

主旨: ENVR 5260 Response to Population Policy Engagement
附件: HKUST ENVR Population Response.pdf; ATT00001.txt

Dear Ms. Lam,

On behalf of the students in HKUST's ENVR 5260 class, I hereby submit their responses to several of the key questions asked in the Population Consultation Document. The views and opinions are expressed as a collective effort from the students in the class. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself or the course TA, Ray Chung.

Best regards,

Calvin Lee Kwan

February 22, 2014

Subject: HKUST ENVR 5260 Response to Public Engagement Exercise On Population Policy

Dear Ms. Lam,

The students of the *HKUST ENVR 5260 course on Environmental Policy* welcome the Government's Public Engagement Exercise on Population Policy. Many of the issues highlighted and raised in the Public Engagement Exercise are very relevant and pertinent to us, and we thank you for the opportunity to be involved in the process and to provide our thoughts and ideas.

We have selected and addressed the following six questions as we feel these are the areas we are most concerned about:

Chapter 1, Page 16: What are effective measures to encourage female homemakers to work or re-join the labour force?

Chapter 3, Page 26: What more can be done to improve and sustain the quality of our post-secondary graduates, including graduates from sub-degree programmes?

Chapter 4, Page 36: What are the barriers that deter Hong Kong emigrants and their offspring to return to Hong Kong to work? How can we reduce or eliminate these barriers?

Chapter 4, page 36: What measures are required to ensure that more effective importation of labor will not jeopardize the interests for local workers, having regard to the importation arrangement for FDHs? Should priority be given to industries facing persistent manpower shortages?

Chapter 4, Page 36: How should we reach out to Hong Kong people and their families studying/living abroad or in the Mainland and encourage them to return to Hong Kong to work and live?

Chapter 5, Page 41: What can we do to help young couples overcome the major hurdles of affordable housing, education and childcare?

Our collective responses to these questions follow. Should there be any comments or questions regarding our responses, please feel free to e-mail Ray Chung, the course teaching assistant

Best regards,

The Students of the HKUST ENVR 5260 Environmental Policy Course

CHAN Sin, CHEN Fangzhou, CHENG Sijie, CHEUNG Kwan Ho (Howard), CHEUNG Sau Ling, CHONG Ho Man, Du Dijia, He Zenan, IU Chun Yip (Lawrence), KUNG Hiu Suet, KWAN Chung Wa, LAM Wing Yan, LAU Chin Wong, LAU Mei Kan, LI Shiyong, LUNG Hiu Ying, MOK Kar Yan, NG Ming Yui (Arvin), PATHANIA Rohit, SUN Kit Chi, XU Quanang, YAM Siu Man, YIP Ching Man and YU Weiping

Question (Chapter 1, Page 16): What are effective measures to encourage female homemakers to work or re-join the labour force?

Encouraging women to re-enter the workforce is very important to Hong Kong's future. We only need to look to our neighbors in Japan to easily understand the impact inaction will do. For nearly the past 20 years, Japanese annual percentage growth rate of GDP undergoing a period of downturn. From 1995 to 2013 the GDP of Japan suffer a serious economic stagnation. One of the reason for that is due to lack of labor force. Right now, about 70% of Japanese women quit working after giving birth to their first child. According to a report from Goldman Sachs, the some 8.2 million women who would be employed if the female labor participation rate were equal to that for men (62% vs. 80%)—could add up to 15% to Japan's GDP¹.

Summarizing the causes holding back female to join the labor force.

- 1) Hong Kong has a lack of social support for Child-care and elder-care. According to HK law children below 12 must be taken care by adults. However there are not enough child and elder care center.
- 2) The conventional thinking expect women to do the house hold work.
- 3) After giving birth, women often become disjointed with society and find it is hard to find a job.
- 4) Despite excellent work by organizations such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, women still tend to get lower salaries. The Hong Kong governmental statistic shows the median monthly earnings for man is HK\$ 15,000, while female employee only get HK\$ 13,000.

Three suggestion to encourage Female Homemakers to Re-join the Labour Force.

