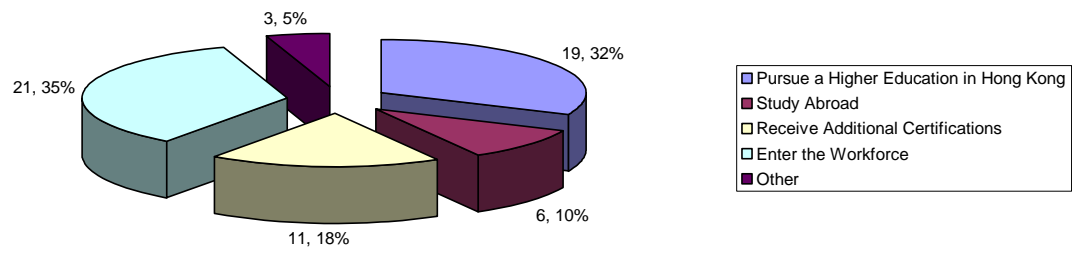
B.A.- A.D. Post-Secondary Ambitions



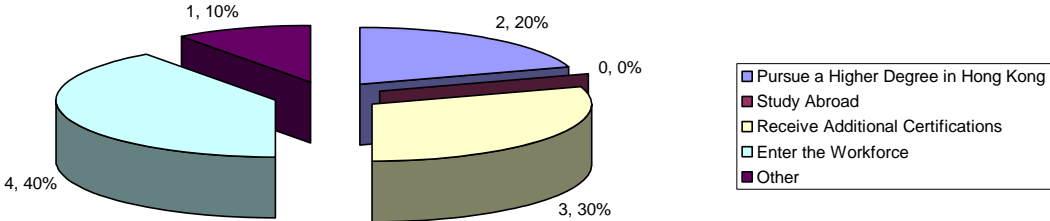
Computer Science Post-Program Ambitions



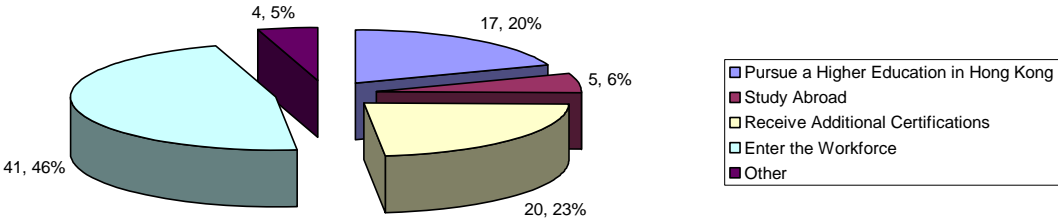
C.S. - H.D. Post-Program Ambitions



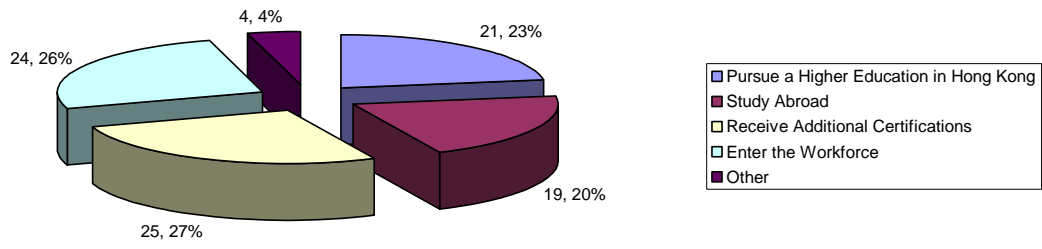
C.S. - A.D. Post-Program Ambitions



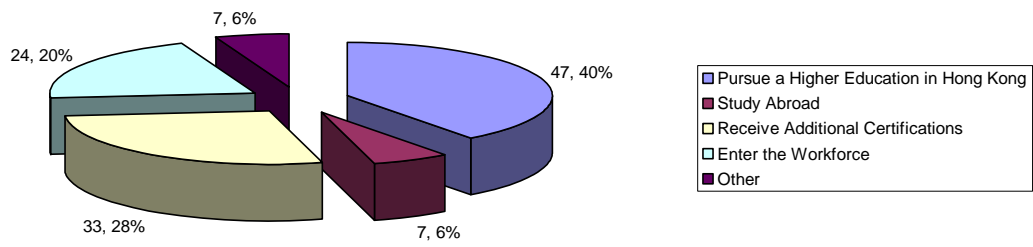
Social Science Post-Program Ambitions



Language Studies Post-Program Ambitions



Accounting Post-Program Ambitions



All Department Open Ended Comments

Social Science Answers

1. hope to increase the recognition and acceptance from the society, government should help more to the students who take the course.
2. reduce or waive the tuition
3. teachers should be more responsible and vexations
4. nothing to do with me
5. increase the chance for college (continuous study) and professional recognition
6. teaching, testing, and grading should be more serious, use English as much as possible
7. tuition is too expensive
8. improve the study atmosphere. Communicate more between teacher and students, students and students
9. hope the government barely support each certified course/program
10. improve the quality, not the quantity. If a student does not pass the entry standard, do not take the person, otherwise waste peoples time.
11. tuition is too high, lack of social recognition
12. hope the government provide more financial support to the school. Tuition is too expensive
13. tuition is too high, hope to have more donation
14. don't know if it may have social recognition
15. change learning environment
16. increase social recognition
17. lack attraction in advertising, low social recognition and awareness
18. tuition is too high
19. tuition is too high
20. teachers quality, should go toward professional career
21. social recognition, tuition with scholarship
22. no English, should use Chinese, we are Chinese..
23. may connect to schools locally or in other cities
24. flexible class time (like university), semester should start early, then have a semester break in the middle
25. course quality is very important
26. tuition should be flat making sure most of graduates can go to college for BA degree credit is transferable.

Accountancy Answers

1. there should be courses for continuing toward BA degree
2. all HK universities recognize non BA courses, students have change for college education in HK, course context/quality should be evaluated at college standard and transferable
3. more courses connected to college courses
4. teachers should explain in more detail, do not speak too fast
5. tuition is more and more, some professors don't know how to teach
6. tuition is high, no cafeteria
7. tuition is too high, no elevator, no cafeteria, no small shop to buy food
8. it should have more teaching weeks but the school fee should remain unchanged, because the summer holidays is too long
9. more teaching by correspondence (distance learning?)
10. more distance learning, more career guidance
11. more connection courses (e.g. BA degree courses in local universities)
12. more articulate BA courses
13. government financial support
14. add tests for entering college
15. reduce tuition course quality should be improved
16. low social recognition
17. tuition is too high
18. social recognition, high tuition
19. more chance for credit transfer
20. tuition is too high
21. more resource (books, testing problems, web-sites)
22. hard to continue in college tuition is high
23. improve course content
24. tuition is too high
25. tuition is too high
26. school is too small
27. tuition may be less
28. more resource
