Trends and Developments of Higher Education Research in Hong Kong: In Pursuit of a Cosmopolitan Vision

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With the processes of inter- and intranationalization, higher education in Hong Kong has been rapidly expanding in an effort to develop the city into a regional education hub. This article explores the trends and developments of higher education research (HER) in Hong Kong in the context of inter- and intranationalization. By drawing on the data from the Scopus database, this article analyzes a selection of journal articles on higher education published in Hong Kong over the past three decades. Findings show that significant growth and some new outputs have been seen in the field during the study period. In addition, local researchers have complied with the rule by forming more transnational and intranational research teams and by conducting more non-local studies. Interestingly, many of them have not abandoned local collaboration and studies, but they further developed their roots. These findings reveal that some internal signs of cosmopolitanization have been recorded in the field.
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Introduction

The development of higher education in Hong Kong can be observed in a dual trend, in which higher education in the territory has responded to the phenomenon of globalization and its associated changes, and it has faced many local challenges especially during the period of the transfer of sovereignty. To be specific, we mention on the one hand that higher education in Hong Kong has been substantially influenced by international competition caused by the profound effects of globalization, as evident in many other East Asian countries. In addition, the city-state, as the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (hereafter China or mainland China) after 1997, enjoys significant autonomy in various aspects,

including education, under the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle. This special political status, together with the colonial history of the city, grants universities in Hong Kong the privileged position as the bridge between the international academic community and the higher education sector in China, but this position requires them to remain highly internationally and globally connected. On the other hand, universities in Hong Kong have to deal with the ascending 'China factors' in the development of higher education as the confirmation of the return of the city to Chinese sovereignty. This contextual issue has become particularly important to the development in higher education in Hong Kong, given that the city is a part of a rising nation.

This article explores the evolution and the characteristics of higher education research (HER) in Hong Kong within a special context where massification, neoliberalization, internationalization, and sinicization simultaneously drive the development of the universities and the academic community in the city-state. This article analyzes the outputs of HER in Hong Kong between 1984 and 2013. The publication data on HER draws from the Scopus database and focuses on journal articles. The selection of articles is based on search keywords in academic journals. These keywords include 'higher education', 'tertiary education', or 'post-secondary education' contained in article titles, abstracts, and keywords, and 'Hong Kong' contained in the affiliation of authors. The selected research outputs will be analyzed by number, institutional affiliation, type of authorship, collaboration patterns, and scope of themes and issues over the study period to initially demonstrate the general picture of HER in Hong Kong and to further examine the extent to which their research outputs are reflected on and have responded to the systemic changes in higher education over the last three decades. In connection with the transfer of sovereignty and the pursuit of being a regional education hub, this study will particularly look into the patterns of trans- and intranational research collaboration and research scope on which higher education researchers tend to focus throughout the period.

The Research Context

Theoretical orientations

The analytical basis of this study builds on the interface between the system context of higher education policy and the nature of HER. As pointed out by Gornitzka (2013, 260–262), 'the changes in the formal governance and policy linkages between the national political-administrative level and the higher education institutions' (HEIs) have significantly affected 'the nexus between research on higher education and policy-making'. She argues that giving policy-relevant answers to the emerging questions in the context of higher education expansion and innovation provides an instrumental use for HER, whereas research on higher education can also play a monitoring role through the conceptualization of major changes in the sector. This

argument indicates that orientations of HER can be responsive and proactive in terms of its relationship with policymaking. Importantly, it also suggests that HER is sensitive to political-administrative changes at the system level.

This idea frames the present study. Indeed, despite the fact that the range of topics and facets in higher education is broad, they are oriented to respond to social changes and challenges (Teichler, 1996, 2005). In this sense, although a major part of HER focuses on teaching, learning, and assessment[1] (Horta and Jung, 2014), trends in HER and changes are connected at the policy and systemic levels. On the basis of these ideas, this study intends to exemplify the nexus between the system context of the development in higher education and the characteristics of research on higher education that are published in journals, thereby charting the trends and developments of HER in Hong Kong.

As for the theoretical orientations of the analysis, this article attempts to further explore the conceptual understanding of the management of knowledge networks with a focus on the emerging research community on higher education in Hong Kong, which leads in establishing international research networks in the region (Jung and Horta, 2013). According to Postiglione, the model of knowledge networks in Hong Kong has two dimensions. The first is 'a high degree of internationalism', which promotes the emergence of a globally open academic environment. Thus, academics in the territory are able to closely integrate with the global academy. The second is 'a highly valued but self-defined Chinese cultural heritage', which emotionally connects academics in Hong Kong with the development of China (Postiglione, 2013, 347). This cultural background facilitates the intensified research collaboration with universities in the Chinese mainland, whereas the Western-originated academic model makes the national vision and commitment in the collaborative engagements remain reflective. This concept is called 'the cosmopolitan model' (Postiglione, 2013), in which the model successfully combines international elements with local and national traditions in the development of knowledge networks.

