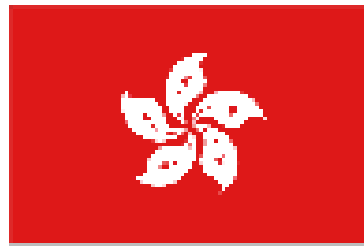


STINT Teaching Sabbatical
Autumn 2017

The Jockey Club School of
Public Health and Primary Care

**Chinese
University of
Hong Kong**



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Linköping University

Introduction

I have to admit that I had not heard about STINT until the spring of 2016, when a friend and research colleague, Anders Broström (Jönköping University), told me that he was going to apply for a Teaching Sabbatical scholarship from something called STINT. This piqued my interest. What was this "STINT" he talked about? He had colleagues who had spent a STINT semester abroad and were very positive. After the meeting, I checked the STINT website and began exploring the option. I learned that STINT stood for Stiftelsen för internationalisering av högre utbildning och forskning (the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education).

I realized that this would be a perfect opportunity to learn more about teaching and research at another university and at the same time experience something completely different. Although I have numerous international research contacts and have visited many of them, I had never spent more than two weeks at another university. The STINT scholarship was for a whole semester, which would make it possible to become much more engaged in the host university and explore the culture of the city and country where the university is located. It all sounded very appealing.

I prepared the STINT application in the autumn 2016. I have research links with University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) and New York University (NYU), so I mentioned these in the application. However, I was open to whatever university might be suggested if my application was approved. I estimated that perhaps one in five applications was accepted, based on information from previous years.

I did an interview with STINT representatives on 23 November 2016, along with the prefect at my department, Preben Bendtsen. Then, a few days before Christmas, 21 December 2016, I received an email that said:

"Hej Per, Stiftelsen för internationalisering av högre utbildning och forskning, STINT, har glädjen att erbjuda dig ett stipendium inom ramen för Teaching Sabbatical programmet. Du erbjuds en plats vid the Chinese University of Hong Kong under höstterminen 2017 och vi ber dig vänligen bekräfta snarast, dock senast den 10 januari, om du fortfarande vill medverka i detta utbyte."

Needless to say, I was overjoyed and immediately set about examining different accommodation options together with my wife, who had been granted leave of absence if the trip would become a reality.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) was a complete surprise. Anders was also granted a stipendium, being placed at UCLA. He had “promoted” and hoped for Singapore so we scratched our heads as to how candidates and universities were matched (we still have not solved that puzzle).

We went to Hong Kong for a week-long visit in April 2017. At the time, we still had not found a place to live during the autumn semester. We explored a few options before settling on One Dundas Apartments, a modern 35-floor serviced apartment in Mong Kok, Kowloon. The two-room apartment, at the 30th floor, had a stunning panorama windows view towards west (Discovery Bay and the airport), with fantastic sunsets. The apartment was costly, but living in Hong Kong is very expensive so it was to be expected.

The timing of the STINT semester was perfect. Our oldest kids, aged 26 and 23, had already left our home, while the youngest, aged 19, had applied to study at King’s College London. We were fairly certain that he would be accepted, but the formal admission took until the summer 2017. Everything fell into place and we were ready to go.

A brief history of Hong Kong

Before describing CUHK and my activities there, it is necessary to provide some context concerning Hong Kong. I believe it is crucial to have a basic grasp of the unique history of Hong Kong to understand the teaching and research in this city. The topic of China (usually referred to as mainland China) inevitably came up in discussions with colleagues at the CUHK. Hong Kong was under British rule for 156 years before reverting to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. The history of Hong Kong can be summarized in bullet point form, with a number of key years.

Late 1700s: The British begin opium trade with China, importing it from India and selling it in China at a considerable profit. Britain and other European countries undertook the opium trade because of their trade imbalance with China. There was tremendous demand in Europe for silks, tea and porcelain pottery from China, but there was correspondingly little demand in China for Europe’s goods. Consequently, Europeans had to pay for Chinese products with gold or silver, but the opium trade “solved” this trade imbalance.

1840: The First Opium War begins in 1840, ending two years later with the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, when the Hong Kong Island was ceded to Britain in perpetuity. The Opium War arose from China’s attempts to suppress the opium trade which had led to widespread addiction in China, which caused

serious social and economic disruption. At this time, Hong Kong was a fishing community under China's rule, but lightly populated and largely ignored by China's leaders.

1856: The Second Opium War begins. It lasted until 1860, when China ceded the Kowloon area of Hong Kong to Britain. The two Opium Wars and events between them weakened the Qing dynasty and paved the way for republican China in the early 20th century.

1898: Britain wins a 99-year lease on the New Territories (comprising 90% of Hong Kong's land).

Early 1900s: The first waves of Chinese come to Hong Kong, fleeing civil war in China. The population at this time was approximately 300,000.

1937: With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, Hong Kong becomes a refuge for thousands of mainland Chinese who fled the advancing Japanese. The population of Hong Kong increased rapidly.

1941: Japan invades and occupies Hong Kong as part of its expansion in the Asia Pacific region. In 1945, Britain resumed control of Hong Kong as Japan was defeated in the Second World War.

1949: China's communists defeat the nationalists in the struggle for control of China. The civil war drove hundreds of thousands to Hong Kong, providing a pool of skilled and unskilled labour that made Hong Kong a manufacturing hub and setting it on the path to economic success. Huge squatter villages developed in the city. The population grew to approximately 2 million in the early 1950s.

1960-70s: Hong Kong booms as a manufacturing centre and the standard of living improves. However, radical politics in mainland China was echoed by left-wingers in Hong Kong, leading to rioting and clashes with colonial police. Hong Kong officials stepped up anti-communist purges and closed pro-Beijing newspapers.

