View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

brought to you by CORE

provided by HKU Scholars Hub

Title	Poverty alleviation policies and action in Hong Kong : an analysis of public engagement strategies
Author(s)	Chau, Ching-man, Eunice; Kong, Wing-wah, Carol; Szeto, Hiu-yu, Raymond; Ting, Ka-ho, Louis; Tsui, Kwok-yiu, Andrew
Citation	
Issued Date	2013
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10722/207961
Rights	The author retains all proprietary rights, (such as patent rights) and the right to use in future works.

Poverty Alleviation Policies and Action in Hong Kong: An Analysis of Public Engagement Strategies

CHAU Ching Man, Eunice (2004159768)

KONG Wing Wah, Carol (2011934804)

SZETO Hiu Yu, Raymond (2011931436)

TING Ka Ho, Louis (2011931448)

TSUI Kwok Yiu, Andrew (2002362672)

Capstone project in partial fulfillment of the requirements

of the Master of Public Administration

Department of Politics and Public Administration

The University of Hong Kong

2013

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Declaration

We declare that this Capstone Project Report, entitled 'Poverty Alleviation Policies and Action in Hong Kong: An Analysis of Public Engagement Strategies', represents our own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

[Signed]

CHAU Ching Man, Eunice

KONG Wing Wah, Carol

SZETO Hiu Yu, Raymond

TING Ka Ho, Louis

TSUI Kwok Yiu, Andrew

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Professor Ian Thynne, our capstone project supervisor, for his guidance and supervision throughout the process of writing this project. We also want to thank lecturers and staff members of the Master of Public Administration Course for their support over the past 2 years.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Abstract

Public engagement is pursued by the Hong Kong Government in many policy areas. Such a trend coincides with the rise of Hong Kong's civil society, who demands a higher degree of public participation in policymaking process. Poverty alleviation, currently tops the government's agenda, is an area where public engagement is rigorously pursued. The focus of this project is to study the general development of public engagement in Hong Kong, to analyse existing engagement strategies in the policy arena of poverty alleviation, to interpret results of analysis and to draw up recommendations for future improvements.

A comprehensive analytical framework is developed for this project. It consists of three parts – a theoretical framework amalgamating prominent theories of public engagement, an empirical tool of analysis and a model for interpretation (the democracy plot). Relevant academic theories and practical guidebooks published by governmental bodies are adopted in the framework development.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

The Hong Kong context is then discussed in detail. The emergence of poverty and income disparity in Hong Kong and the rise of civil society necessitate public engagement on poverty alleviation by the Hong Kong Government. The government's public engagement strategies are analysed in 5 case studies. It is observed that the government has realised numerous benefits from public engagement strategies - boosting legitimacy, enhancing capability and resolving political deadlocks, and fostering collaborations. It is also determined that the degree of engagement bears a positive correlation with the contentiousness of a policy.

This study then draws up 2 recommendations towards a more comprehensive public engagement regime, which includes the expansion of engagement channels and the empowerment of active citizens. This project provides a meaningful portfolio in broadening the understanding of the merits and challenges of public engagement in policymaking in Hong Kong.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ..... **ii**

Abstract ..... **iii**

Table of Contents ..... **v**

List of Figures and Tables ..... **viii**

Abbreviations ..... **ix**

Chapter 1 – Introduction **1**

Focus, objective and background of the project 1

Research questions and propositions: theory and practice 6

Overview of the analytical framework 8

Research methodology 9

Chapter outline 11

Chapter 2 – Analytical Framework **13**

What is meant by public engagement in the policy process? 14

Why should a government engage the public in the policy process? 16

Boosting legitimacy and building greater trust 16

Enhancing governing capability 18

Resolving intertwining political deadlocks in modern days policy problems 19

From theory to practice: public engagement in realistic settings 20

What are the levels of public engagement? 23

Spectrum 1: The IAP2 spectrum of public participation 24

Spectrum 2: The United Nation's scale on level of engagement 25

Spectrum 3: Fung's scale on mode of communication and decision 26

What are the main methods of engagement? 27

Information sharing 27

Facilitated discussion 28

Active participation 29

Choosing appropriate methods to engage the public 32

With whom should the government engage? 33

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

By an individual's needs 34
By the extent an individual is affected 35
By an individual's readiness to be engaged 36
How are engagement methods related to stakeholders characteristics? 38
Open engagement 39
Selective engagement and random selection 41
Lay and professional stakeholders 41
Identifying the participants in poverty alleviation problem 43
What matters should a government consider during public engagement? 44
Balancing inputs and outputs 45
Political consideration: the concept of political equilibrium for public engagement 47
Technical considerations: policy nature, positioning and stage in policy cycle 48
Economic consideration: the special relationship between prevailing macro-economic condition and public engagement strategy in poverty alleviation 50
Psychological consideration: public expectation on their influences 51
Model for Macro-analysis: The Democracy Plot 53
Objective 53
The concept: policy contentiousness and public engagement 53
Concluding Considerations 57

Chapter 3 –Hong Kong Contexts 59

Poverty and public engagement in Hong Kong: the macro-context 60
General background 60
Economic context 61
Political context 62
Social context 66
Policy & Organisational Context 69
The Chief Executive 70
The Executive Council 71
Labour and Welfare Bureau 72
The policy implementation agencies 72
Primary consultative stakeholders 74

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Chapter 4 – Poverty in Hong Kong: Public Engagement Strategies and Achievements 80

Introduction: an overview of existing engagement strategies in Hong Kong 80

Case studies on five poverty alleviation policies 81

Case Study 1: Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme 82

Case study 2: Transport Support Scheme (TSS) and Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (WITS) Scheme 95

Case study 3: Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) 107

Case study 4: Community Care Fund (CCF) 116

Case study 5: Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) – Social Security Allowance Scheme 130

Democracy Plot and Concluding Comments 141

Chapter 5 – Conclusions & Recommendations 143

Overall observations 143

Recommendations 150

Expanding engagement channels 151

Genuine empowerment of active citizens 155

Limitations of the study 158

Concluding Comments 159

References 162

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Fung's democracy cube.....22

Figure 2: The five levels of public participation by the International Association of Public Participation.....25

Figure 3: The three spectra: a synthesis of the IAP2 spectrum, the UN scale and Fung's axis 27

Figure 4: Measuring individual needs so as to identify stakeholders or policy beneficiaries 35

Figure 5: The dimension of participant selection methods in Fung's 'democracy cube' 38

Figure 6. The democracy plot 57

Figure 7: Deliberation process of PMWC 110

Figure 8: Poverty alleviation policies on the democracy plot 141

Table 1: Principles and methods of engagement at different levels in the synthesized spectrum 31

Table 2: Principles and methods of engagement at different levels in the synthesized spectrum 42

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Abbreviations

CE	Chief Executive of Hong Kong SAR
CS	Chief Secretary for Administration of the Hong Kong SAR
CSSA	Comprehensive Social Security Assistance
CoP	Commission on Poverty
CCF	Community Care Fund
C&SD	Census & Statistic Department of the Hong Kong SAR
FS	Financial Secretary of the Hong Kong SAR
HA	Hospital Authority of the Hong Kong SAR
HOS	Housing Authority
HKCSS	Hong Kong Council for Social Services
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
IAP2	The International Association for Public Participation
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IIPS	Institute for Insight in the Public Services
LegCo	Legislative Council of the Hong Kong SAR
LWB	Labour and Welfare Bureau of the Hong Kong SAR
LD	Labour Department of the Hong Kong SAR

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

MPF	Mandatory Provident Fund
MWC	Minimum Wage Commission
NGO	Non-government organisation
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLA	Old Age Allowance
OALA	Old Age Living Allowance
PCSSA	Portable Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme
PMWC	Provisional Minimum Wage Commission
PRH	Public Rental Housing
SETF	Societal Engagement Task Force
SSAIP	Social Security Assistance Index & Price
SSAS	Social Security Allowance Scheme
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMW	Statutory Minimum Wage
SWD	Social Welfare Department of the Hong Kong SAR
TPS	Tenant Purchase Scheme
TSS	Transport Subsidy Scheme
UKDID	Department for International Development of the United

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

	Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
WITS	Work Incentive Transport Subsidy

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Focus, objective and background of the project

This project examines the policy actions taken by the Hong Kong Government to alleviate poverty in the community and assesses the connections between the rise of civil society and public engagement strategies of poverty alleviation policies in Hong Kong. It focuses in particular on the public engagement strategies which the government has adopted during the formulation and implementation of poverty alleviation policies.

The objectives of the project are to explore the motives behind these strategies, the government's performance, these strategies' implications to public governance in Hong Kong and make recommendations.

To begin with, the historical background and the current status of Hong Kong's poverty problem are reviewed. Factors contributing to the rise of civil society and changing attitude towards engaging the public are studied to demonstrate the necessity of public engagement. The

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

connection between poverty alleviation and public engagement is established. Engagement strategies in different poverty alleviation policies are then reviewed. Recommendations and suggestions are made to improve and enhance the policy process in combating poverty, especially from the public engagement perspective.

Poverty problems exist in almost every country and Hong Kong is of no exception. Over the past decades, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has provided various social security protection measures for the poor to meet their basic needs. Poverty problem has only until recent years been widely recognised as one of the most deep-rooted social problems in Hong Kong which has topped the government's agenda. A significant portion of the populace in the city is now living under the poverty line with an increasingly difficult life. From 2003 to 2011, the number of people living in poor working households[1] expanded by 8.1% from 608,900 to 658,100 (Oxfam Hong Kong 2012), despite a promising 40.9% growth of per capita gross domestic product in that period (Census and Statistics Department 2012).

[1]'Working households' refers to households in which at least one family member is working.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Also, the problem is not only about the poor being poorer. The gap between the rich and the poor is also widening at a fast pace. As Oxfam has pointed out, the median income of the richest 10% of households is 26.1 times higher than that of the poorest 10% in 2012. The same figure was 23.3 times in 2003. (Oxfam Hong Kong 2012) Such incomes disparity is considered high by international standard as measured by the Gini Co-efficient, in which 0 represents equality and 1 represents the largest gap. Hong Kong's 0.537 is remarkably higher than other mature economies such as Singapore's 0.482 and United States' 0.469. (M. Cheung 2010)

Oxfam considered government's inaction in combating poverty as the main reason behind the worsening poverty problem and called for urgent government intervention (Oxfam Hong Kong 2012). Some other pressure groups, such as the Hong Kong Council for Social Services (HKCSS), have also urged the government to step up its poverty alleviation efforts (Ngo 2013). Similar recommendations have been made by other pressure groups. The fact that these demands are very closely related to one another suggests that more substantial

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

and wider government's intervention is widely believed to be crucial in tackling the poverty problem in Hong Kong.

It is no secret that poverty has gained wide attention across Hong Kong society. Not only is poverty a glaring social problem, it has essentially become a major source of macro social unrest, which in turn warrants government's attention from a higher level. Many members of the civil society are dissatisfied with the government's efforts in alleviating poverty. On one hand, they perceived the poverty problem as a result of the lack of democracy in Hong Kong. They believed that the government, elected only by an Election Committee[2] which accounts for a mere 0.01% of Hong Kong's population[3], paid little heed to the poor populace who does not possess a vote. On the other hand, they also perceived poverty as a problem of deficiency in governing capacity. They blamed government officials for not understanding the essence of

[2]The 2012 Election Committee for the Fourth Chief Executive Election consists of a total of 1,200 members. (Electoral Affairs Commission 2012)

[3]The total population of Hong Kong is 7,154.6 millions. (Census and Statistics Department 2013)

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

the poverty problem as they lacked professional knowledge, first-hand information and experience in this policy area. These deficiencies prevented the government from formulating effective policies. In summary, poverty is a complex problem of under-representation, lack of knowledge and distrust.

Solving the poverty problem therefore warrants higher level treatments beyond the narrow policy area of poverty. To begin with, it is crucial to recognise the fact that, over the past two to three decades, the macro-political environment has changed drastically as a result of civil political awaking. Public awareness on public policies and governance has increased substantially. This macro-change is closely related to the poverty problem because it is mainly this growing awareness that propels the poverty problem to top of the government and civil society's agenda, as it has done to other policy problems such as urban re-development.

The growth of civil society is accompanied by the increase of public engagement initiatives in policy-making and delivery. Public engagement is recognised as an effective means to raise government's legitimacy and enhance policy quality, with previous success particularly

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

in urban re-development. Hence, it is a likely answer for Hong Kong's poverty problem, addressing critical matters above, i.e. distrust, under-representation and knowledge deficiency.

Research questions and propositions: theory and practice

To achieve the objective of the project, a number of research questions are addressed:

1. Why has public engagement become increasingly relevant and necessary in government policy making and service delivery in many countries?
2. What public engagement strategies are available to a government as it seeks to develop policy and take action in response to matters of immense community concern?
3. What public engagement strategies has the Hong Kong government adopted in seeking to develop policy and take action in response to the increasing problem of poverty in Hong Kong?
4. How effective have the government's public engagement strategies been in relation to poverty?

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

5. How could the strategies be made more effective and/or be complemented by other strategies?

In support of these research questions, three interrelated propositions are pertinent. First, the poverty problem tops both the government and civil society's agenda not only because the problem has become worse in essence. It is also attributable to the change in socio-political atmosphere, which encourages the public to monitor the government and participate in policy making. Political parties promotes advocacy in civil participation and motivates the public to voice out their opinions through various channels.

Besides, public engagement is critical in improving Hong Kong's poverty alleviation policies and actions. The Government is aware of the increasing demand for public participation, especially in territory-wide policies affecting the livelihood of citizens such as welfare policies. Owing to the rather turbulent political sphere in Hong Kong, public engagement appears be one of the possible resolutions in resolving the deadlock on actions to be taken for policy alleviation among different interested parties.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Furthermore, effectiveness is measured by the absolute and relative poverty-related statistics, such as income level and Gini Co-efficient. The statistics serve as indicators on Government's performance in tackling poverty problems.

Overview of the analytical framework

The analytical framework of the project, which is developed in Chapter 2, addresses relevant theories, concepts and ideas through which poverty alleviation policy issue can be analysed systematically from a public engagement perspective. The framework defines the concept of 'public engagement', identifies its core values, and establishes general principles for engagement. The needs as well as merits of public engagement are then discussed. They explain why governments around the world are stepping up their efforts to engage the public in policy making, as in the case for urban re-development and now poverty alleviation in Hong Kong. Up to this point, the theoretical framework can already serve as a lens through which Hong Kong Government's motives to engage can be understand.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

With good reasons to engage the public, the analytical framework advances to discuss how engagements should be conducted. It outlines major engagement methods available, with whom a government should engage and other key considerations during engagement. It establishes benchmarks of effective public engagement, based on which Hong Kong Government's public engagement strategies in individual poverty alleviation policies can be analysed.

On top of the empirical framework for the analysis on individual policies, a new model called 'democracy plot' is also developed in this project for the macro-analysis of the government's public engagement strategies, with particular focus on the relationship between the degree of public engagement and the contentiousness of a policy.

Research methodology

This project makes primary reference to information including publications, websites, speeches and official documents by the Hong Kong Government, and LegCo panel papers and meeting minutes. Analysis is mainly based on desktop research. These papers provide fundamental information on the policy actions taken and relevant

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

engagement strategies adopted for 5 cases studied, reports prepared by the Oxfam Hong Kong, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other organisations and relevant publications by academics are reviewed and examined.

In addition, secondary reference materials from newspaper editorials, journals, commentaries and public reactions via press interviews towards public engagement campaigns are used for analysing public opinions. Editorials and commentaries are useful indicators in assessing responses and reviewing public sentiment and acceptance by the civil society. Various source of information are used for a thorough analysis on public engagement strategies used in formulating anti-poverty policies.

For empirical case studies on selected poverty alleviation policies, the focus is on consultation papers and public engagement strategies adopted during the policymaking process. This method is appropriate as the said documents provide detailed information about policy initiatives and degree of engagement. They serve as a vivid record of the Hong Kong Government's efforts in engaging the public and gauging their views. Consultation forums have been attended in person to observe actual

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

engagement practices. Efforts have been made to collect and analyse the up-to-date information on anti-poverty campaign for a comprehensive analysis.

Chapter outline

This project report is structured as chapters, which includes this introductory chapter. In Chapter 2, an analytical framework is developed, which is anchored on various public engagement concepts, theories and practical guides. It is a framework through which the poverty alleviation policies and action in Hong Kong can be analysed specifically from a public engagement perspective.

Chapter 3 begins with a brief account of the macro-historical background which has led to the emergence of poverty problem and the rapid development of civil society in Hong Kong. It explains how these two contextual changes have made public engagement in the poverty problem inevitable. The chapter continues with a detailed outline of the policy and organisational context of Hong Kong's poverty problem from the perspective of public engagement, in accordance with the analytical framework.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

In Chapter 4, there is a detailed and more specific public engagement analysis of selected major poverty alleviation initiatives, which include the Commission on Poverty (CoP), the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (CSSA), the Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW) and others. These initiatives are addressed because they are good representatives of poverty alleviation policies and action at various facets such as nature, format, function, target group and timing of implementation, etc.

With reference to the findings in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, Chapter 5 reviews the public engagement practices adopted in the 5 selected cases in terms of their significance. The review leads to recommendations and suggestions for possible policy improvements.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Chapter 2 – Analytical Framework

Introduction

Hong Kong is a society of emancipation comprising many business interests in a developed free market, accompanied by an emerging civil society. Having experienced a political awakening in the past two decades, a stronger sense of civil society and a greater political awareness have developed rapidly among the people of Hong Kong. Nowadays, larger and deeper citizen participations are widely expected in many policymaking processes, including poverty alleviation. With public engagement becoming increasingly critical for public governance, an analytical framework on public engagement with particular reference to the context of poverty alleviation is therefore developed in this chapter to provide an overarching conceptualisation for the empirical analysis in subsequent chapters. Key concepts such as definitions, merits, key players, methods, possible outcomes and concerns of public engagement are addressed.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

What is meant by public engagement in the policy process?

Public engagement broadly refers to a government's efforts to involve the public in policymaking and execution. This concept is expressed in similar terms such as 'civic engagement' (Lee and Thynne 2011), 'public participation' (OECD 2009), 'open and inclusive policy making' (OECD 2009), etc. The concepts behind these terms are similar in nature that they are collectively called as public engagement for consistency. Relevant literatures are considered for the analysis on the concept of public engagement.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), a leading international organisation promoting and improving public participation worldwide, has set seven 'core values for the practice of public participation' (IAP2 2013). The essence of public participation, or 'public engagement' as this study denotes, is the belief that parties affected by a public decision should be allowed to involve in the progress in which the decision is made. These parties, individuals and groups alike, are whom scholars and public officials nowadays widely address as 'stakeholders', i.e. people who have a stake in the decision or issue concerned. As the IAP2 core values point out, public engagement

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

attempts to identify stakeholders' needs and concerns, seeks stakeholders' inputs and suggestions, provide stakeholders with information, promote stakeholders' influences on decision-making and keep stakeholders posted on how their inputs would affect decision-making (IAP2 2013). These are the major elements of public engagement. As illustrated here, the nature of public engagement is indeed multi-folded, with impact on every stages of policymaking.

IAP2's core values for public participation echo what is called 'open and inclusive policy making', which are regarded as crucial for effective public engagement. According to OECD, openness refers to the provision of information to stakeholders and the efforts to render policy process accessible and responsive (OECD 2009). In other words, openness is the guiding principle on how governments should interact with stakeholders. Meanwhile, inclusiveness refers to efforts to include the widest possible variety of citizens' voice into policymaking. The term 'widest possible' does not mean literally that every citizen in the whole society must be engaged. This is simply impractical in reality. 'Widest possible', as this study wants to emphasize, refers to the widest

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

possible stakeholders, not 'all' individuals regardless of their relevancy to the policy matters concerned.

Why should a government engage the public in the policy process?

