Commission on Strategic Development

Young People – Education, Employment and Development Opportunities

Introduction

Based on the discussions made at the pre-meeting held on 4 May 2013 and feedback received after the meeting, youth issues were given a high priority by many Members. As at end of 2012, young people aged 15-24 constituted 12.2% of the total population of Hong Kong. As they progress further in life, this group will become the pillar of our society in terms of productivity, creativity, stability and growth.

Many changes among young people have been observed in recent years. One notable aspect is that more young people have participated actively in social and political events and have expressed dissatisfaction with the establishment, through various channels, and particularly through the social media. It is important that we understand the various aspects of our young people, including their views, their situation and the problems they face, in order to find out what the Government should and should not do in trying to achieve the objectives of facilitating the development of the potential of our young people and enhancing the overall quality of our life and harmony of our society. Young people are invaluable assets and our aim is to tackle the problems facing our young people through investing in their present and future.

Definition of youth

There are various widely adopted definitions of the specific age range that constitutes youth. The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) defines youth as persons aged 15 to 24, which is the same definition as that adopted by the United Nations. The Commission on Youth defines youth as “those aged 15 to 24 with a margin of five years on either side of the age range”.}

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group”. On the other hand, when the issues related to young people are discussed in Hong Kong in recent years, the post-80s and post-90s cohorts are usually covered. They represent individuals born after 1980 and 1990 respectively.

4. Generally speaking, young people of different age groups have to deal with different challenges. For example, education is an important concern of teenagers and those in their early twenties, while many young people in their mid-to-late twenties consider that career development and prospect of home ownership are priority issues. In this paper, we will generally cover persons aged 15 to 24 but where appropriate, other persons born after 1980 may also be covered.

**Hong Kong’s youth policy**

5. In the 2013 Policy Address, with regard to youth development, the Chief Executive has stated that “Our policies should focus on creating development opportunities for them. We should foster a culture of multi-faceted experience that will offer abundant opportunities for young people to pursue their studies or career and realise their potential. Our policies should also be inclusive and enable young people from different backgrounds, including new arrivals and ethnic minorities, to enhance their capabilities and broaden their horizons. The Commission on Youth will continue to reach out to young people and assist the Government in formulating policies related to youth development and co-ordinating the efforts of different bureau, so as to achieve policy synergy. In collaboration with various organisations and post-secondary institutions, we will make available additional resources to provide more internship opportunities in the Mainland for our young people. Such experience will help broaden their exposure and boost their confidence.”

6. In the Home Affairs Bureau’s policy initiatives for 2013, it has been stated that “For youth policy, we will focus on opportunities for youth development. We will continue to liaise and enhance communication with youths through the Commission on Youth and facilitate coordinated efforts among various policy bureaux regarding youth development.”

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7. The vision of the Commission on Youth is “To consolidate community efforts; to assist in formulating and implementing youth development programmes and activities; and to nurture young people as future leaders with vision, creativity, leadership and commitment.”

8. We have researched on the youth policies of a number of economies, including Australia, England, Germany, Japan, Taiwan, New York State of the United States of America, and Singapore. Key points of what these youth policies seek to achieve are summarised at Annex A. A common objective of the youth policies of these economies is that they all seek to provide young people with opportunities which enable them to fully realise their potential.

Studies on youth commissioned by Central Policy Unit (CPU)

9. In 2010 and 2011, CPU commissioned the following four studies on youth in Hong Kong:

(a) Study on “Hong Kong’s Post-80s Generation: Profiles and Predicaments”, conducted by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and completed in May 2010 (executive summary of study report at Annex B);

(b) Study on “Social Attitudes of the Youth Population in Hong Kong”, conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong and completed in December 2010 (executive summary of study report at Annex C);

(c) Study on “Understanding Our Young Generation” conducted by the University of Hong Kong and completed in February 2011 (executive summary of study report at Annex D); and

(d) Study on “Understanding Non-Engaged Youths in Hong Kong: A Mixed Method Approach” conducted by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and completed in March 2012 (executive summary of study report at Annex E).

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10. The main findings/recommendations of the above studies are highlighted as follows:

- Improved education does not necessarily lead to more employment opportunities. Unemployment rates have been increasing in recent years for young people, particularly for the post-80s generation, even among those with tertiary education.

- Among those young people who are employed, the highly educated ones have a much less chance of obtaining a managerial or professional job than before, although they are still more likely to find such a job than those who do not have higher education. They are increasingly driven to associate professional and clerical jobs, and to some extent, sales and service jobs.

- The problems that the post-80s generation faces are not unique to Hong Kong, but rather associated with the stage of economic development. The growth in the number of managerial and professional jobs in the service sector cannot keep pace with dramatic expansions in the higher education sector.

- Higher unemployment rates, lower starting salaries and insecure jobs have put many young people in disadvantaged positions, protracting the transition from school to work and from childhood to adulthood.

- While the social trend is hardly reversible, Government policies to a large extent can help to smooth the transitions from school to work and facilitate young people’s subsequent career development. Policies are called for in labour markets, education, and in the relevant institutional processes/mechanisms to link the two.

- The Government should revamp and strengthen the vocational training system by integrating it into the overall educational system and planning in Hong Kong in order to offer young people real choices and alternative paths to academic education in their school-to-work transition.
• The post-80s and post-90s generations are more critical of the establishment, and stronger believers in democracy and environmental conservation.

• The seriousness of young people’s education aspiration should be met by support from the Government, e.g. by increasing the number of institutions allowing University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded degrees, making available more vocational training for the young generation to boost their competitiveness, and lengthening the repayment period and/or reducing the interest rate of Student Grant Loans.

• The Government should initiate and promote working environments that encourage healthy work-life balance.

• High housing prices cause grievances among young people. A people-oriented home purchasing plan with a predictable timeline of home-ownership has to be reviewed regularly.

• Our young generation is very net-savvy. During the policy formulation process, genuine consultation across the community, including wider use of the Internet and other online platforms, will promote youth engagement.

Overview of CSD Members’ views on challenges faced by young people

11. At CSD pre-meeting and in subsequent written comments, Members expressed concerns about various challenges faced by young people in Hong Kong today. The number of higher education graduates in Hong Kong has increased significantly in recent years. However, despite higher educational attainment, it is often difficult for young people to find jobs which meet their interest, and with salaries commensurate with their qualifications. Compared with the older generation, young people today face stiffer competition in the job market, and career prospects and upward social mobility often fail to meet expectation. Therefore, many young people feel that their development goals for the future are not likely to be achieved. On the other hand, after working for a few years, many young people would aspire to rent or buy their own flats, particularly when they want to start their own families. However, it is difficult to find affordable housing due to high property prices.
12. In the light of the findings/recommendations of the studies on youth and the views of CSD members, this paper will now focus on the following aspects, namely –

- education
- job and career development opportunities
- housing (particularly, aspirations for home ownership), and
- social mobility

13. In view of the increasing importance of the social media, the paper will also discuss the impact of the social media on the development of the young people in Hong Kong and what the Government has done to make use of the social media to enhance effective communication with the public, especially with the young people. Regarding the global impact of the social media among young people, please refer to an article titled “Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation” at Annex F. The article provides a good analysis of the characteristics of the “millennials”, i.e. those born in 1980-2000, with particular focus on the inseparability of their everyday life with the social media.  

Education Issues

14. Views expressed by some Members as well as in commentaries reflect that the current education system and curriculum cannot adequately prepare our young people for today’s knowledge-based and fast changing society. There is a need to better prepare our students for whole-person development and life-long learning to cope with the changing world and meet the needs of the changing global environment. The education system needs to provide an environment to nurture the younger generation to deal with social changes.

15. Some ideas on education reform include: there is need for both excellent mass and elitist education so that more people can develop the knowledge and capability needed for strengthening the economy, building a prosperous and happy community, and coping with competition brought about by globalisation, and there is need for collaboration between the

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9 Lok Sang Ho, “Education Reform in Hong Kong: What are the Lessons?”, In Education Reform and the
business sector and educational institutions in the design of school curriculum.\textsuperscript{10} Suggestions by Members include: there is need to provide a range of education opportunities aligned with business/economic realities and future vision; and our higher education needs to provide more opportunities for our students to gain international exposure so as to increase their competitiveness.

Government’s efforts

16. The Government values the importance of education and has been investing heavily in this area, with the relevant recurrent expenditure increased by about 27\% over the past 10 years from 2002-03 to 2012-13. As stated in the latest Government Budget, the estimated recurrent expenditure on education in the 2013-14 financial year will be $63 billion, which takes up more than one-fifth of the total recurrent expenditure of the Government. At present, over 30\% of the relevant age cohort for post-secondary education will have access to degree-level education compared with about 17\% in 2001. The Chief Executive has stated in his 2013 Policy Address that in two years, over one-third of the relevant age cohort will have the opportunity to pursue degree-level education. Taking sub-degree places into account, nearly 70\% of young people will have access to post-secondary education.

17. Full subvention has been provided for full-time courses run by the Vocational Training Council (VTC) for Secondary 3 school leavers, giving senior secondary students an alternative free avenue to mainstream education. The Youth College under VTC offers specialised vocational programmes for graduates above Secondary 3, helping them to build a solid foundation for further studies and employment.

18. It has been stated in the 2013 Policy Address that the Government will continue to actively develop senior secondary curriculum and post-secondary programmes that feature more diversified and specialist subjects. Apart from conventional academic subjects, the Government will progressively develop an education and training system for young people that will integrate academic studies and interest, as well as professional and vocational training, under an orderly framework that features diversity, provides multiple pathways and enjoys high recognition.

\textit{Quest for Excellence: The Hong Kong Story,} eds Lok Sang Ho, Paul Morris and Yue-ping Chung (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press), p.221-222.

