Chapter 6
Intervarsity Campaign for Abolishing the Colonial Chancellor System

Abstract This chapter turns to another significant post-Occupy Central issue concerning politics and university governance—the intervarsity campaign for ending the role of the Beijing-appointed HKSARCE as ex-officio chancellor of all public universities in Hong Kong. The chapter shows that the student- and staff-initiated intervarsity abolition movement extended their pursuit of greater democracy from the political arena to higher education. Staff and students questioned the HKSARCE's dual roles as city head and university chancellor, his/her unchecked appointment power, his/her appointees' ties to local and central authorities, and the dominance of external members in council membership across public universities. While they used different strategies to force university councils and the government to review the HKSARCE's role in university governance and amend university ordinances, the universities remained highly reluctant to change the chancellor system and the managerial model of governance dominated by external members.

This chapter turns to another significant post-Occupy Central issue concerning politics and university governance—the intervarsity campaign for ending the HKSARCE's role as ex-officio chancellor of all public universities in Hong Kong. This issue is not about governance of a single university, but rather of all public universities in Hong Kong. The 2012 anti-national education campaign and 2014 Occupy Central, as demonstrated in Chaps. 2 and 4, alerted many Hong Kong people, particularly students and young people, that Hong Kong was falling under the increasingly tight control of the central government. After failing to attain their goals in the Occupy Central demonstration, university students found a new battle in their fight for greater democracy in their universities and the public higher education system. Post-1997 Hong Kong inherited the British colonial system, in which the city's head also served as the chancellor of publicly funded universities or tertiary institutions and enjoyed the legal power to appoint chairpersons and a significant number of external members to university councils. This gave the government leeway to exercise control over public universities. Following the international managerial trends in university governance, university councils, as examined in Chap. 3, had been downsized and empowered, and external council members now constituted a majority on the councils. After the failure of Occupy Central, the conflict inherent in the

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HKSARCE acting as both city head and university chancellor, his/her unchecked appointment power, his/her appointees' ties to local and central authorities, and the dominance of external members in council membership became important concerns of university students and staff.

The intervarsity abolition movement initiated by university students and staff, as the chapter argues, extended their pursuit of greater democracy from the political arena to higher education; however, the movement was unlikely to succeed without the strong support of university councils, the legislature, and the government. After HKU's PVC appointment saga and the failure of its student union, staff association, and convocation in stopping the HKSARCE's appointment of Prof. Arthur Li as an HKU council member in March 2015, students and staff from eight UGC-funded universities began to question the continuation of the colonial chancellor system. They expressed deep concerns about the power of the HKSARCE, as chancellor, to appoint external members to councils, and the influence those appointees had on university affairs. However, any change to the chancellor system involves amending university ordinances, a complicated process involving gaining the approval of the council/court, the HKSARCE as chancellor, and the Legislative Council, which has been controlled by pro-establishment lawmakers since 1997. Compared to pan-democratic lawmakers and university staff, student unions at UGC-funded universities have been more active and organized in campaigning to change the chancellor system. They have used different strategies to force their university councils and the government to review the HKSARCE's role, as chancellor, in university governance, and to amend university ordinances. While they have convinced their universities to consider reviewing their governance structure, the universities remain highly reluctant to propose changes to the chancellor system. If this very first step cannot be achieved, there is no hope for the abolition movement to succeed.

This chapter first discusses the dual roles of the HKSARCE as head of the city and chancellor of public universities, and his/her power to influence the UGC and individual UGC-funded universities. This is followed by an examination of HKSARCE C. Y. Leung's attempt to change the colonial tradition and practice of chancellorship from one of self-restraint, to one characterized by the exercise of power over university governance. Third, the chapter examines the intervarsity campaign for abolishing the HKSARCE's role as ex-officio chancellor of public universities, and students' reasons and strategies for pushing this campaign. Finally, the chapter discusses the responses of individual public universities to the abolition issue.

