Factors affecting student retention in the Hong Kong Continuing Education Institution

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This dissertation contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. When deposited in the University Library, I give consent to this copy of my dissertation being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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SYNOPSIS

The purpose of this document is to present the findings of a Doctor of Business Administration research project. The primary objective is to investigate the critical factors that affect students' college experience, satisfaction, and completion of their courses at the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK). Data sources include responses to questionnaires and secondary sources of data, such as published literature on student enrolment, satisfaction and retention. Three variables were tested in this study: faculty performance, advisory staff performance and classes. Results found that, compared to classes, both faculty and advisory staff were more influential on students' college experience, satisfaction, intention and retention.

The method used to conduct this research project is questionnaire administration at OUHK. Data collected and analysed are primarily quantitative from the questionnaire administered to students at the institution.

Our research recommendations are: (i) That as "support strategies" is an ongoing process especially appropriate for upper level students, mentoring and life-long learning seminars would improve their academic performance and help students to develop skills, set goals and enhance personal development in their college life; (ii) More practical classes in the community setting would provide real life business experience to facilitate students' learning interest, thus improving their overall student satisfaction and retention. (ii) Financial aid may be another factor affecting students' intention to stay or drop-out, especially in relation to self-financing students. If the OUHK can provide some financial

assistance, such as scholarship programmes, this may encourage students to persist to graduate at the institution.

ABSTRACT

Keywords: *Student retention; Student retention in Hong Kong; Student retention in Asia; Student retention in Asian Open Universities; Student satisfaction in Higher Education in Hong Kong*

Student retention studies have been examined for many years for reasons of students' educational experience and the determinants in affecting students' overall satisfaction, intention and retention. However, most of the published literatures are in English and undertaken in the western world context, particularly the United States and in Western Europe. As such, not much is known about the practices in Asia and in the Chinese context in particular.

This study focuses on the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of The People's Republic of China. The researcher reviews the major factors that most influence student satisfaction and retention. Another objective is to discover whether the institution's current "support strategies" have a positive impact on student satisfaction, intention and retention at the continuing education institution of OUHK. The findings of this research can be a useful starting point for educators who may want to understand why Chinese students choose to persist in a programme or decide to drop-out. The study can generally provide information on the key factors that most influence student satisfaction and their intention to stay at the institution.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
GPA	Grade Point Average
HKCAAVQ	Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualification
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
OUHK	The continuing education institution of the Open University of Hong Kong
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States