This article explores the response of the cosmopolitan model in HER in Hong Kong to the notion of transnationality embedded in the thesis of cosmopolitanization by Beck (2011), which presents a new type of cosmopolitanism (Fine, 2007). In the past, cosmopolitanism was theoretically constructed based on universalism *vs* particularism (see Gouldner, 1957; Merton, 1968; Nussbaum, 1994). However, Beck (2003) argues that localism and cosmopolitanism are not mutually exclusive by themselves, and localism is also an essential element in contemporary cosmopolitanism, emphasizing the interaction between the global and the local. Hence, a cosmopolitan model is one that overcomes 'the dominant opposition between cosmopolitans and locals' (Beck, 2003, 17). The challenge of studying such a model is avoiding the state-centric perspective associated with the concepts of locals to replace the national 'either/or' with a transnational/translocal 'this, as well as that' (see Beck, 2003, 2011). Furthermore, Beck (2011) also argues that we are living in an age of cosmopolitanization because global risks cannot be properly managed by a

single nation-state in a world-risk society. Transnational curiosity, empathy, and cooperation are necessary to deal with global risks, and social developments have been inevitably transnationalized. In accordance with this argument, employing the concept of transnationality, which stresses both the national self and the global others, is necessary, and more empirical studies are needed to uncover and indicate signs that cosmopolitanization truly exists (Beck, 2006).

This study is developed upon the thesis of Beck to examine whether and how the research community on higher education in Hong Kong has been transnationalized in its strategic management of research networks and practices. This article presents data on the trends in HER in Hong Kong that empirically examines the relevance of the ideas of cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitanization to the development of the field. In addition, given the specific background of Hong Kong where it was initially a British colony and is now a SAR of China, this article also uses the terms 'intranational' and 'intranationalization' to describe and conceptualize the intensification of integration between Hong Kong and China. Before starting the analysis, it is useful to provide a brief history of Hong Kong with a specific focus on the development of its higher education sector and of the field of HER in the territory during the last three decades.

Major changes over the last three decades

Higher education in Hong Kong is special because of the historical background and the position of the city, which had been under the British colonial rule for over 150 years. China resumed sovereignty of Hong Kong in 1997, and thereafter the city became a SAR, which maintains its capitalist system, and enjoys autonomy under the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle. The higher education system in Hong Kong is clearly established based largely on the British system because of its colonial history. For example, English is used as the medium of instruction in universities. Indeed, as reported by Lin (2009), the establishment of the University of Hong Kong (HKU), the only government-funded, recognized university in the territory until 1963, carried a mission of extending the cultural influence of Britain to China and Asia. This connects university education in Hong Kong with British cultural colonialism.

Hong Kong underwent the first wave of higher education expansion during the transitional period. The higher education system expanded mainly through awarding several post-secondary education institutions a university status. Consequently, eight publicly funded institutions obtained self-accreditation status, and the participation rate for undergraduates aged between 17 and 20 years surged in government-funded programs from 2% in the 1970s to 18% during this expansion wave (UGC, 1996). The second wave of higher education expansion began after 1997. Compared with colonial rule, the SAR government put more emphasis on the importance of internationalization. For example, in 1997, the government planned to increase the proportion of non-local students to 4% at the undergraduate level (Tung, 1997).

In 2010, the University Grants Committee (UGC) set a target of increasing quota places available for non-local students to 20% of total places (UGC, 2010). Consequently, the number of non-local enrollment of UGC-funded programs has gradually increased from 1% in 1996/1997 to 15% in 2013/2014 (UGC, 2015). Furthermore, in 2000, the government set up a target of increasing the participation rate of tertiary education students to 60% by 2010 (Tung, 2000). Since then, the tertiary education sector has seen an exponential growth. According to the latest statistics, the university admission rate has reached nearly 70% (Education Bureau, 2014).