Head of Government as the Chancellor of Public Universities: A British Colonial Practice in Postcolonial Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, the current higher education administration system has loopholes that can become doorways for the government's political intervention in university gov-

ernance. Chief among these is the HKSARCE's dual role. On the one hand, s/he is the head of the government which, via the UGC, steers and oversees the governance and development of, and allocates resources to, public universities. On the other, s/he is also the ex-officio chancellor of all public universities, with substantive legal authority and power over them. However, until HKSARCE C. Y. Leung assumed the chancellorship in 2012, this dual role had not been a major public concern. Since then, however, it has spawned an intervarsity campaign to abolish the HKSARCE's automatic chancellorships. The central debate, this section argues, is about how to balance public accountability and institutional autonomy in UGC-funded universities, yet guard against potential political interference by the government, under Chinese sovereignty.

HKSARCE as the Head of Government Over the UGC

Similar to his/her colonial predecessors, the post-1997 HKSARCE, as Hong Kong's head of government, has the power to control the UGC, which advises the government on higher education policy and the allocation of resources to UGC-funded universities. As such, the UGC's independence from the government has been questioned. In its report on allegations that education officials had interfered with the academic freedom and autonomy of the UGC-funded Hong Kong Institute of Education (now called EDUHK), witnesses told the government-appointed Commission of Inquiry the UGC was "a rubber stamp" that "uncritically cooperates" with education authorities to achieve government objectives, and recommended "a board independent of the government" be established to advise on policies related to teacher education institutions and their development (Yeung & Lee, 2007, p. 110).

Structurally, the UGC is not completely independent of the government, as it is "responsible" to the Education Bureau (Yeung & Lee, 2007, p. 108), it "formally reports" to the HKSARCE, its secretariat is a government department, led by a secretary-general who is a "civil servant" (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2007, pp. 50, 56). Although s/he reports to and is appraised by the UGC chairperson, the UGC secretary-general's appraisal must be countersigned by the Permanent Secretary for Education. Moreover, the HKSARCE not only appoints the UGC chairperson, s/he also determines its membership. By longstanding practice, the UGC, as mentioned in Chap. 3, comprises both local and nonlocal academics and lay (nonacademic) members.

While all UGC chairs and members are appointed by the HKSARCE, there are no published criteria for those appointments (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2007), allowing the HKSARCE considerable room to maneuver in his/her selections. In April 2013, then-HKSARCE C. Y. Leung appointed Chi-kong Cheung, a member of the Executive Council (the highest level organ assisting the HKSARCE in policy-making) as a lay member of the UGC. Cheung's appointment caused some concern in the higher education community, because he was known for being Leung's strong political supporter, and had written news articles defending Leung and his policies,

and criticizing the design of university-based public polls showing Hong Kong citizens' stronger sense of local identity than Chinese identity (Law, 2017).

HKSARCE as the Ex-Officio Chancellor of Public Universities

By law, the chancellor of each UGC-funded universities is the head of government—i.e., the HKSARCE (or Governor in the colonial period). The HKSARCE is also the ex-officio chancellor of the publicly funded HKAPA, and the self-funded Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK). Moreover, the HKSARCE is not a symbolic figurehead, performing merely ceremonial functions; on the contrary, s/he not only has the legal duty to govern UGC-funded institutions, HKAPA, and OUHK, but also the legal power to do so, and therefore can directly and indirectly influence university governance.

First, the HKSARCE, as chancellor, can indirectly influence university governance through his/her power to appointment a significant portion of the external members on university councils. In Hong Kong as in other countries, the 2002 Sutherland report led many public institutions to adopt an international managerial trend of downsizing their university councils; specifically, nearly half of UGC-funded institutions cut council membership to around 25 members. Since then, however, the average size of university councils in Hong Kong has climbed to 31, ranging from 23 (CityU) to 56 (CUHK, which has studied reducing to about 30) (Table 6.1). Like many European universities (Fielden, 2008), UGC-funded have diverse university councils, with both internal (staff, administrators, students) and external members. Most councils' members are external, ranging from 50% (HKBU) to 76% (LU) in 2016 (62% on average).