1976: Mao Zedong, China's communist chairman, dies, which paves the way for more moderate leaders in China. The new leader was Deng Xiaoping, whose policy of "opening and reform" spurred hope that China would become a major economic power.

1984: On 19 December 1984, the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and China's premier, Zhao Ziyang, sign the Joint Declaration requiring Britain to

transfer sovereignty of the entirety of Hong Kong to China at midnight June 30 1997.

1990s: Hong Kong's British governor, Chris Patten, announces democratic reforms for the 1994 local and 1995 legislative elections. Critics argued that Britain had waited too long to promote democracy and China denounced the move as subversive to a smooth transition. Many Hong Kong residents applied for British and Canadian citizenship, contributing to a "brain drain". Still, the population grew to 6.5 million in late 1990s with the influx of people from mainland China.

1997: Hong Kong officially becomes a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China on 1 July 1997. The constitution stated that Hong Kong would co-exist with China as "one country, two systems" for 50 years. Beijing installed an interim legislature, ousting an elected colonial chamber. Many of the recently introduced civil liberties and labour laws were changed and election rules were rewritten. There were also restrictions imposed on who had the right to live in Hong Kong.

1998: In the first legislative election under Chinese rule, key pro-democracy politicians win 60% of popular vote but only 20 seats in the 60-seat legislature.

2001: Hong Kong authorities deport foreigners in the spiritual movement Falun Gong, who are preparing to join protests against the Chinese president during a visit to Hong Kong. Banned in mainland China, the group remains legal in Hong Kong.

2014: Hong Kong pro-democracy group Occupy Central launches a civil disobedience campaign calling for greater political freedom from Beijing. The demonstrations were the most intense civil unrest in Hong Kong's history as a SAR. The protests were sparked by Beijing's decision to restrict who can stand for the city's top post. Hong Kongers were able to vote for their next chief executive in 2017, but only two or three candidates vetted by a pro-Beijing committee were allowed to stand. Protesters labelled this a "fake democracy" that showed that they could not trust its mainland overseers.

The tension between Hong Kong and China is still evident today and I had many discussions on this topic with colleagues at CUHK. Interestingly, Hong Kong University has surveyed a sample of Hong Kong residents to gauge feelings of identity in the city since 1997. A poll in 2015 found that over 40% of those questioned identified themselves as a "Hong Konger" rather than "Chinese" (amongst other options), a proportion that has increased since 1997. This may not be so surprising since it is hard to foster a sense of togetherness after almost two centuries of being separate.

Living in Hong Kong

While Hong Kong today is a part of China, the city's history sets it apart from China. Having travelled in China and visited the Chinese cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen (three of the four most populated Chinese cities) and Changsha, it is obvious that Hong Kong differs in many respects from mainland China. Colleagues at CUHK were also keen to stress differences when we discussed Hong Kong in relation to China.

In many ways, the British colonial legacy has endured despite the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, providing an important explanation for the many political, cultural, economic, legal and lifestyle differences between Hong Kong and China. Hong Kong maintains its own currency (which is pegged to the US dollar) and the city's "capitalist" system is also enshrined in the constitution. The city enjoys many more legal freedoms than China, including the right to assembly. Hong Kong retains a legal system which closely mirrors the British system, which emphasizes transparency and due process. In contrast, the ruling Communist Party controls all aspects of China's judicial process.

China's economic growth is, at least in part, traceable to Hong Kong's influence. The city's free market was an important influence on the economic reforms in China of the 1970s and 1980s. China has benefited from Hong Kong's investment and entrepreneurship. However, as China's economic clout grows, so does Hong Kong's dependence on it. Retail demand from mainland China provides important income for Hong Kong.

Living in Hong Kong during the autumn semester 2017 was a fantastic experience. I had prepared by reading a great deal about the city (and we spent a week there in April), but it was not until we settled into the apartment in the Mong Kok (literally "busy corner") area of Kowloon and I began meeting and discussing with teachers and researchers at the CUHK that I got more acquainted with the city. I found Hong Kong intriguing and continuously wrote down miscellaneous impressions, which I discussed with my wife and colleagues at CUHK. I also attended a 10 x 3-hour course in Mandarin (although Cantonese is predominantly spoken in Hong Kong) as I found the language quite fascinating and believed some basic skills would provide a better understanding of the culture.

At the risk of over-generalizing and simplifying complex issues, here are some of the impressions that stood out, in no particular order. I am well aware that trying to capture the essence of a city and its culture with a few observations is futile, but I enjoy challenges like this so here is an attempt.

Crowded: Wherever you go in Hong Kong you will be surrounded by large crowds of people. This seemed to be the case from very early in the morning until late at night. It is exceptionally (*italics needed for emphasis*) crowded, but you get used to it and learn how to “navigate” in the streets and stores. The population of Hong Kong is currently approximately 7.5 million (Chinese 92%; Filipinos 2.5%; Indonesians 2.1%; White 0.8%; others 2.6%) and is projected to increase until it reaches a peak at about 8.2 million in 2043. Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated places in the world, with 6,690 persons per square kilometre, making it the 4th most densely populated area in the world. Kowloon, where we lived, supposedly is the most densely populated area anywhere in the world; I have no reason to doubt these statistics.