Certain features are noteworthy in the post-1997 tide of the reform of higher education. First, internationalism is somewhat reflected and emphasized in the reform initiatives (UGC, 2004), as internationalization is considered as an important response to the effects of globalization on higher education (Scott, 1998). Importantly, the government set up a policy goal of developing the city into a regional education hub during the period. The expansion of the population of non-local students is essentially related to this ambition. Second, related to the vision of being an education hub, the education industry is also considered by the government as an engine for economic growth (Tsang, 2008). In fact, the higher education sector in Hong Kong has been substantially influenced by neoliberalism and entrepreneurialism since the early 2000s. Therefore, although the university admission rate has significantly grown, the new provision of higher education, especially in the sub-degree sector, is mainly run on the market-led, self-financing mode (Chan and Lo, 2007). Third, despite the emphasis on internationalization, the origin of the majority of non-local students in Hong Kong is mainland China. In 2013/2014, 78% of the total number of non-local students were from the Chinese mainland (UGC, 2015). This figure is due to the many years of the pivotal role of Hong Kong as a bridge for the international mobility of mainland Chinese students (Postiglione, 2005). Meanwhile, the city also considers its strong links with mainland China in terms of proximity and close ties as the strong competitive edge over its regional competitors, particularly in meeting higher education demands, developing a global center for China studies, and strengthening research collaboration (UGC, 2004, 2010). In fact, market integration is found in higher education between Hong Kong and the mainland (Li, 2011).[2]

As for the development of HER, we witness an expansion in this field in various parts of the world, in the context of massification of higher education (Sadlak and Altbach, 1997). Indeed, HER has been a growing academic field sustained by an increase of academic programs and research centers and the progress of professionalization (Macfarlane and Grant, 2012; Altbach, 2014). Similar to many other places, Hong Kong sees growth in the research and teaching infrastructure of studies in higher education. For example, HKU established the Comparative Education Research Centre in 1994, in which HER is one of its research foci. It has also offered a specialization of higher education in its Master of Education programs since 2010 (Faculty of Education, HKU, 2014). The specialization covers courses in

globalization, policy studies, leadership and organizational studies in higher educa-tion. Since 2014, this specialization has been added to its Postgraduate Certificate in Advance Educational Studies program. The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) has recently launched the Master of Social Sciences in Higher Education Policy and Governance program, which focuses on providing students with skills in higher education policy analysis, governance strategies and issues management. In addition, HKIEd is one of the core member institutions of the Asia Pacific HER Partnership, which serves as a research network for specialists in HER in the Asia Pacific region. Furthermore, with the goals of promoting research into policy and practice in higher education and stimulating research collaboration, higher education researchers from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), HKIEd and HKU started the Society for HER of Hong Kong in 2014.[3] On this basis, an active research community on higher education in Hong Kong is reasonably notable.

Different policy orientations and relevance to HER

The historical background and policy orientations that have been reviewed suggest the following assumptions:

Assumption 1
We assume that massification of higher education results in the growth of research on higher education. Although higher education expansion seems to have a natural and direct causal effect on the growth of research on higher education, two waves of higher education expansion were observed in Hong Kong, and they have different features. The expansion in the 1990s relied on granting the existing degree providers (including colleges and polytechnics) with a university status. Only one new publicly funded institution was established, namely, the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology. In this regard, the effect of this round of expansion on the structure of higher education governance is relatively limited. Yet, the expansion in the 2000s was heavily characterized by the elements of privatization and marketization (Lo, in press). A new sub-degree sector has emerged, which mainly consists of community colleges of public universities and private institutions. It is therefore noteworthy to examine the nexus between higher education expansion and the growth of HER.

Assumption 2
The rapid expansion of the sub-degree sector generates new types of publications to HER. In this regard, a new sub-degree sector that mainly provides 2-year associate degree programs has rapidly grown in recent years. This marks the move of Hong Kong from elite to mass higher education. However, the emergence of the sub-degree sector has substantially changed the hierarchical structure of the higher education system of Hong Kong. On the one hand, institutions and personnel do not necessarily conform to the positions that are taken for granted in the differentiated model of

governance. On the other hand, the shift to mass higher education has been clouded by complaints and criticisms (Kember, 2010). In this regard, we assume that HER has further grown when problems in the sector emerge.

Assumption 3

The degree of transnationality of education in Hong Kong is reflected in HER. Hong Kong has served as a bridge between East and West, and this role is significantly shown in higher education provision (Li, 2011) and academic research collaboration (Postiglione, 2013). However, the internationalization of higher education is reiterated and emphasized in the last decade, given that the city is pursuing to be a regional education hub (UGC, 2004). As Hong Kong has become part of China, examining the way in which internationalism has been developed in terms of research orientation and collaboration in HER is important.