1) Flexible working time and location. Companies should offer more flexible working time and workplace, not only for female, but also for male. If working time for couples is flexible, they can plan an optimums plan which considers about housework and taking care of children. Due to Internet, some positions like e-business are not need employees work together. Therefore, companies allow their employees working at home, it will be win-win for companies and employees. Companies could save rent fee and employees could take care their child when they are working.

2) More supports from community (taking care of children/elder). Due to the reason above, it is said that the child care professions, as well as the elder care, is more likely comprised by women, which is one of the major reason that cause them quit working. In order to release the load of women, services from the community, childcare center and

elder care center included, should be considered as an important role.

3) *Encourage and educate men* Besides, male as an important part of society should also be considered. Although female plays a significant role in family, male has duty to share the responsibility with female for taking care of the family, including child and the elder. Therefore, we also advise that male who get married deserved a certain degree of flexible working time and workplace, such online working. And then female may back to work, without the burden of taking care of family.

Question (Chapter 3, Page 26): What more can be done to improve and sustain the quality of our post-secondary graduates, including graduates from sub-degree programmes?

The Consultation Document on Hong Kong's Population Policy raises several pertinent questions for consideration and deliberation amongst the stakeholders of Hong Kong, i.e. Government, non-governmental organizations, corporations, citizens etc. One of the questions raised in this document pertains to the challenges of employability that Hong Kong's citizens face in today's ultra competitive job market. In response to the concerns that the government has raised, we would like to pose certain questions for consideration and offer what we believe are potential solutions to the challenge of future employability of the population.

One major hurdle for the post-secondary education is the misconception of the lack of communication and language skill of the graduates from sub-degree programmes. This perception, repeatedly cited by various business associations and entrepreneurs in Hong Kong, seems to be unfounded and in our humble opinion do not reflect the current realities. This attitude is quite discouraging for the local population, especially to the young people who pay significant effort to achieve higher education, since it hints at the preference for cheaper foreign talent over Hong Kong's citizens. Keeping that in mind, it would be prudent on the government's part to investigate the cause of this perception. One measure is to examine Singapore's new foreign employment policy, which mandates employers to publicize locally for two weeks and disincentivizes the hiring of foreign talent through higher visa fees and employment guarantee charges.

In addition to the short term measures mentioned above, there are several intermediate and long term measures that the government should surely reflect upon. For instance, curricula in Hong Kong's universities, colleges and polytechnics needs periodic updating and upgrading in order to make it more relevant to the job market requirements. In this process, all the parties should be able to contribute to the structure and the content of the curriculum. For the sub-degree programs, there is a greater need for students to formally engage with the industry, more working experience can help to reduce the misconception previously mention. This process provides up to date skill-set identification, which is important to the curriculum design. Additionally, a government program that encourages small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to actively hire interns for their development needs to be considered actively. Since the SMEs find it financially unviable to hire fresh talent from the job market, the internships should be financed through a special corpus that the government can set aside for this purpose.

While these measures are considered, there is a need to step back and look at the larger picture. What kind of an economy does the government of Hong Kong envision? Currently, a science graduate has nearly zero chance of finding a job in accordance to his/her qualification, while finance graduates see ample opportunities. Diversity in the economy of Hong Kong is vital for not just creating job opportunities, but for creating

long term economic sustenance and resilience in the economy to shocks. Diversity in economic activity has been repeatedly shown to have a positive effect^{1,2}. Not only economic resilience, Hong Kong could potentially prepare itself for the knowledge economy phase, much like Singapore has been doing in an aggressive manner in the areas of genetics, biotechnology and pharmacology. Hong Kong could become the world's consultant instead of seeking consultations from foreign companies outside if given the right platform, policy support and economic foundation.

¹ Regional Economic Capacity, Economic Shocks, and Economic Resilience, MacArthur Foundation Network on Building Resilient Regions, May 31, 2013, seen at <http://brr.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Augustine-resilience-capacity2.pdf>

² "The Link Between Diversity and Resilience", Sloan MIT Review, July 15, 2005, viewed at <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-link-between-diversity-and-resilience/>

Question (Chapter 4, Page 36): What are the barriers that deter Hong Kong emigrants and their offspring to return to Hong Kong to work? How can we reduce or eliminate these barriers?