Vertical: The limited area of Hong Kong makes land very expensive. Consequently, Hong Kong is very much built “upwards”, with skyscrapers and high-rise buildings dominating many parts of the city. Hong Kong has the world’s highest number of skyscrapers, 317, defined as buildings that are taller than 100 meters (New York is second, with 257 skyscrapers). Furthermore, Hong Kong has the second largest number of high-rise buildings in the world, defined as a structure at least 35 meters tall (and/or 12 stories), with 7,833 such buildings (Moscow has more). Instead of the steel or aluminium structures used as scaffolding in most parts of the world, the majority of skyscrapers built in Hong Kong use scaffolding systems constructed out of bamboo. Watching the agile builders climb these structures was both fascinating and scary, as you could easily envision what could happen.

Efficient public transport: Travelling in Hong Kong is convenient as the public transport system has highly reliable services. Indeed, regardless of whether you travelled by train, bus, tram or boat it was always efficient and free of hitches. The (subway) trains are modern and comfortable, and the stations are spacious, always with clear instructions to make travelling as smooth as possible. You rarely had to wait longer than 3-4 minutes for the next train. Obviously, a densely populated city like Hong Kong needs a reliable public transport system and the city really seems to have prioritized this. Moreover, it is very cheap to travel around the city. CUHK colleagues seemed rightfully proud of their system. Having grown up outside Stockholm, I am all too familiar with the frustrations that unreliable public transport cause.

Shopping malls: Hong Kong citizens love their shopping malls of which there are plenty, particularly in Kowloon and on Hong Kong Island. I have never visited a city with so many shopping malls and with so many malls in many different locations around the city. Indeed, the city has many “local” city centres with apartments, shops and offices, each centre having easy access to numerous shopping malls. Despite the large number of malls, most were usually very crowded.

Beautiful nature: Although Hong Kong is mostly known for being a densely populated city (often promoted as “Asia’s world city”), a less recognized aspect of the city is its beautiful nature. The city is surrounded by green hills, perfect for hiking (which is very popular), and it has many idyllic beaches. Buildings can only occupy a certain proportion of the total area of the city (the figure 20% was mentioned but I have not been able to confirm it), meaning that Hong Kong will continue to be much more than a hustling, bustling city.

Cleanliness: People in Hong Kong really care about hygiene and sanitation. Hand sanitizer dispensers were everywhere, toilets were always available, the elevators had signs that read “Sterilized regularly” and the gym we went to admonished the staff to “keep tidy” (along with three other encouragements, “keep professional”, “keep smiling” and “keep learning”). This focus on hygiene, i.e. personal practices that contribute to good health, and sanitation, i.e. use of tools and actions to keep the environment healthy, is important considering the population density. It is likely that the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2002 in southern China (resulting in 774 deaths, of which 299 occurred in Hong Kong) has contributed to an increased emphasis on cleanliness.

Order: People in Hong Kong seem to be very orderly and naturally line up to queue to get on trains, to get into an elevator or withdraw money from an automat and in all possible situations where queueing makes sense. There was never any pushing or shoving to get ahead. I do not think I have ever visited a city (or country) where the citizens are so “queue conscious”. It did remind me of Sweden, but there was no need for queueing tickets anywhere in Hong Kong. Of course, the emphasis on order in such a densely populated city makes life easier for everyone (although there are probably other, less obvious reasons as well). The traffic was also quite disciplined, with little of the aggressive driving, honking and reckless overtaking that are often part and parcel of city traffic. During the stay in Hong Kong, I visited Changsha in (mainland) China for a conference, which provided a somewhat chaotic contrast, with exhaustive traffic congestions, insane driving manoeuvres and riding motorbikes at high speed with kids on the saddle, of course without anyone wearing a helmet. Not unexpectedly, China has one of the world’s highest rates of traffic fatalities.

Obedience: I have never been to a city with so many signs specifying activities that are prohibited on trains, including smoking, eating and drinking, what you cannot do on beaches, e.g. “No kite flying”, “No throwing of flying discs”, “No playing of remote-controlled boats” and what you should refrain from in public parks, such as “No drone zone”, “No damage of plants” and “No hawking”. Most signs also specify the fine, e.g. “Clean up after your dog – Any person who allows his dog to foul any street or public place by faeces will be liable to a fixed penalty of \$1,500”. There are also plenty of signs that admonish certain

behaviours, such as “Please face forward and stand still” or “Keep your hand on the handrail”. Although well-intended, some of the signs were inadvertently funny. My impression was that the people of Hong Kong, in general, obey the instructions, but it is equally important that the societal norms, i.e. the unwritten rules, are aligned with the formal rules. I believe it was quite telling that so few people crossed the streets at red lights. Come to think of it, even dogs seemed obedient and hardly ever barked. Hong Kong felt very safe, an impression which is backed up by its ranking as the sixth safest city in terms of personal safety.

Gentleness: I found that the people of Hong Kong were generally kind, polite and helpful. People get out of the way for each other when entering a train, they ask if you need help if you seem a bit lost and you never felt you were being taken advantage of. My reception at CUHK was also very forthcoming. Most Hong Kongers speak English, which makes communication easy. I saw a girl with a T-shirt that said “Be thankful, be nice”, which I felt captured something of the spirit of the city and its people (of course, there are always exceptions).

I could go on and make this list longer by adding “keywords” (such as sneakers, hiking, mobile phones, fish and Tesla cars) and discuss what they might tell us about Hong Kongers and the city, but I will refrain from doing so. After all, this report should be about CUHK and the Teaching Sabbatical I spent there.