\textsuperscript{10} Thomas Kwan Tse, “Quality Education in Hong Kong: The Anomalies of Managerialism and Marketization”, In \textit{Education Reform and the Quest for Excellence: The Hong Kong Story,} eds. Lok Sang Ho, Paul Morris and Yue-ping Chung , (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press), p.116.
Job and career development opportunities

Issues

19. The younger generation has higher educational attainment than before. As mentioned in paragraph 16 above, the percentage of the relevant age cohort for post-secondary education who have access to degree-level education has increased from 17% in 2001 to over 30% at present. However, the median monthly income from main employment of those aged 15 to 24 in 2011 has remained the same as that in 2001.11 Figure 1 illustrates the unemployment rates of young people in the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups versus that of the overall working population in Hong Kong from 2001 to 2011. In fact, not only do young people with lower educational qualifications often encounter difficulties in finding satisfactory jobs, but many higher education graduates cannot find jobs with a salary commensurate with their qualifications or jobs that offer a clear career structure.

![Figure 1 Unemployment rates in Hong Kong by age group, 2001-2011](image)

(Young people in the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups vs. overall working population)
(Source: C&SD: Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics 2008, p.21; Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics 2012, p.24.)

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20. Some people criticise that there is not enough diversity in our economy to provide sufficient career development opportunities for our young people. A study on Hong Kong’s creativity conducted in 2007\footnote{Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre. *Hong Kong: A Creative Metropolis*. Hong Kong, 2007, p.7-8. http://www.bauhinia.org/research_content.php?lang=eng&id=38} has commented that Hong Kong has been lagging behind in developing the creative economy, the foundation of the knowledge-based world economy, and that its profile in the cultural and creative industries is relatively weak. The study has suggested that Hong Kong should leverage creativity for a new pole of economic growth in order to sustain its position in the global economy. An article titled “Life of Pi” advocating that the Government should promote innovation and technology development in order to provide more opportunities for our young talent is at Annex G for reference.

21. Members’ suggestions include: the Government should adopt an effective strategy to diversify and restructure our economy, for example, by capitalising on global trends of technology and innovation; the Government should revive entrepreneurial spirit and career mobility by recognising the importance of innovative commercialisation of ideas and “smart” technologies and providing appropriate financial support options; and measures should be taken to deepen and broaden our service sector for our local economy as well as to export such service capability overseas.

22. Regarding young people with low educational qualifications who are not engaged in school or work, a study has suggested that Government should explore different ways to increase their competitiveness so as to better integrate them into the mainstream economy,\footnote{This is a recommendation of the study on “Understanding Non-Engaged Youths in Hong Kong: A Mixed Method Approach” commissioned by CPU, conducted by The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and completed in March 2012.} such as traineeship and other skills development programmes.

Government’s efforts

23. The Government has implemented various programmes to enhance the employability of young people and promote their employment opportunities. The Youth Employment and Training Programme implemented by the Labour Department (LD) provides a comprehensive platform of job search with one-stop and diversified pre-employment and on-the-job training opportunities for young school leavers aged 15 to 24 with educational attainment at sub-degree or below level. This programme enables young people to better understand themselves and their work aptitudes while enriching their job skills and experience so as to enhance
their employability.

24. Youth Employment Start, also implemented by LD, provides one-stop advisory and support services on employment and self-employment to youngsters aged between 15 and 29. It provides support to young people to start their career on the right track, enhance their employability, facilitate them to access the latest labour market information and help them secure a firm footing in the labour market for sustainable development.

25. VTC launched at the end of 2011 a pilot traineeship scheme for the service industries, with the beauty care and hairdressing industries as the starting point, providing structured on-the-job training. VTC is considering expanding the scheme to other service industries and plans to provide about 890 training places in 2013-14.

26. HAB has set up a funding scheme under the Commission on Youth to partner with community organisations in providing internship opportunities in the Mainland for students in universities and tertiary institutes. The internships broaden their experience and exposure, enhance their understanding of the development potential in the Mainland, and better equip them for their careers upon graduation.

27. The Government, while consolidating our traditional strengths, will also look out for new growth areas so as to create more job opportunities for the people of Hong Kong. The 2013 Policy Address has highlighted the Government’s efforts in the development of a number of industries, such as the financial services sector, business and professional services, aviation, maritime and land transport industries, innovation and technology industries, and testing and certification industry. It has also been mentioned in the Policy Address that the Government has launched various multi-level support programmes for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in different areas, such as loan guarantee, expanding export markets, export credit insurance, upgrading and restructuring, brand development, start-up support, technology research and development, and patent application. Moreover, the Government would continue to help SMEs tap the Mainland market by various means, including effective use of the Dedicated Fund on Branding, Upgrading and Domestic Sales, and supporting Hong Kong business associations in establishing sales and promotion venues in the Mainland for building the Hong Kong brand.
Housing

Issues

28. It has been reflected in the media and a number of studies that many young people in Hong Kong aspire to buy their own flats. Many consider that home ownership is an important part of independent adult life, especially for married couples. A study on understanding our young generation completed in 2011 has found that 53.4% and 34.5% of respondents of an online survey considered that property ownership was “very important” and “somewhat important” respectively. Many articles in the media have observed that with the surging property prices in Hong Kong until very recently, many young people feel that there is little hope for them to buy their own flats in any stages of their life, or to rent a decent flat so as to live an independent adult life. This is very discouraging for them, and may also be a factor affecting their marriage plans. Measures to increase land and housing supply and stabilise property prices would help young people achieve home-ownership or rent a decent flat.

29. Apart from surging property prices, it is perceived by some commentators that the inability of many young people to buy their own flats is also closely related to the lack of sufficient career development opportunities for young people. Therefore, measures to promote the job and career development opportunities of young people would be helpful.

Government’s efforts

30. Under the Youth Hostel Scheme, the Government will support non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with the full capital costs of building youth hostels. The concept of the Scheme is for meeting the aspirations of some working youths in having their own living space and giving these youths an opportunity to accumulate savings to meet their aspirations, while unleashing the potential of under-utilised sites in the hands of NGOs. The Government plans to start with two projects on a pilot basis, and it is estimated that the hostels under these two projects would be completed in four years at the soonest.

31. The Government put forward ten measures in January 2013 to increase the supply of housing land in the short to medium term. It also set up the Long Term Housing Strategy Steering Committee in September 2012.

14 This is a finding of the study on “Understanding Our Young Generation” commissioned by CPU, conducted by The University of Hong Kong and completed in February 2011.
Public consultation has been launched in early September 2013, with a view to formulating a new long term housing strategy to address the medium and long term housing needs of Hong Kong.

**Social mobility**

**Issues**

32. Some studies have revealed that there is perceived decreasing social mobility in Hong Kong, especially for young people. In a recent survey on Hong Kong people’s perception of social mobility conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong[^15] (press release on the survey findings at Annex H), 54.6% of respondents said there were insufficient opportunities in Hong Kong for upward social mobility, and just 9.9% believed there were adequate opportunities. The survey has found that those under 31 years of age, with tertiary level education, tend to be most pessimistic about their prospects of social mobility.

33. Some studies have suggested that there are increasing barriers to quality education and upward social mobility for young people coming from low-income and less-educated families. A recent study on disparity in higher education attainment in Hong Kong conducted by the Hong Kong Institution of Education (press release on the survey findings at Annex I) has found that in 2011, the university degree enrolment rate of young people (aged 19 and 20) living in the top 10% richest families (48.2%) is 3.7 times that of those living in poverty (13.0%). The poverty line used in the study is half of the median household income.[^16] In comparison, the corresponding percentages in 1991 were 9.3% and 8.0% respectively. The findings have suggested that there has been a widening gap between the rich and the poor in receiving university education in Hong Kong.

34. It has been suggested that the Government should put in place more effective measures to facilitate needy students in their learning and whole-person development, so as to enable young people from financially disadvantaged families to be nurtured into capable individuals and reduce inter-generational poverty. Furthermore, all the factors mentioned above, i.e. problems faced by young people in education, job and career


development opportunities and housing, are considered as contributing to the decreasing social mobility. Enhancement measures in the above areas can help young people move up the social ladder.

Government’s efforts

35. Assisting youth from a disadvantaged background has all along been a key aspect of the Government poverty alleviation work. The Government’s strategy is to address their specific needs and invest heavily in education to increase social mobility and reduce inter-generational poverty. The Government has extended free education in public sector schools from nine years to 12 years as from the 2008-09 school year. Starting from the 2005-06 school year, the Education Bureau has implemented the School-based After-school Learning and Support Programme to provide funding for schools and NGOs to organise after-school activities for disadvantaged students so as to improve their learning effectiveness, broaden their learning experiences outside the classroom as well as raise their understanding of the community and sense of belonging with a view to facilitating their whole-person development.

36. The Commission on Poverty has been established since November 2012. Reviewing existing policies and formulating new policies to promote social mobility is part of the terms of reference of the Commission. Emphasis is placed on policy measures not only to support the underprivileged but also to enhance social mobility through education and employment.

37. The Government set up the $300-million Child Development Fund (CDF) in April 2008 to promote the longer-term development of children from a disadvantaged background and encourage them to develop an asset-building habit with a view to reducing inter-generational poverty. With funding from CDF and the assistance of volunteer mentors, NGOs organise specially designed three-year projects for the participants, teaching them how to formulate personal development plans (PDPs) and implement them using their own savings, matching donations and Government’s special financial incentive. A longitudinal study has been completed to evaluate the first batch of CDF projects, which has reaffirmed the contribution of the three key components (i.e. PDP, mentorship programme and targeted savings) to the objectives of CDF.

38. In order to assist in disadvantaged youths’ whole-person development, HAB has been assisting needy student members of uniform groups to buy uniform and participate in camping, outing activities and
leadership training courses. The initiative has received very positive feedback and has benefitted over 7,000 such youths in 2012/13.

Social media

Issues

39. Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks through the Internet. Young people nowadays are increasingly using social media as their communication tools in everyday life, and they frequently exchange their views on social issues and public policies and express their frustrations through popular social media such as Facebook, YouTube, blogs, microblogs (微博), and forums. With its rapid prevalence among the younger generation, social media provides a channel for the Government to address youth issues by establishing effective communication with young people and collecting suggestions from them. To make use of this channel effectively, it is important to understand the impact of social media on young people in Hong Kong.

40. Social media has the effect of increasing young people’s civic engagement and political participation. Young people can easily disseminate information and gather quick reactions from others by posting articles on social media and making replies to others’ posts. The traditional mass media no longer dominates the channel of communication. As shown in a study conducted in 2010, near half of the post-80s and post-90s surveyed in the research regarded the new media as the major channel of political information.17

41. Social media has provided a new learning platform which supplements the traditional mode of delivery of education. It has also granted a new way for NGOs and social workers to approach non-engaged youth who were “invisible” in social life before.