The HKSARCE, as ex-officio chancellor, is entitled to appoint a majority of these external members. In 2016, the average rates of direct appointment and appointment upon nomination were 34.4% and 41.6%, respectively (Table 6.1), with LU's council having the highest percentage of HKSARCE-appointed members (76%). CUHK's council had the lowest percentage (10%), since it was having more internal members due to the inclusion of college heads and faculty deans as internal members, and was the only public university with three external members drawn from the Legislative Council. In HKAPA and OUHK, the proportions of HKSARCE-appointed council seats were 56% and 83%, respectively (Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, 2016). More important, unlike their counterparts in the UK and New Zealand, who are elected from among council members, in Hong Kong, the university council chairpersons of all UGC-funded universities are appointed by the HKSARCE; CUHK's council is entitled to recommend its own council chairperson to the HKSARCE for appointment (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2007). In addition, deputy council chairpersons and treasurers must be external members; in some universities, such as HKBU, members are appointed to these powerful positions by the HKSARCE. At HKU, despite being only 29% of total council members, HKSARCE-appointed members wield "the most significant substantive power" (Review Panel on Univer-

Table 6.1 Number of council members appointed by the HKSARCE, 2016

University	Total number of members[f]	Number of external members	Number of members appointed by HKSARCE		Percentage of members directly appointed by HKSARCE (%)	Percentage of members appointed by HKSARCE (%)
			Appointed directly	Appointed upon institution's nomination		
HKU	24	16	7	–	29	29
CUHK	56	31[a]	6	–	10	10
HKUST	27	17	9	–	33	33
PolyU	25	17	9	–	36	36
CityU	23	15	7	8[b]	30	65
HKBU	36	18	15	3[c]	42	50
LU	33	25	18	7[d]	55	76
EDUHK	26	15	15[e]	–	58	58
Total	250	154	86	18	34.4	41.6

Note [a]Including three legislators (elected from the Legislative Council, not appointed by the HKSARCE). [b]Nominated by CityU's council. [c]Nominated by the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong. [d]Nominated by the Lingnan Educational Organization Limited. [e]Including one public officer from the Education Bureau. [f]Except for CUHK, which has no student representatives, all universities have one to three student council members. Adapted from Legislative Council Secretariat (2007) with updated figures calculated from UGC universities' ordinances and websites

sity Governance, 2017, p. 30), as they do in most other UGC-funded universities, except for CUHK.

The HKSARCE's criteria, if any exist, for appointing council members and chairs are neither public nor transparent. In his report to the UGC, Newby (2015) criticized the HKSARCE's appointment of external members as not being in line with practices in most other countries, where governing bodies appoint their own members. He further criticized such appointments as lacking "systematic consideration" of the skills and expertise universities need to discharge their duties (p. 20).

Second, the HKSARCE, as chancellor, can become directly involved in university governance. Common to all institutions are the HKSARCE's legal powers and duties, such as presiding at convocations, conferring degrees and academic awards, and accepting institutional reports, financial statements, and auditors' reports (Education Bureau, 2015). Different ordinances at different UGC-funded universities give the HKSARCE different powers over different areas of their internal governance. In HKU, for example, the HKSARCE is authorized by HKU ordinance to receive staff appeals and review university council decisions concerning the termination or appointment of any teacher or officer (Legislative Council, 2011, Section 12). S/he can accept or refuse the recommendations of the university's honorary degrees committee, based on what s/he "thinks fit" (Section 10 and Statue III). S/he has the power to amend and repeal university statutes proposed by the council or the court, and to add statutes s/he deems appropriate (Section 13). Similarly, in CUHK, the HKSARCE is legally entitled to approve or disapprove council statutes concerning university governance and administration (Legislative Council, 2008), and

can request information concerning the university's welfare and make recommendations to the council as s/he deems appropriate (Statute 4). Unlike other UGC-funded universities, EDUHK's ordinance gives the HKSARCE the power to issue directives regarding "the exercise of its powers or the achievement of its objects," with which EDUHK must comply (Legislative Council, 2002, 2016). However, the other five UGC-funded universities have no similar provisions regarding the HKSARCE's power over internal governance and administration.