Why are we concerned?

The major reason to bring Hong Kong overseas back is to meet the growing demand for talent to promote economic development and increase employment. A large pool of talent not only helps fill job vacancies but also helps attract foreign investment. The government aims to attract Hong Kong people both from overseas and in mainland. In fact, we prefer that admitted talent into Hong Kong be allowed to eventually stay here permanently rather than a short while, thus we want to bring Hong Kong people home because they are highly adaptable and versatile. According to the survey conducted by the government, air quality, housing prices and provisions of international school are the major barriers for Hong Kong people to return to Hong Kong. Other than these aspects, we have identified four other areas which may stop Hong Kong people returning to Hong Kong.

Barriers that deter emigrants to return

There are four major barriers that deter Hong Kong emigrants and their offspring to return to Hong Kong to work.

1) The information of Hong Kong is unclear. It may be due to a lack of promotion of the good side and Hong Kong life style, financial information such as housing, salary and tax, etc. Moreover, the policy scheme, economics and school system are totally different after 1997. It hence required more promotion of Hong Kong current situation for their consideration.

2) Cultural differences are a challenge too. As we all know, Hong Kong is a hybrid city of Chinese and western culture. Emigrants may need more times to adapt to the specific culture, in working style, language and daily life. Providing more information and transparency would afford emigrants the peace of mind knowing that they can prepare for any challenges they face in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong working and living environment has higher pressure than other cities. It is important to take a balance on workload, work hours and salary. The emigrants would concern of education for their offspring as well. Currently, the quota of international school is limited. If those children study in local school, they have to use a second language to study, which is challengeable. Also, some parents may concern that Hong Kong education is more focus

on result rather than process and lack of attention on student. They may refuse because of it.

3) There is a perceived lack of welcoming attitude. Recently, due to political and cultural problems, there are some arguments happened between locals and emigrants, especially those from mainland. Many of those incidents were spread out through web and video and hence promote a bad image among foreigners. Sometime, the overseas news report on it as well. The Government has initiated some campaigns such as Brand HK; these are good starts, but more needs to be done to encourage and publicise these materials.

4) Hong Kong's environmental aspect might be a main concern as well. Air quality has been a major concern for people living in Hong Kong, despite local air quality, worsening air quality in China is also taken into account. For health reasons, people may not be willing to return to Hong Kong. It is important that for the long term future of Hong Kong's workforce, we begin to mitigate these environmental issues.

Suggested Solutions

By understanding the reason to drive people working overseas, it will help break down the barrier one by one. When they work abroad, they probably gain better quality of life and better working conditions. To remove the barriers and alleviate their concerns, the Hong Kong SAR government should consider following suggestions.

Among Asian cities, Hong Kong has the most stable economic climate, and the political situation. Therefore the government should put more effort in promoting the advantage of Hong Kong. For example, TV ads overseas or organize some career talk overseas. It would be helpful to explain the advantage of Hong Kong and allow the foreigners easier access to obtain first hand information from our representatives.

In Hong Kong, we have efficient legal system to protect a fair business environment/opportunities. The government should do more promotion in different investment or career exhibitions. It would help people resolve the stereotype that Asian cities and countries have high levels of corruption. We can ensure that people know that in Hong Kong they can enjoy the fair competition in an environment with little corruption.

Meanwhile Hong Kong also has world class Universities and professional association

which would provide opportunities to improve the professional qualification of prospective workforce. Therefore they can keep developing their professional qualifications even after leaving their homeland. To support this, the Hong Kong government could put more resources on developing and promoting the Hong Kong Science Park as an international high-technology hub to attract the highly professional emigrants to return. It also aligns with the government's economic diversification strategy, where the Economic Development Commission established by the Chief Executive identified Innovative Technology and Cultural and Creative Industries as one of the four industry clusters with high new growth potentials. One good example is the Hsinchu Science Park in Taiwan. The Park had around 4,500 Taiwanese scholars who returned from abroad (Johnson, Pfeiffer, Schuettler & Schwinn, 2009).