Assumption 4

The ascending 'China factors' are reflected in HER. This produces a prediction that is possibly opposed to the ideas about internationalism presented in the last assumption. At the system level in the post-1997 era, frequent connections and intensified integration with the Chinese mainland have been a trend in various domains, including higher education (Lo and Ng, 2013). At the institutional level, the increase of academic staff and students (especially research postgraduate ones) from mainland China is considered as a significant factor affecting the orientation and collaboration of HER in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the 'need' to embrace China does not necessarily mean acceptance.

The Study

Methods

Although the Scopus database is unable to cover all the publications across a world so linguistically diverse, it serves as the most comprehensive and largest biblio-graphic database of peer-reviewed journal articles (Norris and Oppenheim, 2007), containing approximately 53 million records, 21,915 titles and 5,000 publishers, according to Elsevier's (2014) statistics. The coverage of higher education publications consists of 38 international peer-reviewed journals, out of which 37 have the keywords 'higher education' in their titles, and one has 'tertiary education'.

By using the Scopus database, this study analyzes academic publications that contain the keywords 'higher education' and its synonyms, 'tertiary education', and 'post-secondary education' appearing in the titles, abstracts, and keywords. These studies, published between 1984 and 2013, were written by authors affiliated with HEIs and other relevant organizations in Hong Kong. Our search starts from 1984 because the first article on higher education appeared in this year. Publications in

2014 are not included because of incomplete data. In total, the period under study consists of the last three decades. We identify 708 publications in the original search results. Two rounds of screening are conducted afterward to streamline the data set. The first round focuses on the type of publications. The original search results contain different types of publications. However, conference papers are filtered out because they are considered unpublished items and may possibly be published later (Tight, 2012). Seventy-three items are thus excluded to avoid double-counting in the analysis. In addition, in spite of Scopus being a comprehensive database on journal articles, it has apparently yet to be developed into a comprehensive data set for analyzing other publication elements, such as book chapters. Hence, we decide to concentrate on analyzing journal articles by screening 86 items of work in total. The second round of screening considers the content of the publications. Although 'higher education' is used as a keyword in some of the shortlisted publications, they may not have direct and clear concerns over HER. For instance, 181 articles are included in the search results because higher education is shown in the name of a publisher, Higher Education Press. In some cases, the studies may consider 'education level' as a categorical variable, and higher education qualification is therefore used as an independent variable and discussed in these articles. This scenario is particularly common in health-science studies. Therefore, given that the themes of these articles are not related to the prominently identified theme in HER, these 30 items are excluded from our data set.

Following the two rounds of screening, the data set has been reduced to 338 articles, which is around 48% of the original search results. As for the characteristics of these articles, around only 30% of them are published in journals with the terms 'higher education' or 'tertiary education' in their titles. This observation means that most of the outputs of HER are disseminated in non-specialized journals. This trend reveals that many of these articles are written by researchers 'who have a primary research subject but also do some higher education research', as addressed by Harland (2012, 704). Given the relevance of these articles to the present study, they are incorporated in the data set. In addition, similar to the note of Harland (2012), this trend indicates that HER is also an open-access field in Hong Kong. That is, HER is not limited to those mainly or exclusively working in the specific field of higher education.

Scientometrics was adopted to analyze the data set in light of the policy orientations discussed in the previous section of the article. To test Assumption 1, the data set was sorted to present the number of journal articles published on higher education by year and by the statistics on the institutional affiliations of local researchers on higher education.[4] The resulting set aims to shed light on whether higher education expansion has increased the number of publications. To test Assumption 2, we consider the percentage of journal articles by type of institutional affiliation and the number of journal articles, especially in the sub-degree sector, to investigate whether and how the newcomers may have made contributions to HER.

Finally, to find out whether HER has undergone the processes of 'internationaliza-tion', 'intranationalization', or both (Assumptions 3 and 4), the article illustrates the complexity of the dual process by examining research collaboration patterns as well as the scope of HER.

Findings

Significant growth of HER

We begin by examining the relationship between higher education expansion and the development of HER in Hong Kong. Figure 1 illustrates the number of journal articles by publication year. An obviously significant growth of research outputs on higher education is observed. The growth of HER in Hong Kong can be divided into three phases. The first stage is the period between 1984 and 1993 (Phase 1). During the period, the number of journal articles fluctuated around zero to three every year, and only 11 journal articles on higher education were observed in total, which reveals that HER was unsurprisingly an inactive research field both locally and globally during the period. The observation probably reflects that the field of higher education was relatively small in terms of number of institutions and the number of research outputs during the period.