Public engagement has become increasingly popular among governments. They want to engage because public engagement boosts government's legitimacy, builds trust between government and citizens and enhances governing capability. Governments, in particular those in developed societies, have to engage because the socio-economic and political contexts have become so complicated nowadays that political and economic interests of various stakeholders often overlap and are closely linked, entailing political deadlocks. Such intertwining political deadlocks can only be resolved through participations by the stakeholders concerned.

Boosting legitimacy and building greater trust

Legitimacy of a government improves as it gains more trust from its citizens. While democratic governments derive their legitimacy mostly through popular elections, there are other ways through which governments can further gain people's trust. Public engagement is one of

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

those. OECD (2009) stated that the inclusion of stakeholders in policymaking will lead to 'greater trust in government' (OECD 2009). This argument was echoed by Lee and Thynne (2011), who suggested that 'civic engagement' allows governments to 'enjoy greater trust from its citizen' (Lee and Thynne 2011).

This also applies specifically to the context of poverty alleviation, as literature concerning public engagement in poverty alleviation has argued. A study commissioned by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, or the UKDID suggested that participatory poverty planning can 'broaden stakeholder involvement' and 'thereby increase general support and legitimacy for anti-poverty strategies' (Norton, et al. 2011).

OECD elaborated further on the logic behind. It argued that 'open and inclusive policy making' can enhance a government's 'policy performance' and 'democratic performance', the two measures which citizens use to judge a government. It defined 'policy performance' as a government's ability to deliver positive outcomes while 'democratic performance' as the degree of democracy a

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

government adapts in its policymaking process. (OECD 2009) Enhancing the outcome and process will increase credibility and legitimacy respectively. This study shall analyse to which extent public engagement has improved these two performance criteria in poverty alleviation, which constitute a part of the analytical framework.

Enhancing governing capability

The second reason for a government to engage the public is the possibility to enrich its knowledge in policymaking. No matter how capable government officials may be, there are always some policy areas which they are unfamiliar with, new issues which they have never encountered, or situations in which they do not have access to sufficient information. There are always citizens outside a government who can complement such inadequacy. Public engagement is the means to this end.

With regards to enhancing governing capability, OECD mentioned two merits of public engagement concerned – namely, 'better outcomes at less cost' and 'leveraging knowledge and resources' (OECD 2009). These merits are closely connected to each other. Policy outcomes shall

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

improve as quality of policy planning and policy delivery is enhanced, through tapping 'a broader reservoir of ideas and resources' by various stakeholders which include 'citizens, business sector and civil society'. These ideas and resources are crucial in solving contemporary policy problems. They are turned into public officials' knowledge and resources through public engagement.

Again, the UKDID study (2001) affirmed this argument specifically in the poverty alleviation context. It suggested that 'the analysis and understanding of poverty' are enriched 'by including the perspective of the poor' (Norton, et al. 2011). With this as part of the analytical framework, this project will focus on whether public engagement has indeed bettered government's understanding of poverty alleviation.

Resolving intertwining political deadlocks in modern days policy problems

Contemporary policy problems are increasingly complex. As OECD pointed out in 2001, 'changed context for policy-making' is the reason behind governments' attempts to engage its citizens. Many governments recognise that they are now 'dealing with an increasingly

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

interconnected world' (OECD 2001). Rapid technological evolution, especially that of information and communication technologies (ICTs), has 'increased and accelerated such interdependencies' (OECD 2001). The interdependencies are further complicated by the involvement by various levels (vertical) and types (horizontal) of stakeholders. This causes their interests to be intertwined, posing significant difficulties for policy planning and delivery.

Public participation is seen as an effective solution for governments in this regard. It allows these interest parties to interact, exchange opinions and interests and reach the best consensus where most parties are reasonably satisfied. This argument is supported by the United Nation Development Programme (2006), which stated that participation helps 'create the conditions for confidence building and trust between different actors and serve as a mechanism for providing mutually acceptable solutions and win-win situations' (UNDP 2006).

From theory to practice: public engagement in realistic settings

Indeed, public engagement has many benefits for governments in the contemporary. Having said that, it is also very important for

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

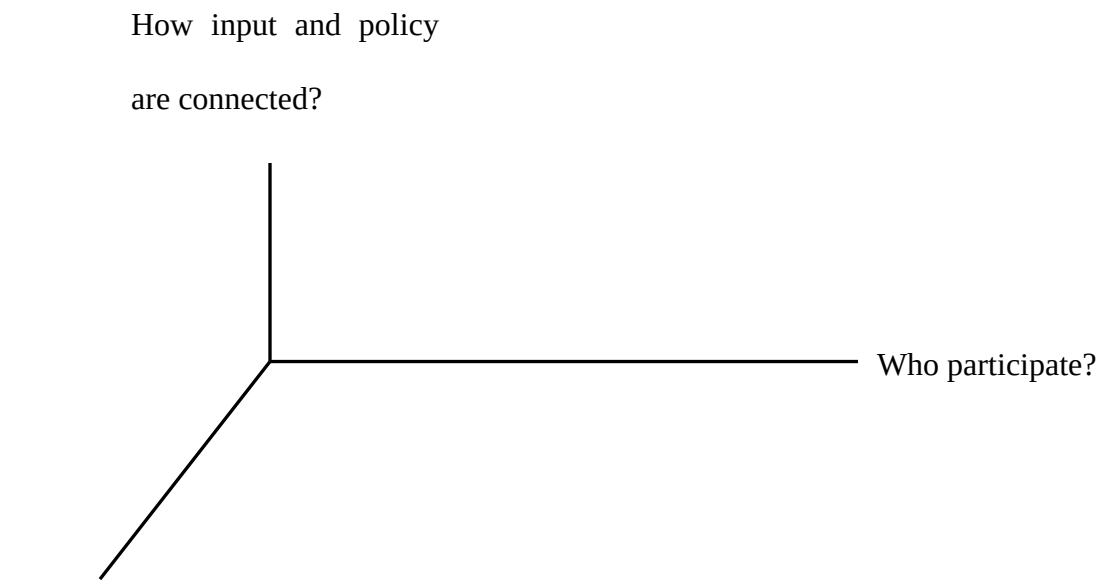
practitioners, such as officials in Hong Kong as in this study, to recognise the fact that these benefits might not happen simultaneously in reality. It is therefore important for this analytical framework to bridge public participation theories with the reality. There are a few factors which affect the results of public participation in real life, which are going to be discussed.

Fung identified three questions affecting results of public participation (Fung 2006). He regards them as fundamental dimensions in the institutional design for assessing public participation in reality. Those questions are: (1) Who participates? (2) How they communicate and make decisions? (3) How their inputs and public policy are connected? Fung saw every question as a crucial variable as in scientific researches. He put these three variables together, in perpendicular with one another, to form a three-dimensional institutional design which he called the 'democracy cube': see Figure 1. This cube was created in an attempt to systematically locate and contrast the varieties of participatory mechanisms in reality, which are often complicated, involving multiple players, happening at multiple arenas and conducted in various manners. Fung's 'democracy cube'

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

superimposes the theoretical benefits of public engagement to a systematic analysis in a realistic setting. Such analysis constitutes a crucial reference for this analytical framework.

Figure 1: Fung's democracy cube



Source: Fung, A (2006), 'Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance', Public Administration Review, December 2006 Special Issue

Fung's 'democracy cube' is designed for realistic and empirical analysis rather than a pure academic framework. To this end, he is very conscious on those formats of participant selection where the public is actually not involved. It is exactly where 'export administrators' are located in

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

his cube (see Figure 2). Although 'expert administrators are seldom regarded as 'public' in reality, it is still included in our framework. It is because participation by expert administrators is both common in reality and complementary to participations by general public.

What are the levels of public engagement?

Understanding levels of engagement is crucial in assessing public engagement methods in reality. Public administrators often have a variety of engagement methods at their disposal. These methods vary substantially by many factors such as format, scale, purpose and intended outcome, etc. Instead of going through the various engagement methods in details, this framework considers the methods in groups. Each group represents a specific level of engagement. Depending on the actual situation and the need of an individual policy concerned, different levels of public engagement and hence different engagement method would be adopted. Three interrelated spectra are reviewed. They include the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (IAP2 2007), the United Nations scale (United Nation 2007), and Fung's 'mode of communication and decision

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

axis' in his 'democracy cube' (Fung 2006). These spectra establish a realistic and comprehensive array of engagement methods which are available for selection by public administrators.

The methods for each level of engagement share many characteristics and principles in common. It is therefore better to study the engagement methods through understanding their common characteristics and principles rather than their actual technical and procedural details. After all, with regards to how to engage the public (i.e., the methods), this project concerns the extent and the general approach of engagement, not the actual procedures.

Spectrum 1: The IAP2 spectrum of public participation

The IAP2 has developed a 'Spectrum of Public Participation' (IAP2 2007) which divide public participation or public engagement into five levels. These five levels, from the lowest to highest level of public impacts, are 'inform', 'consult', 'involve', 'collaborate' and 'empower'. Each level differs from one another by its goal and the degree of power diffusion to the public. At the lowest level of participation, the goal is simply to keep the public informed in order to enhance their understanding on the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

problematic situation they are facing. Moving upward, governments would start listening to the public to an increasing extent and at higher frequency. At the highest level of engagement, the final policy decision-making power rests on the public's shoulder. Governments will implement exactly what the public collectively wants. These levels of public engagement exist in reality, and are practised by governments around the world in various policies areas. They are illustrated in Figure 2:

Figure 2: The five levels of public participation by the International Association of Public Participation

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Less				**More Engagement**

Source: International Association for Public Participation (2012)

Spectrum 2: The United Nation's scale on level of engagement

The UN divides engagements into three levels, namely '*information sharing*', '*consultation*' and '*active participation*' in ascending intensity of engagement. (United Nation 2007) Comparing this spectrum against that of the IAP2, information sharing corresponds to the first IAP2 level

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

(i.e. 'inform') while consultation corresponds roughly to the second (i.e. 'consult') and the third (i.e. 'involve'). Active participation resembles the fourth (i.e. 'collaborate') and the highest level (i.e. 'empower') of engagement.

Spectrum 3: Fung's scale on mode of communication and decision

Fung's dimension on mode of communication and decision is a measure on the intensity of public participation (Fung 2006). One end of the scale represents the least intense mode of communication and decision, in which participants only 'listen as a spectator'. The other end represents the most intense mode of communication and decision, where technical expertise of officials and professional stakeholders are relied on. To this end, as mentioned in an earlier section, public does not participate in the communication and decision-making process. The participants are mainly expert administrators, such as regulators, police officers and social workers as Fung specifically referenced in his article. The fact that social workers were highlighted suggests that this mode of communication and decision, which does not involve the public directly, might be common for poverty problems.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

What are the main methods of engagement?

The three spectra discussed above are brought together in Figure 3:

Figure 3: The three spectra: a synthesis of the IAP2 spectrum, the UN scale and Fung's axis

1. The International Association for Public Participations Spectrum

Inform | Consult | Involve | Collaborate | Empower

2. The United Nation Spectrum

[---Information Sharing---][----------Consultation ----------][---------- -Involve----------]

Less Engagement — **More Engagement**

3. Fung's dimension of modes of communications and decisions

Listen as Spectator | Express Preference | Develop Preference | Aggregate gain | Bargain | Deliberate & Negotiate | Deploy Technique & Expertise

Least Intense — **Most Intense**

Source: (IAP2 2007), (United Nation 2007), (Fung 2006)

Information sharing

Information sharing is undoubtedly the lowest level of public engagement but effective implementation can still be contemplated. In fact, sharing accurate, balanced and detailed information at an

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

appropriate timing can be a challenging task which requires thorough planning. The appropriate questions concern the key or core message that has to be delivered, the information which are important and relevant, and the reasons why the government must provide these information. Based on the answers to these questions, the United Nations (United Nation 2007) proposed a series of corresponding methods, such as advertising, online information, briefings, education and awareness programme, fact sheets, newsletters, media stories, etc.

Facilitated discussion

According to the UN, at this level of public engagement, citizens' inputs are collected for 'planning or developing policies, programmes or services'. They help 'identify, frame and assess options'. Meanwhile, in Fung's scale, this is the level where engagement begins – participants will be given opportunities to express their preferences, although many might be very primitive thoughts based on personal feelings and limited knowledge on the issue. Moving one step further to another level of engagement, participants will be encouraged to learn about the relevant issues as public administrators attempt to engage the public in a deeper manner. Through educational presentations and distribution of

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

detailed materials, participants are encouraged to review the issue more comprehensively and thoroughly, especially to consider the merits and trade-offs between different policy options. The participants' inputs should hopefully be more constructive than those based simply on personal feeling and existing knowledge. Main methods at this level include discussion groups, workshops, one-on-one interviews, open days, polls, roadshows, survey research and web-based consultation sessions.

Active participation

The next level along the spectrum of participation mode denotes active participation of stakeholders. The core objective of active participation is to 'increase the inclusiveness of citizens' opinions, values and expertise in government policies' and hence exert a stronger and larger impact on decision-making, policy formulation and execution. In the previous two modes of engagement, although participants are encouraged to express their preferences, there are no facilitated interactions between participants. Without such interactions, a key merit on resolving political deadlocks among stakeholders as previously mentioned is unlikely to realise. This brings us to another level of engagement, starting with Fung's 'aggregation and bargaining'. At this level, participants

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

are conscious of their own needs. Most importantly, their respective needs are aggregated. Participants of different interests are encouraged to bargain with one another. This process of give-and-take narrows down or even resolves conflicts between stakeholders and lead to a mutually acceptable solution.

This mode of engagement can be further advanced by deepening and widening their knowledge on the issues concerned. Apart from educational presentations and distribution of detailed materials as mentioned above, this can also be achieved through multilateral deliberation and negotiation.

To achieve this, methods at this level should be more deliberative which 'involve citizens and communities in planning, programming, budgeting, evaluating and auditing, etc'. Through such methods, stakeholders should be effectively engaged as partner and co-producer with the government. Based on these principles, the UN suggested a number of active participation methods including citizens' juries, citizens' panels, charrettes, deliberative retreats, drama workshops,

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

search conferences, negotiation tables, steering committees and reference groups. (United Nation 2007)

The principles and methods of engagement at different levels in the synthesized spectrum are summarised in Table 2:

Table 1: Principles and methods of engagement at different levels in the synthesized spectrum

Level	**Principle**	**Examples of Engagement Methods**
Information sharing	Sharing the accurate, balanced and detailed information at an appropriate timing	Advertising, online information, briefings, education and awareness programme, fact sheets, newsletters, media stories, etc.
Facilitated discussion	Participants are encouraged to review the issue more comprehensively and thoroughly, especially to consider the merits and trade-offs between different options	Discussion groups, workshops, one-on-one interviews, open days, polls, roadshows, survey research and web-based consultation,

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

		etc.
Active Participation	Involve citizens and communities in planning, programming, budgeting, evaluating and auditing	Citizens' juries, citizens' panels, charrettes, deliberative retreats, drama workshops, search conferences, negotiation tables, steering committees and reference groups, etc.

Choosing appropriate methods to engage the public

To enhance the effectiveness and outcome of public engagement in policymaking, it is crucial to select the appropriate methods of participation according to the nature and scale of a policy. Nature of the policy determines the level of intensity required for public engagement. A more contentious policy would warrant more intensive public engagement. Scale of the policy affects the number of target participants to be engaged. Other factors, such as the leading principal officials in charge and urgency in rolling out the policies, are also taken into

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

consideration for identifying the most appropriate methods in engaging the public.

Apart from policy nature and scale, stakeholders' characteristics also have strong influences on the selection of engagement methods. This relationship between stakeholders' characteristics and selection of engagement methods will be discussed in more details in the next section on whom the government should engage.

With whom should the government engage?

As mentioned in the beginning of the analytical framework, public engagement refers to the involvement of stakeholders, i.e. people who will be affected by the decision or have a stake in the issue. It is therefore the stakeholders whom the government should engage.

Stakeholders can be individuals, companies, interest groups, professional bodies, industry or sectoral associations. Given such complex nature of stakeholders, a thorough understanding on their characteristics can assist the government to identify the relevant stakeholders for different policy issues, thereby adopting the appropriate strategy to engage them. In the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

attempt to understand such characteristics, three key factors emerge. They are individual needs, the extent an individual is affected, and the individual's readiness to be engaged.

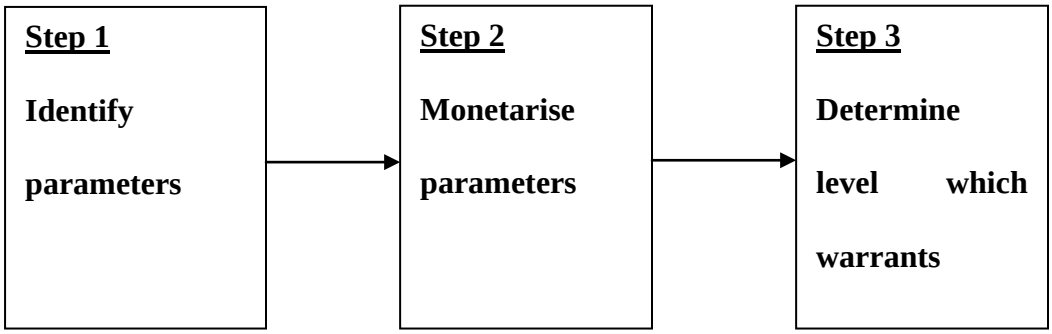
By an individual's needs

Stakeholders' needs are an especially important criterion for categorising stakeholders when it comes to poverty problems. Common factors to understand one's needs for poverty alleviation policies include individual income, asset level, health condition, number of dependents and their needs and living condition, etc. While there are various designated parameters to measure these factors, it is essential that these factors can be conceptualised under a common parameter so that they become meaningful information for stakeholder identification. An effective way of achieving this is to translate all of them into monetary terms. Some measures such as income and asset levels are already in monetary terms themselves. Others such as health condition can also be measured by the persons' medical expenses over a certain period of time, e.g.: one month or one year. Having monetarised these factors, a simple way to identify persons in need is to draw a threshold at a certain monetary level. It should be a level below which the persons would be

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

unable to live a basic life, according to the living standard and price index of the place where they live. This group of stakeholders is indeed the policy beneficiaries of poverty alleviation policies.

Figure 4: Measuring individual needs so as to identify stakeholders or policy beneficiaries



By the extent an individual is affected

The second criterion is the extent to which a person is affected by a policy. Apart from policy beneficiaries who have already been identified through the first factor (i.e. need), many other parties could be affected in various ways by a policy. It is not necessarily that those who are direct beneficiaries that can be identified as stakeholders; those whose interests are affected indirectly may also be considered. Such is the concept of externalities. For example, the Tenants Purchase Scheme

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

(TPS) which the Hong Kong Government implemented in 1998 allowed some tenants in public rental housings (PRH) to purchase the flats they rented. This policy did not only affect tenants in PRH but also those non-PRH tenants who were waiting to be allocated a PRH flat.

Another more recent example is the Hong Kong Government's plan to consolidate franchised bus routes in the Southern District in light of the opening of the MTR Southern Island Line. This move will actually affect not only residents of the Southern District but also passengers of those bus routes in other districts, such as those residing in the Mid-levels and Western District.

By an individual's readiness to be engaged

The third criterion is a person's readiness to be engaged in the policymaking process. Stakeholders' readiness to be engaged has substantial impact on the effectiveness of public engagement and possibly on the policy outcome as well. In the United Kingdom, an engagement profile which constitutes a framework to study stakeholders' readiness to be engagement has been developed. In the study, British citizens were divided into five groups according to the personal

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

resources which they were willing to invest on community and public affairs. The five groups were 'community bystanders', 'passive participators', 'community conscious', 'politically engaged' and 'active protestors' (Harrison and Singer 2007), which form a useful scope for analysing groups of individual to be engaged.