During the colonial period, this practice was not challenged. Although the HKU Students' Union requested abolishing the governor's automatic chancellorship in 1991, the challenge quickly lost momentum, largely because Hong Kong governors exercised self-restraint and followed the British tradition of acting as a ceremonial figurehead, rather than intervening in university affairs. No governor engaged in intense public confrontation with the students or staff of Hong Kong's public tertiary institutions while acting as chancellor.

Change of HKSARCE's Approach to Chancellorship: From Self-restraint to Exercising Power Over Universities

Hong Kong's first two chief executives (C. H. Tung and Donald Tsang) continued their colonial predecessors' approach to university governance by exercising self-restraint and playing mainly a ceremonial and honorary role. This changed after C. Y. Leung became the third HKSARCE (2012–2017). After assuming power, Leung sidelined the Liberal Party, whose founding chairman, James Tien, had frequently criticized him and was axed by the CPPCC for not supporting Leung. Leung also adopted a hardline approach to pressure groups, media, and pan-democratic lawmakers, who used filibustering to block the passage of government bills and budgets (Goodstadt, 2018). In his role as chancellor, Leung made several moves his critics saw as threatening institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

First, in his 2015 policy speech, HKSARCE Leung criticized *Undergrad*, the official magazine of the HKU Students' Union, for publishing an issue advocating the need for Hong Kong people to decide their future and "find a way to self-reliance and self-determination" after 2047 (the last year China was obliged to allow Hong Kong to keep its capitalist system and way of life unchanged) (Hong Kong Government, 2015, para. 10). Such high-profile public criticism of a student magazine was unprecedented, and immediately drew the attention of the Hong Kong public, particularly young people, to the issue of Hong Kong independence. As such, the space for discussing this politically sensitive issue was quickly broadened from university students' publications to the public sphere in Hong Kong. Although he was not the first to criticize the rise of pro-independence voices, Leung was mocked by pan-democrats and his critics, who called him the "father" of Hong Kong independence.

Second, in 2015, Chancellor Leung was alleged to have used his power to veto HKU's awarding of honorary degree to several nominees (including his 2012 election opponent, Henry Tang); while the HKU Ordinance gave Leung the power to reject honorary degree nominees, there was no hard evidence to support the allegation he had done so. In response to media questions, Leung neither admitted nor denied the veto; instead, he merely expressed that he had performed his public duties according to the relevant university ordinance (Cheng, 2015). HKU authorities declined to comment; however, 2 years later, without naming any parties, HKU's Review Panel on University Governance (2017) revealed HKSARCEs had approved, and "on occasion" rejected, the nominations made by HKU's honorary degrees committee (p. 37). This suggests at least one HKSARCE had exercised his veto power and gone beyond what was expected of a symbolic figurehead.

Third, unlike his colonial predecessors, who appointed elites or celebrities without strong political affiliation, Leung used his appointment power to place his political allies on university councils. This was strongly protested by student unions; for example, in 2016, the LU Student Union protested the appointment of two council members who were seen as Leung's supporters, and who had opposed students' participation in the Occupy Central protest.

During his tenure (2012–2017), Leung appointed three then-Hong Kong delegates to state organs to be council chairmen of UGC-funded universities: Herman Hu was appointed and reappointed as CityU's council chairman in October 2012 and January 2015, respectively; Andrew Liao became HKUST's council chairman in March 2015; and Arthur Li was appointed as HKU council chairman in January 2016. Hu had been a state lawmaker in the NPC (2012–2017), while Liao and Li had been members of both the CPPCC (2012–2017) and the HKSAR's Executive Council.