29. more resource
30. reduce tuition
31. government should put in more money, tuition should be reduced
32. hope to have more government support
33. should have tuition waiver, more connection courses to university
34. government should provide more tuition help
35. reduce tuition, hire more qualified professors to attract students
36. reduce tuition, more variety of facility
37. credit transferable, more students would be interested
38. more recognition from big companies/institutions/offices, continue for college education
39. the cost of programme is too expensive
40. more study's subject for choosing

41. entrance requirement should be higher
42. more facilities for learning, such as more laboratory
43. the transferability of credits should be improved, professors are very helpful and supportive to students
44. increase the recognition of the society and transferability of credits to other university
45. there should be courses for continuing toward BA degree

Business Administration

1. more real practice in company (interns?)
2. course context should not be the same as in high school
3. CM majors should learn computer, IT
4. reduce price
5. should enhance technique application and social work experience, this is the way to learn useful knowledge
6. more compensation
7. make up things not in BA degree
8. insufficient teaching facility
9. increase social recognition, do more advertisement, tuition should be less than HK 30K per year
10. increase the room for peoples creativity and skill
11. add "fun"
12. offer more majors
13. provide more practice/intern opportunities
14. improve the applicability of the course, increase activities outside classroom
15. course goes too fast
16. more focus on specific area would be valuable, this is not BA degree
17. course quality is ok, but not well organized by the security, that is not good
18. more communication with other local universities
19. government should let the people in the society recognize it more

AD-TMM

1. reduce per year tuition
2. more resource, school recognition
3. too hard (we have to work hard)
4. more practice opportunities, connection to BA course

Computer Science

AD BIS

1. too expensive

HD CS

1. tuition should be lower than BA degree programs
2. next transparent enough
3. high variety of course content, which leads to un-focused in a specific area
4. reduce tuition
1. I have been here for more than 2 years, I may learn a lot of computer skills
5. well recognized
6. more recognition, from the society
7. we'll expect the sub-degree can increase of recognition from society

Language Studies

1. Reduce the studying time to 3 years.
2. reduce study time to 3 years. In the first year, course context was a lot and made us busy.
3. increase the recognition from the society
4. general education subjects should focus on the understanding and application instead of exam-oriented
5. lets finish it
6. finish it
7. hope to improve the faculty quality
8. unable to improve the students who were behind others (change)
9. more advising to problematic students
10. reduce tuition
11. should teach more other kind of professional knowledge
12. teaching facility/text insufficient
13. Improve faculty quality. Course was taught too fast
14. offer more language courses, increase the number of different languages
15. Reduce tuition. Separate tuition and text, note fee. Some of them were not worth buying
16. tuition is too high
17. arrange students for practice in real case (intern?) tuition is too high
18. increase social recognition
19. reduce tuition (currently equivalent to university tuition)