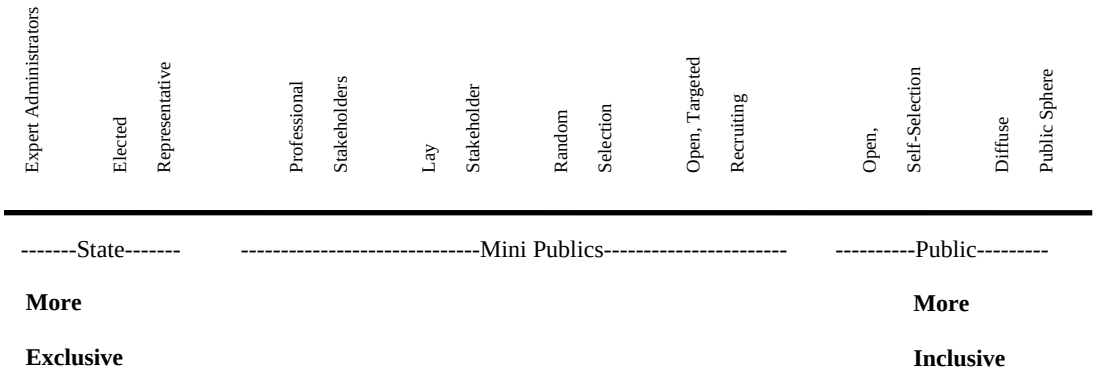
Engaging different groups can have effects within and beyond the policy process respectively. Within the policy process, engaging active stakeholders can lead to a larger quantity of valuable inputs which would enrich government's policy knowledge. Policy quality, especially its relevancy with stakeholders and its effectiveness, can be enhanced. Beyond the policy process, these active stakeholders can serve as the government's community ambassadors to convince other citizens to comply with the policies. From a macroscopic point of view, the compliance cost will decrease. Engaging stakeholders with respect to their readiness can improve governing capabilities, and may even have lasting benefits in policy implementation.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

How are engagement methods related to stakeholders characteristics?

Having reviewed the principles in selecting participants, this analytical framework relates the stakeholders' characteristics to the selection of engagement methods. When trying to establish such relationship, the framework continues to draw reference from Fung's 'democracy cube', in which one of the three dimensions exactly concerns 'participant' selection (Fung 2006). Along that scale, inclusiveness varies on a linear scale with the participants' characteristics. One end of the scale represents higher degree of inclusiveness while the other end represents higher degree of exclusiveness, as illustrated in Figure 5:

Figure 5: The dimension of participant selection methods in Fung's 'democracy



Source: Fung, A (2006), 'Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance', Public Administration Review, December 2006 Special Issue

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Open engagement

Many public participation mechanisms which are currently in place are open to all members of public who want to participate. This is the least restrictive method to select participants. However, this absolute openness does not essentially equate absolute representativeness for an obvious reason – those actual participants are in fact a 'self-selected subset' of the general public, as Fung put it. For example, Fiorina suggested that those who are wealthier and better educated might participate more than those are not (Fiorina 1999), as far as the American context is concerned.

In the context of Hong Kong, wealthier and better educated working class might be relatively silent despite their dissatisfaction (Wong 2013) while the younger generation is more committed to public and social affairs. They are in general more vocal and stand ready to express their discontent through multiple channels. Thus, while open participation is essentially a self-selected subset welcoming all voices, it is actually not as representative as one imagines – The more vocal participants may crowd out the voice of their more quiet counterparts. Public inputs from open

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

engagement can be distorted and thus may not be a true comprehensive basis for policymaking.

The merit of open participation is that it gives every member of the general public a sense of inclusiveness, strengthening the intangible tie between the government and the public. However, whether this merit can be sustained largely depends on how responsive the government is towards the public's inputs. If the public finds that their inputs fall into deaf ears without actually affecting policy decision-making, it is very likely that they would question the credibility of the engagement mechanism as well as the government's sincerity in engaging them.

Government's responsiveness towards stakeholders' inputs is a key question beyond the primary focus of this section, which is to identify the relevant stakeholders and deploying the appropriate methods to engage them. This question is actually related to the remaining third dimension of Fung's 'democracy cube' on 'authority and power', a conceptualisation yet to be examined. This dimension will be

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

discussed separately in more details in the next section where matters a government should consider during public engagement are addressed.

Selective engagement and random selection

With reference to the first dimension on participant selection, this project has earlier argued that open engagement is in fact a kind of self-selection which is not as representative as many imagine. To enhance representativeness, Fung put forth two alternative methods of participant selection. The first method is selective recruitment, where disadvantaged or under-represented citizens are particularly targeted for engagement. Also, those who have a special interest will also be specifically selected. The second method is random selection, where the participants are randomly selected from the general population.

Lay and professional stakeholders

Moving further along Fung's scale is the engagement with lay stakeholders. Fung described lay stakeholders as 'unpaid citizens who have a deep interest in some public concern'. They are people who are willing to represent others with the same interest. There are abundant examples of lay stakeholders. In the context of Hong Kong, chambers

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

of commerce, industry associations, labour unions, parents' associations, neighbourhood groups are common examples.

There are policy areas in which highly sophisticated and professional knowledge is required for deliberating options and leading to constructive policymaking. In these policies, the involvement of professional stakeholders appears to be indispensable. Examples of these policy areas are drugs regulations, environmental impact assessment in infrastructure developments, and urban planning. Of course, this manner of engagement can often give the general public a sense of exclusiveness.

It should be emphasised again that engaging one kind of stakeholders does not necessarily mean the exclusion of the other kinds. Very often, inclusion of various stakeholders can achieve respective merits which are complementary with one another.

Table 2: Principles and methods of engagement at different levels in the synthesized spectrum

Methods	**Participants characteristics**	**Likely outcomes**
Open engagement	Self-selected sub-set of the public	● Distorted views not comprehensive for

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

		policymaking ● Give general public the feeling of being engaged
Selective recruitment	Under-represented views are deliberately included	● Mitigate the distorted public views from open engagement ● Require careful selection to ensure balance
Random selection	Closer to the opinion of the general public	● Allow public administrators to understand general public opinion ● Participants might lack insightful knowledge of the policy concerned
Lay stakeholders	Unpaid citizens with deep interest in some public concern	● Offer issue-related insights for policy making ● Give general public the sense of exclusiveness
Professional stakeholders	With sophisticated and professional knowledge related to	● Offer indispensable, professional insights for policymaking ● Give general public the sense of exclusiveness

Identifying the participants in poverty alleviation problem

In public engagement for poverty alleviation, the poor people are undoubtedly one of the most important groups of stakeholders whom the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

government cannot afford to overlook. However, it is also crucial not to overlook other important stakeholders. As the British Department of International Development report suggests, different levels of Government, NGOs and donors, etc., are all key stakeholders in poverty alleviation (Norton, et al. 2011). Stakeholder analysis according to the UN's '*Guidance Note on Stakeholder Analysis*' (UNDG 2008) can be a useful tool in assessing Hong Kong Government's efforts on identifying the relevant stakeholders. Major considerations include the stakeholders' priorities, perceptions, and influence concerning poverty alleviation policies.

What matters should a government consider during public engagement?

As previous paragraphs suggest, public engagement can, on one hand, bring about many benefits for a government. On the other hand, it can be a highly sophisticated process which warrants careful management to attain the desired results. Poorly managed public engagement attempts can turn out to be wasteful, unpleasant, exhausting or even disastrous for a government. There are several key aspects which public administrators should consider before and during public engagement.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Balancing inputs and outputs

A general principle behind government's consideration is the balance between inputs to and outputs from the engagement process. The British Department of International Development report stated that poverty-related public engagement will 'enhance conceptualization and understanding of poverty problem, participation and accountability and policy effectiveness' (Norton, et al. 2011). Major considerations involve availability and reliability of information, possible trade-offs between cost, time, effort and logistics, ease, rationale and consequence of involvement, extent of follow-up action, etc (Thynne 2011).

Public engagement allows the decision-making power and responsibility to be shared by a government and civil society. Such collaborations serve as foundations of good governance. Nevertheless, the possible trade-off in time may hinder the efficiency of a government. Identifying stakeholders and inviting them to participate in discussions take time and efforts. It takes extra resources to conduct consultation, facilitate deliberations and incorporate opinions as policy inputs. Not only does it increase the cost in policy formulation but also inevitably lengthen the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

policymaking process and poses barriers to taking policy actions that require urgent attention or immediate responses. The government may be criticised as inefficient if the consultation and formulation last for too long.

On the other hand, if the scale of engagement is very limited without much citizenship participation, the government would be accused of disregarding public opinions and the consultation exercises are merely window-dressing. Therefore, it is understandably that the government would have to weigh the numerous trade-offs on conducting public engagement in the course of policy formulation.

Nevertheless, the inherent benefits of public engagement should always be recognised, especially in the context of poverty alleviation. According to the British Department of International Development report, poverty participatory policy can lead to valuable outcomes which include 'stimulating public debate about poverty nature and causes', 'assisting institutions to further their work with more reference to the essence of poverty' and 'assisting poor community to make claims on public services provision' (Norton, et al. 2011).

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Political consideration: the concept of political equilibrium for public engagement

A key factor that affects the relationship between inputs and outputs of a public engagement process is the existing political equilibrium of a specific policy. Contemporary scholars generally agree that public engagement is able to boost government legitimacy, enhance a government's capability to govern and resolve intertwining political deadlocks. Having said that, it does not mean that a government must always engage the public in situations where the policy process is hampered by low legitimacy, governing capability deficiency or intertwined political deadlocks. Instead of the absolute seriousness of these problems, public administrators might opt to assess how serious these problems are in public's eyes. That says, even if these problems exist in essence, if the public is not aware of them or quietly accepts the problems' existence, a government might not need to step up public engagement. We consider such condition as political equilibrium for public engagement. When such equilibrium has been attained for a particular policy, any introduction of public engagement into that policy is posed to disturb the political equilibrium. Subsequent development

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

after the disturbance is hard to predict. The more complicated the stakeholder condition of a policy is, the more unpredictable the outcome of public engagement becomes. Despite possible favourable outcomes at the end, immediate political turbulence is usually unavoidable. Such turbulence could be unpalatable for a government and any mishandling could actually derail the government from reaching the desired outcome or even result in a political disaster. As demonstrated here, political reality is an influential factor and hence a key consideration for a government in public engagement.

Technical considerations: policy nature, positioning and stage in policy cycle

Apart from politics, technical aspect of a policy is another important consideration for public administrators in public engagement. The degree of ease as well as the effects of public engagement varies with a policy's nature. Hence, different degree and strategies of public engagement are required for policies of different nature. There are indeed many factors that can define a policy's nature. For example, the extent of professional or technical expertise required, the confidentiality or sensitivity of policy information, etc. Usually, policies which require

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

deeper and wider extent of such expertise do not require wide-ranged public engagement. And very often the public themselves also do not find extensive engagement necessary in these policies too.

Again, while the actual nature of a policy is crucial, public's perception on the policy also matters, if not more important. The public's perception is shaped by many factors. However, there is one controllable by the government, at least at the onset of a policy process, which is the positioning of a policy. What a government should do is to ensure that public's perception towards the policy is consistent with the actual nature of the policy. Such consistency is crucial, because it would lower the chance for the public to demand excessive public engagement. A government should contemplate such effects of policy positioning on public engagement.

Apart from policy nature and policy positioning, policy cycle is another important technical consideration. Even as a government has decided to engage and has selected an overall approach to engage, it is worth noting that the exact method and format would, and should vary as different stages of the policy cycle are reached so as to achieve optimal results.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

For example, in the initial stage of agenda setting, the wider public should be involved in order to collect as many and as diverse opinions as possible. Once reaching the law-drafting technical aspects, professional experts instead of the wider public should be engaged so as to enhance efficiency. A government should adjust and calibrate its public engagement strategies not only according to a policy's nature, but also the stage of policy cycle.

Economic consideration: the special relationship between prevailing macro-economic condition and public engagement strategy in poverty alleviation

Instead of the nominal economic efficiency of a public engagement process, this section refers to the prevailing macro-economic situation, which often defines the social mood and hence greatly influences a government's public engagement strategies. When the economy booms, the public is in general less critical towards the government. They are also less sensitive towards the government's spending. The situation is often the exact opposite under economic downturns.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Prevailing macro-economic condition is especially crucial in the study of public engagement strategies in poverty alleviation policy because poverty problem is generally more severe during economic downturn. As mentioned above, this is exactly when the public would scrutinise the government more closely. Public's demand for more engagement is expected to intensify. Public administrators should be mindful of these parallel intensifications of both the demand for poverty alleviation policy and demand for more public engagement during economic downturns. And this is the major reason which renders macro-economic condition a crucial consideration for a government in public engagement, especially for policies related to poverty alleviation.

Psychological consideration: public expectation on their influences

When a government declares its willingness to engage and put forward public engagement initiatives, it will inevitably fuel public expectation on their influences towards policymaking. It is therefore important for the government to manage such public expectation, assuming that the public expectation does not derive substantially from the actual turnout.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

A useful framework for the government's reference in this regard is the third and final scale in Fung's democracy cube on 'Authority and Power' (Fung 2006). The scale begins at the point where 'participant has little or no expectation of influencing policy or action'. The next level of 'communicative influence' refers to the situation where participants influence public agency indirectly through changing public opinion.

Direct influence begins at the third level of 'advice and consultation'. Here authority is still firmly with public administrators who, however, commit themselves to take participants' inputs into serious considerations. The fourth level of 'co-governance' refers to the situation where power is shared with the public by government officials. In the fifth and final level, which is very rare in reality, participants will be able to exercise direct power on policymaking.

It is crucial for a government to decide which level of authority and power they can share with participants, and make sure that the public agree with this level.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

As shown in this section, apart from the theoretical benefits of public engagement, there are several considerations which a government should carefully go through before and during public engagement so as to achieve favourable outputs.

Model for Macro-analysis: The Democracy Plot

Objective

What have been discussed so far in this chapter are useful in a macro understanding of public engagement as general doctrine of public governance, as well as establishing a contextual framework for assessing public engagement strategies in poverty alleviation in Hong Kong. The study proceeds to define a model of analysis on the collective implications of all public engagement strategies to poverty alleviation in Hong Kong.

The concept: policy contentiousness and public engagement

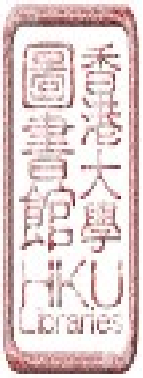
The appropriate choices on whom to engage, when to engage and how to engage are key decisions to be made by a government on public engagement. Fung's literature provides a sensible and comprehensive model to descriptively project modes of public engagement through the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

lens of three important concepts. On top of Fung's model, this study leverages another intriguing and less discrete angle involving public participation of a policy – the **contentiousness** of an issue in a policy-specific mode of public engagement strategy.

To reiterate, in Fung's literature, the perspectives of public engagement were viewed through three empirical dimensions in participant selections, mode of engagement, as well as the mode of decision-making. Meanwhile, the overall situation demands the benefits brought by public engagement to address the situation of contentiousness arising from the nature of poverty alleviation policies, as well as the political context and social context of Hong Kong. The factor bridging the theoretical concepts and Hong Kong context is indeed the contentiousness of a particular policy.

An abstraction of a democracy plot, customising the concepts in Fung's democracy cube, is designed to systematically illustrate major policies in poverty alleviation and to establish a framework applicable to this policy arena. The democracy plot utilises the modes of engagement from the democracy cube, which is closely related to the institutional design on



public engagement of a government. This concept is often widely discussed and debated by scholars regarding politics of post-1997 Hong Kong (A. B. Cheung 2009). This dimension of modes of engagement is adopted as elaborated by Fung's cube.

The other dimension of interest is designated to be the contentiousness of the policy issue. The cases studied in this policy arena bear different characteristics in this dimension, with some highly controversial issues, such as the formulation of the SMW, with others that are subject to less political confrontations, such as the CSSA as a social security net. Through the variance in the studied cases is the framework derived. On some contentious cases the stakeholders engaged can have fundamental paradigmatic disagreement. A prime example would be the use of minimum wage to improve livelihood of low-waged workers, where free-market advocates would strongly disapprove. Such fundamental disagreement, where the stakeholders concerned disagree in both the principle and implementation of a policy, would set the highest point of contentiousness in the democracy plot. The next less contentious stage is conceptualised to be the situation when participants generally agree on the principle behind a policy, but disagree on policy

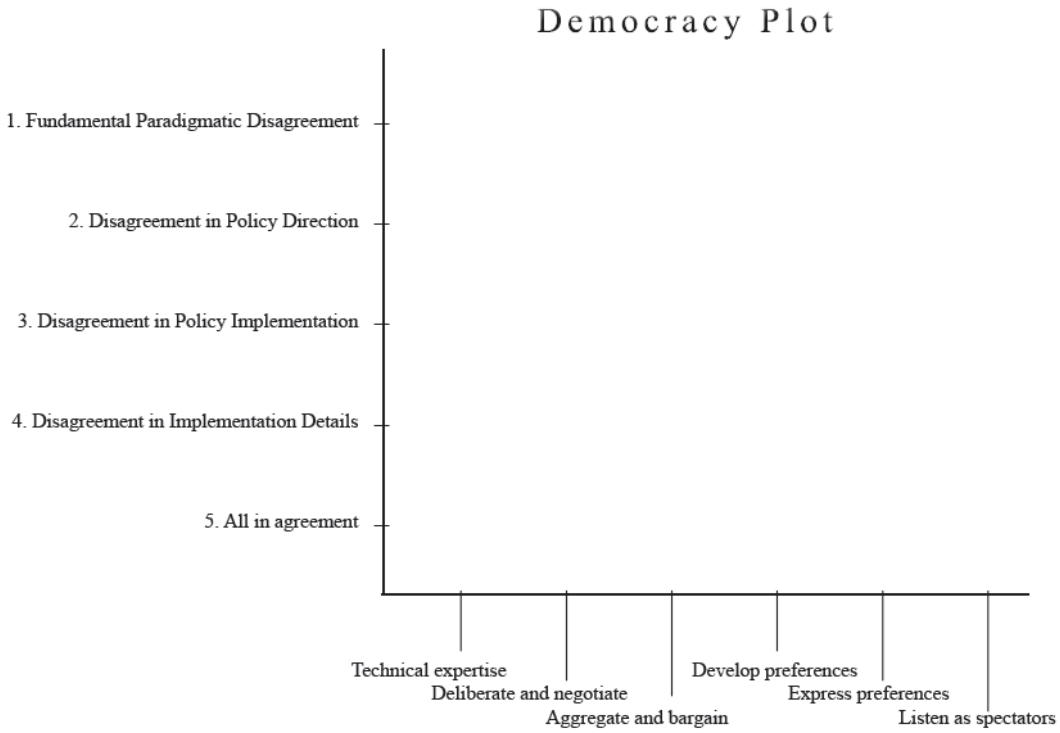
香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

directions. Examples of this level of contentiousness include the mandating of medical insurance for the society pooling together the mounting cost of medical care, which was in principle beneficial to the poor who have trouble footing their medical bills. The third stage of contentiousness is where stakeholders agree upon the principle and direction of a policy, but disagree on the implementation of the policy. The fourth stage is when stakeholders agree upon the principle, direction and implementation of a policy, but disagree upon the specifics of an implementation. The fifth and last stage on the scale is the most harmonious of all possibilities, where the stakeholders are unanimous on all aspects of a policy. The five stages of contentiousness form the second dimension of the democracy plot.

The democracy plot is tailored to address the policy arena on poverty alleviation in Hong Kong, with specific reference to the unique political dynamics and socioeconomic situation. Chapter 3 will discuss the Hong Kong situation in details to illustrate such perspective.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Figure 6. The democracy plot



Concluding Considerations

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, a theoretical foundation for this project is built, where the essence and nature of public engagement are defined and understood, merits of public engagement are discussed and methods for engagement are explored with reference to prominent theories of engagement and public governance. The theoretical framework in this first part is applied to study the Hong Kong context in Chapter 3, where the needs for public engagement in poverty alleviation problems in Hong Kong are examined.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

In the second part of this chapter, the theoretical framework is superimposed onto the reality to construct an empirical framework to analyse public engagement strategies. This refined framework is applied in Chapter 4 where thorough analyses on 5 representative poverty alleviation policies in Hong Kong are based upon.