Li's appointment as HKU council chairman in particular caused a huge controversy and led to serious protests in the HKU community, particularly among students and alumni. Despite his lack of direct connection with and sufficient knowledge of HKU, Li was deemed qualified to be its council chairman because of his strong professional and administrative experiences in higher education. Li was a former dean of medicine (1992–1996) and former vice-chancellor of CUHK (1996–2002) and had been secretary (2002–2007) of the Education and Manpower Bureau (now called the Education Bureau), to which the UGC reported. However, because of his strong leadership style at CUHK, Li had been dubbed the "Tsar" or "King Arthur." In 2007, as education secretary, he was accused of interfering with the academic freedom and institutional autonomy of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (now EDUHK) (Morris, 2010). While he was cleared by a government-appointed commission of inquiry, his permanent secretary was found to have improperly interfered with the Institute's staff's academic freedom (Yeung & Lee, 2007).

The controversy over Li's appointment started even before he became an HKU council member, in March 2015, as it was already "rumored" that the HKSARCE would appoint Li to succeed the outgoing HKU council chairman, Edward Leong, in November 2015. Many HKU students and alumni suspected Li's appointment was a strategic move by the government to "tidy up" HKU after the Occupy Central,

in which a number of its undergraduate students and one staff member had played important leadership roles. In October 2015, nearly one-third of HKU students (5316 students; 33.2%) voted on Li's appointment in a general poll, with 90% of voters agreeing with the assertion Li was "not suitable to hold any position under the governance structure" of HKU (Cheung, 2015). Similarly, on November 29, 2015, the HKU Convocation (a statutory body of over 162,000 alumni) held an extraordinary general meeting (the largest in its history) to enable alumni to express their views on the issue. In the meeting, 97.8% of the 4454 voters present agreed Li was "not suitable" to be the council chairman, because he did "not have the trust, confidence and respect" of HKU staff, students, and alumni (Convocation of the University of Hong Kong, 2015b). Despite the strong opposition of students, staff, and alumni, then-HKSARCE Leung exercised his power as chancellor to appoint Li as HKU council chairman, on December 31, 2015.

Students' Strategies for Promoting the Abolition Campaign

Students were the strongest force in the intervarsity campaign for abolishing the chancellor system. They adopted two different strategies to advance the campaign, resulting in different outcomes. The first strategy was to strengthen the legitimacy of the abolition campaign and garner wider on-campus and societal support by conducting general polls on institutional autonomy. This strategy was first employed by the Convocation of HKU (2015a). On September 1, 2015, the Convocation held its first extraordinary general meeting since 1985 (and largest ever), at which 82.4% of the 9298 voters (including 45 proxies) supported abolishing the HKSARCE's role as HKU chancellor; 83.4% supported that, if the HKSARCE continued as chancellor, his/her role should be ceremonial only.

Before conducting their polls, student unions used various channels (including Facebook, sharing sessions, and a Q&A booklet) to alert fellow students of the potential political threat the HKSARCE's role as chancellor represented to institutional autonomy, and to explain why the role should be abolished (HKFS, 2016). From late 2015 to early 2016, student unions from all UGC-funded institutions conducted their own referenda on campus (except for CityU, whose students' union council had been shut down). In PolyU, over 4200 students cast votes (turnout rate, 24%), with an overwhelming majority favoring abolishing the HKSARCE as default chancellor (85%), abolishing the HKSARCE's power to appoint external members to the university council (90%), and increasing the proportion of elected staff and student members on the council (89%) (Hong Kong Polytechnic University Students' Union, 2016). Student unions from other public universities reported similar voting results.

Following in the footsteps of the student unions, in March 2016, staff unions of eight UGC-funded institutions (together with other concerned groups) conducted an unprecedented, cross-institutional referendum on institutional autonomy. Over 4500 of the 26,332 full-time academic and nonacademic staff (17%) participated in the referendum, with voter identities being authenticated before balloting (Public Opin-

ion Programme, 2016). An overwhelming majority of voters favored the abolition of the HKSARCE's powers to appoint council members (92%) and increasing the ratio of elected staff and student council members (94.8%).