Actually Hong Kongers have positive attitude towards foreigners abroad. The bridging support policy should be adopted, which will let foreigners easily discover something new and meet new people. It would be helpful to reduce bad feeling of leaving home. Meanwhile can funding and more support the foreigner to learn Cantonese, it would help them to reduce the difficulties during daily life.

Reference

J. Johnson, A. Pfeiffer, K. Schuettler & J. Schwinn (2009). *Migration and Employment*. OECD

Question (Chapter 4, page 36): What measures are required to ensure that more effective importation of labor will not jeopardize the interests for local workers, having regard to the importation arrangement for FDHs? Should priority be given to industries facing persistent manpower shortages?

Answer:

The principle for an effective labor importation policy is to protect the local workers while lifting the burden of industries facing shortage of labor power. To achieve a well-balanced policy, several schemes were proposed as followed.

First of all, it is necessary to ***identify the concerned industry*** which is currently facing a shortage of workforce. Of which the shortage of workforce would be expected to continue for significant period of time instead of a temporary shift. The identification of concerned industry would be dedicated to trade unions or employers. These parties could bear the responsibility to prove the difficulty in employing local workers. The benefit of the described method comes from the familiarities of particular industry by the trade unions, which helps to provide suitable and up to date information; doing so can help governmental to save money and time during the implementation and monitoring processes. In addition, study or survey can be carried out by recognized public bodies to prevent bias on any industry.

On the other hand, highest priority should be given to employ local workers at the concerned industry. To achieve this, particular ***hiring ratio*** of local to non-local workers under the same cooperate should be imposed. The hiring ratio should also have the flexibility to be set according to the needs of different industries. Besides, it is possible to limits the promotion opportunities for non-local works in order to protect local workers.

An ***annual monitoring framework*** should be developed to conduct regular review on the proposed scheme. Regular reviews are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the implemented policy. Continual monitoring of the industry workforce performance is necessary as the structure of workforce may change from time to time that lead to amendment on the scheme to accommodate the variation.

In order to protect local workers' interest, Hong Kong could also follow other countries' policies of migrant workers, such as UK and Australia. UK and Australia implemented ***points-based system*** that migrant worker must pass a points assessment before they can get permission to work in the country. Employers are required to obtain a sponsor license before employing migrant workers, and fulfill reporting duties to relevant government department. Suggestion is made that Hong Kong can implement points-based scheme and list out the openings which are in high demand in Hong Kong. For employers with openings which are not on the list must complete a resident labor market test/report to prove that there is no suitable or sufficient local worker for that

low-skilled job. The government should also review the sponsor license and shortage occupations list annually.

Question (Chapter 4, Page 36): How should we reach out to Hong Kong people and their families studying/living abroad or in the Mainland and encourage them to return to Hong Kong to work and live?

Outline:

1. For university students:
 - To secure university students to stay in Hong Kong and contribute – fully open the administrative possibility to students on joint programmes with universities in Hong Kong
2. For young professionals:
 - To scale up the portion of family background in the point-based system and to add in the professional shortage list to the system
 - To offer settlement package to new talented comers
 - To improve the recognition of foreign qualifications with informative workshops
3. General measures

Response: Bringing Hong Kongers back to Hong Kong will extensively complement the existing population in terms of workforce quality. It would improve the professional shortage and mitigate the aging issues. Moreover, Hong Kongers who live/study abroad have international experience. They would help provide a more comprehensive understanding of future economic and social development in Hong Kong.

In order to maximize our policy effectiveness, our policy should be customized for people with high mobility. The higher the mobility of the people we target, the more effective our policy will be. Nevertheless, this should not compromise the quality of people we are going to attract because people without stable income also hold high social mobility. Therefore, we propose to target university students and young professionals as our priority policy audience.