Following this period, 1994 and onwards show a gradual growth in the number of published articles. Hence, we consider another 10-year period between 1994 and 2003 as the second stage (Phase 2). Although the number of articles remained to be less than 10 during the period (except in 2001 when 11 journal articles were published), journal articles on higher education were published every year during the period, and a total of 56 articles were published, resulting in a five-fold increase from
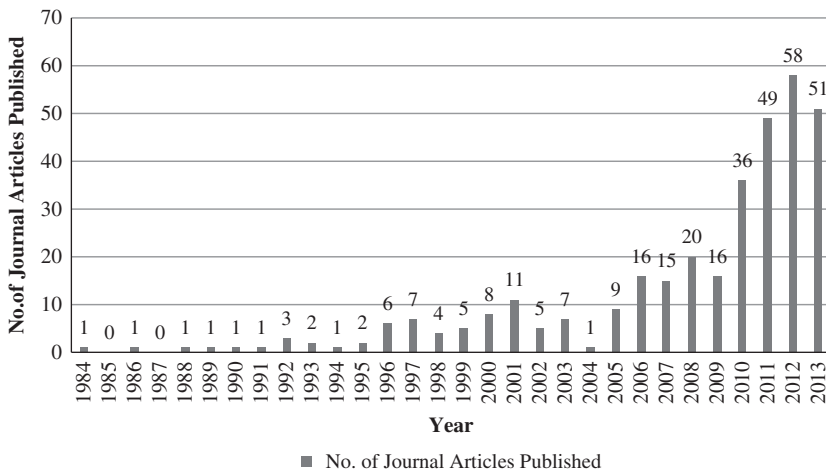

Figure 1. Number of journal articles on higher education between 1984 and 2013.

the first phase. The result shows that to a larger extent, this growth of HER can be attributed to the higher education expansion in the 1990s through the upgrading of colleges and polytechnics and the establishment of new universities. With more input of public higher education sector from the government, more social science, particularly education-related, faculties and schools simultaneously emerged or expanded in these new HEIs. With regard to the institutional affiliation of the publications (see Figure 2), the number of publications in affiliation with the new publicly funded HEIs, namely, the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology, City HKU, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Lingnan University and HKIEd, had grown considerably from six in the first phase to 39 in the second phase. On the contrary, their older counterparts, namely HKU and CUHK, published only 20 articles, around half of those from the new HEIs during the period.[5]

The third stage refers to the period from 2004 onward (Phase 3). As shown in Figure 1, a more rapid growth began in 2004. The number of journal articles increased from one in 2004 to nine in 2006. Since then, a proliferation of HER in Hong Kong was witnessed. In total, the number of articles has increased to 271 in the third stage, accounting for approximately 80% of the journal articles on higher education over the whole period. These findings show that the upward trend of HER is highly associated with the phenomenon of higher education expansion (Assumption 1).

New sector in the field
As previously discussed, the higher education sector was expanded through market-ization. Consequently, a striking increase of post-secondary educational institutions in Hong Kong that are self-financing was observed. These institutions, which mainly provide sub-degree programs including 2-year associate degrees and 2-year higher
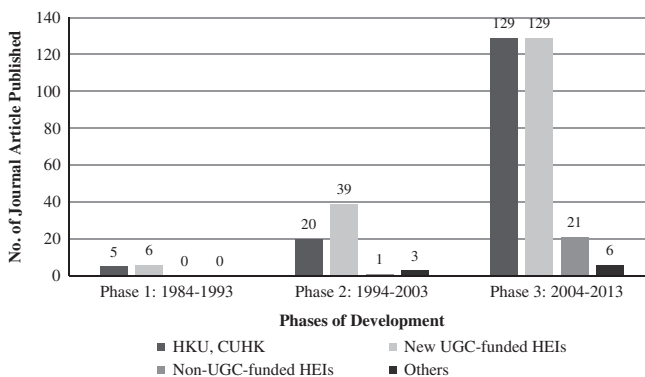

Figure 2. Number of journal articles on higher education by the type of institutional affiliation.
Note: The total number of articles does not add up to 338 because some coauthors are affiliated with different institutions in some jointly- and multi-authored publications.

diplomas, accepted around 52,046 students in the academic year 2013/2014 (iPASS, 2015). This section analyzes the influence of this new self-financing sector of higher education, which mainly consists of sub-degree programs providers, on HER in the city.