42. Virtual communities are established on social media, especially among young people. They are largely influenced by peers on social media, and they would strive for recognition among their peers.

17 This is a finding of the study on “Social attitudes of the youth population in Hong Kong” commissioned by CPU, conducted by The Chinese University of Hong Kong and completed in December 2010.
43. The prevalence of social media has given rise to the fragmentation of information. While young people can instantly get access to a lot of information on social networking websites and the Internet, they encounter the problem of scattered knowledge from diversified sources. They may not be able to verify the information obtained from social media and may unintentionally make use of or spread false information.

44. Relying on social media as a tool of socialisation may weaken young people’s interpersonal skills in the real world. Young people who spend long hours on virtual social networking may have less time for in-person socialising, and their sociability may deteriorate.

Government’s efforts

45. Noting the growing popularity and influence of social media, the Government has encouraged bureaux/departments to employ this new media to reach out to and enhance effective communication with the public, particularly young people. A number of Government officials, including the Chief Executive and the Financial Secretary, as well as various bureaux/departments have established blogs and microblogs to strengthen connection between the Government and the public. In 2010, Hong Kong Housing Authority created the “Public Housing Vistas” page on Facebook to share pictures of historic public housing estates and encourage the public to share their stories, pictures and videos of living in public housing estates.

46. Some commentaries have suggested that Government officials and bureaux/departments could better utilise social media in conveying messages and collecting public opinions. For example, it has been suggested that the Government should make use of popular social networking websites such as Facebook, Youtube and Twitter more extensively in order to approach more young people, and that Government officials could conduct direct discussion with members of the public at these social networking sites. There have also been suggestions that more new elements should be injected to the presentation and content of the Government’s materials on social media.

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47. The trend of the increasing use of social media among the younger generation is irreversible, and the power of social media in influencing and shaping young people is undeniable. It is worth exploring how we can make use of this new media to gain a better understanding of young people in Hong Kong, and to utilise various channels of social media more effectively to attract more young people to engage in communications with the Government. This would provide useful information to facilitate the Government in formulating policies to enhance youth development and to address the issues faced by young people discussed in this paper.

Discussion

48. Youth policies around the world invariably have a vision and objectives to create opportunities for young people to become skilled, healthy and productive members of society. There are also specific strategies to translate policy into action. In drawing up these strategies, the responsible agencies should recognize that young people are assets and not problems. They are not a homogenous group and overgeneralization often lead to ineffective or misguided policies. The aspirations of youth sub-groups and sectoral priority issues should be specifically addressed.

49. Members are invited to express their views and suggestions on the following –

(a) The education system and curriculum are closely related to how well-prepared young people are for the job market. What further measures can be introduced to the education system to enhance the employment and career development opportunities of young people, having regard to the present economy and employment market and the anticipated changes in the future?

(b) What policy direction should the Government adopt to diversify our economy and provide more career development opportunities for our younger generation, thus promoting social mobility?

(c) Apart from overall measures to increase land and housing supply and stabilise property prices, what measures can be taken to specifically help young people set up their own homes as they grow older and establish their families?
(d) How may the Government make use of the social media to communicate with young people more effectively so as to facilitate formulating policies that can better address their needs?

Secretariat to the Commission on Strategic Development
September 2013
**Youth Policies of Other Economies**

This Annex sets out the main objectives of the youth policies of other selected economies, including Australia, England, Germany, Japan, Taiwan\(^1\), New York State of the United States of America\(^2\), and Singapore\(^3\).

**Australia**

2. The National Strategy for Young Australians articulates the Australian Government’s aspiration for all young people to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient and to have the opportunities and skills they need to learn, work, engage in community life and influence decisions that affect them. The Strategy aims to (i) empower young people to build their own lives; (ii) enable young Australians to learn to take responsibility for their actions; (iii) build resilience in young Australians to navigate life’s challenges; and (iv) build a healthier, safer and more productive Australia.

**England**

3. “Positive for Youth” is a new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19 in England. It brings together all of the Government’s policies for this age group, presenting a single vision across the interests of nine departments, amongst which include the Department for Education, the Department of Health, the Home Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government. It therefore covers a wide range of issues – from education and youth services, to health, crime, housing and more. “Positive for Youth” sets out a shared vision for how all parts of society – including councils, schools, charities, businesses – can work

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\(^1\) Information on the youth policies of Australia, England, Germany, Japan and Taiwan are from links provided by youthpolicy.org (http://www.youthpolicy.org/nationalyouthpolicies/)

\(^2\) The US has currently no federal youth policy. We have included the youth policy of New York State in this annex as it is one of the most populous states of the US. Information on the youth policy of New York State is available at http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/youth.

\(^3\) The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth is in charge of youth matters in Singapore (http://app.mccy.gov.sg/AboutUs.aspx).
together in partnership to support families and improve outcomes for young people, particularly those who are most disadvantaged or vulnerable. This means working towards a common goal of young people having a strong sense of belonging, and the supportive relationships, strong ambitions, and good opportunities they need to realise their potential.

**Germany**

4. With the development of the “Independent Youth Policy”, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is pursuing a subject-oriented approach that focuses on the skills and potential of all young people and makes them the starting point for the structuring of its policy. One of the aims of the Policy is to establish an “Alliance for Youth” in 2013 which reaches beyond child and youth services and integrates relevant partners from commerce, education and media, etc, to ensure a comprehensive, cross-sectoral youth policy approach for Germany. The three thematic areas of the Policy will be: (i) fair opportunities for young people; (ii) facilitating young people to meet increased requirements in shorter periods of time; and (iii) perspectives and optimism for the future.

**Japan**

5. The Act on Promotion of Development and Support for Children and Young People was enacted in July 2009 and came into effect in April 2010. In July 2010, the “Vision for Children and Young People – Supporting the development of children and young people, aiming for a society inclusive of every single person” was devised as a basic policy based on the Act. Under the Vision, measures to develop and support children and young people span almost all areas of society, including education, welfare, health, medical care, correction, offenders’ rehabilitation and employment. All possible efforts will be made, in close coordination with relevant national and local government organisations, private-sector groups and so on.
Taiwan

6. Youth Policy Launching and Promotion Act was launched to serve as a basis for the government to develop youth affairs. The objectives of the Act include developing potential of the youth, sharpening their edges, and facilitating development of multiple intelligences; helping them plan careers and develop potential; helping them gain a better understanding of Taiwan and encouraging them to care for the society and join public affairs; proposing effective solutions to the youth problem, and creating an appropriate environment in which the youth can develop their right attitudes for lives, care for the society and international views, and in which the youth can hone their competitive edges and improve adaptive capacities.

New York State of the United States of America

7. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) serves New York's public by promoting the safety, permanency and well-being of children, families and communities. The Office of Youth Development under OCFS designs, coordinates and promotes innovative strategies to advance youth development. These strategies cut across all disciplines at the state and local levels. Their goal is for all New York State youth to reach their full potential and become healthy, productive adults.

Singapore

8. The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth is in charge of youth matters in Singapore. Its functions in respect of youth matters are to:
   • Support the youth to fulfill their aspirations and interests
   • Encourage youth contributions to the community through youth engagement programmes
   • Nurture youth leadership
Hong Kong’s Post-80s Generation: Profiles and Predicaments

Executive Summary (English)

Based on a series of census-by-census data from 1981 to 2006 and the data from a household survey conducted in 2007, this report documents the demographic profiles and the socioeconomic predicaments of the post-80s generation in Hong Kong in the context of rapid social changes, in particular, the economic restructuring and educational expansions that took place in the 1990s. The report also analyzes young people’s subjective evaluation of their socioeconomic status, perceptions of inequality, social identity and political orientation.

The major findings are summarized as below:

- The young post-80s generation is the major beneficiary of the higher education expansion in the 1990s, and they have enjoyed more educational opportunities than those in the same age group in earlier years.

- Improved education does not necessarily lead to more employment opportunities. Unemployment rates have been increasing in the past decade for young people, particularly for the post-80s generation, even among those with tertiary education.

- Among those who are employed, the highly educated ones have a much less chance of obtaining a managerial or professional job than before, although they are still more likely to find such a job than those who do not have higher education. They are increasingly driven to associate professional and clerical jobs, and to some extent, sales and service jobs.

- The earnings of young people relative to the general working population have been declining over time, although they seem to be able to catch up later. The post-80s may also be able to do so.

- No evidence suggests any decline in either intergenerational or intra-generational mobility for the post-80s, although their transitions from school to work have become more precarious and unstable than before.

- Because of the uncertainties associated with bumpy transitions from school to work, more young people are delaying marriage and living with their parents even after marrying.

- In terms of subjective stratification, young people are less likely to identify themselves as being in the higher social strata than older people, but their level of job and life satisfaction do not differ from other groups.
• The post-80s generation seems to be a heterogeneous group. No evidence suggests that the post-80s generation has developed distinctive values and political orientations as a group.

Main points in the report:

• The problems that the post-80s generation faces are not unique to Hong Kong, but are rather associated with the stage of economic development. The growth in the number of managerial and professional jobs in the service sector cannot keep pace with dramatic expansions in the higher education sector.

• Higher unemployment rates, lower starting salaries, and insecure jobs have put many young people in disadvantaged positions, protracting the transition from school to work and from childhood to adulthood. The key issue for Hong Kong’s youth nowadays can be seen as the increasingly bumpy transition from school to work, rather than the lack of upward mobility.

• Recent protests of a group of young social/political activists labelled as “the post-80s” are not a direct response to the young generations’ worse-off socioeconomic situations, but their radical behaviour should be seen as a warning sign for policy makers who should seriously address their concerns and needs.