To better illustrate the concepts, a ‘democracy plot’ is derived in attempt to transform results of analysis on individual poverty alleviation policies into meaningful macro-implications, providing insights to public engagement strategies for poverty alleviation policies in Hong Kong as a whole.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Chapter 3 –Hong Kong Contexts

Introduction

Civil society in Hong Kong has experienced tremendous development in the last decades, as a result of dramatic changes in the socio-political and economic environment. These changes have led to the surfacing of poverty as a major social problem, and created heavier-than-ever public scrutiny on the government. It is crucial to recognise this situation as the essence of the research problem because it welds the two research cores, i.e. the poverty problem and public engagement, firmly together.

This chapter describes the background of the above-mentioned social, political and economic changes in details, aiming at establishing firm connections between the poverty problem and public engagement strategies in Hong Kong. Apart from the macro-context, such connections are also established through the relevant organisational and policy contexts. These connections provide a concrete basis for subsequent analysis of public engagement strategies in poverty alleviation.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Poverty and public engagement in Hong Kong: the macro-context

General background

Until 1841, the region of what is currently considered Hong Kong was only a small rural village at the remote Southern edge of the Empire of China under the imperial Qing Dynasty. British colonisation began at that time and from there Hong Kong embarked on a journey of economic development and modernisation. Started as a small village, Hong Kong first became an entrepot, endured the raging world wars and industrialised before becoming a service-oriented international financial and commercial centre as it is today. The people of Hong Kong were not rich people from the outset. They created and accumulated the fortune which they have today over a journey which spans across several generations. During this long period of history, a large part of Hong Kong population struggled under economically unfavourable situations. However, the kind of difficult lives, namely poverty, was not regarded as a critical social problem and did not warrant urgent and rigorous government intervention at that time. This phenomenon can be explained from three dimensions – economic, political and social.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Economic context

Hong Kong entered a period of hyper-economic growth in the 1950s, soon after the World War II and the establishment of New China under the communist rule. The city became one of the most important light industry bases in the world and started to prosper. The demand for manufacturing labour matched well with Hong Kong's abundant low-skilled population. Despite living a poor life, many were content with the robust upper social mobility and believed that they could live a better life as the economy continued to improve. This optimism was being reinforced over time as income increased and job opportunities abounded. Therefore, the people of Hong Kong believed that their poverty problem would be disappearing gradually through their own hard work without relying on the government. That was why poverty was never viewed as a major policy problem.

As Hong Kong's economy continued to develop and transform into a service-oriented and later knowledge-based economy in the 1990s until today, growth in the availability of job vacancies has begun to stagnate and the distribution of wealth has become increasingly uneven. Meanwhile, the cost of living has continued to increase at a rapidly rate

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

as asset prices surged. Many low-skilled labours have been forced to live a hand-to-mouth life and discovered that they have been unable to turn the situation around without external, especially the government's, assistance. In short, an imbalanced economic development and uneven wealth distribution has materialised as a major problem in the contemporary Hong Kong society. The problem, however, is not only about people becoming poorer. What is equally critical are the reasons that cause the poverty problem to deteriorate in Hong Kong and attract the society's attention. Such factor, the change of political context in Hong Kong, is discussed as the second reason.

Political context

The significant changes in the political context over the recent two decades have remarkable influence on the emergence of the poverty problem in Hong Kong. In the few decades after World War II, adverse living conditions accompanied by rapid economic development prompted Hong Kong people to focus on working hard and improving their living. The culture of self-reliance prevailed. Ordinary citizens at that time seldom thought of relying on the Government, or precisely,

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

without a social security net, any thoughts of receiving government aid would be unrealistic.

This mentality could be explained by the political environment during the post-war era – when Communist China was newly established. China's economy was extremely bad after decades of wars such as the World War II, the Chinese Civil War and the Korean War, coupled with economic mismanagement by the Communist regime. The Chinese people were also subject to tighter political controls of a total authoritarian state. As a result, many Chinese mainlanders were desperate to flee Communist China for British Hong Kong, which was comparatively liberal and economically vibrant. It was not surprising that these new immigrants were easily satisfied even though the colonial government was running Hong Kong in a laid-back manner without any public engagement. Owing to the said waves of migrations, the inbound mainlanders accounted for a substantial portion of Hong Kong's population growth. These mainlanders-turned-Hong Kong people might be poor, but they were already satisfied after having moved to a better place – Hong Kong.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

The situation subsequently changed as Hong Kong became increasingly populated in the 1960s and 1970s. As Murray MacLehose assumed the governorship in the early 1970s following the 1967 riot, a series of social welfare policies were introduced. From the early 1980s to early 1990s, a series of prominent political events, such as the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, the Tian'anmen incident in 1989 and Chris Patten's Political Reform in 1995, raised Hong Kong people's political awareness since their future was at stake. This enhanced awareness led to citizens thinking more critically towards public policies. The government was beginning to be subject to actual public scrutiny at that time. Meanwhile, the political momentum was retarded by the flamboyant economy in the 1990s. Hong Kong people's attention was still primarily on making more money. Issues such as political participation and social justice were never serious topics for the Hong Kong society as a whole.

The year of 1997 marked the beginning of the contemporary chapter of Hong Kong. The political environment has been undergoing profound, if not revolutionary, changes since the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), resumed under the Chinese

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

sovereign in 1997. Coincidentally, Hong Kong outward-oriented economy was hit hard by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. Serious economic bubbles developed before the return of the sovereignty burst rapidly. Hong Kong people faced the first prolonged economic crisis after almost forty years of hyper-economic growth. The unfortunate intersecting of an economic downturn with the HKSAR's establishment inevitably persuaded some Hong Kong citizens to stipulate causality between the economic turmoil and the formation of the new Hong Kong Government. The government also shared part of the blame, as a series of administrative failure, policy mismanagement and unfulfilled promises such as the new airport saga, the SARS epidemics and the 85,000 housing policy which some said to have led to the subsequent collapse of real estate prices, added greatly to public frustration.

As a result, few years into Hong Kong's return to China, many people began to cast great doubts over the government's ability. Pan-democrats seized these opportunities to advocate democracy through universal suffrage as a solution. To date, while the pace of democratic development might still be kept under the government's control, the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

demand for public participation in policymaking and implementation has expanded dramatically in this period. Traditional public consultations and participation through advisory committees are no longer considered adequate, and the public yearns for a better solution to the public engagement inadequacy.

Social context

Alongside with the economic change which causes the poverty problem and the political change which necessitates public engagement, the social change serves as the catalyst which propels economic and political changes. Such social change also creates a platform which connects the poverty problem and public engagement.

The social context in Hong Kong has quietly undergone a revolutionary change owing to the evolution in information and communication technologies (ICT), which has been especially fast in the past ten years. The increasingly popular social media and smartphones, thanks to the high-speed access to the Internet, have substantially changed the way and the pace which people connect with one another and that of information dissemination. People with the same

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

political thoughts, even though they might not know one another in reality, are easily connected through the internet. These networks in the virtual world constitute formidable forces in monitoring, pressuring, or even usurping governments. The political prowess of ICT is widely considered to be one of the major factors leading to the Arab Spring in 2011, especially in Jasmine Revolution of Tunisia and the subsequent downfall of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt.

The penetration rate of smartphone and high-speed internet access in Hong Kong is one of the highest in the world. As a result, the Hong Kong society has also undergone the abovementioned change in social context. The change first came under the public and the government's attention in 2009, as the government attempted to seek the Legislative Council's approval to fund the construction of the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou – Shenzhen – Hong Kong High Speed Railway. Hundreds of thousands of protestors, who were mainly tech-savvy at the twenties, surrounded the LegCo and rallied against the government's bill after they were connected over the internet. Soon after this incident, the government introduced a number of public engagement measures over the internet especially through Facebook, the most popular

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

social media in Hong Kong. The government has since been keenly aware of the need to engage the public in wake of the social change.

Social media has also emerged as an alternative platform for information dissemination other than the traditional mass media. Unlike the mass media in which the editorial rights rest almost entirely on the editors, reporters and journalists in the profession, who usually select information according to the stances of their respective publications, the social media disseminates information to the public in a relatively non-discriminatory or random manner. Essentially every citizen can now assume a reporter role and publicise things of their interest and their opinions. And what they publicise can be read by the public and spread quickly with a far reach. One of the most well-known online social media in Hong Kong is the 'InmediaHK', established with the exact, clear aim of providing news from a different perspective from the mainstream media. Since its founding in 2004, InmediaHK has played a major role in bringing the poverty problem into limelight.

Poverty problem is a social issue which is popular among the netizens mainly because of the widespread empathy among Hong Kong society

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

towards the poor population. This empathy is a result of the serial economic and political change, such as the widening wealth gap between the rich and the poor, the surging property price and cost of living, the rising sense of social justice, and the reduced social mobility, etc. This feeling is particularly strong among young people who find that their hard work, academic qualifications and tremendous efforts are not rewarded with the expected income and upward social mobility, especially when compared with their parents' generation. The poverty problem is easily a focal point for people to reflect their dissatisfaction over the abovementioned social problems. The increased coverage and public attention render public engagement in poverty alleviation policy inevitable.

Policy & Organisational Context

The changes in social, political and economic contexts call for the Hong Kong Government to address the poverty problem and step up public engagement initiatives. The policy and organisational context of poverty alleviation policies in Hong Kong is instrumental in policy formulation and implementation, of which the Hong Kong Government's capacities in both governing and engaging the public, as well as the roles of

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

related stakeholders, are critically examined in relation to poverty alleviation.

The Chief Executive

The Chief Executive (CE) is the de juror head of Hong Kong Special Administration Region (HKSAR). As Hong Kong's leader, the CE is vested with a substantial amount of power by the Basic Law, Hong Kong's de facto constitution. The political system manifests the executive-led philosophy championed by the British Government during the colonial era and inherited by the Chinese Government after she retook Hong Kong's sovereignty in 1997. The directions of public administration and policy priorities are determined primarily by the will of the CE.

The poverty problem has emerged as one of the prime policy priorities by the incumbent and former CEs, C.Y. Leung and Donald Tsang, as they have each given poverty problem extensive coverage in their annual policy addresses. They have proposed a series of policy initiatives to tackle the poverty problem. The emphasis which the CEs have paid to poverty has made poverty alleviation a core policy priority in Hong Kong.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

In particular, C.Y. Leung has reinstated the Commission on Poverty, which is chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS), as the major organisation to gauge stakeholders' inputs in poverty alleviation. The CE himself also chairs an annual summit of the Commission to, as the Commission website suggests, 'bring together relevant sectors in the community to set and reinforce strategic directions.' The CE's emphasis on poverty alleviation and his recognisation on the need to engage the right stakeholders are obvious.

The Executive Council

As stipulated in the Basic Law, the Executive Council is an organ which assists the CE in policy-making. Its members are appointed by the CE at his discretion. Executive Council members are mainly principal officials, members of the Legislative Council and other influential public figures. Over the years, representatives from the grass-root are rare in the Council. The only notable member that falls into such category is Cheng Yiu Tong, currently Honorary Chairman of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions representing many grass-root workers whose incomes are often insufficient to support his personal and family lives and are therefore poverty population. Given the remarkable proportion of

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

poverty population in Hong Kong, it is considered that they are under-represented in the Executive Council.

Labour and Welfare Bureau

The Government of Hong Kong consists mainly of two levels, namely policy-making bureaux and policy-executing departments. The Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) is the policy bureau responsible for labour and social welfare policies. The LWB was formed in 2007 as a result of a reshuffle of bureaux when Donald Tsang began his second term as CE, bringing together the two policy portfolios of labour and social welfare under one single roof, which were originally under the purview of the Economic Development and Labour Bureau and the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau respectively. The amalgamation of labour and social welfare to one policymaking organisation represents of the Government's emphasis on fighting poverty with both labour and social security policies.

The policy implementation agencies

Poverty alleviation policies are implemented by a number of agencies with different specifications. The major agencies are the Social Welfare

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Department and the Labour Department, i.e. the two departments under the LWB. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) serves as the major executive arm which carries out welfare policies of Hong Kong (Services 2013). It offers welfare services and a sustainable social security safety net targeting the most needy people in society, such as elderly, disabled, the socially disadvantaged and the vulnerable. The services consist of a large variety of nature, including preventive, nurturing, supportive and remedial measures.

Employment is the major source of income especially for people in poverty who live hand to mouth. In this regard, employment facilitation and improvement of employees' rights and benefits at a commensurate rate with the socio-economic development is essential and crucial in poverty alleviation. These labour-related policies fall into the jurisdiction of the Labour Department (LD). (Labour Department 2013)

Apart from the two departments under the LWB, other execution agencies which provide basic social services, such as the Housing Authority (HOS) and Hospital Authority (HA), are also involved in poverty alleviation.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Primary consultative stakeholders

In the Hong Kong context, where democracy is not apparent but Pluralism is valued by the government to a certain extent, it is very important to denote the series of stakeholders that the Hong Kong Government places significant weight to and deliberates with frequently. These primary consultative stakeholders are framed as the groups of politicians, advisory bodies and/or policy pundits where the Hong Kong Government engages on a regular basis.

The Legislative Council (LegCo)

The Legislative Council is the Legislature of the HKSAR. The latest Fifth LegCo (2012 - 2016) consists of 70 Members, with 35 of them returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections while the remaining 35 returned by functional constituencies. (The Legislative Council 2012)

The main functions of LegCo are to enact laws, control public expenditure, and monitor the work of the Government. LegCo members

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

also monitor the work of the Government through the 18 Panels under LegCo.

For example, the Finance Committee formed under LegCo is responsible for scrutinising and approving public expenditure proposals and the budget of the government. Major funding proposals must seek approval in LegCo meetings before official promulgation. For poverty alleviation policies, there were numerous times where LegCo posed obstacles to policy bureaux with filibuster tactics when members were dissatisfied with the implementation details. The OALA was a typical example of how the LegCo kept government's policymaking in check by delaying the approval of relevant policy expenditure proposals.

The LegCo also serves as a platform for deliberation and negotiation. All major government funding and policy proposals have to be tabled for discussion before a bill can be passed and enacted. It also receives submissions from deputations and individuals to deliberate on specific policy proposals. Special panel meetings would be held for the government to consult various stakeholders on their opinions before submitting the final proposal in the LegCo meeting.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Advisory body - The Commission on Poverty

The Hong Kong Government relies on advisory bodies positioned at arm's length with the government to provide inputs and comments on policy issues. Among them, the Commission on Poverty (CoP) is the most recent major effort by the incumbent government to combat poverty problem. Its member composition and the terms of reference is a vivid reflection of the government's vision and approach on Hong Kong's lingering poverty problem, with representation of grass-root and impoverished populace larger in the CoP than in the Executive Council.

Six task forces have been setup under the CoP. They are:

- Social Security and Retirement Protection Task Force
- Education, Employment and Training Task Force
- Societal Engagement Task Force
- Special Needs Groups Task Force
- Community Care Fund Task Force
- Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund Task Force

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

The task force that warrants special attention is the Societal Engagement Task Force (SETF), signifying the government's recognition on the crucial need to conduct public engagement in poverty alleviation. This echoes with CoP's Terms of Reference, which explicitly oblige the commission to 'engage stakeholders' and 'promote tripartite partnership' which involve the government, the business sector and community organisations. (Commission on Poverty Secretariat 2013)

Minimum Wage Commission

Established in February 2009, the Provisional Minimum Wage Commission (PMWC) was mainly tasked to advise the CE on the initial statutory minimum wage rate to be adopted on the basis of an evidence-based approach and with a view to ensuring a sensible balance between forestalling excessively low wages and minimising the loss of low-paid jobs while sustaining Hong Kong's economic growth and competitiveness. (HKSAR Government 2009)

The then-CE Donald Tang appointed Teresa Cheng Yeuk-wah as the chairman of the PMWC. The twelve members were drawn from

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

different sectors, namely the labour sector, business community, academia and government departments. The chairman and the nine non-official members were appointed on a personal basis.

The PMWC was expected to work in an objective and balanced manner in making its recommendation on the initial SMW rate, having taken into account the empirical findings of surveys as well as the views of various stakeholders.

The appointments of PMWC ended upon the establishment of the statutory Minimum Wage Commission (MCW), which was set up under the Minimum Wage Ordinance in February 2011, to review and recommend the SMW rate at least once in every two years.

Concluding comments

The unique identity of Hong Kong as a special administrative region with a strong colonial legacy characterised by a prosperous economy and wealth disparity, as well as being a developed international metropolitan with an awakening civil society, weave a political

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

atmosphere that is ostensibly peaceful but with a turbulent undercurrent. The organisational context, consisting of an evolving governance structure of administrators, legislators and advisory bodies, provides a structural understanding of Hong Kong's regime for public engagement, which will be further analysed with 5 cases on poverty alleviation policies.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Chapter 4 – Poverty in Hong Kong: Public Engagement Strategies and Achievements

Introduction: an overview of existing engagement strategies in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, the traditional mode of engagement takes the form of consultative democracy. Primary consultative stakeholders, namely representatives in advisory committees and relevant stakeholders are engaged, and the scope of participation is rather exclusive to a small group of politicians and pundits. The participants have relevant knowledge or represent aggregate interests of market or civil society organisations to carry out discussions and negotiations. The Hong Kong Government considers their preferences and suggestions in the policymaking cycle. On the other hand, the silent majority of citizens, with no direct channel to influence policymaking, rely on experts to offer policy advice to the government. In the policy arena of poverty alleviation, the Hong Kong Government generally adopts a similar

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

approach of public consultation. Different LegCo subcommittees, task force and advisory committees are set up to discuss policy initiatives. The Hong Kong Government then takes into account their advices during the policy formulation process before conducting further public engagement exercises on implementation details.

In recent years, the rise of civil society and the increasing demand for public participation have placed considerable pressure on altering the prevalent mode of limited public participation. In response, the Hong Kong Government has introduced new public engagement measures such as public consultation forums, school talks and seminars, telephone hotlines and e-mails in gathering public opinions. Introduction of more sophisticated consultative approach in Hong Kong coincides with a worldwide tendency of embracing public engagement as an integral part of policymaking.

Case studies on five poverty alleviation policies

Five policies on poverty alleviation are identified for the study on how public engagement strategies have been adopted during the course of policy formulation and implementation in Hong Kong. The five poverty

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

alleviation policies are analysed with reference to their background, rationale, policy initiatives and implementation details, engagement strategies adopted and policy outcome.

Case Study 1: Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme

(a) Background. The CSSA Scheme is the basic social welfare policy implemented by the Hong Kong Government, originated in the 1970s. The progenitor of the CSSA Scheme was the Public Assistance (PA) Scheme, which was introduced in 1971. It was the first social security system in Hong Kong and subsequently developed into the current CSSA Scheme in 1993 (Social Welfare Department 2013). Coming off the political unrests from the 1967 Riot, the colonial administration was eager to provide meaningful public reforms in social security, among other government provisions. The colonial government was successful in its efforts to ease political tension by improving the material livelihood of the Hong Kong citizens.

The name of the CSSA Scheme is self-explanatory. Over the years, the social security system has evolved from a program giving its recipients

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

the basic subsistence for survival to a comprehensive system covering both basic needs and special requirements (e.g. rental, medical and specific items such as household expenditure, etc.). The CSSA Scheme is being positioned by the Hong Kong Government as a means-tested and non-contributory safety net which aims at providing financial assistance to bring the income of needy individuals or families up to a prescribed level to meet basic needs. Since 1971, the allowance amount has been revised upward at a pace at least commensurate with inflation, and on the other hand, many improvement measures have been introduced. They include bona fide adjustments in allowance amount (either increasing or decreasing depending on the economy), the provision of disregarded earnings, the establishment of special supplements and grants to meet with the socio-economic development and to meet special needs of different categories of the needy.