Figure 3 indicates that researchers affiliated with self-financing HEIs have contributed to the growth of HER in Hong Kong. In Phase 1, only the researchers from publicly funded HEIs were involved in HER, whereas researchers from self-financing HEIs were not engaged in studies in higher education. The situation did not significantly change in Phase 2, as only one article involved a researcher from a self-financing HEI. The number, however, increased markedly in Phase 3, as researchers in the self-financing sector contributed 21 articles, which accounts for around 8% of the total during the period (see Figure 3). In fact, the number of enrollments of full-time self-financing programs climbed from 27,296 in the academic year 2004/2005 to 84,157 in 2013/2014 (iPASS, 2015). However, as the self-financing HEIs are identified as teaching institutions, this new group that contributes to HER is not normally expected to act as researchers. Therefore, their research work was unlikely to have been financed by the government. This new sector in the higher education system does not bring only new researchers but also new research topics to the field. Six journal articles, which are specifically related to the issues about the sub-degree sector, are found in our search. Overall, these findings reveal that the research interests of local researchers on higher education are connected with this round of higher education expansion (Assumption 2).

Increase in research collaborations
Figure 4 shows that many higher education researchers in Hong Kong conduct their studies alone rather than work in teams. In Phase 1, more research outputs (6 out of
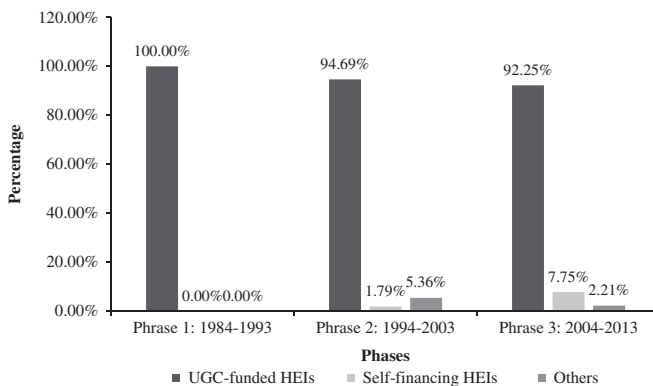

Figure 3. Percentage of journal articles on higher education by the type of institutional affiliation.
Note: The total is not equal to 100% because some articles involve inter-institutional collaborations.

11 publications) are individually authored. The situation did not change significantly in Phase 2, as four out of seven articles are individually authored during the period. Given the expansion of the field, both numbers of individually authored and jointly or multi-authored publications significantly increased in Phase 3. In addition, researchers seem to welcome teamwork in recent years, as over half (52%) of the research outputs are jointly or multi-authored publications, which have outnumbered individually authored work.

To further investigate the nature of research collaboration in the field, we consider some characteristics of these co-authored publications. At this point, we classify collaboration into three types: local collaboration (those researchers affiliated with the institutions in Hong Kong), intranational collaboration (those researchers affiliated with institutions in mainland China, Taiwan, or Macau), and transnational collaboration (those researchers affiliated with institutions in foreign countries). Our analysis shows that all three types of research collaboration have grown considerably in the last three decades (see Figure 4). This reveals the importance and relevance of the development of knowledge networks in HER. Local collaboration is the most common form of collaboration throughout the three phases. However, we have seen significant growth in intranational and transnational collaborations. In Phases 1 and 2, only a total of two intranationally collaborative publications were produced. The number increased to 20 in Phase 3. Meanwhile, transnational collaborations have grown more rapidly. No transnationally collaborative publication was observed in
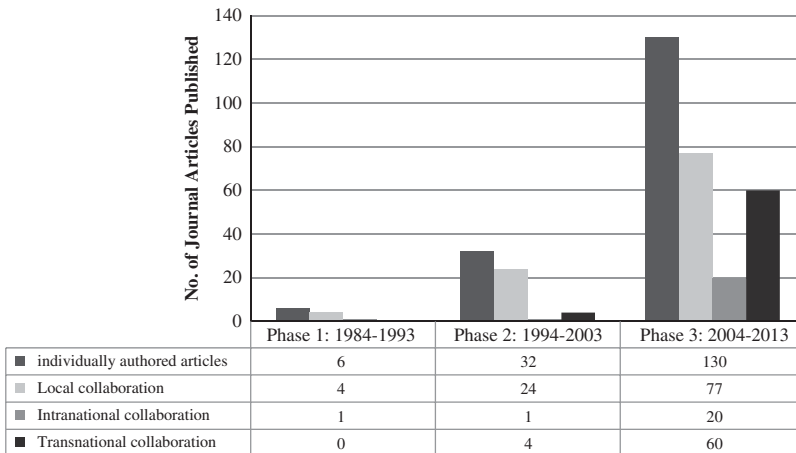

	Phase 1: 1984-1993	Phase 2: 1994-2003	Phase 3: 2004-2013
■ individually authored articles	6	32	130
▩ Local collaboration	4	24	77
▦ Intranational collaboration	1	1	20
■ Transnational collaboration	0	4	60

Figure 4. Collaboration patterns of local researchers on higher education.
Note: The total number of joint/multi-authored articles were 5 in phase 1, 24 in phase 2, and 141 in phase 3. Local, intranational, and transnational collaborations are not mutually exclusive, as some publications involve researchers from Hong Kong, the intranational region (mainland China, Taiwan or Macau), and the transnational region (foreign countries) simultaneously.