For university students

The collaboration between foreign universities and the universities in Hong Kong is common. There are all sorts of exchange programs for students to choose from. Students in the joint programs are competitive, open, and versatile. They are full of potentials and vigour. They are great complementation to the population in Hong Kong. However, all these exchange and joint programs offer only the experience to students. Such program can be further enhanced to secure international students (include students who originally come from Hong Kong – either born in foreign countries or moved to foreign countries with their parents). One way to do it is to change the joint program to be open end. This means students can actually change their home universities to one of the universities in Hong Kong if theirs are foreign. To be specific, if students found they prefer the Hong Kong universities, they can apply for the change.

Changing the home university here does not necessarily mean that the students apply for transferring to Hong Kong. The change can be implemented on the mutual understanding between two universities that students are eligible to choose which university they want to be based at during a joint program. This has no effect on his/her final degree results. The issuing institutions of the final degree depend on the negotiation between the two parties. The issuing will not injure the students' participation on the joint program. This further amendment of the joint program can boost the possibility that a student stays in Hong Kong upon graduation. Students are not constrained to go back to their foreign universities if they do not wish to do so. Meanwhile, students can have longer time to know the city. Vice versa, universities can be free from worrying losing talents they want because the students are free now. Universities can provide all sorts of benefits to secure the students to stay in Hong Kong. Organizations also can take the advantage to come to the universities in Hong Kong to demonstrate opportunities they offer to the international talents via workshops. This can save their trip to go to a foreign country.

For young professionals

Firstly, organizations in Hong Kong are very international today. They need the talents with globalised vision. At the same time, this type of young professionals is also willing to put their attention to Hong Kong. However, Hong Kong is not the only destination that can provide a platform to showcase their talents. Places like Singapore, Shanghai and Beijing are also compelling. A very new report claimed that Shanghai and Beijing are both of the most popular choices for foreign immigration nowadays (Skeldon, 2011). The key is how Hong Kong will compete with the other cities. Since the young professionals we target are very likely to be the offspring of Hong Kongers who moved abroad, these groups of young professionals may not have the right of abode in Hong Kong and are treated the same as other migrants under existing immigration arrangements. If government can adjust their policies to be more favorable to the offspring of Hong Kongers, it might increase their potentials to come back and work. For example, if the offspring of Hong Kongers have an official employment contract with a local company, they can apply for the Hong Kong citizenship. (Owning Hong Kong citizenship means to enjoy a series of benefits including good infrastructure and transportation, low crime rate, low tax, efficient public services and so on.) Hong Kong has already stabilised the Point-based system for Quality Migrant Admission Scheme (Public Services, 2014). In the system, '5.1' is set to test the migrants' background. Government may want to scale up the portion if the family hold a Hong Kong related background in order to stimulate the Hong Kongers to come back home.

However, unlike the UK Tier 2 Point Test [Tier 2 (General) Points Test, 2014], the point-based system of Hong Kong does not have a national shortage occupation list relating to the entry under the point-based system. It is very important that we assess the professional shortage first in terms of the occupation categories. To do so, we can avoid risk of over recruiting people for the same industry. Since Hong Kong is treated as a financial hub in Asia-Pacific region, many young people come to Hong Kong might just for the similar positions in the financial sector. The future of Hong Kong is not

determined yet by such fact. It is possible that Hong Kong would turn into a knowledge based centre in a few decades for its need of sustainable development, just like Singapore. Therefore, the close rating of the professional shortage may not only help solve the current professional shortage in Hong Kong, but also gather the professionals for the society transformation in Hong Kong for the future. Furthermore, only in this way will issuing citizenship for work contract bring minimum harm to the employment opportunities of the local people. Since establishing a whole new point-based system for Hong Kong is not the case here, but the professional shortage list. We need a comprehensive professional shortage list to better implement the quality migration scheme as well as to complement our current point-based system. The current UK national shortage occupation list can be a good example for Hong Kong to learn from (Tier 2 National Shortage Occupation List, 2014).