• While the social trend is hardly reversible, government policies to a large extent can help to smooth the transitions from school to work and facilitate young people’s subsequent career development. Policies are called for in labour markets, education, and in the relevant institutional processes/mechanisms to link the two. More resources and programs are needed to promote the inclusion of youths as stakeholders in the society to avoid marginalization and other negative consequences.
Executive Summary

1. Background of the Study

In the past two years, generational differences and conflicts have evoked growing interest from the mass media and the public. Whenever incidents of social unrest visibly involve the younger generation, the mass media usually cite anecdotal evidence to argue that “generational conflicts” are operative. In that narrative, the beliefs and attitudes of the younger generation are interpreted to be a consequence of frustration caused by the limited opportunity to move up the social ladder or from having their upward social mobility completely blocked.

These anecdotal observations and interpretations have crystallized around the label of the “Post-80s”, a term which has swiftly spread into the public consciousness through the reinforcement of the mass media. This label is appealing because of its simplicity to explain and interpret why social conflicts have led to waves of political mobilization and mass demonstrations in recent years. From a “generations” perspective, the “Post-80s Generation” would be regarded as the “source” of conflict.

2. Approach and Methodology

The major research objectives are to compare and contrast the variations among the younger generations born between 1980 and 1995 in social and political attitudes, beliefs, postmaterialist values, orientations and behaviors. In addition, the post-70s cohort is also surveyed in order to capture the characteristics of those who are still regarded as “young” but not “green” in
terms of social exposure and working experience. It is also used as a control group or "baseline" to establish what characteristics, if any, are distinctive to the younger age group.

This study uses two approaches to the collection of relevant information and data. First, secondary analysis of existing survey data helps to unveil the characteristics of the younger generations born after 1980 and those born before then. Second, a telephone survey has been conducted to collect information pertaining to the social attitudes, beliefs, values, orientations and behaviors among Hong Kong citizens born between 1970 and 1995.

3. Findings from Secondary Data Analysis

Data for secondary analysis come from three surveys: two telephone polls, one conducted in December 2009 and the other in January 2010, on 2012 constitutional reforms, and one community research project conducted in July 2008. We carried out statistical analysis on the three datasets to compare across cohorts their (1) political orientations, (2) social perceptions and values, (3) identity, and (4) life satisfaction. The findings do not exhibit consistent evidence to support the anecdotal generalization that the post-80s are more radical and discontented than other generations. We summarize the social attitudes of youth, especially those from the post-80s cohort as follows:

- less supportive of high speed rail budget
- more negative views of functional constituencies
- more inclined to support the demand for a timetable or roadmap for universal suffrage
- more supportive of resignation of Civic Party and LSD legislators and the
By-election, but NOT more inclined to recast their vote for candidates from these two parties

- identify more with LSD than the other cohorts, but are still more supportive of DP than LSD
- appear to be susceptible to issue-based mobilization based on “post-80” identities
- not more radical than the post-70s in disapproval of the 2012 constitutional reform bill
- not more skeptical than other cohorts with regard to progress in democratization under the 2012 constitutional reform
- more positive with regard to living standards
- more positive in believing hardworking will bring success
- more positive in planning for their own future
- more positive in accommodating economic restructuring
- more identified with Hong Kong
- lowest degree of sense of belonging to Hong Kong
- more satisfied than other cohorts with life in almost all domains

These results suggest that while there are some signs that the younger generation is more critical of the government and political establishment, this negative orientation is not fixed but is significantly influenced by political events and mobilization. The surge of negative perceptions among the younger cohort towards the political reform package after the anti-high speed rail movement is a clear illustration of this point. Negative sentiments among the younger cohorts, to the extent they exist, are not related to a more negative evaluation of their personal conditions. Even though young people are more critical of the government, they are in general more positive in evaluating their own conditions.
4. Telephone Survey on Social Attitudes of the Youth Population in Hong Kong Conducted in May-June 2010

The telephone survey was conducted from 24 May to 25 June 2010. The target respondents of the present study were Hong Kong youth population born in 1980 or after. Those born in 1970 or after were also surveyed as a reference group to compare and contrast with the younger sample. The finalized version of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix 1. A total of 2,003 respondents completed the survey: 1,108 (55.3%) are female and 895 (44.7%) male; 552 (27.6%) are post-90s, 667 (33.3%) post-80s, and 784 (39.1%) post-70s.

4.1 Democratic Development and Environmental Conservation are Preferable

A majority of respondents adopt postmaterialist positions on democracy and environmental conservation, and generational differences are small. The overwhelming support to postmaterialist orientations is found across generations. While we should not jump to the conclusion that most Hong Kongers are postmaterialists, we could say that for many Hong Kong people democracy and conservation are desirable value positions to adopt and profess.

4.2 Civic Engagement and Seeking Political Information

Anti-establishment sentiment is more readily manifest in attitudes than in actions. A majority of respondents have not engaged in any demonstration or rally since 1997, and mere 1.4% joined frequently. The participation pattern is very similar across the three generations although slightly higher percentages from the post-70s have engaged in these types of civic action. An overwhelming majority are aware of demonstrations or rallies to be organized.
The absence of any generational difference means that information seeking relating to civic actions is common among all respondents irrespective of the age factor.

Conventional mass media are still the major channels to receive information on civic actions to be organized. Television is the most common channel for 3 generations, while newspapers rank second for the post-70s and post-80s, but rank only third for the post-90s. Using the Internet or mobile phone SMS to receive information on civic actions is the second most popular channel for the post-90s, but ranks third for the post-80s and post-70s. The older generation thus has a notably different pattern of electronic communications usage than younger ones.

4.3 Voting Behavior in the Legislative Council By-election

Held on 16 May 2010

Our survey result does not exactly match the interpretation found in the mass media that the By-election was much more appealing to the younger generation. More than half of respondents are registered voters eligible to vote in the By-election that took place on 16 May 2010. Eligible voters of the post-90s were the least mobilized to vote in the By-election, and the post-80s voters were the most mobilized. Despite the difference in voter turnout rates among generations, their choices are almost identical. An overwhelming majority of all generations voted for candidates from the Civic Party or League of Social Democrats (LSD). And the proportion of casting blank ballots is almost the same in all generations. The By-election was not particularly
appealing to the post-90s eligible voters. However, once they were mobilized, a majority of the post-90s supported the idea of the simulated referendum.

4.4 Life Satisfaction

Results show that all generations are dissatisfied with the conditions of politics, economy and environmental conservation in Hong Kong. Although differences among generations exist, they are all barely visible. All generations evaluate their overall quality of life positively, with differences among generations, although statistically significant, quite small. All generations are slightly satisfied with their personal life, in contrast to negative evaluation of broader social conditions.

4.5 Identity and Political Trust

An overwhelming majority of respondents in all generations explicitly identified themselves as Hong Kongers. Comparatively fewer respondents identified themselves as Chinese, although they are still in a majority. Not surprisingly, the percentage of the post-70s who identify themselves as Chinese is higher than that of the younger generations.

More respondents have trust in the Hong Kong SAR Government than Central Government. Trust in the Hong Kong SAR and Central Governments also differs significantly among generations. The post-80s are the most critical to the establishment. They have proportionately the lowest trust in the Hong Kong SAR Government and in the Central Government. The post-90s, on the other hand, have the noticeably highest proportion who trust in the Hong Kong SAR Government. The proportions trusting the Hong Kong and Central
Governments are similar among the post-70s.

4.6 Education and Employment in the Mainland

Although respondents do not particularly favor a national identity or the Central Government, they are positive towards the idea of study or work in the Mainland. A majority of respondents accept the idea of pursuing further studies in the Mainland, and the tendency is about the same across generations. There is a similar popularity for the idea of working in China, with younger generations showing more enthusiasm than the post-70s. On the ideological level, our respondents, especially the younger generations, are not that positive towards establishing connections with the Mainland. When it comes to matters of personal life and development, however, the younger generations find it much more acceptable to have connections with the Mainland.

4.7 Blocked Mobility of Youth?

Some recent observers of social unrest among youth suggest blocked upward mobility could be one of the factors leading to negative sentiments. Using three measures to probe youth perceptions of their opportunities for personal development in Hong Kong, this study found as follows. First, the post-80s and post-90s are more discontented with the opportunities available to their own age cohort than are the post-70s. Second, our findings are counter-intuitive to anecdotal observations that younger generations are supposedly more pessimistic about their personal development in the future. In fact, the post-80s and post-90s are more optimistic about their future development than the post-70s. Relatively fewer post-90s and post-80s than post-70s are expecting a worse future. Third, more respondents are satisfied than dissatisfied with the opportunities available for their personal development.
in Hong Kong. Comparatively speaking, the post-80s are the least satisfied generation. The post-90s and post-70s report about the same level of satisfaction. These statistics do not offer strong enough evidence, however, to confirm the claim that blocked mobility pre-occupies youth perceptions. Nevertheless, neither satisfaction nor optimism is the prevalent sentiment among all generations.

5. Predictors of Youth Dissent in Hong Kong

5.1 Social Attitudes of Dissent

In this study, the extent of discontent is measured by 5 social attitudes: (1) whether or not respondents support the Legislative Council (LegCo) to approve the budget for the High Speed Rail in January 2010; (2) their evaluation towards LegCo members from Functional Constituencies after the High Speed Rail Budget was approved; (3) which side they support in various incidents of conflicts between HKSAR Government and concern groups on conservation issues; (4) their evaluation of democratic progress in Hong Kong since 1997; and (5) the political party they most support in Hong Kong. The following table summarizes the effect of various factors on dissenting social attitudes.
Table 1. Summary of Predictors of Dissenting Social Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual items of Social Attitudes</th>
<th>Generational difference: younger</th>
<th>Democratic and conservational value: higher</th>
<th>Postmaterialist value orientation: higher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT supporting High Speed Rail</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative evaluation towards</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Constituencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support environmental concern</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groups in conservation issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider democratic progress since</td>
<td>✓ *</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997 too slow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic political affiliation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ indicates predictor effect is statistically significant at probability less than 0.001, except with * at 0.05 level.

Table 1 (cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual items of</th>
<th>With local identity</th>
<th>NOT identified as Chinese</th>
<th>NOT trust HK SAR Government</th>
<th>NOT trust Central Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOT supporting High Speed Rail</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative evaluation towards</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Constituencies</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support environmental concern</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>groups in conservation issues</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider democratic progress since 1997 too slow</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic political affiliation</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ indicates predictor effect is statistically significant at probability less than 0.001.