Unlike the first strategy, which was rational and peaceful, students' second abolition strategy was radical. Between mid-2015 and early 2016, to urge their university councils to review the chancellorship system and increase the proportion of internal council members, the student unions of HKU, CUHK, HKBU, and LU organized students to demand direct dialog with their council chairmen, besiege the council meeting venues to block council members from entering or leaving, and/or impede council meetings.

The two most serious sieges were made by the HKU Students' Union. The first (examined in Chap. 5) happened after the HKU council's second postponement, on July 28, 2015, of its consideration of the PVC(ASR) appointment; the meeting was also the first attended by Arthur Li as a council member. The second siege took place on January 26, 016, when Arthur Li chaired his first meeting as the new council chairman, and involved hundreds of HKU students and alumni, some students from other universities, and some pan-democratic politicians. Students demanded a direct dialog with the council chairman; in response, the council proposed a taskforce to review university governance. However, this news was not sufficiently nor correctly communicated to student protesters by either university authorities or Billy Fung, then-president of HKU Students' Union (2015–16) and student councilor at the meeting, and protesters thought the council had delayed the taskforce's establishment. Many of them, together with Fung, unsuccessfully attempted to forcibly enter the venue. Students later surrounded and shouted at council chairman Arthur Li, VC Mathieson and some pro-establishment council members; the latter felt their personal safety had been threatened by the former, and two council members were sent to hospitals.

The second strategy was detrimental to the movement, and greatly weakened the public support and legitimacy the abolition campaign had gained to date. The first besieging and storming of an HKU council meeting was quickly and widely condemned. Three days later (July 31, 2015), an internally elected council member, Prof. Kwok-Yung Yuen, resigned. While acknowledging the "injustice in the system," Yuen (2015) condemned students for using verbal and physical violence to disrupt council meetings, and insisted that such violence cannot change injustice. He suggested that "those in power… have the primary responsibility to… remove these injustices." Yuen's remarks suggest students' violent behavior was unacceptable and could discredit their movement, and that the council needed to attend to their concerns.

The consequences of the second besieging were even more serious. One day after the protestors' second incursion, VC Mathieson (2016) sent a mass email to staff, students, and alumni, condemning the students' inappropriate behaviors as "mob rule," and revealing his decision to make video footages of the incident available to the police. He considered the case serious, as it had involved both criminal acts and property damage, and instructed the university administration to refer the case to the police. Later, at an off-campus press conference, new council chairman Arthur

Li, accompanied by Mathieson, reportedly accused (without evidence) students of acting as if they "were on drugs" or had been "poisoned" by drugs and "manipulated" by the pan-democratic camp (Zhao, 2016).

Later, two student protest leaders, Fung and the HKU Students' Union's then-secretary for external affairs, were prosecuted. In July 2017, Fung was convicted on three counts (disorderly conduct in a public place, criminal damage, and attempted forcible entry) and the other student leader on one count (obstructing public officers in their performance of public duty) (Siu, 2017). They were sentenced to 240 h and 200 h of community service, respectively. More important, however, was that students lost the moral legitimacy they had accumulated through the first strategy, and public attention shifted from a rational discussion of the problems arising from the existing chancellor system to a critique of students' violent behaviors.

UGC-Funded Universities' Responses to the Abolition Campaign

Despite criticisms of their violent behaviors, the efforts of student abolition campaigners and their supporters were not fruitless. UGC-funded universities, as mentioned earlier, were required to follow 2015 Newby's recommendations, and review their governance structures. This created an opportunity for abolition supporters to force university councils to include in their governance reviews the issues of UGC-appointed members and the chancellorship. Universities reacted differently, based on internal and external pressures, and their responses were far from what abolition supporters wanted.