Phase 1, and only four items were observed in Phase 2. However, the number increased to 60 in Phase 3. The increase of intranational collaboration partially demonstrates the influence of the rise of China over HER in Hong Kong (Assumption 3), although the trend is rather implicit. Therefore, we see a stronger trend in the growth of transnational collaboration (Assumption 4). This strength exhibits a proliferation of transnationalism. We believe that this trend is associated with the result of the emphasis on internationalization in the higher education sector in Hong Kong during the last decade (UGC, 2004).

To further examine the pattern of the cross-border research collaborations, we consider the origins of these higher education researchers. Figure 5 illustrates the fact that many local researchers in higher education prefer to work with colleagues from the same institutions. Some of them may have collaborations with researchers from other local institutions. However, researchers from English-speaking countries are popular choices of local researchers for collaborators. As shown in the figure, 82% of transnational collaborations involve researchers from English-speaking countries. On the one hand, the emphasis on English can be seen as a British colonial heritage, which left a competitive advantage for local researchers who are used to and capable of working with researchers from English-speaking countries. On the other hand, this pattern sufficiently responds to the understanding of East Asian internationalization, which considers using English as an effective way of internationalizing higher education (Chan and Lo, 2008). In addition, we use the term 'intranational' to incorporate research collaborations among four Chinese societies (Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, and Macau). However, collaborations with researchers in Macau did not exist and those with researchers in Taiwan were rare. Establishing
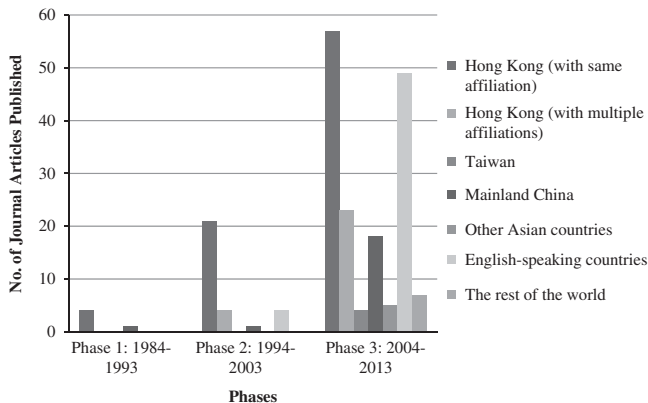

Figure 5. Detailed collaboration patterns of local researchers on higher education.
Note: English-speaking countries include Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

collaborations with researchers in mainland China and in English-speaking countries is the major form of regional and transnational collaboration in the field of HER in Hong Kong.

The scope of HER

The increase of cross-border collaborations also draws our attention to the themes and issues that higher education researchers are interested in. We therefore categorize the publications in the data set into three types: local studies (focusing on higher education issues in Hong Kong), intranational studies (focusing on national issues or comparative issues between Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, and Macau) and transnational studies (focusing on foreign countries or beyond these Chinese societies, although the research still includes them). Figure 6 indicates that HER in Hong Kong has experienced rapid growth in local, intranational, and transnational studies, whereas local studies have been the mainstream research topic over the last three decades. Nevertheless, the situation has slightly changed, as local researchers in higher education have been more willing to conduct intranational and transnational studies. However, as shown in the figure, the proportion of intranational studies still remains at slightly over 26% between Phase 2 and Phase 3, although the actual number has increased. In contrast, the proportion of transnational studies has increased from 1/19 in Phase 2 to over 1/4 in Phase 3. We believe that this changing scope of research reflects the cosmopolitan model of knowledge networks in Hong Kong (Postiglione, 2013) as well as the degree of transnationality in HER.
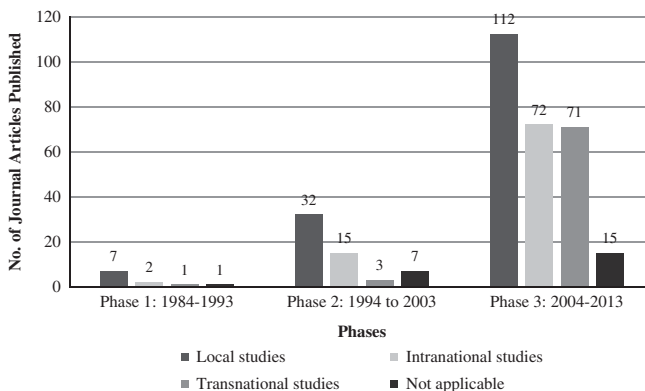

Figure 6. Number of local, intranational, and transnational studies on higher education.
Note: 'Not applicable' refers to the theoretical or conceptual articles or reviews without a geographical scope and those without indicating the geographical scope of their studies.