✗ means no significant effect
5.2 Aggregate Measure of Dissenting Attitudes

Assessing individual items of dissenting social attitudes and political affiliation indicates how much discontent the youth population has towards the socio-political environment. An aggregate measure to summarize their discontent is created by counting how many of the following positions the respondents have expressed: (a) not supporting the High Speed Rail, (b) viewing Functional Constituencies negatively, (c) supporting environmental concern groups, (d) finding democratic progress too slow, and (e) having a democratic affiliation. The “baseline” post-70s are the least discontented generation; over 30% of them do not show any discontent. Both the post-90s and post-80s have an equal level of dissent. In general, the more dissenting respondents are male, born in Hong Kong or having lived here for 7 years or more, educated to a secondary educated or above, and students or economically active.

5.3 Demographic Profiles of the Strong Dissidents

Respondents are regarded as having strong level of dissenting attitudes if they have expressed 4 or 5 critical positions in the above-mentioned 5 socio-political issues. Among all respondents, a sizeable minority of 395 respondents (19.7%) are identified as having strong dissenting attitudes. A profile analysis of them reveals that the youth population holding strong dissenting attitudes share similar demographic characteristics:

(1) not at the bottom layer economically (with median household income between $10,000 and $29,999),

(2) attained tertiary education,

(3) mostly born in Hong Kong, and
(4) with only few having experience of living overseas.

5.4 Other Correlates of Dissenting Attitudes

Respondents perceiving limited opportunities are not visibly more dissenting than those perceiving better development opportunities, so we cannot conclude that perceptions of blocked mobility reinforce dissenting attitudes. The effects of quality of life on dissenting attitudes are similar. Respondents dissatisfied with life or health condition do not have visibly more dissenting attitudes than their satisfied counterparts. The same applies to unhappy respondents who are not more dissenting than happy ones. The findings do not support observations that dissatisfaction with life leads to dissent.

We have examined the effects of “Chinese patriotism” and “Trust in the Hong Kong SAR Government”. Both measures have a negative correlation with dissenting attitudes. For “Trust in the Hong Kong government”, a negative correlation means that the more trust there is, the less dissenting attitudes are. On the other hand, the more dissenting respondents are, the less their trust in the Hong Kong government. For “Chinese patriotism”, the more identified respondents are with China, the less dissenting their attitudes. Respondents with a stronger sense of dissent evaluate national identity and the Central Government more negatively.

5.5 Postmaterialism and Dissent

The thesis of a cultural shift from materialism to postmaterialism has triggered a series of research studies in western societies since the 1970s that focus on how values affect and explain variations in perceptions of social, political, and economic conditions. It is one of the most influential
perspectives to describe and explain the effect of postmodernization on changes in values and perceptions in highly industrialized societies. Earlier empirical findings clearly revealed that Hong Kong people were basically materialist but also possessed partial but not fully developed postmaterialist values. In the present study, the generational difference in postmaterialist value orientation is found to be statistically significant, with the post-90s scoring the lowest and the post-80s the highest in measures of postmaterialist values. The postmaterialist value orientation has significant effects on social attitudes of dissent. The general pattern is that a stronger postmaterialist value orientation results in more critical perceptions of social and political issues.

5.6 Multivariate Predictors of Dissenting Social Attitudes

To better gauge the combined predictive effects of demographic (structural) factors, postmaterialist value orientations, democratic and conservation inclination, identity, and political trust on dissenting attitudes, we have conducted multivariate regression analysis by using aggregate score on dissenting attitudes as the outcome.

The results show that the generations effect alone is minimal. Second, adding more demographic variables cannot account for the greater extent of dissenting attitudes. Hence, it implies that demographic characteristics are not effective predictors. Third, the predictive power is far more encouraging by combining factors of generations, postmaterialist values, democratic and conservation inclination, national identity, and trust in Central and as well as Hong Kong governments. The explanatory power is 8 times greater than the effect of demographic variables.
6. Conclusion

This study starts out with the common perception that generation differences have become influential in the genesis of social discontents and even the emergence of protest movements against major public policies. From our secondary analysis of existing data we do not find consistent evidence to support this anecdotal generalization that the post-80s are more radical and discontented. Some differences in orientations indeed exist across cohorts, but the differences are slim and are not observable in some critical dimensions. While there are some signs that the younger generation is more critical of the government and political establishment, such oppositional attitude is not fixed but significantly influenced by political events and mobilization. More importantly, whatever negative sentiments exist among the younger cohorts, they do not appear to be related to unsatisfactory personal conditions. Even though young people are more critical of the government, they are in general more positive in evaluating their own conditions.

The various findings from the telephone survey specifically conducted for this study confirm that two younger generations are more critical of the establishment, and stronger believers in democracy and environmental conservation. The post-90s are expressing "radical" ideologies, comparable to if not more so, than those of the post-80s. An important question that follows is whether we could attribute the generational differences to the adolescent tendencies to rebel against authority or whether enduring transformation in social values has indeed occurred? The present study lacks the information to provide further answers to these puzzles. We have to wait for longitudinal research on the continuity and change of socio-political attitudes of those in the same cohort over their life course.
Some social observers have suggested three perspectives to account for social and political unrest among youth, namely, that discontents are a result of generational differences, that such differences could be traced to the lack of opportunities for social advancements among the younger generations, and that they are in general less satisfied with their personal life. When more factors are included in the analysis, the generations effect recedes to have minimal significance. We have also tested the second and third perspectives involving blocked upward mobility for youth, and their dissatisfaction with life. However, our findings do not support such claims.

In search of predictors of dissenting social attitudes in addition to generations effect, we use multivariate analysis to test the effectiveness of demographic (structural) factors, postmaterialist value orientations, democratic and conservation inclination, identity, and political trust. Results show that the demographic model is ineffective in explaining dissenting attitudes. Postmaterialist value orientations and other socio-political attitudes are powerful in accounting for dissenting attitudes. The generations effect becomes the weakest variable when its impact is assessed along with that of postmaterialist value orientations through multivariate analysis.

This study has revealed basically that radical and dissenting views show a systemic character in that they tend to cluster together. A person’s dissenting view in one aspect may be correlated with values in other domains. There is evidence showing systemic relationships exist between value orientations and social unrest among youth irrespective of their demographic background. We do not know the causal effects yet, however. We should not subscribe uncritically to the common belief that many youngsters are driven to become discontented with the establishment because of dissatisfaction in their personal life. Blocked social mobility and dissatisfaction with aspects of their personal
life clearly have only a very slight effect on their negative orientations towards major policy decisions. In short, miserable youngsters do not necessarily become angry anti-establishment youngsters. Instead of assuming that young people are motivated by "negative" sentiments, we must accept the fact that many of the young people critical of the government are prompted by "positive" beliefs about themselves, the society, and the polity.

One of the major policy implications from our findings is that social unrest cannot be deduced from demographic background. We have to identify and understand the conditions and process of how these young people have come to acquire radical values and attitudes.

The second policy implication is that a sizeable minority of about 20% of youth are strong dissidents with an anti-establishment sentiment on almost every social or political issue. Officials involved in policy debates should expect that oppositional voices will not be silent and public actions characterized by confrontation and anti-establishment sentiments will probably occur. Policymakers may or may not respond to the sizeable minority views, but the choice made should be based on careful calculation but not paranoia.

This study is decidedly a preliminary investigation of a very complex problem, and only the socio-political attitudes of the younger population in general rather than their political actions are investigated. Further study on the "radical syndrome" and its determinants are perhaps called for before we could fully understand the rising tide of youth activism in public affairs. Nevertheless, the study has contributed by drawing a comprehensive picture of the value dispositions of the younger population in general, and reflecting the misinterpretation from common belief about youth. It also illustrates that a minority of the younger population harbor much discontent towards the
government and major policy decisions. In policy debates, public opinion will be heavily influenced by existing perceptions among the younger generation and policymakers are well advised to be aware of such perceptions. The presence of discontents and radical dispositions, if not actual radical behavior, would be an important parameter for policymakers to consider when riding over major policy debates.
Executive Summary

Youth protests against the construction of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong express rail link have raised widespread attention and concern in our community. The media has adopted various terms—such as “post-80s”, “the 4th generation”, “digital natives”, “the net generation”, and “generation Y”—for this young generation (i.e., the young generations).

The objective of this research study is to assess and understand the young generation’s needs, views, and frustrations. Over eight months, this study used various research approaches to expand our understanding of the younger generation. We conducted a media content analysis and a literature review, which served as a platform to understand the young generation from both global and local perspectives. We then collected in-depth information via four studies: (i) a demographic and socioeconomic profile study, (ii) focus group studies, (iii) telephone and online surveys, and (iv) semi-structured interviews. We categorized the findings of these studies into three major dimensions: (a) psychosocial, (b) communication use, and (c) civic/community involvement.

Media Content Analysis

Major media content in Hong Kong—including newspapers and magazines—were searched between Jan 1 and Feb 28, 2010 using keywords “80 后” and “post-80s”. A total of 1,996 articles were identified (1,894 Chinese articles and 102 English articles). Although the media portrays a wide range of public views towards the young generation and its character and attitudes, articles generally portray the younger generation as highly educated, but with a relatively low median income. That makes it seem impossible for them to purchase their own property, which has become one of the major obstacles in their future, especially for family planning. The articles also point out that this generation is unique in that they are educated in the common values of fairness and justice in society, rather than just earning money. Also, the media reported that one of the core reasons behind the recent demonstrations was the government’s failure to listen objectively to their views.
Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile

Data collected from the Census and Statistics Department shows that the young generation accounted for 20.24% of the entire Hong Kong population in 2009. The educational attainment of this cohort was higher than older generations; however, their median income was lower. Media accounts have talked about this finding. Statistics have also showed that youth aged 15-19 are increasingly working in the fields of wholesale, retail, import/export trading, restaurants, and hotels since 2001.

Focus Group Studies

Six focus groups were conducted with 46 young générés aged 18-29. Their opinions and views were collected. Unlike some descriptions from the media, participants were considerably energetic, passionate about life, and well-educated. Even though they sometimes feel frustrated about facing a glass ceiling, they have strong passion towards their career. Most surprisingly, the focus groups expressed their deep concern about the development of their home, their neighbourhood, their city—Hong Kong, China. They have felt ignored and have grievances about the current mode of civic engagement. They want the government to address their needs. They want to be listened to sincerely and genuinely.

