Joining forces to tackle issues

HKU’s new public administration course bridges the gap between private and public sectors in facing challenges, says George Chen

Hong Kong has been one of the world’s leading financial centres for decades, but now it faces new challenges due to the arrival of new financial professionals, and in HKU is one of the most popular academic programmes for those entering the industry. In recent years, HKU has seen rising political challenges in making public administration more transparent and effective. Today’s social problems include widening income gap, rising property prices, and a growing desire for greater freedom in education and public administration. Solving these problems involves getting to the root of the causes, which falls within the academic field of public administration. The University of Hong Kong (HKU) has long been well known for its right to receive the highest-quality teaching and research programmes, and often be the best place to work in the government. Civil servants at both the colonial and post-1997 era.

Public administration (PA) scholar Professor Wai-yung Lui, who is also associate dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at HKU, believes that public administration studies are most closely related to the government’s ability to manage public affairs. Lui says those operating in the public sector, including policy advisers and public managers, feel the need to develop an understanding of the skills required to handle political situations and cope with increasingly complex problems. On the other hand, those from the business, NGOs and social sectors see the importance and relevance of public policy in today’s world. “Today I can learn more about governance,” he says that as a member of the professional administrative programme in governance in Hong Kong to the region to satisfy this need.

The PA course is the first of its kind in Hong Kong, combining academic rigor with a focus on practice to enhance the already-robust expertise of executives keen to extend and build on their professional experience by bridging the gap between theory and practice. “We have designed the programme to provide theoretically grounded professional education to leaders in different sectors who strive to gain knowledge of governance and develop the intellectual ability to apply this knowledge in their work,” Lui explains.

The programme is ongoing as an elite programme, as the student involves a small number of students. “We wanted to ensure that the student body is a good mix of experience, backgrounds, and aspirations,” Lui says. “The programme is ideal for the growth of students who have extensive experience in the public sector, or those in the private sector, who want to develop their leadership skills.”

Effective problem-solving hinges on collective action in different arenas

Dennis Lam, the government’s ability to manage public affairs has helped bridge growing demand for professional education in public administration. Photo: H.K.U.

Lam adds that unlike conventional PA programmes, which mostly focus on the operation of government, the programmes are designed to provide comprehensive knowledge of governance, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts to tackle the diverse roles in the state, markets, and society, and collective action in multiple jurisdictional levels and scales, as well as the responsibilities in the administration of public affairs.

“A major principle underlying the curriculum design is that even more complex public problems can be solved by being dealt with by government alone,” Lam says. “Our curriculum is designed to ensure that students have skills in collective action in different arenas. “Our courses are designed to enable students to work with others to develop new ideas and solutions to the problems that we face together,” Lam says. “In the end, our students will be able to apply what they have learned.”

Students must write a dissertation equivalent to a PhD thesis in depth, and academic standards. The 36-week-long programme is divided into three semesters, with the first two for core modules, and the third for electives, which academic standards. Lam says the department has developed a network of scholars and public administration practitioners to contribute to the programme. It includes former Directors of Personnel, the Legislative Council, and management sectors such as Professor Peter Lo, a former secretary for security for the former Hong Kong government.

Professor Tse Lay, Hong Kong’s former ambassador, and senior academics from major public administration schools campuses.

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Photo: H.K.U.

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