In retrospect, I believe many of my Hong Kong impressions and experiences can be traced to Confucianism, which emphasizes virtues such as justice, integrity, loyalty, righteousness, obedience, discipline and social harmony. Confucius was a Chinese philosopher, teacher and political figure from the 6th century BC. The vast majority of Hong Kong citizens are of Chinese descent, so it is obvious that Confucius’ thoughts have greatly influenced the culture despite the 156-year British rule. However, I am not sufficiently familiar with this philosophy (also referred to as a religion, tradition and a way of life), so I cannot expound on its impact on Hong Kong today.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care

I did my STINT Teaching Sabbatical at the Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care (JCSPHPC) at CUHK. The university was inaugurated in 1963 against the backdrop of the Communist revolution in China, when many Chinese academics fled to Hong Kong from China. The university was formed as a federation of three universities: New Asia College, founded in 1949 by anti-

Communist Confucian scholars from mainland China; Chung Chi College, founded 1951 by Protestant churches in HK to continue the theological education of churches and schools after Christian colleges and universities in mainland China were shut down; and United College, founded in 1956 with the merging of five private colleges.

CUHK filled an important gap for the Chinese in Hong Kong who wanted to study. University studies in mainland China were impossible after the upheavals and enrolment at the University of Hong Kong, the only university in the territory at the time, required sufficient proficiency in English. Representing an alternative to the older University of Hong Kong (founded by the British in 1911), CUHK has always championed a strong pride in its historical Chinese heritage.

The motto of CUHK is "Through learning and temperance to virtue," which are the words of Confucius. He emphasized the importance of a virtuous life, filial piety and ancestor worship. The motto is an expression of CUHK's dual emphasis on the intellectual and moral aspects of education.

CUHK has approximately 20,000 students, of which undergraduate students make up 16,500 and postgraduate 3,500. The university is organized into 9 constituent colleges and 8 academic faculties. The colleges are intended as communities with their own dining halls, hostels and other facilities. Extracurricular social and athletic activities are promoted, with the aim of building camaraderie among the students in each college. CUHK operates in both English and Chinese (Mandarin), although classes in most colleges are taught in English. Each semester, the university has over 1,000 exchange students from close to 50 countries.

The main campus of CUHK is vast, covering 1.373 square km (137 hectares). It is beautifully located in the picturesque hills of the Ma Liu Shui area (where Chung Chi College was already established). I was at the JCSPHPC, part of the medical faculty, which is situated next to the teaching hospital Prince of Wales Hospital.

Despite its relatively short history, CUHK is ranked at 46th position in the world in the QS World University Rankings of 950 universities worldwide. It was behind two other Hong Kong universities in the 2018 ranking, University of Hong Kong (#26) and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (#30), but ahead of the City University of Hong Kong (#49) and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (#95).

JCSPHPC was established in 2009 by the merger of School of Public Health and the Department of Community and Family Medicine. JCSPHPC aims "to

contribute to improvement in health of populations locally, nationally and internationally through excellence in research, teaching and training in public health, and collaborative efforts with worldwide partners from all relevant disciplines and institutions" (according to the website). The values of JCSPHPC are summarized as fairness, integrity, trust, passion and caring. The "Jockey Club" of the name is from the Hong Kong Jockey Club, a horse racing operator and an important community benefactor, which operates as a not-for-profit organization. The company is an important sponsor of the SPHPC.

I attended several lectures in the Master of Public Health (MPH), which is provided as an 11-month full-time or a 21-month half-time programme. The degree requires 36 units (also referred to as credits). The MPH students were required to take the following seven courses, named "modules" (adding up to 16 units): Foundations of Public Health (1 unit); Introduction to epidemiology (3 units); Introduction to biostatistics (3 units); Health system, policy and management (3 units); Environmental health sciences (2 units); Infectious diseases in public health practice (1 unit); Introduction to health and social behaviour (3 units). MPH students must also take an additional 10 units in their chosen concentration: Epidemiology and biostatistics (10 units); Environmental/occupational health and infectious diseases (10 units); Health systems, policy and management (10 units); Health promotion and social behaviour (10 units); Population and global health (10 units). In addition, MPH students complete a supervised Capstone project (6 units) in the latter half of the programme. Remaining units are chosen from the offered electives (i.e. courses chosen from a number of optional courses in a curriculum, as opposed to required courses which the students must take). Students usually take between 24 and 30 units per semester.

My activities at CUHK

To briefly recap, I began my research career in 2003, being recruited as a health economist for a project on WHO Safe Communities. Although I studied economy at the Stockholm School of Economics and Business Administration, I would certainly not consider myself a health economist, but it worked out anyway because I was able to steer the project in another direction (I had a pragmatic supervisor). I have primarily focused on public health-related issues, typically involving behaviour or practice change as a desirable outcome. Since 2008-2009, my research has predominantly concerned implementation issues. Implementation science is a young field that deals with the challenges associated with translating research findings into desired actions to address society's problem. Implementation science depicts a metaphorical gap between what has been proven or is believed to be effective solutions and what is actually practiced or used in various areas of society.

JCSPHPC at CUHK does not currently have a course or programme in implementation science even though some courses address related issues. However, this meant that there was no established course that I could take part in. Time was also too short to develop a new course in implementation science, but instead we decided that I should give a series of seminars to introduce implementation science issues to curious researchers, teachers and students. There is considerable interest in implementation science at CUHK and some of the researchers I met have embarked on research projects which focus on implementation issues.

I was also involved in many other activities at CUHK, with the ambition to learn as much as possible about the teaching and research there. Although there is no generally accepted definition of learning, there is considerable consensus among learning theorists that learning implies some sort of lasting change in anything from skills and knowledge to beliefs, motivation, attitudes and actual behaviour. Unquestionably, my STINT semester contributed to a great deal of personal learning. Here follows an overview of my activities.

