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Opening up the road to nowhere : problems with the path to mass higher education in Hong Kong

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**Abstract**

Hong Kong has moved from elite to mass post-secondary education in a very short space of time and at little cost to the Government. Most of this spectacular expansion in participation has come through enrolments in 2 year associate degrees in recently founded community colleges, which have self-financing status. The achievement has been clouded by complaints from associate degree graduates that the articulation envisaged by the government is not working; so they are unable to obtain places for undergraduate degrees in UGC-funded universities. The value of an associate degree as a suitable terminal award for employment in a knowledge-based economy is yet to be clearly established. There must be doubts as to whether students will continue to enrol in associate degrees if they provide stepping stones to neither employment nor places in undergraduate degrees in UGC-funded universities. In an attempt to deal with the lack of articulation, some community colleges, in conjunction with overseas universities, have started to offer top-up degrees to enable associate degree graduates to convert the award to a degree. However, the resulting qualifications are

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seen as inferior to undergraduate degrees from the UGC-funded universities. (HRK / Abstract  
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