There are three types of payments under the CSSA Scheme, which includes (a) standard rates to meet the basic and general needs of different types of recipients such as food, electricity and gas, clothing and footwear and transport; (b) supplements to meet the specific needs of single parent families, disabled, ill-health, elderly and long-term

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

recipients; and (c) special grants to meet the particular needs arising from old age, disability, education, accommodation and other family circumstances, such as rent, water and sewage charges, schooling expenses, special diets, rehabilitation and surgical appliances. (Social Welfare Department 2013)

Since its introduction, the number of cases and Hong Kong Government's expenditure on CSSA has been increasing exponentially. The number of CSSA cases increased from 88,660 cases in September 1993 to 327,100 cases in March 2012, an astounding increase rate of 370% over 20 years. During this period, the Hong Kong Government's expenditure on CSSA also increased by a startling amount by over 770%, from $2.4 billion in the Financial Year of 1993/94 to $18.5 billion in the Financial Year of 2011/12. The rapid growth in CSSA case count and expenditure are mainly attributed to an aging population, increasing number of new immigrants from China increased public awareness of the CSSA Scheme, changes in people's views towards receiving social assistance, and most importantly the increasing attractiveness of the payout amount. (Scott, The Budget Cycle 2010)

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

(b) Analysis of public engagement measures. Being the first poverty alleviation policy in Hong Kong, it was designed by the Social Welfare Department and was launched without any noticeable degree of public engagement. Similar to most government policies in the decade, the colonial Hong Kong Government simply did not appreciate the concept of engaging the public in any parts of the policy process. Disregarding public engagement was not a surprise at the time due to the high receptivity of an easily-appeased public to any government policies. There was no need for the government to boost its legitimacy or build up trust with the public as the citizens, relatively impoverished, had to rely heavily on government provisions. In this case of launching the pioneering poverty alleviation policy, the public embraced anything the colonial government was offering without questions. In the 1970s, the Hong Kong society as a whole was relatively simplistic – the population was small, and the socioeconomic structure was not very complicated. Therefore, relatively less knowledge and less administrative efforts were required to implement policies in Hong Kong at that time. The colonial government did not see pressing needs to listen to stakeholders' opinion in regards of strengthening its

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

governing capability. (Scott, Efficiency and Performance Legitimacy 2010)

Moreover, Elitism, as the reigning governing philosophy in the colonial government, dictated the direction of the government agenda. In a context with the governing power was highly concentrated around the colonial Governor and a few administers, hardly could there be an outside opposition against policymaking perpetuated by any groups or individuals. Meanwhile, government officials believed that they understood the public well and whatever policies they implemented were well-suited to cover their needs, which was supported by the relative peace during the time. However, the colonial government and the Hong Kong society were not aware that the ensuing social harmony was a result of economic growth and a relatively simple society with upward social mobility.

The CSSA Scheme utilises a rate setting system according to a mathematical model "The Social Security Assistance Index of Prices" maintained by the SWD prior to the handover in 1997. This model is

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

reviewed every five years, but the major component of calculating the amount of allowance payable remains as the Consumer Price Index.

In June 1996 (until 2012), the CSSA Scheme was first bought before public scrutiny upon the establishment of the Welfare Services Subcommittee on CSSA Study under the Welfare Services Panel in the LegCo. In the subcommittee, LegCo members discussed and commented on the delivery-end of the Scheme, including the eligibility of applicants and rate adjustment mechanism. In October 1997, the subcommittee extended the invitations to representatives from interest groups, such as the Society for Community Organization, Alliance Concerning CSSA, etc. However, due to the dominance of the pro-establishment camp in the LegCo, any suggestions, whether feasible or not, which might bring a challenge to the Hong Kong Government were not pursued in the subcommittee. Nevertheless, the channel connecting the government and the public was established.

Unlike formulating policies on other policy areas such as urban development, environmental protection or on other poverty alleviation policies tailor-made for a specific group of individuals such as WITS, the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Hong Kong Government did not require too much effort in engaging the public when the CSSA Scheme was implemented. One of the major reasons is that the Hong Kong Government already positioned the CSSA Scheme as the general safety net that provided social security at the bottom line level, while any special needs beyond such a level would be supplemented by other specific programs. In principle, the CSSA Scheme is an intuitive approach easily understood and accepted by different sectors of citizens in Hong Kong. On one hand, it provides direct subsistence in cash to the needy, i.e. the subsistence is tangible. On the other hand, the non-contributory nature as recurrent government expenditure poses little direct impact (or hard feeling) on the tax payers, i.e. the actual contributors. While the Hong Kong society has been increasingly politicised, the stakeholders concerned has yet to besiege the CSSA Scheme, a policy where a political equilibrium is reached. Stakeholders rather choose to deliberate on other policies which would generate greater political resonance, e.g.: Old Age Allowance, Statutory Minimum Wage. Since the clear definition and positioning has successfully saved the CSSA Scheme from open criticisms by the politicians and the public, any change to this equilibrium is unfavourable

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

to the government, given that the Hong Kong Government is already facing many difficult battles in many other policy areas.

Moreover, the CSSA Scheme is already one of the most well-known and simple government policies being implemented for over 40 years with most of its details polished and refined to optimum. Chronicling the evolution of the CSSA Scheme, when it was first introduced in 1971, only the most basic social security benefits were provided. In 1972, the colonial government constructed the Social Security Assistance Index of Prices (SSAIP, then known as Public Assistance Index of Prices) as an open formula to adjust the CSSA standard rate (Census and Statistics Department 2011). SSAIP is compiled by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) on a monthly basis which reflects the impact of price changes on the recipients of CSSA. Other than the items which are already covered by the CSSA special grants or free public services provided to CSSA recipients, items covered by the SSAIP are the same as those covered by the Consumer Price Indices compiled also by the C&SD. Moreover, the expenditure weight of individual categories of goods and services used for calculating the SSAIP is updated every five years with reference to the findings of the Household Expenditure Survey

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

on CSSA Households. The government reviews the payment rates of the CSSA Scheme on an annual basis, taking into consideration changes in the 12-month moving average of the SSAIP. The proposed adjustment is then submitted to the Finance Committee of the LegCo for approval in December to take effect from February in the following year. The long-standing rate reviewing mechanism has all along been accepted by the general public and is robust against challenges in spite of a rising civil society calling for fundamental reforms in poverty alleviation.

In recent years, the Hong Kong Government often leverages the CSSA Scheme as an inducement policy tool to obtain quick public support. Although the SSAIP has already reflected the extent of economic growth as a basis for the government to increase the standard CSSA payment, the then-Financial Secretary (FS) Henry Tang proposed paying an additional month of the standard rate payment in his Fiscal Budgets since the Financial Year 2007-08 as a "one-off" measure to share the wealth and relieve the grassroots' pressure in facing inflation (Tang 2007). Although FS named it as a one-off measure, it has been implemented every year (except 2009-10) since then. This simple

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

executive manipulation with low administrative cost undoubtedly gains vast support from the public.

(c) Challenges ahead. It is not only the external factors which excuses the Hong Kong Government from engaging the public in implementing the CSSA Scheme, its scale and its stabilised and entrenched condition also precludes the Hong Kong Government from gaining any marginal benefit from conducting public engagement. The most fundamental reason is that the CSSA Scheme is positioned as a safety net for the entire Hong Kong population. This safety net not only affects the 415,462 CSSA recipients in 268,101 cases, but also affects those potential recipients living in poverty and those who are indirectly contributing to the Scheme – the taxpayers. The current CSSA recipients included the elderly, the unemployed, the disabled, the single-parent, the working poor, etc. Although all these recipients have their voices represented by respective interest groups or associations, it is difficult for the Hong Kong Government to engage them one by one, not to mention reaching a consensus for all. As mentioned in the public engagement framework derived in Chapter 2, the government should consider the nature and scale of policy, as well as

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

the characteristics of the stakeholders. Given the tremendous scale of the CSSA Scheme and a huge number of diverse recipients, consensus is extraordinary difficult to reach, and since the CSSA Scheme is not attracting major criticisms on shortcomings, thus it is justifiable for the government not to contemplate on public engagement strategy in the CSSA Scheme.

When taking the interests of Hong Kong's taxpayers into consideration, the only course of favourable action is to cut the rate of the CSSA allowance. Obviously, such a stance would never be accepted by the poor as any reduction in the allowance would seriously affect their livelihood, and thus result in public outcry. The LegCo member Mr James Tien, a merchant from the Liberal Party faced furious criticism from the public when he moved a motion of "Optimizing the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance for the unemployed" in LegCo in early 2013 (Legislative Council 2013). It might be viewed as evidence that taxpayers' voices on the CSSA Scheme are seldom heard by the government under the current socio-economic context. Moreover, given the current dichotomy where the views of the public are polarised to two extremes, the Hong Kong Government is naturally

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

inclined to maintain status quo in order not to provoke debate among the involved parties. It is also the simple design of the CSSA Scheme which allows the government to operate without encountering much resistance. From the government's perspective, the choices are either to increase or decrease the allowance rate; as for the public, the choices are either to take it or not take it. The simple mechanics means that the CSSA Scheme has little room for modification. While any sophisticated engagement work done by the government would not alter this principle, it would be more effective and efficient for the government to allocate its resources to focus on calculating the SSAIP than diverting resources to seek opinions from the public which might be impractical or unnecessarily controversial.

Since 1996 and until 2012 at the end of the 4th LegCo, there was a subcommittee established under the Panels on Welfare Services which served as a single channel to bring the view from the public on the CSSA Scheme before the administration. Representatives from interest/pressure groups, e.g. the Society for Community Organization, Alliance Concerning CSSA, etc. would sit in the subcommittee meeting to speak for the needy. However, such specific subcommittee was no

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

longer convened in the 5th LegCo and the issues on CSSA are now being deliberated in the Panels on Welfare Service together with other welfare issues.

In 1978, the Social Security Appeal Board chaired by government officials was set up as an independent body to provide a means of redress for any person not satisfied with the decision of the SWD in respect of eligibility and payment of social security benefits including the CSSA Scheme. The said Board deals with appeals lodged by persons applying for, or in receipt of, CSSA, Social Security Allowance or Traffic Accident Victims Assistance, against the decisions of the SWD. Following the reestablishment of the CoP in November 2012, the newly established Social Security and Retirement Protection Task Force with non-official members appointed by the CE and chaired by the CS is charged with a role to review the existing CSSA Scheme. The stakeholders appointed are mainly professional practitioners and scholars in the field of social work whose decisions made in this Task Force are expected to become policy.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

In all, when compared with other social security policies, the CSSA Scheme is relatively less controversial. People's views on CSSA mostly concern the amount of allowance, the means to encourage the recipients to work, the adjustment measures on the coverage of the safety net and the measures to prevent the misuse of public money. This is not to say that the public is in complete agreement with the CSSA Scheme. In recent years, the Scheme was challenged by some. A CSSA applicant lodged a judicial review by the High Court and won after his application for CSSA was rejected for his failure to meet the continuous residency requirement. Nevertheless, such disagreement in views and challenges are nothing new for a social security net similar to other developed societies in the world.

Case study 2: Transport Support Scheme (TSS) and Work Incentive Transport Subsidy (WITS) Scheme

(a) Background. The TSS and the WITS are both the Hong Kong Government's initiatives to address the problem of high travelling expense to the working poor living in distant suburbs. TSS is a transport subsidy trial scheme launched on 25 June 2007, serving as a poverty alleviation measure to provide time-limited transport subsidy to needy

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

job-seekers and low-income employed persons living in four designated remote districts, namely, Yuen Long, Tuen Mun, North and Islands districts, with a view to encouraging them to look for jobs and stay in employment across districts. Shortly after its introduction, the government revised the programme with relaxation measures on the TSS on 2 July 2008 by raising the income ceiling and extending the duration of subsidy period**.** (Legislative Council Panel on Manpower 2010)

The recommendation of providing transport subsidy to the working-poor households was found in the Report on Working Poverty by the Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty ("the Subcommittee") presented in February 2006, the then-Financial Secretary (FS) announced a provision of short term travel support in the 2006-07 Budget. The TSS was subsequently replaced by WITS Scheme, which was launched on 3 October 2011. (Labour Department 2013)

Policy initiatives of WITS originated from the CE's 2010-11 Policy Address. The WITS Scheme is similar to TSS in nature but is more comprehensive, aiming to relieve the burden on travelling

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

expenses commuting to and from work on the part of low-income employed persons and promote sustained employment.

With regards to contended issues, there are diversified views in policy implementation, namely on the choice of undergoing a means test on a household basis or individual basis, as the former method, adopted by the first iteration of TSS/WITS, arguably neglects individual needs for low-income workers. The complicated application procedures and means test assessments also aroused some concerns and resentment in the society. It was not until 2 July 2013 that the WITS Scheme finally acknowledged its shortcomings and began to accept individual applications from eligible persons, serving as an alternative option to household applications. Besides, the income and asset limits for WITS were also raised in parallel. (Labour Department 2013)

(b) Analysis of public engagement measures. During the resumption of the Second Reading debate on the Appropriation Bill 2006 at the LegCo meeting on 29 March 2006, the then-FS stated that "Some people have requested the Government to assist the unemployed living in districts further afield to take up employment by providing them with short-term

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

travel support." (Legislative Council Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty 2007) This idea originated from the budget consultation exercise of 2006, which was in the form of open engagement welcoming all Hong Kong citizens to express their opinions through a dedicated website or by e-mail, fax or telephone. Regional forums were also held to gauge opinions from a wider spectrum of participants by inviting members of District Councils, Area Committees, district advisory committees and local organisations to join, as well as unsolicited participation from self-selected members of the public. Such consultations involved selected regional stakeholders to represent regional stance and concerns, together with the public voicing out individual needs in the consultation sessions. With reference to the analytical framework, the intensity level of public engagement ranges between information sharing by general public and some facilitated discussion among district representatives.

The Hong Kong Government then conducted a feasibility study and explored possible mechanisms to be adopted with relevant policy bureaux, departments and non-government organisations (NGOs). A working group comprising representatives from the LD, SWD, the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Employees Retraining Board and the CoP Secretariat was set up to study the recommendations and the implementation issues. The engagement was quite exclusive as only professional and lay stakeholders were invited to deliberate under facilitated discussions. Government officials (expert administrators) and sub-committee members (elected representatives) discussed the implementation details of the scheme in workshop meetings. The scope of participation was limited and did not engage the general public to express their views in the policy implementation stage.

Initially, the idea of TSS originated from a public consultation exercise, a form of open engagement which is highly inclusive and receptive to a wide range of participants. After the basic policy direction was in place, the government changed the engagement approach to a rather exclusive one during the policy formulation and implementation stage.

It is believed that such change was made owing to two factors. Firstly, the policy direction of providing a transport subsidy was announced by the government and was generally agreed by the public without much debate. As the eligibility criteria (which mainly cover the income and

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

assets level) and rate of subsidy were mainly calculated with reference to statistics including employment statistics, transportation cost, regional household statistics etc. These factors are considered technical and too complicated to be explained to layman and to elicit meaningful input. Secondly, the period spanning 2006 and 2007 was a time of booming economy. Citizens were more willing to share the fruit of prosperity with the society. Politically, the then-CE Donald Tsang was re-elected in 2007 and the government maintained existing bureaucratic structure and procedures. The political environment was less hostile and politicised than that in 2012 when the current CE assumed office. Therefore, it was understandable that the government tended not to spend extra time and resources to conduct further open public engagement exercises.

As addressed in the analytical framework, the nature of a policy largely determines the level of intensity required for public engagement. In this case, TSS was a pilot scheme supporting the poor to seek jobs and stay in employment and the Government promised to conduct a review within a specific time frame. Scale of the policy was comparatively small as it focused on four designated districts. As a result, despite the fact that consultation was only done in the preliminary stage during the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

formulating a policy on transport subsidy, there was not much opposition against the government when rolling out the TSS policy framework.

Public engagement was done until the TSS review in 2008 in which the government took account of the views and suggestions of different sectors of the community. The LWB conducted experience-sharing sessions and focused group meetings with NGOs commissioned to implement the TSS (Legislative Council Panel on Manpower 2008). These organisations had first-hand contacts with the target beneficiaries and provided valuable inputs on how the TSS might be refined and enhanced. For instance, the LWB gauged the views of the management and front-line staff of the 12 TSS operators and their network of 33 service centres, plus two mobile service centres through a special panel discussion session (Legislative Council Panel on Manpower 2009). These sharing sessions were of low intensity aiming at candid information exchange and collecting feedbacks. Staff members at the service centres were randomly selected to provide first-hand information and comments on refining the existing TSS and suggestions on further enhancements. Telephone surveys on admitted applicants were conducted and focus group meetings with stakeholders were held,

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

in the form of a more intensive facilitated discussion, to induce deliberation and negotiation on the merits and drawbacks of the TSS. A more comprehensive review enabled the government refine the future WITS Scheme from the angles of relevant stakeholders.

The LegCo Panel on Manpower also held a special meeting on 14 January 2010 to listen to opinions from other organisations. Prior to the meeting, various District Councilors and concern groups had expressed their views on TSS in writing, including but not limited to, extending the coverage to all areas in Hong Kong and raising the subsidy amount of a prospective scheme replacing the TSS. Active participation of interested parties contributed many constructive recommendations. The submissions were well noted by the government and were uploaded onto the LegCo website for record and reference. The review set a good foundation and built general support for a transport subsidy scheme, paving the path for conducting further consultations before the launch of the WITS Scheme in late 2011.

On 4 January 2011, a three-hour special meeting under the LegCo Panel of Manpower was held for deputations and individuals to meet with

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

government representatives and express their opinions towards the WITS Scheme to be promulgated. The LegCo Panel, as a primary consultative stakeholder, received submissions by lay stakeholders and selected representatives, including political parties, District Councillors, labour unions and some concern groups, and relayed their opinions to the LWB. The said LegCo Panel received the views of 33 deputations in total on the proposed WITS Scheme. Most stakeholders, if not all, agreed on the policy direction on the provision of a transport subsidy to support the working poor and encourage them to stay on-job to earn a living. Nevertheless, they shared different views on the implementation details, such as the eligibility criteria of participants and the rate of subsidy provided.

In hindsight, it is evident that the TSS/WITS public engagement strategy was designed based on the relatively less controversial nature of the schemes as a poverty alleviation measure targeted towards a specific working class.

Despite general agreement on policy direction, divergent or even polarised views are commonly found in the implementation of this type

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

of poverty alleviation measure. On one hand, working poor would urge the government to raise the subsidy level and expand the schemes to ease their financial difficulties. One the other hand, tax payers would request the government to exercise financial prudence by implementing a means test to avoid abuses of the subsidy scheme, causing a waste of public money. To untangle such conflicting interests and settle disputes at the optimal equilibrium where most parties are largely content, public engagement through facilitated discussions is deemed an effective means for the government and relevant stakeholders to negotiate a mutually acceptable solution.

The scope of participation in WITS Scheme is wider than that in the TSS, which the former includes professional and lay stakeholders, self-selected interest parties constituting the “mini-public”. They represent different groups of stakeholders and submitted their proposals according to their interests, often on behalf of represented members. They were gathered in a meeting to deliberate, negotiate and exchange their views towards the WITS Scheme. Suggestions were made to the government to explore the feasibility of adopting the "dual-track" approach and streamlining the means test procedures in its future review of the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

said scheme. Apart from the above meeting held in January 2011, the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions urged the government to conduct further consultations among the grass-root and labour unions before rolling out new proposals (Headline Daily 2011).