Providing a seminar series

The seminar series consisted of four 2-hour seminars, which addressed four themes in implementation science. The seminars were held for a group of approximately 20 participants: Master students, PhD students and researchers at CUHK who were interested in the topic. The participants read a paper before each seminar, which was then discussed in conjunction with a Power Point presentation by me. The format allowed for a great deal of interaction and discussion. I felt the series was appreciated and I think the participants gained a better understanding of the field. I received interesting questions that differed from what I might usually get, so it was a valuable experience.

Involvement in Master and PhD research projects

Together with Assistant Professor Benjamin Yip I co-supervised a Master (of Public Health) Capstone Project: "Implementing a new financial resource allocation strategy of Hospital Authority, Hong Kong". The project is still ongoing and we plan to use e-mail communication and Skype meetings to continue the supervision (examination is late spring 2018).

I was involved in a PhD research project and the writing of a scientific paper concerning implementation together with a PhD student and her supervisor Associate Professor Vincent Chung. The project concerns how traditional Chinese medicine fits in with evidence-based medicine. It will continue in 2018.

Participation in conferences

I took part in the 1st Interdisciplinary Behavioral Health Conference: Opportunities and Challenges, which was held 16-19 November 2017 at PREESS Hotel Resort in Changsha, China. The event was organized by the JCSPHPC together with Xiangya School of Public Health, Central South University and School of Public Health, Sun Yat-sen University. I was invited to conduct a 3-hour workshop that provided an overview of implementation science. I believe the workshop went well, with a group of about 20 participants. The input and questions I received provided interesting learning experiences for me.

I also participated in another conference, which was organized by JCSPHPC. BeHealth 3 – Interdisciplinary Forum on Behavioral Health was a one-day conference held on 21 November 2017. I had a presentation which discussed different ways to understand the challenges of behaviour change, addressing behaviourism, cognitivism, habit theory and cultural perspectives. I think my presentation was perhaps overly “theoretical” as most other speakers presented very concrete empirical projects.

Research funding involvement

Two research funding applications were worked on with my involvement: “Developing an integrative Chinese-Western medicine implementation model for cancer palliative care” (with Associate Professor Vincent Chung) and “Implementation strategies for facilitating transition of terminal care provision from inpatient to outpatient and home care settings” (with Professor EK Yeoh, Director of JCSPHPC). I discussed the applications with the researchers and contributed with various forms of input in writing. I am part of the applications, which, if funded, would potentially enable me to go back in 2018 to participate in the research.

Sitting in on lectures and taking part in examinations

I sat in on numerous lectures (and tutorials) which were part of several courses: Introduction to health and social behaviour (3 units); Health economics and healthcare financing (2 units); Introduction to qualitative research (1 unit); Global health (2 units); Health policy and management (3 units); Environmental health sciences (2 units); and Nutrition for public health (2 units).

I took part in a mid-term examination and the (final) examination of the course Introduction to health and social behaviour (a mandatory course in the Master of Public Health). The former featured an MCQs test, which I felt was very well put together to “test” the knowledge about the contents of the first half of the course. I extracted some of the questions and let colleagues back home do the

test; they agreed about the merits of the test. The end-of-term examination involved presentations of six projects by groups of students. I was part of the committee that scored the presentations and I summarized my overall views of the student projects in writing. I think the presentations were mostly very well executed, usually with exemplary Power Point slides although oral presentations varied in quality.

Miscellaneous

Aside from these activities, I conducted some interviews and had many informal conversations with teachers, researchers, Master students and PhD students to gain further insight into conditions for teaching and doing research, curriculum, pedagogical approaches, research projects, etc., at CUHK. These interviews were also a way to continuously “challenge” my impressions and provide more of a meta-perspective on teaching and research at CUHK.

Table 1 provides a summary of my CUHK activities, specifying four main types of activities: (1) observing and taking part in teaching; (2) presenting research; (3) advising on and supervising studies; and (4) discussing research. The different activities are connected and interdependent. If I had only taught one course it would have provided quite limited learning.

Table 1: Overview of my activities at CUHK

Activity	Observing and taking part in teaching	Presenting research	Advising on and supervising studies	Discussing research
Providing a seminar series				
Involvement in Master and PhD research projects				
Participation in conferences				
Research funding involvement				
Sitting in on lectures and taking part in examinations				

Reflections on the teaching and research at JCSPHPC at CUHK in comparison to Linköping University

As I expected, teaching and research at the JCSPHPC at CUHK differed in many ways from the corresponding activities at Linköping University (LiU). It is obvious that some differences may be attributed to differences between Western and Chinese cultures, the latter having influenced Hong Kong along with the British colonial influence. Whereas Western cultures tend to focus on the individual as an independent and self-reliant being, Chinese culture has traditionally downplayed concept of the individual, instead emphasizing the supremacy of the collective and bringing honour to your family or group.

Cultural differences notwithstanding, Hong Kong is very much a part of the globalized world, with increasing interaction of people, countries and cultures. Hence, there are also many similarities between Hong Kong and Sweden in terms of teaching and research. It is often easier to look for differences, i.e. aspects that stand out, but similarities can be telling and just as interesting. The following are some reflections on the teaching and research I participated in or witnessed at CUHK, accounting for both differences and similarities in relation to LiU.

Structure

Full-time studies at JCSPHPC cost HK\$ 165,600 (approximately 172,000 Skr) per year for full-time studies and HK\$ 82,800 per annum (approximately 86,000 Skr) for half-time studies. There are two types of scholarships, merit-based and needs-based. Full-time students tend to come from an academic background and are typically in their mid-twenties. They have often studied health-related subjects, e.g. pharmacy, biochemistry, psychology, medicine, nursing, microbiology, etc. The part-time students are older, often being “mid-career professionals in the government, hospital or NGO settings seeking to advance their careers”, according to one of the persons I spoke with at JCSPHPC.