Telephone Interview and Online Survey

The main study consists of two parts: (Part 1) a telephone interview and (Part 2) an online survey. The main study confirmed the prior qualitative findings about their needs and aspirations. The question set was generated in accordance with the three main study dimensions. A total of 1,020 randomized mobile users aged 15 to 29 participated in the telephone interview, and 328 participants completed the online survey.

Respondents were well-educated, and their incomes mostly ranged between HK$6,000 and HK$14,000. Respondents described difficulties with job promotion and agreed that further education may help. Many have considered furthering their education in the future. Young générés are not very absorbed in their current work, perhaps because their work does not intrinsically motivate or inspire them; however, most of them work more than 41 hours a week.

Respondents still hold fairly strong traditional family values and a high percentage intend to get married. In addition, data revealed that young people have strong housing aspirations, and living close to their family is a key concern for them.
Regarding civic engagement, those who voted in the 2008 LegCo election have drifted from the political party they voted for. Over 50% have no favourable candidate or party in the 2012 LegCo election. Although the results of this study do not focus on attitudes towards the acceptability of the violent behaviours of the demonstrations, there is indirect evidence in the finding that close to 50% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “the law should always be obeyed even if a particular law is wrong”. Media use on the Internet and on mobile devices is getting very popular. Over 60% of respondents acquire information online, send or receive SMSs, and use other forms of instant text messaging at least once a day.

**Semi-structured Interviews**

Using purposive sampling, twenty interviewees (aged 18-29) were invited to express their views and aspirations towards the three dimensions and their fourteen sub-themes developed in this study in a one-hour face-to-face interview. This provided more data to follow up with preliminary results from the focus groups and survey studies.

Findings demonstrated that the rise in the young generation's education level has not increased job promotion. The rise in education has even led to some difficulties, especially for clerks, service workers, and shop salespeople. Almost all have considered furthering their education in order to stay competitive in the work field. They consider their preference for outdoor activities during leisure time a sign that they are mentally healthy.

In terms of financial management, interviewees do not prefer to spend much money shopping. They prefer instead to spend money on travelling and investments (e.g. stocks, funds, and bonds). Some said they purchase clothing online because prices are usually cheaper. They are upset about government-developer shields to luxurious flats, and this hinders their confidence in being able to purchase a home in the future and presents a barrier to their plans to start families.

When talking about how to increase youth civic engagement, some participants said the government’s form of communication is rather conservative: emails and phone calls are limited in their ability to collect the young generation’s views. Face-to-face meetings were not very appealing to them, especially when the meetings are not very interactive.
Recommendations

Findings proved that young generas are looking for “space”. A tangible plan is needed to create more recreation space—including social, mental, physical, and environmental recreation—as an investment in our young generation.

The seriousness of their education aspiration should be met by the support from the government. It is crucial to increase the number of institutions allowing University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded degrees. More vocational training should be made available for the young generation to boost world competitiveness. It is also recommended to lengthen the repayment period and/or reduce the interest rate of Student Grant Loans.

The government should initiate and promote working environments that encourage healthy work-life balance. Employees should be encouraged to leave work on time, though with occasional overtime. They should also be allowed to work from home sometimes for better job flexibility. Miso-affluence views show their concern for high housing prices, which are a cause of grievances. A people-oriented home purchasing plan with a predictable timeline of homeownership has to be reviewed regularly. Because young generas still maintain strong family values, they still see owning a flat/house as necessary step in forming a family. Also, more accessible public spaces should be opened for leisure meetings and activities.

Our young generation is very net-savvy. Freedom of speech is one of their core values, and they exercise it with the world via online platforms like Facebook, blogs, SMS, email, and online newspapers. A bi-modal approach including top-down and bottom-up agenda—but with genuine consultation across the community—will promote youth engagement.

Not only is the youth the future; THEY’RE NOW. They are an important barometer of government performance and an indicator of how much the community accepts policies. People from other generations should try to remove their pride and prejudice towards the younger generation and replace it with acceptance and tolerance. Beginning in earnest with the young generation is the best way to make progress. They are the best insurance for the future of Hong Kong.
UNDERSTANDING NON-ENGAGED YOUTHS IN HONG KONG:
A MIXED METHOD APPROACH

Executive Summary (English)

The past decades have been marked by drastic social and economic changes in many countries, including the economic transformation and restructuring of labour markets, increases in demand for educated workers, growth in flexible employment practices, and withdrawal of welfare benefits. As a consequence of these changes, young people nowadays are facing enormous pressures and increasing uncertainties which their parents’ generation has not experienced. Transitions from school to work, which previously tended to be smooth and straightforward, are now becoming increasingly protracted and complex. New terms and categories, such as “status zero”, “freeter”, and NEET have been emerging to describe the patchwork experiences and the problematic and non-linear transitions encountered by today’s youths.

The NEET acronym refers to youths aged 15–24 who are neither in employment, education, or training. It has been used to describe non-engaged youths since the late 1990s in Hong Kong. The current study was designed to provide an up-to-date portrait of non-engaged youths, to examine their school-to-work transition processes, to analyze their experiences of non-engagement, vocational training and employment, to gauge their work values, career aspirations, and views about Hong Kong society, and to understand their everyday lives in terms of spatial distribution, time use, and activities on the internet. The intention was to
develop evidence-based policy recommendations to promote better (re-)integration of such youths into mainstream society in general and to help them gain a foothold in the labour market in particular.

Data from the General Household Survey conducted between 1991 and 2010 and from 52 in-depth interviews with currently or previously non-engaged youths carried out in June to October 2011 were analysed. The major findings can be summarized as follows.

**A Socio-demographic Profile of Non-engaged Youths in Hong Kong**

- In 2010, among 837,700 young persons in Hong Kong, 7.0 percent (58,300 youths) were non-engaged. Of these, 67.7 percent were unemployed, 23.3 percent were categorized as “other inactive persons” (who were not pursuing study, keeping a house, nor suffering from sickness, injury, or disablement).

- Results from binary logistic regression reveal that, first, compared with females, younger youths (age 15-19), and those not living with their parents, male youths, those aged between 20 and 24 and living with their parents were significantly more likely to become NEET. Second, living in a household in the lower income quintile also increased one’s chances of becoming non-engaged. But educational attainment generally buffered youths against non-engagement, with degree holders the least likely to be non-engaged. Marital status and housing type did not pose any significant effect on non-engagement among youths.

- Time-series data from 1991 to 2010 show that the proportion of NEET youths in the total youth population was around 4–5 percent in the first half of the 1990s but rose dramatically from the late 1990s onwards.
The figures increased from 4.3 percent in 1997, to 6.8 percent and 8.5 percent in 1998 and 1999 respectively. After a brief decline, the percentage of NEET youths rose again in 2002. In 2003, it reached a record high which stood at 9.7 percent. Since then, the proportion has fallen and remained at 6–7 percent between 2005 and 2010.

- The fluctuations in the proportion of NEET youths in the total youth population have followed the changes in the level of youth unemployment and overall unemployment, which in turn reflected and were affected by the macro-economic environment.

**Leaving Full-time Education**

- Of the 52 youths interviewed, more than a quarter had left school before completing compulsory education (Form 3) ("early school leavers") and another two-fifths withdrew without finishing Form 5 ("intermediate school leavers"). Unlike those who left school later, these two groups explained their departure from full-time education in terms of disinterest, boredom in the school environment, the perceived irrelevance of the school curriculum, the restrictive disciplinary regime, their rebelliousness or life events beyond their control (such as financial pressures, parental divorce, pregnancy, and problems with the police).

- Parents, friends, and social workers all played a role in delaying or urging our respondents to leave full-time education early and in coping with the negative aspects of early drop out. In the case of social workers, they provided some of these youths information about pre-employment training programmes, job vacancies, and recruitment fairs.
Experiences of Non-Engagement

- All of the youths we interviewed had experienced at least one period of non-engagement lasting at least three months. Cumulatively, one-seventh had spent less than 6 months disengaged so far, but almost half had experienced at least 1 year of non-engagement. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents started to be NEET before age 18.

- The respondents generally held individualistic explanations as to why they fell into non-engagement, preferring to view it as a choice, rather than the results of larger social forces beyond their control. Since many of them first became NEET before reaching adulthood, they believed that time was on their side and saw these non-engaged periods as a rite of passage.

- Some youths spoke about their non-engagement as an opportunity to re-connect with friends and family and to develop themselves educationally or enrich their experiences by travelling and volunteering. On the other hand, others reported being “socially withdrawal” or “hidden” at home and feeling bouts of extreme isolation and fear of going out.

- After a period of non-engagement, some youths reported feeling a greater sense of responsibility toward their family and a need for more cash because they were getting older and had begun to view their disengagement as a period of time wasting. These feelings pushed them to leave non-engagement and to take up training or work.

Participation in Vocational or Employment-related Training Courses

- Many early and intermediate school leavers joined vocational or employment-related training programmes held by the government and
social service organizations. However, most did not find them useful for gaining the experience needed for employment.

- When asked to compare and contrast their experiences and perception of vocational training with those of academic education, respondents provided mixed responses. A point to note is that, whether they spoke positively or negatively about these two types of training and education largely depended on which they felt could best help them to secure a decent job.

_Early Labour Market Experiences_

- Forty-six of the youths studied had work experience. However, two-thirds of them had quit their first job within 3 months, and more than half had worked in at least 3 jobs so far. One of the reasons for their high job mobility is that most of the respondents reported little immediacy about finding work as they had little family pressure or financial burden. This is supported by the fact that over half of the respondents took more than 6 months to take up their first job.

- Regardless of the respondent’s educational level, most of their first jobs were entry-level positions. Many of the interviewees complained about the working and employment conditions, the lack of training and career prospects.