During the implementation stages of the WITS Scheme, political parties criticised the government for 'not listening to public views'. District Councilors were discontent that the government failed to send representatives to attend their meetings to listen to opinions from district-levels (Yuen Long District Council 2012). This criticism was noteworthy as the government indeed adopted similar consultation strategies for the WITS Scheme as they did with the effective TSS run, where no open engagement consultation exercises were held and only selected representatives were invited to panels to express their views. Nevertheless, the political environment has changed in a few years' time and that the public expected the government to spend more efforts on public engagement. With various voices urging relaxation on eligibility, the LWB has taken initiatives to advance the mid-term review of the WITS Scheme from October 2012 to August 2012.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

The LWB finally put forth an enhanced proposal for discussion in the LegCo Panel on 3 December 2012. The proposal suggested a review on the subsidy rate based on the General Household Survey, an annual updating of monthly income and asset limits and relaxation on eligibility criteria to accept either individual or household applications. (Legislative Council Panel on Manpower 2012) It also put forth an alternative 'individual-based application' option for discussions and deliberations. After the endorsement of the proposals by LegCo members, the enhanced "dual-track" proposal was finally implemented starting from July 2013.

(c) Challenges ahead. The government is committed to conducting a comprehensive review on the WITS Scheme after three years of operation. It is expected that diversified views on the eligibility criteria of applicants and rate of subsidy would continue to be major debating points among stakeholders.

In order to resolve the political dissonance, the government should consider conducting open engagement and allow a wider scope of participants to express their ideas. On adjusting the income and assets level and determining an appropriate subsidy rate, the government may

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

make reference to relevant employment, household and Consumer Price Index, and to discuss the financial impacts with professional stakeholders, while considering the feedbacks from the beneficiaries to understand their needs and difficulties. In conclusion, public engagement is undoubtedly a useful tool for relevant stakeholders to reach a consensus and minimise confrontation when rolling out further enhancement schemes on transport subsidy.

Case study 3: Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW)

(a) Background. The discussion on the SMW has a long history. As early as in 2000, there were prevalent views that the government should establish policy on minimum wage, which set the threshold of the lowest wage rates, and thus protecting grass-root workers who are usually the underprivileged in a society.

In October 2008, the then-CE Donald Tsang announced in his annual Policy Address that the Wage Protection Movement, a voluntary scheme to encourage businesses to provide a reasonable wage for cleaning workers and security guards launched in October 2006 was unsatisfactory, and the government would subsequently proceed with the legislative

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

work regarding statutory minimum wage to cover a wide range of industries (Tsang 2008).

One of the focuses on the minimum wage legislation debate lies in whether a statutory minimum wage rate would violate the doctrine of free market economy, which has been a basis of Hong Kong's prosperity. The business sector in particular, presented their worries and raised objection. Opponents pointed out that the unemployment rate would go up accordingly and jobs would then disappear in large numbers. They argued that the impact would even be disastrous for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which were more vulnerable to business volatility. Some stated that the level of the initial legal minimum wage would be crucial in determining how much the economy would be affected once the law was enacted.

The Provisional Minimum Wage Commission (PMWC) was established in February 2009 to advise the CE on the initial SMW rate (Labour Department 2009). The PMWC comprised a chairperson and twelve other members with background in the labour sector,

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

business community, academia, as well as the relevant government departments.

After the law was enacted, the Minimum Wage Commission (MWC) was set up under the Minimum Wage Ordinance in February 2011, to recommend the SMW rate at least once in every two years. (Minimum Wage Commission 2013)

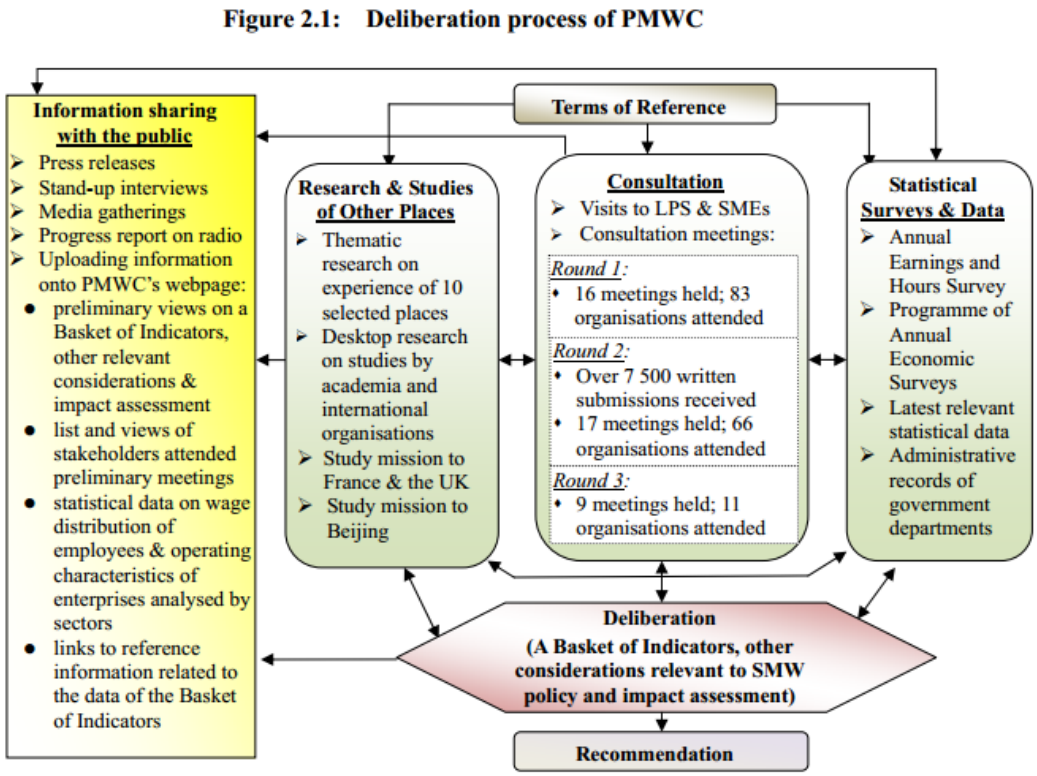
Both the PMWC and the MWC adopted an evidence-based approach, in order to conduct a more objective and comprehensive study of the minimum wage rate, on top of the traditional method of analyzing the relevant statistical data.

(b) Analysis of public engagement measures. To engage the society on this highly sensitive issue, the PMWC adopted a multi-pronged approach and a combination of engagement methods which illustrated that the Hong Kong Government was willing to include views from different walks of life in the policy making process. (Policy 21 Limited 2012)

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

The graph below adopted from the report of the PMWC indicated that a lot of effort was put in information sharing, facilitated discussion and active participation – all three levels of engagement as pinpointed in the analytical framework.

Figure 7: Deliberation process of PMWC



Source: Report of the Provisional Minimum Wage Commission, October 2010 http://www.mwc.org.hk/filemanager/system/en/download/PMWC_Report.pdf

To formulate an appropriate SMW rate, the government had to draw on a lot of statistical data in justifying decision-making. Institutionally, the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

entire PMWC framework facilitates public engagement in all stages of policymaking.

As discussed in Chapter 2, information sharing is the first level of engagement method, representing the lowest intensity by merely sharing the accurate, balanced and detailed information at an appropriate timing. In the case of SMW, a lot of press releases, progress reports and designated websites were arranged for the government to reach the media as well as the public, with the aim of facilitating the next step - facilitated discussion.

In order to gauge the real impact of imposing a minimum wage in Hong Kong, the PMWC employed outside researchers, who were professional stakeholders acquiring sophisticated and professional knowledge, to work on some important areas such as the knock-on effect of SMW on the pay hierarchies in the retail and restaurant sectors. These studies required complicated calculations which demanded specific financial knowledge, and the result offered essential and professional insights for policymaking. Experiences from other countries adapting to SMW were also important lessons that could be valuable to the Hong Kong situation.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Study missions to other countries helped justify the results of statistical surveys and data and gave a more comprehensive view of the issue.

The PMWC engaged lay stakeholders and conducted selective recruitment as well in order to gather more diverse views on the issue. Besides general public consultations and forums, specific sectors like the Low Pay Sectors (LPS) and SMEs were separately invited to express their opinions, of which 16 meetings were held with their comments quite comprehensively summarised in their report on public engagement. It ensured that lay stakeholders' views, as well as under-represented stakeholders' views, were all included.

Regarding legislating SMW, the major problem of the supporting side was setting an initial rate. It was believed that the enactment of the law would mostly affect those SMEs with employees who were poorly-educated and had relatively few competitive advantages. If the rate were excessively high, many businesses, especially those in property management, security, cleansing services will be hit hardest. On the other hand, a rate set too low would be useless and ineffective in raising the living standards of the poor.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Unlike most of the other poverty alleviation policies, SMW is a redistributive policy not paid directly from the public purse but in a way as a direct expense charged to the employers in the benefit of the employees. The topic was bound to be contentious and the PMWC put in effort to set the venue for deliberation amongst the various parties with conflicting interests.

As addressed in the analytical framework, one of the reasons for engaging the public is to resolve intertwining political deadlocks in modern day's policy arena and this fits the case of SMW. The terms of reference of the PMWC stated clearly that stakeholder engagement is mandatory in formulating SMW.

At the outset of discussions, pressure groups representing labour interests, such as the HKCTU, insisted that the rate should be set at $33/hour, while the Liberal Party, representing the business sector repeatedly indicated that $24/hour would be suitable. On 20 March 2010, after LegCo Member representing the catering industry Tommy Cheung Yu-yan suggested a minimum wage of HK$20/hour, and he was

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

nicknamed “Twenty dollar note Cheung” by opposing stakeholders, a taunt that associated his assertion with the corporate indifference to hardships of the working poor.

After different levels of engagement activities, the government accepted the findings of PMWC and decided that it was in the society’s overall interest to set the initial statutory minimum wage rate at $28/hour. As a result, in November 2010, the $28/hour SMW rate was set and finally came into force on 1 May 2011.

The level of the initial SMW rate was under the limelight of the public and appeared as the main theme in media headlines. Although there were some suspicions that the initial rate of $28/hour was determined before the consultation, the government showed its willingness and was seen to be listening to public views.

Subject to a two-year reviewing period, extensive consultations to assess views and concerns of the community regarding the SMW rate are conducted and views collected are considered by the government to better the SMW. The latest eight-week public consultation

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

was conducted to collect public views in April 2012. With effect from 1 May 2013, the SMW rate was revised to $30/hour.

(c) Challenges ahead. As discussed above, the complexity of SMW is attributed to the direct involvement of multiple and conflicting interests in the market. Unlike other poverty alleviation measures, the redistributed wealth in SMW is not drawn from the public purse, which is indeed taxpayers' money, but rather directly from the employers' vault.

The MWC was set up after the enactment to review the SMW rate at least once every two years. Despite the extensive efforts on public engagement, political parties and the public still have very different views regarding the frequency of reviews of the SMW rate level. To a certain extent, this ongoing problem illustrated that public engagement might not resolve all political problems.

The latest challenge to the government would be on a related topic - the implementation of standard working hours. Given that the standard working hours would involve even more employers in the market, the challenges ahead could not be underestimated.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

The public engagement strategy employed by the SMW policy formulation process is largely effective and serves as a valuable lesson. The above analysis illustrates that the Hong Kong Government is keenly aware that even for public policies with goodwill, in view of the contentiousness in the policy's nature where stakeholders' interests are in direct conflict, compounded by Hong Kong's vibrant political context, engaging the public in an early stage of policy formation would always be conducive to gaining public support.

Case study 4: Community Care Fund (CCF)

(a) Background. In the 2010-11 Policy Address, the then-CE Tsang announced the establishment of the CCF to promote a culture of social responsibility and encourage the business sector's participation in helping the poor. CCF is a trust fund established in 2011 under the Secretary for Home Affairs Incorporation Ordinance (Cap. 1044), with a Steering Committee who oversees and coordinates its operation. An Executive Committee and four Sub-committees (Education, Home Affairs, Medical and Welfare) are set up under the Steering Committee to support the operation of the CCF. CCF aims to provide direct assistance to needy

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

persons facing economic difficulties, in particular those who fall outside the social safety net or those within the safety net but have special circumstances that are not covered.

The CCF has been integrated into CoP since 2013 with overseeing responsibilities transferred from the CCF Steering Committee to one of the six task forces under CoP, the CCF Task Force. The said Task Force is responsible for advising the CoP on the CCF's operational arrangements and liaising closely with CoP to draw up assistance programmes for the underprivileged. Since the establishment of the CCF in 2011, it has launched 19 assistance programmes with more than 100,000 people benefited. (Home Affairs Bureau 2013)

(b) Analysis of public engagement measures. The CCF puts in place a comprehensive public engagement regime employing a multitude of pioneering measures to consult the pubic when compared to other poverty alleviation policy processes. To date, the CCF has conducted certain rounds of discussion and consultation forums for various stakeholders to express their views before rolling out a series of programmes.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

The CCF is set up to promote a tripartite partnership involving the government, business sector and the community in poverty alleviation. It targets to promote a culture of social responsibility and encourage the better-off citizens to give a helping hand to the poor. Apart from government funding, the projects under the CCF also rely on donations from the business sector. The unique positioning of CCF and its fundraising nature made it place greater emphasis on community participation than other government bureaux or departments. To foster a closer partnership, the incentives to engage the public and include them in policymaking are higher. Also, a more extensive public engagement strategy is required as the CCF is designed around the concept of providing assistance to cover for the needy whose special needs are not taken care of by the current welfare system, thereby warranting an enhanced understanding and sensitivity to the multi-faceted hardships of the poor.

Besides, the business sector and organisation chiefs are always regarded as middle and upper class citizens who do not share a common background with the poor and thus are often chastised as being

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

indifferent to the sufferings of the poor. Hence, to formulate appropriate and effective poverty alleviation policies, public engagement is regarded as a vital means to collect feedbacks and opinions from the target beneficiaries. It enhances the government's capability in understanding people's needs and builds greater trust between the three parties in the society. With the support from the general public, it also boosts the legitimacy of the government in implementing assistance programmes.

With regards to procedural hurdles traditionally plaguing the efficiency of any governments, the CCF enjoys greater flexibility in the formulation and implementation of assistance programmes. Firstly, LegCo approved the injection of $15 billion to the CCF in a lump-sum total rather than going through the cumbersome and tedious procedures in approving each assistance programme separately (Legislative Council Subcommittee on Poverty 2013). As a result, the CCF enjoys greater financial flexibility and a shorter time-span for a policymaking cycle. Secondly, new policy initiatives are discussed in the CoP meeting and when finalised can be announced immediately afterwards. Without the need of going through LegCo voting and bureaucratic procedures, the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

CCF can afford to divert more time and resources on conducting consultation exercises. Such flexibility reduced the time and resource constraints for the CCF to conduct open engagement exercises.

As the CCF would launch diversified assistance programmes which cover different policy areas, it has to engage expertise from different sectors for their contributions. Regarding the member composition, the CCF Task Force comprises ex-officio members (government representatives from Education Bureau, Food and Health Bureau, Labour and Welfare Bureau etc.), members of the CoP and lay stakeholders from various sectors such as business entrepreneurs, social workers of non-profit organisations, doctors and school principals.

There are two tiers of public engagement utilised by the CCF. The first one is a more intensive deliberation held within the professional and lay stakeholders to facilitate issue-related deliberations. It is highly exclusive with an aim to provide insightful suggestions that are readily adopted as policy proposals. Stakeholders from different background can contribute their knowledge in respective areas in the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

discussion and deliberation within internal meetings. Second one is a less intensive open consultation sessions for general public or target beneficiaries with an aim to collect and share information and identify possible future assistance programmes. In the consultation sessions, CCF Task Force members can also share useful information and provide instant feedbacks to the general public to facilitate informed exchanges of ideas.

Before the integration into CoP, CCF employed various engagement strategies to gather public views on project ideas. CCF held two public consultation sessions on 7 and 14 January 2011 without preset agenda to collect public opinions on the operation of the CCF, including the target beneficiaries and assistance programmes. Two focus group meetings were also conducted to consult stakeholders on specific programme areas. The Steering Committee and its sub-committees also took into account the actual experience gained and views collected from the public and stakeholders.

Subsequently, another four public consultation sessions were held on 28 and 30 November 2011 as well as 13 and 19 December 2011

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

(Community Care Fund 2011). Each consultation session was organised under one specific sub-committee so that the public may express their views according to the respective areas of work to be done by the CCF in education, home affairs, medical and welfare. The purpose of classifying different themes for the consultation was clear. It attracted participants with similar interest to express views under a sub-committee. Sub-committee members may also provide instant response to queries and suggestions. It intended to provide a platform for interested and self-selected ordinary citizens to voice out their opinions. With a specific theme for each consultation forum, public had the opportunity to express their views and deliberate in a particular context. This arrangement raised the efficiency and effectiveness of the consultation. Such a consultation strategy was useful as suggestions were focused on specific topics and participants could supplement suggestions raised by other participants with the goodwill for better policymaking.

From the above consultation exercises, it was noted that the CCF adopted a more inclusive mode of public engagement, which consulted and involved the public on both policy ideas

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

and programme details. Participants could express their views freely on assistance programmes that were rolled out or under deliberation. Some social workers, representing respective disadvantaged groups in various districts, could also take the chance to point out what their serving community really needed, helping the sub-committees to identify new assistance projects, set the eligibility criteria and provide useful opinions with feasible options.

Information-sharing sessions and consultation forums with open engagement are classified with the lowest intensity involving a wider scope of participants. It enables members of the CCF to outreach the public directly and obtain first-hand information. CCF officials can also share relevant information and implementation difficulties to stakeholders. Such open engagement can build greater trust between the disadvantaged and the government and can enhance the government's knowledge in understanding their underlying concerns and needs. Furthermore, to arouse public awareness in the works of CCF, direct engagement with the diffuse public sphere is one of the most effective and suitable strategies. All stakeholders, including beneficiaries, interested citizens, social workers (representing the disadvantaged) can

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

attend the forum and voice out their opinions. The public would have a stronger sense of belonging and inclusiveness towards the CCF.

In the consultation forum we attended on 5 February 2013, we noticed that there were no preset agenda for the session. Chairman of the CCF Task Force, CK Law invited participants to freely voice out their views on existing programmes and to provide any suggestions to new programme initiatives. He also made instant responses to criticisms or accusations. Simultaneous interpreters were fielded on standby for bilingual interpretation as an inclusive gesture to the ethnic minorities. A basket of suggestions were collected for further study, which would enhance the capacity of the CCF to seal the gaps in existing systems and to launch more targeted assistance programmes and pilot schemes to help the needy.

As everyone holds different opinions for any policy areas, the views collected would be fragmented under the present engagement strategy. Efforts have to be made to summarise and consolidate for systematic presentation and interest aggregation. In the case of the CCF, views and suggestions of participants have been summarised in a

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

month's time after the consultation forum and put on CCF's website for public inspection. (Community Care Fund 2013) The public engagement exercises are open and transparent. The summary can serve as a record of the communication exchange. It also reflects that the sub-committee has noted and would give considerations to the suggestions raised in the consultation sessions. Comparing with the past poverty alleviation policies, CCF adopts a more inclusive approach in gathering and aggregating public opinion. Various engagement methods are adopted to collect different stakeholders' views. Both focus groups and general public are consulted before the CoP and expert administrator makes the final decision on assistance programme details. It is a welcoming manifestation of the IAP2 and OECD's core value of "open and inclusive policy making". In terms of openness, all the information is uploaded online and accessible to public. All interested participants are welcomed to express their opinions in the consultation sessions. In terms of inclusiveness, the CCF Task Force has endeavoured to include a larger variety of voices to be heard, from business sector participants to non-profit community organisations, and from wealthy citizens to grass-root citizens, so that a more comprehensive view can be formulated. This paves the path of success for effective public engagement.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Regarding engagement methods employed, the CCF organises one-off consultations (ad-hoc consultation) on specific issues or areas of work for the general public, while engaging the CCF Task Force, focus groups and Sub-committee members for ongoing consultation. Consultation is conducted to collect views but decision-making power largely rests within the expert administrators and professional stakeholders. The government places a heavy weight on their advices before making a final decision. In any event, the CCF has made a great step forward in enlarging the scope of participation and empowering the citizens in the decision-making process. The opinions received from consultation session are duly considered and studied for their feasibility and effectiveness in helping the poor.