While I do not have hard facts to back it up, my impression is that courses at CUHK are better financed than they are at LiU. This funding makes it possible to maintain an administration that provides highly important support for the teaching and research. The administration at CUHK (and I would assume other universities in Hong Kong) essentially allows teachers and researchers to focus on their “core” competencies and activities instead of being distracted by administrative matters that can be far more efficiently handled by those who are tasked with this responsibility.

Aside from student fees, CUHK obtains funding by offering courses and open lectures for people outside academia, e.g. managers from Hong Kong

companies, health care professionals and anyone with an interest in the topics. This activity seemed to be a prioritized strategy, which I believe contributes positively to CUHK's integration in the social and economic life in Hong Kong. It was both a way to generate income and to fulfil the third task of universities, i.e. the societal responsibility to support the development of the surrounding community. I found this to be an appealing aspect of CUHK. I believe the relevance of teaching and research can be strengthened through cooperation with partners outside the academic world.

Teachers are expected to teach 26 weeks of the year, usually having 2-3 courses per year, which enables most to pursue research. Doing research has a higher status than teaching based on my observations and discussions with teachers and researchers at JCSPHPC. Obtaining research funding "buys" autonomy and usually leads to reduced involvement in teaching. This is similar to LiU. Although the teachers are rated by the students, research merits are more important when applying for positions at CUHK or other universities in Hong Kong.

Courses at JCSPHPC (and in general at CUHK) typically run for 13 weeks, with a mid-term examination and a final examination at the end of the course. The courses I participated in (or sat in on) all had one lecture and tutorial per week. Many students take 5-8 courses (some even more) in parallel, which means they have 5-8 lectures and tutorials per week, which equals 15 to 24 hours of classroom activity. Based on the conversations I had with students, it is difficult to devote the same level of attention to all the simultaneous courses.

Research and studies at CUHK are goal-oriented. According to a person who has lived 25 years in Sweden, where he took his PhD before returning to Hong Kong eight years ago (where he was born), "It was a very open atmosphere in Sweden, in terms of brainstorming and research improvement. I miss the intellectual conversations I had in Sweden. We had many conversations about research. I could knock on a colleague's door and it was very easy to have intellectual discussions. Here in Hong Kong, this doesn't happen so much. Yesterday I had lunch with some colleagues and I wanted to talk about causal inference, causality, etc. In Sweden we could have discussed that a whole lunch, but here they asked, 'Is this your new project?' 'No, but I'm teaching later today, so I just want to have some brainstorming.' The response was, 'Don't waste your time.' It seems like things in Hong Kong are more calculated, just focused on the output". JCSPHPC had previously tried to have a series of seminars to create synergies between different projects, but it was not continued as the researchers and teachers felt it did not yield the expected benefits and was too time-consuming. An increasingly goal-oriented focus of academia is not unique to Hong Kong, but is very much evident in Sweden too.

Pedagogy

The lectures at JCSPHPC usually last 3 hours, with a couple of breaks. LiU lectures are restricted to 2 x 45 minutes. I believe the shorter lectures are more conducive to maintaining focus and concentration. Teachers I discussed this with at JCSPHPC agreed and most seemed to feel that 3 hours is too long for optimal learning. However, this seems to be an established tradition that was not really questioned.

Following on immediately after the 2-hour lectures, 1-hour tutorials provided a practical application of the lecture. We do not have this approach at LiU, but I felt it had many merits. According to one of the teachers at JCSPHPC, "We ask that tutorials closely follow the preceding lecture. All the modules [courses] have undergone QA auditing by me to make sure they fit together."

Teaching assistants at JCSPHPC (and at CUHK in general) have an important role. They handle all practical matters of the courses, making sure they run efficiently from an administrative viewpoint. They maintain the contact with the students, mail instructions, respond to questions and are in charge of the tutorials. They collaborate with the lecturers so the lecture and tutorial are synched. In the courses I attended, this worked very well and I felt the combination of the lecture and tutorial was important for the students' understanding. Teaching assistants could previously be PhD students, but rules have been changed and today they must have a PhD degree. Most current teaching assistants are employed full-time staff, either a researcher or a lecturer.

The pedagogical methods at JCSPHPC did not differ that much from LiU. All lectures I attended relied on conventional PowerPoint presentations, much like at LiU. The teachers usually adhered fairly strictly to their slides, which the students had received in advance. Some teachers were more active, walking around among the students, which I felt encouraged more engagement.

There were no special arrangements or strategies that I became aware of to advance the pedagogy at JCSPHPC. Teachers did not have a forum to discuss pedagogical matters. This is in line with my experiences from LiU, which led me to propose a pedagogical forum a few years ago, as I felt we have endless discussions about the smallest details of a research project but spend very little time discussing pedagogical matters or share teaching experiences. JCSPHPC seemed remarkably similar to LiU in this respect.

The use of modern technology or new forms of teaching was limited, which surprised me somewhat. For example, JCSPHPC did not offer any distance courses whatsoever and had not developed any courses to account for pedagogical ideas such as flipped classroom, massive online open courses

(MOOC) or micro modules. This is not much different from my department and division of LiU.

The student groups at JCSPHPC were generally much larger than at LiU. In the courses I attended, which are similar to courses at LiU, the lectures often consisted of 40-50 students. At LiU, courses in the same topics might have 15 at the most. Obviously, the size of the student groups influences the teaching style (see below).