Two UGC-funded universities—EDUHK and LU—indicated they would not change their chancellorship practice. Although they were amending their institution's ordinance in anticipation of being upgraded to university status, EDUHK authorities did not want to complicate and prolong the amendment process in the Legislative Council, which was dominated by pro-establishment lawmakers. Unlike EDUHK, LU (which has the highest percentage of CE-appointed members) explicitly opposed changing the chancellor system. In a January 2016 council meeting, a majority of LU's council members reportedly voted against a student motion that a panel be struck to review its chancellor system; this decision was reported in local and mainland news (e.g., China Daily Reporter, 2016; Singtao Daily Reporter, 2016), but was not mentioned at all in LU's (2016) Summary of Discussions and the Decisions of the Council Meeting. Two new HKSARCE-appointed external council members, Junius Ho and Maggie Chan (then a CPPCC member for Hunan Province), publicly admitted their objection to changing the chancellorship system. Chan (2016) even issued a public statement expressing her objection, in which she argued universities should focus on teaching and research, not political wrestling.

Unlike LU and EDUHK, three other UGC-funded universities included the issues of chancellorship and council composition in their governance reviews. In June 2015,

HKBU set up the Task Force on Review of the HKBU Ordinance (2015), which quickly scheduled consultation dates and issued a consultation paper reviewing ordinance provisions concerning the chancellorship and council composition. However, at the moment of this writing, the consultation has not started, as the taskforce decided to seek legal advice on issues related to legislation amendment before doing so.

Similar to HKBU, in January 2016, CUHK council struck an internal taskforce to review council composition. Unlike HKBU, however, CUHK's Taskforce for Reviewing the Size and Composition of the Council (2016) successfully carried out two rounds of consultation and, in September 2016, submitted its second (almost final) consultation report, which recommended reducing the council size to not more than 30 (the majority being external members), but preserving its original system of having the HKSARCE appoint the council chairperson based on the council's advice. It is very unlikely the final report (received by CUHK council in June 2017, but not yet available to the public) will differ greatly from the second report, especially as the CUHK university council earlier (January 2016) indicated that the council was "not the proper platform to discuss the issue" of abolition, because of the HKSARCE's constitutional status as its chancellor.

HKU seemed to provide critics of the current chancellor system with some hope. Despite the many controversies confronting it (as presented earlier), in January 2016, the HKU council established its Review Panel on University Governance (RPUG) to review the effectiveness of its university governance structure. Unlike its counterparts at HKBU and CUHK, the RPUG was external; its chair was Sir Malcolm Grant (Chancellor of York University, UK), while its two other members were Prof. William Kirby (Harvard University, US) and Mr. Peter Nguyen (a former high court judge in Hong Kong); both Grant and Kirby were former UGC members. In February 2017, the RPUG submitted its major report, in which it recommended that, in light of Hong Kong's current "fiercely political system," the chancellor's role should be "largely honorary" and that, to avoid the need to amend the ordinance, the next HKSARCE (who would be elected in March 2017) should delegate the power to appoint external members (including council chair) to the council (p. 32). Because of Hong Kong's politically uncertain future, the RPUG further recommended HKU should eventually have an "independent chancellorship," one separate from the government and appointed by the council on the recommendations of its nomination committee (p. 34). However, one RPUG member, Nguyen, submitted an addendum, in which, while expressing his overall support for the main report, he indicated he had found no concrete evidence of conflict of interest in the HKSARCE's actions as HKU's chancellor. Therefore, he opposed the eventual removal of the HKSARCE as HKU's chancellor, and recommended following CUHK's model of having the council chairperson appointed by the HKSARCE, based on the council's nomination.

In its February 2017 meeting, instead of accepting the recommendations in the main report, the HKU council set up an internal Working Party to look into the different views expressed by the RPUG members. The Working Party comprised six council members—five external members (of whom two, including the chairman, were HKSARCE-appointed), and one internal member (an elected teacher).

The Working Party (2017) wholly accepted most RPUG recommendations on less controversial issues, such as maintaining the balance of council constituencies and providing professional development for council members. However, citing its desire to avoid the uncertainty inherent in amending the legislation relating to the chancellorship and its powers, and seeking the HKSARCE's agreement to delegate power to the council, the Working Group did not accept, *inter alia*, Grant and Kirby's recommendations on most controversial issues, including the eventual separation of the HKU chancellorship from the HKSARCE, and the appointment of HKU council chairman and members by the council, rather than the HKSARCE. Instead, it accepted Nguyen's recommendation that HKU preserve the practice of having the HKSARCE serve as chancellor, with the power to appoint council chairperson and members. It suggested the council set up an advisory committee on its chairmanship to advise the chancellor on recent university developments and issues related to the appointment and recommend candidates to the chancellor for his/her consideration. In June 2017, all these recommendations were fully accepted by the council.