Discussion and Conclusion

In summary, this article has reported certain trends of HER in Hong Kong. First, the findings indicate a growing number of HER publications, which emerged in the context of massification of higher education in Hong Kong. Second, the emergence and expansion of the sub-degree sector generates certain new inputs in terms of players and topics for the field of HER in the territory. Third, the proliferation of HER has been influenced by the processes of internationalization (within the context of globalization) and intranationalization (within the context of the closer integration with mainland China). However, the findings indicate that the trend of intranationalization is less obvious, as local researchers in higher education tend to collaborate with partners in foreign countries (especially English-speaking ones) rather than those in Chinese societies. More importantly, although the findings indicate a growing number of publications, of which the research scope has gone beyond Hong Kong, local studies remain to be the mainstream research topic in the city.

Furthermore, we attempt to interpret the findings in connection with the socio-political environment, in which Hong Kong has been integrating with mainland China. However, sinicization is not clearly revealed in the field of HER. Although the number of collaborations with researchers in the Chinese mainland has considerably grown, the findings do not support the presumption that collaborating with researchers in Chinese societies has been a trend. In this sense, intranationalization is not the general situation in HER, despite the fact that the higher education systems between the two societies have been integrating in recent years (Li, 2011; Lo, 2013). Another important policy context is that of internationalization of higher education. We have witnessed the proliferation of translocal research collaborations and non-local focused studies in HER. However, in contrast to the argument that local dimension has been overshadowed by the international dimension of higher education (Chan and Lo, 2008), many higher education researchers in Hong Kong are actively collaborating with their local peers. In this regard, we suggest that although the scope of HER has been expanded under internationalization initiatives, they have not abandoned their roots to maximize their interests in the field.

To consider these issues from the theoretical lens set in the earlier part of this article, we argue that the cosmopolitan model of knowledge networks revealed by Postiglione (2013) can be further illustrated by using the concept of cosmopolitanization. The findings notably do not show that players in the field of HER have internalized or absorbed (normative) 'cosmopolitanism' by developing a cosmopolitan vision or embracing cosmopolitan core values, namely, cultural diversity and cosmopolitan citizenship, in their practices of internationalization (as well as intranationalization). Instead, the limited evidence only reflects some signs of 'cosmopolitanization' mainly as an expansion of scope in the field. We believe that the internationalization initiatives, which consist of expanding the higher education sector, recruiting non-local students and academic staff, developing more translocal

research networks and strengthening them by hiring more non-local researchers and junior academics, are based more or less on socioeconomic needs and political goals. This belief inevitably encourages or pushes more local players to act translocally. Nevertheless, our findings reveal that HER in Hong Kong is partially able to connect with a larger research community without losing touch with the local community. We see this 'walking on two legs' approach as a way of demonstrating the idea of 'anchoring globalization' (Postiglione, 2013). In addition, the process of 'rooted cosmopolitanization' drives us to be inevitably engaged in the local, the national, and the global at the same time. Importantly, although we do not think that HER in Hong Kong can become fundamentally translocal or transnational in the current phase, the special historical background of the city-state allows it to be more easily relaxed from the state-centric perspective.[6] This effect is the reason for our argument that a cosmopolitan turn can exist in the dynamics and transformations of the research community on higher education in Hong Kong. Admittedly, we suggest more efforts to study, examine, and understand further on the true existence of cosmopolitanization in HER, and in turn develop a cosmopolitan vision in the higher education sector.

Notes

1 According to Tight (2004), two major approaches are used in HER: the policy approach and the teaching and learning approach (also see Horta and Jung, 2014).
2 An increasing integration and interdependence of socioeconomic domains is found between Hong Kong and mainland China during the post-1997 era.
3 We thank Anatoly Oleksiyenko, Lina Vyas and Shuangye Chen for the information on the recent developments of HER at their universities.
4 In this study, local researchers on higher education refer to higher education researchers who have affiliations with HEIs or other organizations in Hong Kong.
5 These eight public HEIs, which are funded by the government through the UGC, form the core part of the higher education system in Hong Kong.
6 Beck (2003) noted that cosmopolitanization refers to a transformation process with which all social development would become fundamentally transnational.

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