Examination and grading

Influenced by the British and US grading system, CUHK (including JCSPHPC) uses a scale of A-B-C-D-F, where "F" denotes failure. With A, A- and plusses and minuses for the B, C and D (e.g. B+), this is in reality a 12-level rating scale. In contrast, LiU has a very basic pass-fail scoring of students. Students at CUHK with an "A" must demonstrate "superior mastery" and only 4-5% of the students receive this grade. CUHK has witnessed a growing "grade inflation" in Hong Kong and have created a policy that sets the normative anchor for "demonstration of reasonable effort and general competence for a Master-level student" at a "B" grade (the policy has been revised a few times). This means that a "C" reflects a basic understanding of the material that is slightly lower than the average. "We rarely score someone a D, so in practice it's an A to C scale", said one of the teachers. Students at CUHK who are unable to maintain a "C" average must discontinue their studies; the university kicks them out. A student cannot fail more than two subjects (even if they obtain "A" grades on all other courses).

The courses I attended at JCSPHPC had both a mid-term examination and an examination at the end of the course. This seemed to be the norm at CUHK, according to discussions with colleagues. The mid-term examination I took part in consisted of a multiple choice question (MCQ) test, which is commonly given at CUHK. It was very well put together, consisting of multiple choice items but also some short questions. MCQs seemed to be well-liked by both students and teachers. They would likely be more controversial at LiU, possibly being seen as interfering with the students' learning processes. However, I believe they have merits to make sure the students are on the right track and have acquired important knowledge for the continuation of the course. They should not be the only form of examination (and they were only given as mid-term tests at JCSPHPC).

The final examination of the Master of Public Health course I attended at JCSPHPC focused less on knowledge-testing, instead having more to do with understanding, applying knowledge and using analytical skills. The students in groups wrote a report to describe the development, implementation and

evaluation of a public health project. It was written as a fictitious funding application. Similar projects are done at LiU, but I felt the tight structure of the task at JCSPHPC was beneficial for students and it facilitated comparisons by the teachers.

The examinations at JCSPHPC are entirely based on the contents of the lectures, i.e. aspects that are not addressed in the lectures cannot be part of the examination. This is different from LiU, where students are expected to read some literature. One of the teachers believed the students are “spoon-fed” to a large degree, “Hong Kong students are very goal-oriented, they are always thinking about how they should pass the exam. The most common question I get as a teacher is, ‘What questions are most likely to be part of the exam?’”. According to the person at CUHK who had lived in Sweden, “In Sweden, they just needed the concept and maybe an example, then they would read themselves. Here they like me to show them the example step-by-step. Curiosity was higher in Sweden”.

The lectures at JCSPHPC were usually less interactive than at LiU, as they had a focus on presenting information rather than discussing or reflecting on it. There are many reasons for this, but one simple explanation is that the large student groups are not conducive to discussions, at least in the lectures I attended (further reasons are discussed below). In general, the lectures at LiU are more interactive. One of the teachers I spoke with talked about students wanting to be “spoon-fed” knowledge. He believed natural science was more aligned with the Chinese culture than social science, “Chinese are better at natural science since it is so exact, right-or-wrong. Social science involves discussing ideas, philosophies, values, which is much more difficult for them”.

Students at JCSPHPC rated their teachers’ performances. “This system is taken very seriously”, explained one of the teachers. “I have 5 point something out of a possible 6, it’s like A- or B+. All the teachers know their scores. Your boss, the director, also know all the scores, so it’s very transparent. Another guy who taught one of the courses I teach now was not fired but his contract was not extended, because he had poor evaluations, less than 4 on average.” However, this system has obvious pros and cons. The person I interviewed said, “We need to improve the teaching, because some lectures are really lousy. The advantage is that the evaluations force us to make them better. The downside is that the students know that their evaluations are affecting you, which signals to teachers to prepare exams that are well-liked”. Assessments of teachers also take place at LiU, but they are not considered as important as they are at CUHK.

Teachers were usually called “professors” as CUHK has a system where the progression is from postdoc (and senior postdoc) to research assistant

professor, assistant professor, associate professor and (full) professor. Hence, being a “professor” basically means that you are a researcher.

Students

Students were usually reluctant to respond to questions in the classroom, despite active encouragement from teachers. LiU students are more talkative and do not need the same prompting to comment on something or respond to questions. However, it is noteworthy that students were quite confident when they gave oral presentations in front of the teachers and their peers, suggesting that public speaking was not the problem. The paucity of student input at lectures has been explained with reference to the fear of losing one’s face (either the teacher’s or one’s own), an important trait of Chinese culture, which has valued social harmony and generally avoided criticism. A competent person in Chinese society is considered one who puts self in relation to others and who cultivates morality so that his or her conduct will not lose others’ face. However, an alternative explanation for the lack of input was offered by one of the teachers I interviewed, “Chinese and Hong Kong people are quite smart, so many times they think your questions are not so good. They want to be the ‘wise guy’, but not in the American way, by talking loud, but in the Chinese way, which is sitting at the back and saying, ‘I know everything, I don’t need to show that I know’”. A more prosaic explanation was, “They don’t care. It’s only the exam that counts”.

Students were always polite to teachers and showed them a great deal of respect. I never experienced that students objected to or challenged a teacher’s authority or knowledge, which is not unusual in Sweden. In Western culture, critique is generally considered a part of the learning process. While a student in Sweden might be respected for his or her frankness and courage by standing up to a teacher, the same person would likely be viewed as uncultured, overbearing and rude in Hong Kong.

The student-teacher relationship was more formal at CUHK than in Sweden. “One thing that really impressed me when I did my PhD in Sweden was that we’d always go to lunch together, with the supervisor,” reflected the person who had lived in Sweden. “The whole team would go together. Here in Hong Kong, you don’t see that. It happens, but it’s rare. In Sweden, it’s more equal, less of a hierarchy”.

