

主旨: Comments on Population Policy Paper
附件: Comments on Population Policy (21 Feb).pdf

Dear Sir,

Please find attached my views and comments for your consideration.

Regards

C.W. YU

Comments on Population Policy Paper

1. Prime Objective of the Population Policy Paper

The Chief Secretary for Administration has laid down the key considerations of the Population Policy in her Foreward. Reading together with the contents of the Paper, it seems that the weights are very much leaning towards the consideration of economic growth, over that of the well-being of the citizens. Most if not all discussions are made in the Paper to sustain Hong Kong's economic growth. It is rather an Economic Growth Policy Paper.

The argument that good economic growth will automatically bring in a better quality living is a rather myth than a reality. Despite the continual positive GDP growth in the past years, the general public considers that it is more difficult to live in Hong Kong today than 5 years ago.

The only focus or prime objective of the Population Policy should aim at equal opportunities for all people and better quality living, using her words.

2. Limited Resources vs unlimited population

I do not agree to the statement in the Foreword that *Hong Kong also needs population growth to cope with a rapidly ageing population by adding people to the shrinking workforce to maintain competitiveness* given that we do not have unlimited resources to cope with the increasing population, both residents and visitors.

Therefore, the Paper should evaluate our capacity to provide a reasonable home for the increasing population both locally and from abroad, residents and visitors. Personally, I consider that we are already at the ceiling of our capacity to serve. As an easy reference, I summarize the comments from various without naming them "the 80/90's is the best period for living in Hong Kong".

3. Ageing population

Quite a lengthy portion of the Paper addresses to Ageing Population. Yet, the focus stays with economic growth. This leads to the conclusions of finding new sources of labour as well as increasing productivity of our labour force.

The well-being of the citizens has never been considered.

As a matter of fact, Demographic Dividend plays a vital role in Hong Kong's economic development in the past years. Should there be unlimited resources, including most importantly land and the corresponding infrastructures, one can consider to boost up the young population by introducing labours and talents from overseas thereby delaying (but not eliminating) the Liability after Demographic Dividend. However, the reality is that resource problems led by a leap-frog increase in Mainland visitors have demonstrated our limit to handle already today.

Therefore, the Population Policy should put in place appropriate policies to handle the reality that follows the Demographic Dividend, a liability for the prosperity earned, than to extend this period with new populations from Mainland and overseas. The HKSAR Government should prepare plans and reserve resources today if not yesterday to cater for the coming of the Liability after the Demographic Dividend peaked at 2018 (Chart 1.2 of the Paper). This should be part of the Population Policy.

4. New sources of labour

The labour shortage as referred to in Chapter 1 of the Paper is temporary as the HKSAR Government has launched a number of infrastructure projects in the recent years after a mere stop from 1998. The labour demands for these infrastructure projects (when the skilled labours were jobless and had left the industry since 1998) together with the leap-frog increase in demands from serving Mainland visitors are the reasons for the current problem. The solutions should be a careful planning of future Government capital expenditures and a policy on our tourist industry (comments from my various overseas friends are that Hong Kong is no more a place to spend for their vacations. The city is too crowded, the pace is too fast and the unique features of Hong Kong had before are replaced by high office buildings and chain stores.).

Given that our labour force will peak in 2018, the future development of Hong Kong's industries should focus on high-tech industries which requires more automation and less labour. Government support is a key to this development as our resources, particularly land, is very expensive.

On the issue of growing mismatch in human resources, the proposed policy at 1.13 is partially correct for the highly educated group. But, it does not solve the problem on low-skilled jobs. Earning is the key factor for these jobs to be attractive. Look at Germany for instance, the salaries of a street cleaner, a taxi-driver and a young professional are very similar. The low-skilled workers are equally respected by the others. Whereas, in Hong Kong, no respect is paid to the low-income groups. We need to have a cultural change in this respect. Closing the income gap may be a solution but objection from the Riches is not an easy task to handle. Importation of low-skilled workers may help at one time but will not solve our problem.

Hence, we need to address this problem from a different angle. I hope that this will be considered in the revision of the Paper.

5. Cosmopolitan

The statement in 1.19 is also partially correct but again the weight is biased on one side of the balance. Looking at Hong Kong's current economy, we rely already heavily on Mainland trades and visitors. China being the biggest leverage for Hong Kong will no doubt be continued in short term. However, with the announced State Policy of building a number of "Hong Kong" in the near term, we have to rethink of developing our economy with foreign countries before it is too late.

China is absolutely not our long term solution when their "Hong Kong" are ready. We need to maintain/create our unique position and continue to serve and benefit our motherland that other Mainland cities cannot copy. Going-out instead of going-in is definitely the answer to Hong Kong.

C.W. YU

21 Feb 2014