- Regardless of their educational qualifications, these respondents found difficulties in finding a job they liked. While less educated youths mostly attributed their predicament to their own personal problems, such as low educational level and lack of persistence, more educated youths tended to blame society, the media, and the government.
Career Aspirations and Perceptions of the Future

- Most of the respondents cited good relationships with colleagues and good career prospects as being important criteria in job selection. Many had some ideas about their ideal job. For the early school leavers, ideal jobs were constructed in opposition to the poor working conditions they had known in their current job situation. Some, however, pointed out that financial pressures and lack of sufficient educational qualifications prevented them from obtaining their ideal jobs. Their more educated counterparts felt more confident.
- Although most interviewees expressed optimism about their future, they realized the possible challenges or obstacles. While less educated respondents tended to take into account personal factors such as their lack of skills and low educational qualifications, more educated respondents tended to give a structural critique.

Attitude about Inequality and Perceptions of Opportunities

- Underpinning the overwhelming optimism shown in the qualitative interviews, over half of the respondents believed that Hong Kong is a meritocratic society. Most, however, disagreed with the statement that “Hong Kong is a fair and just society.” More than half also expressed discontent about kids from rich families, the Hong Kong government, and “big business”.
- Statistical tests reveal that older youths (age 20–24), degree holders, employed respondents, and those who were first engaged in their 20s were significantly more likely to hold negative evaluations about the rich and those in power in Hong Kong.
**Spatial Distribution, Temporal Scheduling, and Activities on Internet**

- Currently non-engaged youths had lower geographical mobility than their engaged counterparts. They also kept unconventional hours, sleeping late at night and waking late in the late morning or even afternoon.

- Our respondents spent a considerable amount of time on the computer. Many of them used the computer for playing computer games and social networking.

**Policy Recommendations**

- To launch a territory-wide longitudinal study to gain a full understanding of the mechanisms and processes of problematic and non-linear school-to-work transitions in Hong Kong. Longitudinal data on a representative youth population are needed not only to track changes in the activity of school leavers in general and early dropouts in particular, but also to contrast the educational and labour market outcomes between groups of youths with different educational levels and different educational tracks, be they academic or vocational.

- To revamp and strengthen the vocational training system by integrating it into the overall educational system and planning in Hong Kong in order to offer young people real choices and alternative paths to academic education in their school-to-work transition.

- To introduce systematic career guidance and counselling in the secondary schools to provide students and school leavers with timely advice about planning future work and learning.
• To increase the flexibility in the educational system in order to offer early school leavers opportunities to return to formal education later in life.

• To explore different ways to increase the competitiveness of non-engaged and poorly-educated youths so as to better integrate them into the mainstream economy in Hong Kong.

• To provide more support to outreach social workers assisting non-engaged youths in finding courses and jobs and overcoming social isolation. Authorities concerned and social service organizations need to be proactive in recruiting more female outreach social workers so that more suitable services can be provided for non-engaged women.
Annex G

Life of Pi

This is a fascinating story about a 14 year old boy whose nickname is Pi. To cut the story short, his ship sank and he was on a lifeboat with a hyena, an orangutan, and a zebra. The hyena killed the zebra and then the orangutan. At this point, Pi discovered that there was a tiger in the boat.

The tiger killed the hyena. Pi was frightened and he constructed a small raft and floated alongside the boat, so that the tiger could not harm him. He then learned to feed the tiger with fish he caught, and rock the boat to make the tiger seasick whenever the tiger threatened his life. Later, the tiger was conditioned to tolerate Pi and they lived on the boat together, floated on the sea for 227 days. The boat landed in Mexico and the tiger ran off.

Pi was later rescued by a Japanese ship. He was interrogated by the marine officers about the shipwreck, so Pi told them the story. They could not believe the story of Pi.

So Pi told them another version of the story. The ship sank and he was on the boat with his Mom, a cook and an injured Japanese sailor. The cook killed Pi's mother and the sailor. Pi killed the cook for survival.

At the end, the officers believed the "unbelievable" animal story instead of the human story.

The story is about religions, beliefs and humanity. Whether you believe the animal story or the human story, it does not affect the shipwreck. One interpretation of the story of Pi is that whenever there is any doubt, turn to humanity and you will see the light. Sometimes, what is unbelievable is all in your head.

There are a few less known stories of Pi.

Political economics story of Pi

Pi was born on July 1st, 1997, and the 16 yrs old boy was on a boat with a hyena from Korea, a zebra with a hurt leg from Japan, and an Orangutan from Singapore. The hyena killed the zebra then the orangutan. Pi found a tiger called China, and of course the tiger killed the hyena. Pi out of survival had to make a small raft and floated alongside the boat. Pi also learned to feed the tiger and rock the boat to condition the tiger by making the tiger seasick whenever it threatened the life of Pi.

The sad story of Pi

When Tung Chee Hwa was the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, he commissioned Professor Tien Chang Lin [田长霖] to provide an overall framework for the development
of the science and technology for HK. The Innovation and Technology Commission [ITC in short] was found to spearhead HK with science and technology. The logo of the ITC is the symbol \( \pi \) \( \approx 3.1416... \). It is chosen as it is the letters ITC compact together, and \( \pi \) is used in mathematical and physical applications and many more. Another hidden meaning is that science and technology will bring prosperity to HK [三三不尽，六六无穷]. But this story of \( \pi \) is a bit sad.

A Steering Committee for Science and Technology was created to advise the Chief Executive on science and technology policies. The Chairman of the Steering Committee for Science and Technology reports to the Chief Executive directly. It somewhat copied the experience of Taiwan when Li Kwoh-Ting [李国鼎] was in charge of all science and technology policies of Taiwan and reported directly to Chiang Ching-Kuo [蒋经国]. Under Li Kwoh-Ting [李国鼎], ITRI [工研院], Tsinchu Science Park [新竹科技园] were found, and many Taiwanese scholars and engineers returned to Taiwan and started their businesses. One very successful industry was silicon foundry represented by TSMC and UMC. UMC was a tech transfer from Philips Semiconductors. It started as an IC fabrication line no bigger than a few hundred square meters. Later, Morris Chang [张仲谋] started TSMC. TSMC is now the best silicon foundry in the world and the pride of Taiwan. During the eighties on top of the list of Commonwealth 100 [天下一百强] were companies like Far East [远东纺织], Taiwan Cement [台泥] and many large corps of traditional industries. Today, many companies on the top of the list are technology companies with market capitalization much bigger than the top companies in the eighties.

For the story of HK, Professor Tien died of brain cancer two years after his report was finished. The first Chairman of the Steering Committee was diagnosed to have cancer too. So, nobody wanted the job, as it seemed spell struck. When Donald Tsang became Chief Executive of HK, he turned the Steering Committee into a useless assembly. The ITC is now with no directions and hidden under layers of bureaucracy. Needless to say, the ITC was practically defunct under Tsang and now still at a limbo under CY Leung.

But the sad story of \( \pi \) does not end here. One day \( \pi \) will bring HK out of a stagnant economy and HK will prosper.

The economics "Pie" - our reality

Japan dominated Asia for 100 years in the 20th century, and it was because of their strength in science and technology. Korea is already a par with Japan in consumer electronics, entertainment, cars, chemicals, batteries and etc. They are now even challenging Apple. Taiwan has taken a different path of competition, by providing the
world's best EMS [electronic manufacturing services] and silicon foundries. Singapore which is comfortably distant from China has chosen a path of high tech propelling Singapore into a regional centre of ASEAN. [note 1]

The political and economical landscapes have changed in the past twenty years, and the 21st century is a totally different ball game. The four little dragons are all threatened by a tiger called China. Whether you want to believe in the political economics story of Pi is your personal choice. The reality is HK has to be Pi and leverage on the tiger and to live with the tiger on the same boat.

HK used to be the bridge between China and the World. Trading companies had prospered when China was sleeping. But import/export trade of HK have come to a wall since China entered WTO. Even supply chain giant Li & Fung is facing immense pressures these days.

Liberalization of the RMB will bring growth to the finance sector of HK for a while, but when the RMB becomes a world currency, the role of HK to China will become minimal. We have seen this in trading, and we will see the same in RMB financing.

Our sea port is threatened by Yantian, our airport is competing with four airports situated within 100 km from HK.

Tourism has been growing healthily but we are facing many issues caused by resource limitations and imported inflation.

If we do not make our economics pie bigger, we will not be able to cope with the aging population and the decreasing competitiveness of HK. We see that the four pillar industries of HK not growing bigger, but facing smaller marginal returns every day. How to grow our pie is the pressing issue, and we have to find a way forward.

In the past decades we have already invested a lot on infrastructures. In this 21st century, our neighbours have caught up with us building mega scale infrastructures. The age of infrastructure driven growth for HK is ending. Although science and technology is the chosen path for many economies, Hong Kong has been slow and hesitant to take this path.

The skeptics

Many civil servants believe in “factual” statistics. As there are practically no science and technology industries in HK, then why spend money on science and technology? They keep saying that this is public money so must be spent wisely.

Some economists say governments should not intervene, and this belief has almost developed into a religion.
The bankers say we cannot support the weak and poor. They lend to property purchase and development at lower interest rates, but penalize SME's with higher lending rates, and even more so if they are engaged in science and technology.

Many conservative politicians say we should be fair to everybody and should not pick cherries to support. They say "What about us? We came so far without any supports from the government!" In reality they have all benefited from government policies in the past 50 years.

The poor, the needy and the elderly say "What about us?" They are the neglected, and they need immediate solutions to their predicaments.

Our skeptics cannot see science and technology bringing prosperity tomorrow. Some have good memories of our past and believe the good old days would sustain. They live in yesterday and cannot see tomorrow.

Everyday we wake up to a new day and a new world. **Whether you are the skeptics or the advocates, all of us cannot see our future, but it is how we work for our future, which makes a difference.**

**Give hope a chance**

The Life of Pi is a story about religions, beliefs and humanity. It is also a story about survival and hope. For the 227 days on the sea, Pi has never given up hope. Even when Pi and the tiger landed on a small island and had plenty to eat, Pi had not given up hope to return to civilization.

About 25% of our children will choose to study science and technology in schools and at universities afterwards. They are often our best students. In the last four decades, many scientists and engineers originally from HK have decided not to stay in HK because they could not find jobs here. It is plausible that the number of emigrants with science and technology background is in the range of two hundred thousand and more [note 2]. This is a workforce as big as our workforce in the finance and insurance sector, standing at about 206,000 people [note 3]. If we do not do anything about it, we will continue to see brain drain of our best talents. So give them a chance and give them hope. We need to create an environment to keep our best brains.