Students seemed quite young in the courses I attended at CUHK. Half-time students were said to be on average 10 years older than the full-time students as they had usually worked several years after finishing their earlier studies. Students at corresponding courses at LiU tend to vary more in age although I do not have any reliable statistics to go by.

I found many students to be very attentive, taking notes and listening carefully. On the other hand, they also used their mobile phones to surf, text or play games. They also did little to hide yawning and could, at times, quite visibly show their disinterest. As one of the teachers remarked, "One of the students even played a Manga film with the sound on. Oops. 'If you do that, can you do it more discreetly,' I said". I see similar behaviours among LiU students (although I'm not sure how popular Manga is here).

In general, the students appeared to be very disciplined, hard-working and ambitious. Considering that studies at CUHK are quite expensive, my impression was that Hong Kong students tend to be more career-minded and have more at stake than Swedish students. At LiU, students can have repeated re-examinations. This creates a feeling that your performance is not all that important because there is always a second (or third or fourth) chance. In the courses I attended at CUHK, re-examinations were possible but seemed very rare. I was told that there are differences within CUHK, with some departments, programs and courses not offering a chance of re-examination, which meant that students had to do the examination the next time the course was given.

Lessons learned for potential use in Sweden

At the mid-term meeting with other STINT candidates in Asia, we were asked to identify pedagogical features that could potentially be implemented at our home universities. I have since given this more thought and actually see quite few areas where I feel CUHK approaches could be applied for use at LiU.

Teaching assistants

The system of teaching assistants at JCSPHPC has many merits. The teaching assistants usually gave a 1-hour tutorial immediately after the main 2-hour lecture by the teacher. The tutorial focused on applying the knowledge presented in lecture. I found this to be an appealing approach, as it showed how the theories, concepts and principles taught in the lecture could be applied and used. Since presentation of theories in lectures can be fairly "theoretical", the more hands-on approach of the tutorials are valuable for improved understanding of the actual use or application of the theories or principles. While this system may not be directly implementable in courses I'm involved in at LiU, it is well worth considering how practical examples can be used to show the value of theories, concepts and principles that are taught.

Administrative support for teaching

JCSPHPC has a highly effective administration that handles most administrative aspects of the educational activities, including student contacts. This allows teachers to focus on the teaching, i.e. letting “teachers be teachers”. This is of course highly desirable, but would likely be difficult to implement at LiU, but it is worth striving for. I think teachers and researchers have become increasingly burdened by administrative matters that require time and attention that could better be devoted to developing in one’s profession (this development is hardly unique in academia, though).

Assessment of teachers

Teachers at the JCSPHPC are continuously assessed and know how they perform, over time and in relation to colleagues. The assessments matter for the salary and becoming tenured. The system has its obvious pros and cons, as it creates a teacher-student dependency (“I will rate you higher if your lectures focus on things that will be examined”). All the teachers at CUHK know their scores and take the system very seriously. While assessments of teachers also take place at LiU, their importance is more limited than at CUHK.

Grading system

The A-B-C-D-F grading system encourages ambitious students to make an extra effort and makes it possible to identify those who are most likely to achieve success at higher education levels. A pass-or-fail system does not always encourage ambition or hard work to the same extent. My experience from LiU is that we have considerable difficulties identifying and recruiting the most motivated and talented students for PhD studies. The A-F system was very well accepted at CUHK, but would likely meet a great deal of resistance at LiU. The pass-or-fail system has been explained with reference to the Problem-based learning (PBL) approach at the medical faculty of LiU. Group discussions are an important part of PBL, which means that students should not be assessed individually. Still, the present LiU system can be questioned.

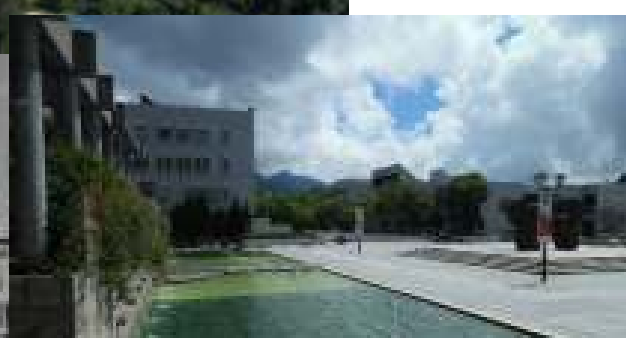
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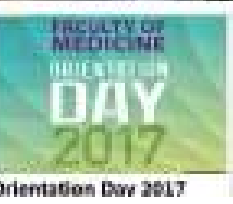
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Appendix

- 1: CUHK, main campus
- 2: CUHK: JCSPHPC
- 3: The apartment and Mong Kok area
- 4: Hong Kong surroundings

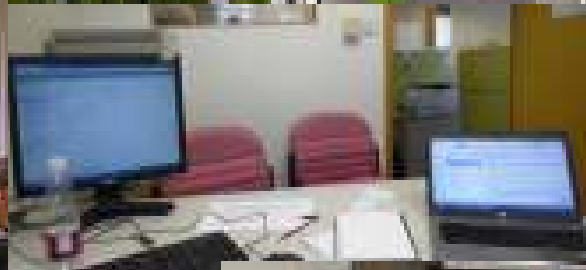




Orientation Day 2017

Teachers' & Students' Awards

Administrative Meeting





 香港中文大學 CUHK

 賽馬會公共衛生及基層醫療學院

 The Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care



旺角 Mong Kok