Secondly, the expensive housing in Hong Kong has also limited the possibilities for Hong Kongers to return home. The mainland China government has implemented settlement package to attract talents to work in China (People's Daily Online, 2014). Hong Kong government can also consider about providing housing allowance for the new talented comers to Hong Kong. For example, the Hong Kong government may consider provide housing allowance to the returnees for the first few years to assist them to settle down in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the housing allowance provided to attract foreign talents should be treated separately to the housing allowance reserved to the local low income residents. The functions and purposes of the two housing allowances here are different. Moreover, the housing allowance to the local citizens are always the priority to the Hong Kong government. (The same logic can be found in the education sector as well. The Hong Kong PhD Fellowship is open to all international students while this fellowship does not contradict to the opportunities that only local Hong Kong students can enjoy.)

Thirdly, government may want to consider relaxing on the qualifications recognition. The overseas qualifications that young professionals obtained should be equally recognized in Hong Kong. This will cease the professional barriers from bringing Hong Kong people back. For instance, currently doctors who received foreign training and wish to practice in Hong Kong. This does not mean, however, we receive all qualifications without considering the local circumstances in Hong Kong. In order to better coordinate the recognition of transnational professional qualification, workshops designed to help the professionals to adapt into the local practice environment should be held as complements of the qualification recognition procedure.

General measures

We also can include some general adjustments, which may include updating information about living and working in Hong Kong on the government's website regularly; creating a column to offer tailor-made information to bring Hong Kong people back; promoting this welcoming policy to the Hong Kong people abroad (Brand Hong Kong, 2014). The government may consider design such a systematic platform to help with promoting this policy. Finally, we shall not forget about the environment. Environmental quality is essentially vital in any society. If the environment in Hong Kong can improve

continuously, without doubt, this can further attract any talent to come and live in Hong Kong. (We did not design specific policies to improve the environment in Hong Kong due the fact that government has already implemented some policies for the sustainability in Hong Kong. We do not go against them. Moreover, to fundamentally improve the natural environmental is a long term project. The measures we proposed above mainly focused on the results which can be produced in short term.)

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Question (Chapter 5, Page 41): What can we do to help young couples overcome the major hurdles of affordable housing, education and childcare?

Current situation

Many young couples in Hong Kong choose to postpone marriage and childbearing nowadays. Some of the common hurdles are difficulties in finding affordable housing, quality childcare as well as education services. As a result of the delayed marriage and never-marriage in the past decade, fertility rate stays low. Hence, the unhealthy population structure may not be able to sustain the economic and society development. It is of paramount for the government to encourage young couples to form family and born child.

The hardly affordable house price in Hong Kong is one of the main factors discouraging young couples to get marry at the prime age. Though the government provides public rental housing, the average waiting time for public rental housing is often too long for eligible young couples. Moreover, most of young couples probably just fall out of the net when they finally get an offer. The 25th percentile of monthly wage distribution was \$9,500 in 2012. If both of the couples work, the total income of \$19,000 will exceed the maximum income limit for family public housing applicants. In some extreme cases, one of the couples may choose to stay idle in order to be eligible for public housing. Some couples may then turn to consider renting or buying a flat in the private market. Hong Kong is famous for her high property price for long. The latest figure of median home price is \$4,020,000. According to the Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey, Hong Kong's average home price rose to 14.9 times gross annual median household income recently. Since young couples cannot afford a flat to settle their family, a large majority of youth prefer living with parents after leaving school or entering the workforce. Thus, many young couples postpone their marriage and deter their parenthood.

Besides housing problem, education for the next generation also concerns many young couples. Couples may need to be worried about the kindergarten place even during pregnancy due to the insufficient capacity. In addition, there is a tendency for children to participate in playgroups in order to have a place in good kindergartens. Also, many parents would arrange intensive extracurricular activities for their children to increase their competitiveness. Most of the extracurricular activities are very expensive and hence may increase the financial burden of the young couples. Therefore, young couples tend to deter childbearing.

Long working hours is common in Hong Kong. Young couples are generally worried if they would have enough time to take care their children. Also, the immature childcare service discourages them to have a baby; for instance, there is no well-structured system to provide well-trained babysitter. Most young couples are not

considering childbearing because they have no confidence to provide proper childcare.