In 2018, following the Working Group's recommendations, the HKU council set up an advisory committee—comprised of the pro-chancellor (HKSARCE-appointed, court member), VC (internal council member), treasurer (external council member), and one council member elected from within the council—to nominate candidates to replace outgoing council chair Prof. Arthur Li, whose chairmanship was scheduled to expire at the end of the year. In October 2018, two council members, Davin Wong and Prof. Rosie Young, competed for the fourth seat in the advisory committee (Su, 2018). Wong was then the president of the HKU Students' Union and represented full-time undergraduate students on the council, while Young was a council-appointed member, famous endocrinologist, former dean of medicine (1983–1982), PVC of HKU (1984–1993), and former chair of the Education Commission who had advised the colonial government on education policy between 1993 and 1998. Young won the election by a vote of 14 to 3 (Su, 2018). As a result, the committee was dominated by external members. It later forwarded nominee(s) to HKSARCE Carrie Lam, as ex-officio chancellor, for her consideration in appointing a new HKU council chair.

Because of the lack of information in the public domain, the positions or tendencies of the councils of the remaining three universities (HKUST, PolyU, and CityU) on these issues remain unclear. In August 2015, the HKUST established its Task Force on Review of Council Effectiveness but assigned it the task of following up on Newby's 2005 recommendations, including the use of a skills template for appointing council members.

The setting up of such advisory committee was an important step in the history of HKU governance. However, it did not change the colonial tradition of the head of the city having final power to appoint the HKU council chair. On December 14, 2018, the HKSARCE reappointed HKU Council Chair Prof. Arthur Li to another 3-year terms, from January 1, 2019 (Hong Kong Government, 2018). It is still unknown whether the advisory committee nominated Li alone or submitted other name(s) for the HKSARCE's consideration, whether she chose from the committee's nomination list, nor what selection criteria she used. In response, HKU Students' Union, the Academic Staff Association of HKU, and the HKU Alumni Concern Group (2019),

together with over 30 student societies and student hall associations, protested Li's reappointment and urged their university council and court to amend HKU Ordinance and Statutes to remove the chancellor's power to appoint the council chair and other external members, and to make the chancellorship "a titular office," with only ceremony duties.

Moreover, the responses from the majority of UGC-funded universities seem to suggest they preferred the status quo—i.e., the colonial practice of the head of government, as university chancellor, having the power to appoint council chairs and external council members. They also preferred keeping the managerial trend of external members dominating council membership. If HKU, the city's oldest and leading university, cannot change its chancellor system, it is difficult to imagine that other UGC-funded universities will be able to, either. If a council does not agree to change, and to initiate that change from within at the outset, neither the HKSARCE, as chancellor, nor the pro-establishment-dominated Legislative Council have strong reasons to change the existing system. All this suggests the colonial practice is likely to be preserved in postcolonial Hong Kong under China's rule, for the foreseeable future, as might be external council members' dominance of Hong Kong university councils empowered by international managerial tendencies.

University students had high hopes for attaining greater democracy in university governance through the abolition movement, much as they had hoped to attain genuine universal suffrage without political screening by central authorities through Occupy Central. The abolition movement and Occupy Central both centered on a common figure—the HKSARCE—who lacks popular legitimacy to govern Hong Kong, is selected by a small circle of Hong Kong people in Beijing-controlled election, and who, as chancellor can influence and control—on behalf of the local and central governments—university council membership, and thereby university affairs. However, university students and many other people failed in both instances to realize their objectives, leading a number of students and people to see Hong Kong independence as a means to attain greater democracy or even full autonomy in Hong Kong, as examined in the next two chapters.

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