Glimpses of genuine citizen empowerment are noticed when some suggestions are eventually included as a part of policy decisions. On 2 May 2013, Chairman of the CoP, Mrs Carrie Lam, announced the endorsement of four funding proposals put forth by the CCF Task Force after the CoP's third meeting (Commission on Poverty 2013). The endorsed proposals included a new 2-year assistance programme on

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

"Extra Travel Subsidy for Needy Special School Students", a re-launched programme on "Subsidy for CSSA Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing" to provide a one-off subsidy to CSSA households living in rented private housing, continuation of the "First Phase Programme of the Medical Assistance Programme" and adjusting the eligibility criteria of the "Elderly Dental Assistance Programme" to cover elderly who are users of the "Integrated Home Care Services" and "Enhanced Home and Community Care Services". The transcripts for the consultation sessions indicated that the housing and medical concerns were raised quite frequently in various forums. For example, participants urged the CCF to relax the eligibility criteria for housing subsidy for low-income residents living in rented sub-divided units. Some elderly participants also pointed out their financial difficulties in seeking medical and dental treatment. The programmes were responses to the suggestions raised in the various public consultation forums.

In summary, the CCF is a great leap forward in the public engagement development in Hong Kong as it gradually places greater emphasis on citizens' input and empowers them in the policy process. It

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

has covered a variety of engagement methods with different intensity levels – both open engagement and engagement of professional and lay stakeholders. The many merits of public engagement were largely realised in the case of CCF.

(c) Challenges ahead. As the number of CCF projects increases, it may pose difficulties for the CCF to manage a mounting number of projects concurrently. The CoP, as the overseeing committee to the CCF, may need to invest considerable time and efforts to determine the desired policy aspects to consult and to launch the consultation at an appropriate time during the policy process. The crowded agenda may become insurmountable as the scope of the CCF continues to expand. Moreover, there are suggestions to incorporate those effective pilot schemes into government's regular assistance and service programmes. As a result, nature of the CCF may drift from supplementing government programmes to becoming part of the government. Under such circumstances, the merits of the CCF as a unique tripartite partnership venture in effective public engagement may be diminished.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

The CCF can be contentious in nature but is not situated in a critical political deadlock where stakeholders are in fundamental disagreement. Most people agreed in the policy directions in combating poverty and providing financial help to those who are in financial difficulties. LegCo members support distributive poverty alleviation policies in principle and would generally set less hurdles against the formulation and implementation of these policies. Financial contributions by the business sector also generate goodwill in a society with some citizens harbouring grudges for the rich, which helps moderating potential controversies. Nevertheless, the society still has diverse views in how the details of assistance programmes should be developed. For example, CS Carrie Lam announced on 23 July 2013 that the new assistance programme on "Subsidy for low-income persons who are inadequately housed" would exclude residents in sub-divided units in industrial buildings or commercial premises as target beneficiaries because of their illegality. Such a decision has rippled into debates on the eligibility of the beneficiaries. Those disagreements in implementation details are best to be dealt with public engagement to work out a consensus solution or enhancement plans.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Case study 5: Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) – Social Security Allowance Scheme

(a) Background. As with many developed societies around the world, the aging population is becoming a major problem in Hong Kong. As at 2013, one in seven citizens in Hong Kong is aged 65 or above, and it is estimated that the ratio will become one in three in 2041. The rapidly ageing populace poses an imminent threat to the Hong Kong Government and warrants urgently a review on the relevant population policies.

To deal with the poverty problem regarding the elderly sector, the Hong Kong Government has promulgated the recurrent Social Security Allowance Scheme (SSAS). The SSAS consists of the Normal Disability Allowance, the Higher Disability Allowance, and the Old Age Allowance (OLA). The executive agency of these schemes is the Social Welfare Department under the Labour & Welfare Bureau. In 2012, the SSAS saw a new addition to the family of assistance schemes, which also turned into a political hot potato – the Old Age Living Allowance (OALA).

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

The Hong Kong Government first announced the details of OALA in October 2012, and that a sum of $2,200 a month would be given to elderly people aged 65 or above who are in need of financial support. The aim of providing the allowance is provide a modest supplement to the living expenses of elderly people. Similar to those other schemes mentioned above, the allowances paid under the scheme are non-means-tested. (Social Welfare Department 2013)

Political pressure groups and some other citizens found it difficult to distinguish between the existing Old Age Allowance (common known as "fruit money") and the new Old Age Living Allowance. An answer to such a question requires a close examination of the eligibility criteria for OALA:

> *A person is eligible for OALA if he/she is aged 65 or above; has been a Hong Kong resident for at least seven years and has resided in Hong Kong continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application; is having an income and assets not exceeding the prescribed limits; and is not in receipt of Old Age Allowance or Disability Allowance under the Social Security Allowance Scheme or assistance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme,*

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

The government emphasised that the objective of OALA was poverty alleviation rather than a tribute to the elderly, and thus was different from the existing OLA, nicknamed as “fruit money”, which was often regarded as a token of appreciation for the elderly. Moreover, the new allowance was about double the amount of that of OLA, and was expected to really help alleviate the hardships of impoverished elderly.

To the dismay of the Hong Kong Government, such a policy of goodwill stirred unanticipated disputes. When the policy was brought into limelight, the government, political parties and the general public had diverse views on whether the elderly allowance should include a means test to assess their financial situation. It was estimated that the new OALA scheme involve an annual expenditure of $6.2 billion, a 14% increase in the government's recurrent spending on welfare. If no means test was implemented, the estimated expenditure would climb to $13.6 billion – or twice the original estimate.

Secretary for Labour and Welfare Matthew Cheung explained that the means test would be necessary as the government needed to be prudent

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

and should deliver the limited resources to those with genuine needs. He added that if the OALA was granted to all senior citizens, then the financial implications would balloon to a level that would crowd out other government spending (South China Morning Post 2012), disrupting the overall financial balance of the Hong Kong Government.

Unfortunately for the government, the passage of this controversial proposal was dramatised by a "filibustering" crisis. To effect the proposal of OALA, the Hong Kong Government sought HK$3.1 billion in funding from the Legislative Council in October 2012. Despite calls for more flexibility from some lawmakers, the government refused to make any concessions on the conditions of the scheme or to effect retrospective payments dated back to October 1, citing a longstanding convention of financial discipline.

On October 22, 2012, a coalition of 23 pan-democrat LegCo members signed a statement to demand more consultation on the issue and backdate the monthly allowance to October 1, regardless of the day of passing the funding approval. The statement read that according to a Hong Kong Polytechnic University survey with the Alliance for

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Universal Pensions, nearly 90% of 1,000 respondents agreed that there should be a universal pension scheme to be promulgated within the current term of CE. The pan-democrats called on the government to listen to the public and not rush to table the new allowance for approval. (The Standard 2012)

Meanwhile, the Hong Kong Government insisted to table the original proposal of applying a means test for everyone aged over 65 and applicants must meet the monthly income cap of HK$6,660 and an asset limit of HK$186,000. It also insisted that payments would be backdated only to the first day of the month the proposal was passed, but not for October as suggested by the coalition of LegCo members. In response, the LegCo member Leung Kwok Hung of the League of Social Democrats staged a filibuster to blockade the passage of the financial provisions. To circumvent the filibuster blockade, in December 2012, the government put up a new proposal with amendments and persuaded the pro-establishment camp of the LegCo to cooperate. As a result, the Finance Committee of the LegCo deemed the amendment in the government's budget proposal as a new document, and that the 302 amendments raised by Leung were abolished and the controversial bill

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

was passed, after two months of filibustering which paralyzed the normal operation of the LegCo.

Nonetheless, there were public outcries and criticisms that the Hong Kong Government sought passage by such a hideous tactic, a symbol of the government's disrespect to the LegCo, and true support from the civil society for the scheme was absent. Despite being victorious, the Hong Kong Government was seen to be embarrassed and shocked by the multiple waves of criticisms and controversies drawn by this policy that would by all means be considered a benevolent provision.

(b) Analysis of public engagement measures. The ordeal surrounding the passage of OALA is a noteworthy counterexample showing that insufficient public engagement of social policies leads to fierce opposition from political parties and the civil society, even for welfare policies with good intentions.

Considering the political undercurrent in advocating for a universal pension scheme, the OALA had the potential of becoming a focal point of a greater political maelstrom. However, the controversial nature of the

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

OALA was not recognized by the government and the respective engagement work done was limited to information sharing. There was no facilitated discussion, let alone active participation in the details of the policy.

The official in charge of the scheme, Secretary for Labour and Welfare Matthew Cheung's comment on the scheme - "We have allowed maximum flexibility and there is no room for changes" - was repeatedly quoted by the mass media, as an illustration that the administration was not receptive to public opinion. (South China Morning Post 2012)

When Cheung appeared in the RTHK public forum to defend for the proposal on 14 October 2012, it was believed that his adamant attitude resulted in even more criticism from the public and the political parties. (RTHK 2012)

The government reiterated that the OALA was to realise what the CE stated in his election manifesto and was eager to turn the promises into government policies. However, critics refuted that in general, process of

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

formulating effective government policies need a longer time to nurture and that more consultation was needed for OALA. In response, Cheung described the requests of the LegCo members in amending the scheme as "unfortunate", as the monthly payment of HK$2,200 to about 400,000 elderly poor was bound to be delayed, adversely affecting their livelihood. In all, the blatant refusal of listening to public views gave public an impression that the government was rushing out a welfare policy to save its deteriorating legitimacy and going as far as ignoring the traditions of engaging relevant stakeholders and the public.

Though the government obtained formal approval from the LegCo, the lack of public engagement deemed that the policy would continue to face fierce criticisms in the implementation stage. The government devised a so-called set of “simplified application procedures” to enable elderly persons to receive OALA as early as possible. The scheme was rolled out in three phases, namely "Auto-conversion", "Postal Submission" and "New Application", with different types of elderly receiving the allowance through the relevant arrangements. However, the procedures of application for OALA were deemed unclear and were criticised as too similar to existing OLA. Meanwhile, many

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

seniors were eager to get the new allowance but had difficulties in understanding the complicated converting process.

The chaotic situation was clearly illustrated by the respective numbers of enquiries and requests for assistance received by the authorities. The daily enquires reached a number of 1,200, with the Social Welfare Department's Old Age Living Allowance hotline had received 57,351 enquiry calls as at 9 April 2013 - a daily average of 700, while the 24-hour hotline manned by the Efficiency Unit saw 15,780 enquiries - a daily average of 500.

As addressed in the analytical framework, openness and inclusiveness are very important characteristics along the spectra of dimensions of public engagement. These notions are obviously disregarded by the Hong Kong Government in the case of OALA. The related information sharing was insufficient and limited, often confined to public speeches made unilaterally by government officials. The details released by the Hong Kong government were pitched towards the positives. The allowance is a well-intentioned policy to help the seniors; however, the government's stubborn attitude to forcibly pass the proposal through the LegCo without

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

proper engagement and appropriate timing was not conducive to effective governance that the government had wished. Not only did it fail to bolster performance legitimacy that the government was desperate to achieve, it further deteriorated the already meager trust between the public and the government and engendered further political deadlocks.

The reasons behind the Hong Kong Government's hesitant attitude to engage might be related to the characteristics of the target recipients, who are seniors with dubious ability and interest to clearly understand the scheme. The government might have acted on a presumption that it would be fine by simply informing them the benefits of the scheme. The fierce opposition from the civil society and political party was out of the government's expectation and taught them a hard lesson.

(c) Challenges ahead. Following the research results that around 30% elderly live in poverty (Hong Kong Council of Social Service 2013), another challenge comes from a greater worry that Hong Kong as a whole was beleaguered by a serious wealth gap problem.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Some criticisms point out that the OALA is simply not the answer to the problem of elderly poverty and advocated that what Hong Kong really needs is a universal retirement pension, in light of an unsatisfactory performance of the existing Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF). The MPF is marred by high management fees and the returns are deemed insufficient as a reliable source of income after retirement. The heavy and lingering criticisms to the Hong Kong Government by the civil society might be attributable to the vicious strife of an expectation mismatch.

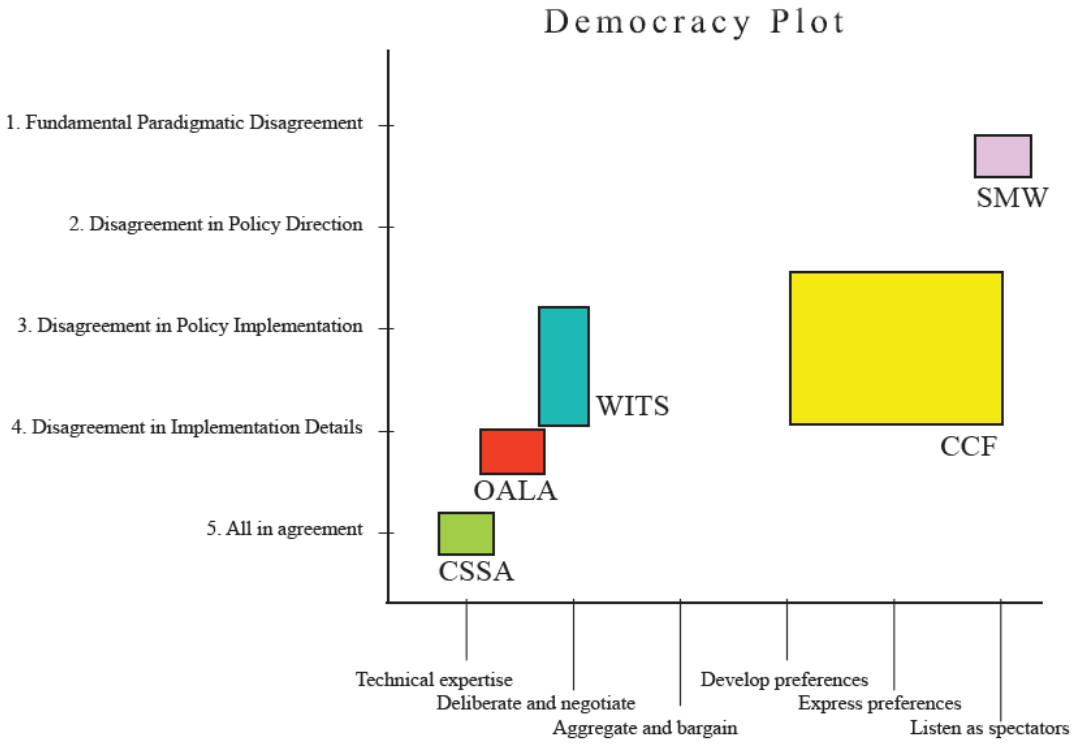
In sum, public engagement might not be panacea for all policy areas; however it is an important element when it comes to poverty alleviation. The case of OALA illustrates that for a policy without proper public consultation, the government still has tremendous difficulties garnering public support and would likely to encounter barriers in its implementation, even though the policy itself is for the benefits of the underprivileged in the society.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Democracy Plot and Concluding Comments

For the purpose of facilitating a detailed discussion in Chapter 5, with the five examples of policies on poverty alleviation viewed from the democracy plot tool, a trend of a positive relationship between two factors is established: the contentiousness of the poverty issue at hand and the mode of public engagement strategy used. The more contentious a poverty issue is, the more vigorous and diffused the engagement mode becomes.

Figure 8: Poverty alleviation policies on the democracy plot



While it may be premature to conclude that the two factors form a direct causal relationship, it would still be reasonable to use these findings as a viable basis for analysing public engagement in Hong Kong in the policy arena of poverty alleviation. Indeed, the tendency of the Hong Kong Government to employ more comprehensive and devolved approach to deliberate and even empower citizens is in line with governance amidst an increasingly complex and pluralistic society in Hong Kong, with the rise of the civil society. In the context of poverty alleviation, in particular, the government is particularly keen on developing pronounced strategies to enhance public engagement efforts.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Chapter 5 – Conclusions & Recommendations

Overall observations

The five cases analysed for poverty alleviation vary in terms of contentiousness, beginning from the least-debated CSSA Scheme to the most controversial SMW. Changing political landscape with rising civic society are some of the factors enticing debates; also, policies involving poverty alleviation inevitably bear some fundamental elements for contention to varying degrees. With reference to the cases analysed, the CSSA Scheme and OALA are redistribution of wealth with no immediate and apparent impact on taxpayers; whereas SMW, in comparison, has direct consequence on business owners, hence subject to more intense debates. The democracy plot is a useful tool to view the overall public engagement regime under a relevant scope of reference. The emerging trend of the Hong Kong Government's tendency to adopt a more intensified approach to public engagement for more contentious policy problems is not surprising. It also establishes a direction for further study towards follow-up analysis on the particulars of each policy problem and

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

their respective elements of contentiousness. Analysing the respective situation of each poverty alleviation policy and their respective choices of public engagement strategy adopted by the Hong Kong Government, the following observations emerge.

One important merit of public engagement conducted by the Hong Kong Government is the exchange of information between the government and other stakeholders, who are often with vested interests on various policies. In the context of poverty alleviation, the Hong Kong Government is able to learn a great deal about the plight of the poor populace, their perceptions, opinions and preferences, as well as possible measures that are deemed effective. For example, the TSS was a scheme developed from budget consultation to address the problem on high transportation costs, while the CCF identified appropriate assistance programmes to be launched through engaging participants in the public. In the case of SMW, the Hong Kong Government, through the PMWC, also leveraged industry expertise on rate-setting at an agreeable minimum wage rate.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

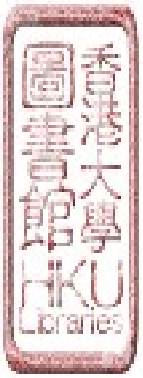
The boost of legitimacy achieved through public engagement is instrumental to the success or failure of policy formulation in poverty alleviation policies. As addressed in Chapter 2 and 3, there is an inherent need to bolster legitimacy to foster better policymaking and effective policy implementation. In the policy arena of poverty alleviation, contentions and even confrontations are well expected and legitimisation through public engagement becomes ever more critical, as the stakeholders can be focal and sentimental.

The Hong Kong context also plays a critical part that yields extra needs for public engagement. It is important to note that the trajectory of government's gradual embrace of public engagement coincides with the rise of civil society after 1997. Traditionally, the Hong Kong Government engages the public through advisory bodies, as is the decade-old case of CSSA promulgated in the 1990s. However, the rise of civic society and social awareness on democracy prompted changes in the policy process. The government, suffering from a legitimacy deficit, requires public engagement to reinforce the legitimacy of its policies.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

The Hong Kong Government is well aware of the extra magnitude of legitimacy boost required to put forward policies on poverty alleviations, and is, for the most part, keen on employing suitable public engagement strategies contingent on the specific needs of an individual policy. With the formation of the CoP, the Hong Kong Government expanded the scope of public engagement to other stakeholders other than representatives. Government officials, business representatives and academics were invited to discuss and draw up recommendations on the overall policy direction to combat poverty. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the Hong Kong Government has traditionally been identifying stakeholders without an open and systematic stakeholder analysis. The absence of such analysis may continue to hamper the effectiveness of stakeholder selection in public engagement.

A contrasting observation is made between the public engagement strategies between the process of the TSS and OALA. As previously discussed, OALA is a noteworthy example of a well-intended poverty alleviation policy greatly hindered by political oppositions due to a lack of public engagement. On the other hand, despite a wider scope of consultation on policy direction, TSS only conducted highly exclusive



consultations confined to certain politicians and professional stakeholders on implementation details, but no noticeable public outcry or extensive resistance was observed.

The contrast in outcomes is perhaps due to the ever-evolving Hong Kong context signified by the ascension of civil society and the awakening of citizens calling for more public participation in policymaking. The socio-economic situation in 2006 was much less hostile when the TSS was first conceived. With budding civil society has yet to assume a prominent role in a time of economic prosperity, the TSS was promulgated without many controversies. On the other hand, OALA was one of the first acts of a newly-elected government lacking legitimacy, attributed to a series of political scandals. The political current was much more turbulent which ultimately toppled the government's efforts to promulgate a well-intended policy on helping the elderly in need.