We are facing limits to growth on all our pillar industries. If we want to enjoy healthy growth in our economy, our hope is to take the path of science and technology. Many skeptics do not believe this. Believe it or not, if this two hundred thousand emigrated workforce is working in HK, their contribution to our economy would have been as big as our finance sector. There are five stories of Pi, which story of Pi you want to belief in is entirely your personal choice. It makes no differences which story you belief in. It is how we work for our future which makes a difference. We cannot just sit and wait for miracles, we must work for our future.
To take the path of science and technology will not be easy, and the way forward is to "learn by doing". It is like walking across a river, it takes courage and determination, and the path will not be a straight path across. You have to find the way, one step following another. The situation of Pi was even more difficult then crossing a river, he floated on the open sea, but he had never given up hope. So let's start walking across, and don't turn back.

Many feel frustrated, despaired, angry and tired of the status quo. No matter how hopeless it may seem to be, never let go of any opportunities to influence the GovHK. Make your voices heard. Influence your colleagues, talk about the need for change, talk about the future of HK, and share your views. You can't change it alone, but together, we can.

We all have dreams, but don't let the reality kill your dreams. No matter how remote your dream may be, for as long as you belief in it, there is a chance for hope. But if you do not start walking, your dreams will never come true.

Become a change catalyst and a hope activist, and remember,

It is how you work for your future which makes a difference. So let's work for it.

Notes:

1. Readers can read about Singapore’s scope of efforts on science and technology at http://www.a-star.edu.sg/Portals/0/media/otherpubs/STEP2015_1Jun.pdf
2. A ball park estimate : 10% emigrated, 70,000 high school graduates a year, for 30 years.

Sunny Cheng
5/3/13

Dr Cheng was a Senior Manager at the Innovation and Technology Commission from 1999 to 2003.
(Translation)

Survey by the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies (HKIAPS) at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK):
More than half of Hong Kong people felt opportunities for upward social mobility inadequate

(Press Release)

Enhancing social mobility is a viable option to alleviate the disparity between the rich and the poor, which is one of the deep-seated problems in Hong Kong. However, according to a recent survey conducted by HKIAPS at CUHK, more than 60% of the respondents considered that opportunities for upward social mobility in Hong Kong today were worse than they were 10 years ago. About 55% of the respondents, in particular young males from grassroots background with post-secondary education, felt that the opportunities for upward social mobility today were inadequate. Survey researchers opined that the Government should seek to create more opportunities for upward social mobility so as to mitigate people’s dissatisfaction while boosting public governance.

HKIAPS recently conducted a telephone survey and successfully interviewed 707 people aged 18 or above to gauge their views on the opportunities for upward social mobility in Hong Kong. The findings showed that 61.1% of the respondents considered that the opportunities for upward social mobility in Hong Kong today were worse than they were 10 years ago. Only 14.6% felt that the opportunities today were better, while 20.5% found that they were the same, then and now (see Schedule 1). Meanwhile, 54.6% indicated that the opportunities for upward social mobility in Hong Kong today were inadequate, and only 9.9% thought otherwise, while 32.4% considered them “moderate” (see Schedule 2). As judged from their background, respondents who were male, aged 30 or below, with post-secondary education or above, reporting themselves to be from the lower/lower middle class, were more inclined to perceive that the opportunities for upward social mobility today were inadequate as compared with other groups of respondents (see Schedule 3). The survey also showed that a relatively high percentage (43.6%) of respondents estimated that in ten years’ time opportunities available in Hong Kong for upward social mobility would be worse; only 19.7% thought that the opportunities would improve, while 24.4% believed that they would be the same over the same period (see Schedule 4).
Moreover, the survey also revealed that 39.2% of the respondents considered the opportunities for their career development worse as compared with those for their parents in the past, 30.8% commented that the opportunities were the same, while only 23.1% perceived that they had better opportunities (see Schedule 5).

Researchers of HKIAPS pointed out that a considerable number of young males from grassroots background, but with a higher level of education, were upset and frustrated in view of the inadequate or declining opportunities for upward social mobility. This group was also most dissatisfied with public governance and gave Mr CY Leung the lowest rating (for the statistical data, please refer to the survey findings on the popularity of the Chief Executive and the HKSAR Government released by HKIAPS on 1 March 2013). In this connection, the Government’s success in improving opportunities for upward social mobility will not only help mitigate the dissatisfaction of this group of people, but also enhance public governance and help alleviate the disparity between the rich and the poor. It is worthwhile for the Government to conduct further studies on and direct more efforts to this area in future.

Despite respondents’ dissatisfaction with the current state of social mobility, it emerged from the survey that many of them considered their standard of living had improved compared with that of their parents. More than half (51.8%) of the respondents said that, compared with their parents, their standard of living had improved, only 25.0% thought otherwise, and 20.9% considered that it was the same (see Schedule 6).

The survey had been conducted in the evenings between 22 and 26 February 2013, with a response rate of 45.1%. 707 respondents were successfully interviewed. Based on these samples, the sampling error is ± 3.69 at a confidence level of 95%.

Telephone Survey Research Laboratory
Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
Chinese University of Hong Kong
4 March 2013
Schedule 1: Opportunities for upward social mobility in Hong Kong when compared with those available ten years ago (percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The same</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No idea/hard to say</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sample size) (707)

Question: "Do you think that the opportunities for upward social mobility in Hong Kong today are worse or better than they were ten year ago or the same?"

Schedule 2: Adequacy of opportunities for upward social mobility in Hong Kong (percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No idea/hard to say</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sample size) (707)

Question: "Do you think that the opportunities for upward social mobility in Hong Kong today are adequate or not? Are they inadequate, moderate or adequate?"

Schedule 3: Views on the opportunities for upward social mobility in Hong Kong by respondents as indicated by their different socioeconomic backgrounds (percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inadequate</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>No idea/hard to say</th>
<th>(Sample size)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>(312)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>(395)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or below</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>(113)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31- 50</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>(323)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 or above</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>(264)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary or below</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>(73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>(368)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary or above</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>(258)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower/lower middle class</td>
<td>60.1 29.7 6.0 4.2 (333)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>53.7 34.6 11.0 0.7 (283)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle class/upper class</td>
<td>38.4 35.6 23.3 2.7 (73)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Schedule 4: Opportunities as estimated to be available in Hong Kong for upward social mobility in ten years’ time (percentage)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No idea/hard to say</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sample size) (706)

Question: “How will you estimate the opportunities to be available in Hong Kong for upward social mobility in ten years’ time? Will they be worse, better or the same?”

**Schedule 5: Opportunities for career development as compared with those for your parents (percentage)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No idea/hard to say</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sample size) (707)

Question: “Compared with your parents, do you think that the opportunities for your career development are worse, better or the same?”

**Schedule 6: Your standard of living compared with that of your parents (percentage)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No idea/hard to say</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sample size) (707)

Question: “Compared with your parents, do you think that your standard of living is worse, better or the same?”
A study conducted by The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) has revealed that although the number of publicly funded undergraduate places has increased in the past two decades, education inequality has deteriorated, with a widening gap between the rich and the poor in receiving university education.

The study, conducted by Professor Chou Kee-lee, Associate Head of the Department of Asian and Policy Studies at HKIEd, analysed data collected during the Hong Kong Population Census in 1991 and 2011 to assess the trend in education inequality during the period. According to the study, the university degree enrolment rate of young people (aged 19 and 20) living in the top 10% richest families (48.2%) is now 3.7 times that of those living in poverty (13%), a much wider gap than 20 years ago (1.2 times). The survey findings are summarised in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in university degree programmes</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in post-secondary programmes</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither in full-time education nor employment</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education of Father

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form 3 or below</th>
<th>University or Above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in university degree programmes</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in post-secondary programmes</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither in full-time education nor employment</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Public Rental Housing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in university degree programmes</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in post-secondary programmes</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither in full-time education nor employment</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Type</strong></td>
<td><strong>Single parent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in university degree programmes</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment in post-secondary programmes</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither in full-time education nor employment</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study also found that young people with highly educated fathers, living in self-owned residential properties and growing up in a two-parent family have higher rates of university attendance and their edge has been widening in the past twenty years.

Professor Chou said that the income equality indicator, the Gini Coefficient, increased from 0.476 in 1991 to 0.537 in 2012, which demonstrates that the issue has become more serious over the years. He added that “education with equal opportunity is the most important vehicle for social mobility in Hong Kong, but now it may not able to prevent intergenerational poverty due to the lack of support for children living in poverty.”

Another noteworthy finding from the study is that the enrolment rate in post-secondary education (excluding degree programmes) is higher for youth living in
poverty (30%) than those in the richest families (23.6%). This suggests that the parents of poor families generally recognise the importance of higher education for their children.

Professor Chou also added that the conversion of many popular schools into Direct Subsidy Schools would further enhance their entry threshold, thwarting students from modest family background in applying for admission into these schools. This will create a class of “noble schools”, hinder social upward mobility, and deteriorate the disparities between the rich and the poor.

Professor Chou notes that a number of organisations have in the past provided solutions to address this issue, some of which are worth considering now. These include providing scholarships or an adequate tuition-reduction scheme to allow students living in poverty to enter self-financed programmes. He also recommends that the government should allocate more resources to schools that receive a substantial number of children living in poverty so that they can enjoy equal opportunity in higher education through more holistic development.

With regards to the discussion of poverty line by the Poverty Commission on Monday, Professor Chou recommends that household income aside, the government should consider adopting other indicators such as a material deprivation index and benchmarks in relation to equal opportunity such as academic results in primary and secondary school, university attendance and graduation, and youth who are in neither full-time education nor employment.

Notes:
1. The census statistics sample used in the study represents around 5% of Hong Kong’s total population.
2. The poverty line used in the study is half of the median household income.
3. Enrolment in university degree programmes included all local and overseas bachelor degree programmes and above.
4. Enrolment in post-secondary programmes includes all certificate, diploma, associate degree and sub-degree programmes.