Education

Tax deduction

To release pressure brought by the expenditure on education for both the young couples and their children, we suggest the government may extend tax deduction for education. Tax deduction is now available for Self-education under salaries tax. Tax deduction may consider extending to children's education expenses. Since most families which are charged salary tax are not eligible for other existing financial assistance scheme, tax deduction could be one of the effective ways to ease the parents' pressure or parents-to-be's worries.

Financial assistance to children's extracurricular activities

Expansion of current subsidies or funding for children's extracurricular activities expenses is also suggested. The eligibility requirement of the existing financial assistance scheme should be considered loosen. The current eligibility requirement is often commented too harsh to many needy families. To help their kids handling the complicated assignment from school and examinations required by the educational bureaus, most parents would pay for private tuition for their kids. Both the number of students having private tuition and the expenses on private tuition has increased comparing to the past few years. [2][3]

Childcare

Tax offset for childcare expenses

Most young couples are not able to look after their children during working days because both of them have to work and the working hours are long. In this case, young couples who have children would have to seek help from their relatives, neighbours, child-minders or make use of the various child care services available. However, this would increase their expenses and thus discourage parenthood. A cash allowance can be offered to those who need someone to care for their children when they are at work. The allowance needs to be at least equal to the average cost of the expenses and on top of the current allowance in respect of each dependent parent / grandparent to encourage young couples to have children.

Promotion of family support policies

Hong Kong's work culture is highly competitive and demanding which deter young couples to have children or fewer children. The government can be more aggressive in promoting family support policies to ease the burden of young couples and help them achieve a better work-life balance for a higher fertility rate. For examples, it can take the initiative and implement family support policies in government departments. This can set a standard for private companies to follow. Also, a deduction of profit tax can be offered to privately owned corporations which adopt certain family support policies,

such as paid parental leave, family-friendly workplace practices, flexible working hours and childcare allowances. More companies will then be motivated to enhance family support for their employees.

Vocational training for child-minder

There is no specific vocational training course offered in Hong Kong for child-minder. The workers in childcare centres in Hong Kong do not need to be trained and registered. Hence, the quality of the services provided may vary greatly from centre to centre. This worries the young couples and discourages them from making use of the child care services available in the community. The government can demand vocational training school and Employee Retaining Board (ERB) to offer courses to cope with the shortage of well-trained child-minder. This would help young couples to find qualified persons to look after their children, while at the same time open up the market for child-minding and create job opportunities.

Housing

Rezoning and altering the function of industrial buildings to suit for living

In Hong Kong, there is approximately 17.57 million square meter of factory space, much are over 20 years old and another 7 million square meter of private storage, private specialized factories and private industrial space. In the recent decade, most of manufacturing activity has moved into Mainland, some of such accommodation was standing vacant with additional space being under-utilized or used for purposes which are outside the conditions of their land leases or planning approval.

If those factory spaces are able to convert the redundant space to residential purpose, it should be an immediate solution to the problem.

Re-launching the Home Starter Loan Scheme

Some young couples, aged between 20 and 30 years, are not eligible to apply for public rental housing because their incomes exceed the income limit, but they cannot afford private housing flats which typically cost over a million dollars each. On the other hand, the government once re-launches the Home Starter Loan Scheme ("HSLs") whereby eligible families and singletons are granted low-interest home starter loans for the down payment and related expenses.

Reference

- [1] General Household Survey Section (1) Census and Statistics Department, "Women and Men in Hong Kong Key Statistics", 2012 Edition, 2012, pp.44
- [2] Private Tutoring of Primary and Secondary School Students in Hong Kong, <http://yrc.hkfyg.org.hk/news.aspx?id=80e74ef2-f9cc-4260-9292-a10a8432887e&corpname=yrc&i=2069>, 21 Feb 2014

ⁱ Gwynn Guilford 2013, Japan could add hundreds of billions to its GDP with more women in the workforce, 19.02.2014,
<http://qz.com/90440/japan-could-add-hundreds-of-billions-to-its-gdp-with-more-women-in-the-workforce/>