On a boarder context, the OALA is also a rather puzzling move by the Hong Kong Government that defies the current trajectory of policy formulation in the gradual expansion of scope and reach of public engagement. The case of OALA is a portrayal of a unilateral government

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

with little regards to counterproposals raised by politicians and stakeholders. The political fiasco that ensued also reflects that the contemporary public is no longer satisfied by mere benefits provided by a policy; the means of formulating a policy is also under public scrutiny, and public engagement is the undisputed answer to address the increasing appetite for legitimacy and justifiability of policies.

In all, the five cases analysed demonstrate that the formulation and implementation of Hong Kong Government's policies on poverty alleviation are increasingly reliant on public engagement to achieve the desired political momentum for acceptance by the general public, and the government is keen on pursuing public engagement to capitalise the various benefits, most notably the instrumental significance of public engagement. Unfortunately, the OALA case is perhaps indicative of the Hong Kong Government's view that public engagement more of a means than an end to policy formulation and implementation, and that the genuineness of the government's public engagement regime remains enigmatic.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

In a long-term perspective of an evolving policy process, public engagement is crucial to nurture a culture of collaboration. The process of formulating poverty alleviation policies that are complex and involve the contributions from market players and other stakeholders in the society, such as the SMW and CCF, employs extensive public engagement involving a variety of stakeholders with a multitude of consultation methods. For the formulation of SMW, having noted the contentious nature of the issue, the government formed the PMWC and created a venue for various stakeholders with unaligned and somewhat conflict interests to discuss and debate. While devising a general policy direction towards the setting of a SMW, the government relied heavily on deliberations among engaged parties to achieve the most effective balance. The SMW level and other details were sorted out by extensive deliberations among the stakeholders in the PMWC. The government showed its willingness to listen to the diverse public views. Meanwhile, CCF manifests the benefits of collaborative governance in public engagement. CCF is a unique model of public consultation with an even wider scope and more thorough extent of participation, which follows the discourse by Lee and Thynne on forging an alliance between the state apparatus and relevant stakeholders

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

from the market and civil society (Lee and Thynne 2011). The committee comprises representatives and stakeholders on poverty, as well as representatives from the business sector and relevant NGOs. To further engagement efforts, it hosts information sharing sessions and public forums to facilitate useful discussions between policymaking authorities and the public. The CCF is a genuine design to empower citizens to influence policymaking on poverty alleviation, and building trust among stakeholders. Such a design facilitates capacity building and policy learning by the government, and resolve political deadlocks between conflicting interest parties, which ultimately benefits the formulation of effective policies on poverty alleviation.

Recommendations

Ongoing changes in political, economic and social context warrant continued adjustments of engagement methods to facilitate an effective policy process. The prevailing use of smart-phones, social media and other technological advancements brings both opportunities and uncertainties in refining engagement strategies to suit the changing society in Hong Kong. Moreover, aging population and income disparity

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

are posing further challenges to the poverty problem. In view of such a perplexing situation, the Hong Kong Government should invest extra efforts to innovate and establish an effective framework with the appropriate arsenal of public engagement methods, as the means to raise performance legitimacy, enhance policy quality, and ultimately promoting a culture of collaboration in the policy process. Recommendations to enhance civil engagement are expanding engagement channels and genuine empowerment of citizens.

Expanding engagement channels

The Hong Kong Government is on an overall course to expand its public engagement regime and strategies. One important dimension of interest is the channels of public engagement. Traditionally, the government arranges for consultations to solicit comments from interested parties and self-selected representatives. In the cases of SMW and the CCF, the government also introduced institutionalised channels that incorporate opinions from relevant stakeholders in policymaking, through committee meetings and public forums. The Hong Kong Government has also made some use of digital social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

In light of the latest development, the recommendation on expanding engagement channels is directed both towards innovation and to preserve effective channels already in practice.

Innovation on engagement channels should appreciate the revolution of communication and information technologies. The world has entered the information era. A golden opportunity of building a public engagement methodology to achieve unprecedented levels of penetration to policy stakeholders is on the horizon. Leveraging the prowess of latest technologies in communications, such as digital social media channels, the government can now easily put forth their ideas and messages to the public. These new media channels are particularly effective in reaching out to the technology-savvy younger generations emerging as a group of stakeholders. With youth unemployment more severe than the nominal unemployment situation, as well as heightening public expectations on legitimacy of the policy process over the course of political development since 1997, the need for the government to engage through innovative media is more crucial than ever. While the Hong Kong Government has already implemented several measures to utilise digital social media for

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

engagement, a more comprehensive and bilateral approach is recommended, with genuine communication facilitating bottom-up feedbacks and recognising the public's contribution to policymaking. An example would be the use of on-line petitions to collect public opinion.

Meanwhile, in the context of the poverty alleviation policy, the target audience also concerns underprivileged having very limited access new media. Therefore, to realise public engagement in this aspect, the Government would still opt for traditional methods with sensitivity to the relevant circumstances, for example, the holding of public consultation sessions to consult for the possible assistance items in the CCF. Officials would meet the public face-to-face in the consultation forum and have direct dialogue and two-way communication with stakeholders.

Working poor usually has long working hours and has difficulties in spending time to attend consultation forums. Owning or even using a computer with Internet access may be luxurious beyond the affordability of the underprivileged. There are also possibilities that the illiterate and the elderly may not notice the consultation and ignorant of such platforms to express their views.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

In order to further understand their needs and views towards potential assistance policies and measures, the government should consider collecting the beneficiaries' views through street-level bureaucrats' regular and direct contact with the beneficiaries, or engaging the street-level bureaucrats so as to tap their experience.

Most beneficiaries of poverty alleviation policies are living from hand to mouth. Although existing poverty alleviation policies might not be sufficient to satisfy their basic needs, many of them are probably unaware of the channels through which they can express their views to the government. Even if the channels become known to them, they might opt to invest their time in exchange for more income for their everyday lives instead of spending time on expressing their views to the government. In order to engage these silent beneficiaries, who are important stakeholders for poverty alleviation policies, the government is recommended to capitalise on the existing interactions between various street-level bureaucrats and these beneficiaries to gauge their views. For example, social workers' regular home visits to the elderlies and the disabled and low-income patients' regular visits to government clinics.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

However, due to the heavy workloads of these street-level bureaucrats, any addition of workloads might be greeted by opposition by these bureaucrats. Public engagement through this channel can start lightly. A short and standard questionnaire can be designed for conducting brief survey during social workers' visits. Regular meetings between street-level bureaucrats and policy administrators can be held so that the latter will be able to hear from these beneficiaries, even indirectly, through the street-level bureaucrats. The essence of this recommendation is that the street-level bureaucrats' experience and knowledge on those silent stakeholders' needs can be heard, taken into consideration and turn into meaningful improvements to the policies.

Genuine empowerment of active citizens

Public engagement regarding poverty alleviation policies for Hong Kong still remains a top-down approach reminiscent of the Elitism regime in pre-1997 days. During the policy formulation process, the decision-making power are still highly concentrated amongst public administrators or appointed committees.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

There are critics that policymakers of the current government are not sensitive enough in deploying the public resources to the most needed areas. Mistrust generated among the government, the public and the civic society after severe policy failures and the broke of top officials' scandals. Even policies with goodwill, such as the OALA, only garnered minimal support in the implementation stage and was stigmatised as being insensitive to the actual hardships of the elderly in Hong Kong.

The government is recommended to empower the public in decision making through institutional arrangements, in order to harness the untapped potential of representatives, non-government organisations, as well as the civil society to contribute to poverty alleviation. For example, the government can empower the District Councils with the authority to implement assistance schemes to help the underprivileged on a local district level, which is an idea briefly visited by the ex-CE Donald Tsang. Favourable policies towards NGOs, civil societies and projects dedicated for poverty alleviation are also encouraged. Possible "sweeteners" such as financial assistances, tax breaks, award schemes

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

and accommodation provisions can be provided to these potential partners.

It would be mutually beneficial for the government to foster long-term partnerships with NGOs and civil societies, with the aim to establish goodwill by forming truly consultative bodies incorporating their recommendations in policymaking. From the case studies above, the CCF and the CoP are examples in which public could be empowered in the decision-making process. Such arrangements are also conducive to the promotion of collaborative governance.

In all, the government should continue take the initiative in enhancing public engagement, through the expansion of channels for gathering public views in policy and empowering citizen to make informed decisions, the government can garner more support for public policies, especially on areas closely aligned with the livelihood of the Hong Kong people.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Limitations of the study

The study mainly focuses on only one policy arena – poverty alleviation. Poverty is one of the major issues, among other important and contentious policies, that the focus of the study is on analysing the public engagement strategies adopted. The findings may not be applicable to other policy arenas as specific references were drawn to poverty alleviation policies. Moreover, government policies are always interdependent to one another. This study does not take into account the said interdependence across policy arenas. A joint study with other policy arenas have to be conducted in order to grasp a general understanding of public engagement strategies employed during the policymaking process in Hong Kong.

Also, the study is largely based on desktop research and secondary source of information, e.g. LegCo panel papers, press releases, newspapers reports and government websites, for analysis. No interviews or surveys were conducted to get first-hand information from the beneficiaries or the general public to probe immediately perceived effectiveness of the public engagement exercises conducted. Analysis is largely based on open information available on respective websites.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Some of the five cases analysed had ongoing developments over the past few months with new implementation details. This study strives to keep updating new information to reveal latest positions on contemporary issues, such as assistance programmes promulgated by the CCF, and to reflect policy outcomes. However, owing to the limitation of time, the study may not cover all useful information. Nevertheless, the extent of the research has been carried out as far as practicable with a view to conducting a comprehensive review and the information are updated as at July 2013.

Concluding Comments

This project provides an analysis of an evolving regime of public engagement by the Hong Kong Government on poverty alleviation policies through a practical framework amalgamating the contemporary conceptualisation of public engagement and governance. The Hong Kong Government, amidst a rapidly changing society, took various steps to be more open, receptive and bilateral through a chronicle in the past decade. The Hong Kong Government has placed considerable commitment to public engagement,

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

and the utilisation of newer and better engagement methods are seen in practice beyond the policy arena of poverty alleviation. The practices on engagement have been spread to other policy arenas, with a recent example on the formation of the Standard Working Hours Committee on the issue of legislation on standard working hours, bearing many similarities to a successful precedent in the PMWC. The transcendence of public engagement regime beyond poverty alleviation is indeed an encouraging sign of Hong Kong developing into a society respecting the virtues of public engagement and citizen empowerment.

However, despite the government's effort to better its public engagement regime, it remains elusive whether the Hong Kong Government has in fact genuinely embraced the principles and virtues of public engagement, or that public engagement is merely an instrument as a symbolic showcase. Also, challenges remain for the Hong Kong Government to respond to a fast-paced evolution of civil society, and the increasingly turbulent political undercurrent characterising the contemporary Hong Kong society, confronting the historical crossroad towards universal suffrage. Nonetheless, the movement for public engagement is definitely and rightfully gaining momentum in all sectors of the society, bearing

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

a collective will to steer towards a more pluralistic and collaborative Hong Kong, and the public engagement regime for poverty alleviation should serve as an important lesson for future public engagement efforts of policymaking.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

References

Census and Statistics Department. *Census and Statistics Department Website.* August 6, 2013. http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/so20.jsp (accessed August 12, 2013).

Census and Statistics Department. *Special Report on Gross Domestic Product 2012*. Hong Kong: Census and Statistics Department, 2012.

—. *The Social Security Assistance Index of Prices.* November 21, 2011. http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp390.jsp?productCode=FA100101 (accessed August 6, 2013).

Cheung, Anthony B.L. *In Search of Trust and Democracy: The Political Trajectory of Hong Kong as Part of China.* Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Institute of Education, 2009.

Cheung, Matthew. "Poverty in Hong Kong: Our Challenges and Responses." *Speech by the Secretart for Labour and Welfare to the Hong Kong Democratic Foundation Luncheon.* Hong Kong: The Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, September 22, 2010.

Commission on Poverty. *Commission on Poverty convenes third meeting.* May 2, 2013.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201305/02/P201305020612.htm (accessed July 3, 2013).

Commission on Poverty Secretariat. *Commission Structure - Terms of Reference.* May 31, 2013. http://www.povertyrelief.gov.hk/eng/structure.html (accessed July 22, 2013).

Community Care Fund. *Public invited to attend public consultations on Community Care Fund.* November 16, 2011. http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201111/16/P201111160180.htm (accessed January 10, 2013).

—. *Summary of public consultations (Chinese only) (關愛基金公眾諮詢會記錄摘要).* February 2013. http://www.communitycarefund.hk/download/Public-Consultation-Sessions.pdf.

—. *Summary of views and suggestions.* 2012. http://www.communitycarefund.hk/download/archive/SummaryofPublicConsultationSessions-en.pdf.

Electoral Affairs Commission. *Report on the 2012 Chief Executive Election.* Hong Kong: The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2012.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Fiorina, Morris P. " Extreme Voices: A Dark Side of Civic Engagement." In *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, by Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, 395-426. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999.

Fung, A. "Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance ." *Public Administration Review, December 2006 Special Issue*, 2006: 66-75.

Harrison, Michelle, and Michelle Singer. "The timesqueeze generation: what the public are doing with their spare time." *Participating Nation: Reconnecting Citizens to Public Realm*, 2007: 49-62.

Headline Daily. *工聯會冀諮詢新交津計劃.* Hong Kong, February 14, 2011.

HKSAR Government. *Provisional Minimum Wage Commission appointed.* February 27, 2009. http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200902/27/P200902270192.htm (accessed July 29, 2013).

Home Affairs Bureau. "Item for finance committee - Members are invited to approve an additional injection of $15 billion into the Community Care Fund." *FCR(2013-14)20.* June 2013. http://www.legco.hk/yr12-13/english/fc/fc/papers/f13-20e.pdf (accessed July 21, 2013).

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Hong Kong Council of Social Service. "2012 年上半年貧窮數據." January 26, 2013. http://www.hkcss.org.hk/cm/cc/press/documents/2012H1poverty.pdf (accessed May 6, 2013).

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. "Article 54 to 56." *The Basic Law.* January 6, 2013. http://www.basiclaw.gov.hk/en/index/index.html (accessed June 6, 2013).

IAP2. *The International Association for Public Participation - Spectrum for Public Participation.* The International Association for Public Participation, 2007.

—. *The International Association for Public Participation Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation.* 2013. http://iap2.affiniscape.com/displaycommon.cfm?an=4 (accessed August 12, 2013).

Labour Department. *Provisional Minimum Wage Commission.* February 2009. http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/rbo/content4_1.htm (accessed March 28, 2013).

—. *Welcome Message of the Director of Labour.* January 7, 2013. http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/welcome/content.htm (accessed June 2, 2013).

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

—. "Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme opens for individual applications." July 2, 2013.

Lee, E, and I Thynne. "Symposium introduction: dynamics of governance and civic engagement." *Public Administration and Development Dev.31*, 2011: 75-82.

Legislative Council. "Motion on “Optimizing the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance for the unemployed” Moved by Hon James TIEN." Record of the Legislative Council, Hong Kong, 2013.

Legislative Council Panel on Manpower. "Progress of the Review of the Transport Support Scheme." *LC Paper No. CB(2)276/09-10(05).* November 19, 2009. http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/mp/papers/mp1119cb2-276-5-e.pdf (accessed April 6, 2013).

—. *Proposed enhancement of the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy Scheme.* November 2012. http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/panels/mp/papers/mp1203cb2-269-1-e.pdf (accessed May 1, 2013).

—. "Proposed Relaxations under the Transport Support Scheme." *LC Paper No. CB(2)1353/07-08(03).* March 28, 2008.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/mp/papers/mp0320cb2-1353-3-e.pdf (accessed June 22, 2013).

—. *Transport Support Scheme - Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the special meeting on 14 January 2010.* January 11, 2010. http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/mp/papers/mp0114cb2-717-1-e.pdf (accessed April 26, 2013).

Legislative Council Subcommittee on Poverty. "Injection of $15 Billion into the Community Care Fund." *LC Paper No. CB(2)1154/12-13(01).* May 24, 2013. http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr12-13/english/hc/sub_com/hs51/papers/hs510524cb2-1154-1-e.pdf (accessed June 12, 2013).

Minimum Wage Commission. *About us.* May 1, 2013. http://www.mwc.org.hk/en/about_us/introduction/index.html (accessed May 12, 2013).

Ngo, J. *South China Morning Post.* January 27, 2013. http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1136870/one-three-old-people-hong-kong-are-living-below-poverty-line (accessed August 12, 2013).

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Norton, A, B Bird, K Brock, M Kakande, and C Turk. *A rough guide to PPAs Participatory Poverty Assessment - An introduction to theory and practice.* Overseas Development Institute, 2011.

OECD. *'Citizens as Partners – OECD Handbook on information, consultation and public participation in policy-making'.* Paris: OECD Publications Service, 2001.

OECD. *OECD Studies on Public Engagement Focus on Citizens: Public Engagement for Better Policy and Services.* Paris: OECD Publishing, 2009.

Oxfam Hong Kong. *Oxfam Hong Kong Poverty Report: Employment and Poverty in Hong Kong Families (2003-2012).* Hong Kong: Oxfam, 2012.

Policy 21 Limited. *Study on Knock-on Effect of Statutory Minimum Wage on Pay Hierarchies in the Retail and Restaurant Sectors.* 2012. http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/smw/Study_on_Knock-on_Effect.pdf (accessed July 21, 2013).

RTHK. *Discussion on: Old Age Living Allowance.* October 14, 2012. http://programme.rthk.hk/rthk/tv/programme.php?d=2012-10-14&p=899&m=episode (accessed July 22, 2013).

Scott, Ian. "Efficiency and Performance Legitimacy." In *The Public Sector in Hong Kong*, 232-235. Hong Kong Unversity Press, 2010.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Scott, Ian. "The Budget Cycle." In *The Public Sector in Hong Kong*, 166. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010.

Services, Director of Social. "Message of the Director of Social Services." *Website of the Social Welfare Department.* 2013. http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_aboutus/page_dswwelcome/ (accessed August 12, 2013).

Social Welfare Department. *Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme.* May 3, 2013. http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_socsecu/sub_comprehens/ (accessed August 3, 2013).

—. *Social Security Allowance Scheme.* July 2, 2013. http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_socsecu/sub_ssallowance/ (accessed July 15, 2013).

South China Morning Post. *Debate: Should a means test be applied to old age allowance?* October 22, 2012. http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1066705/scmp-debate-should-means-test-be-applied-old-age-allowance (accessed April 5, 2013).

—. *New Legco hearing for old-age benefit.* November 1, 2012. http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1074070/new-legco-hearing-old-age-benefit (accessed July 28, 2013).

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Tang, Henry. *The 2007-08 Budget.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2007.

The Legislative Council. *Legislative Council of the HKSAR.* 2012. http://www.legco.gov.hk/ (accessed August 10, 2013).

The Standard. *Coalition rules out filibuster on cash for elderly.* October 12, 2012. http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_print.asp?art_id=127520 (accessed June 16, 2013).

Thynne, I. "'Workshop No.6: Sunday 25 September – Public administration and civil society', course material for the Master of Public Administration degree of the University of Hong Kong." Hong Kong, 2011.

Tsang, Donald. "The 2008-09 Policy Address." Policy Address, Hong Kong, 2008.

UNDG. *Guidance Note on Stakeholder Analysis.* United Nations Development Group , 2008.

UNDP. *Multi-stakeholder development process – A UNDP Capacity Development Resource.* United Nation Development Programme, November 2006.

United Nation. *Civic Engagement in Public Policies: A Toolkit.* New York: United Nation, 2007.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries

Wong, Wai Ho. *七一後，更高危：中央要有 Plan C.* July 3, 2013. http://news.sina.com.hk/news/20130702/-6-3006914/1.html (accessed August 12, 2013).

Yuen Long District Council. "Fifth meeting minutes." 2012.

香港大學圖書館 HKU Libraries