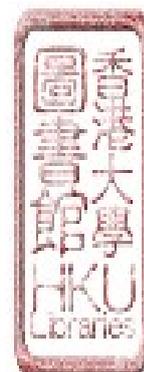


Title	A proposal for formulating a youth policy in Hong Kong for the 21st century
Author(s)	Chan, Shui-ching.; 陳瑞貞.
Citation	
Issued Date	2009
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10722/144223
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A PROPOSAL FOR FORMULATING A YOUTH POLICY IN
HONG KONG FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

CHAN SHUI CHING
M.P.A. DISSERTATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
2009



Abstract of Dissertation

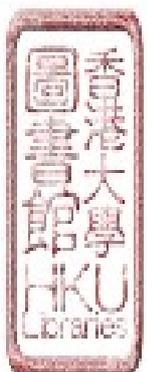
A Proposal for Formulating a Youth Policy in Hong Kong for the 21st Century

Submitted by

Chan Shui Ching

for the degree of Master of Public Administration

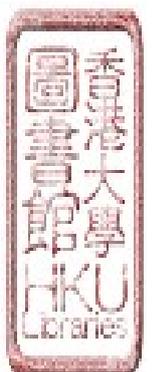
At the University of Hong Kong in June 2009



Abstract

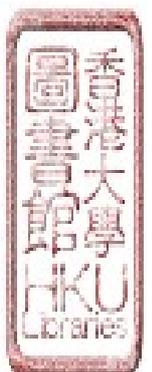
Young people are the pillars of our future society. However, there is no explicit youth policy in Hong Kong. Youth-related policies are taken up by different government bureaus, and most of them are problem-solving oriented, preventive and remedial measures. In 1988, the Central Committee on Youth finished a Report on Youth Policy which stated clearly that the government should have the obligation to make a commitment towards the future development of youth as well as set up directives to achieve youth development through more effective deployment of resources and coordination. Although the Report suggested the setting up of a comprehensive youth policy, the proposal had been turned down by the colonial government. The government preferred to initiate a Youth Charter instead of a Youth Policy. The Youth Charter only enunciated the principles and ideals on youth development without any resource implication.

After resuming sovereignty in 1997, the socio-economic context of Hong Kong has undergone a significant change and has been shaped by broad-spectrum technological advancements. The youth in Hong Kong appear to have new trends and characteristics. In order to develop our youth to face to the new challenges and to motivate them to be active and committed citizens, the formulation of a youth policy arouses social concern again. As we are preparing young people in Hong Kong for the 21st century, there is a pressing need for the Government to review all the issues related to youth development, and to assess whether it is appropriate to formulate a comprehensive youth policy which is in line with the Government's overall blueprint for the SAR's future development.

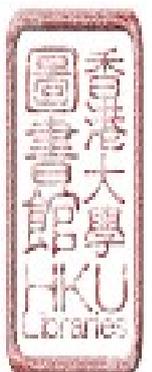


This paper will attempt to explore the possibility of the formulation of a youth policy in Hong Kong after ten years of resuming sovereignty through in-depth interviews and analysis of the stakeholders including legislative councillors, educational professionals, youth work professionals and young people. This paper specifically tries to address the following questions: (1) to assess the major characteristics and the new challenges faced by the youth in the 21st century; (2) to assess whether society has a need for a Youth Policy; and (3) to assess what framework of this Youth Policy will be suitable for Hong Kong.

The formulation of a youth policy is not only related to overall social change, but is also affected by other political and economic activities. Hong Kong is facing severe challenges from economic globalization, democratization, polarization of society and an aging population. Being a special administrative region of China, the connection between the youth in Hong Kong and Mainland China becomes close. Young people in Hong Kong need to increase their knowledge of the Mainland as well as develop their sense of national identity. Against this wider political, social and economic background, complemented with the analysis of the relevant materials and research findings, the youth policy in Hong Kong is moving towards a new agenda and the following three points need consideration. First, it must address the social considerations of the wide range of young people in Hong Kong. Second, it must ensure that a structure is in place to facilitate young people to make a successful transition to adult life. Third, since the young people are the future of our society, investment in youth now should be seen to be a long-term investment, not only for the benefit of Hong Kong's internal well being, but also for the benefit of the Mainland China as well as the world's development.



Young people are the assets of society and they represent our future. A youth policy should be built upon an all-round policy vision and strategy to fully develop the potential contribution of young people to the future of Hong Kong. A major reorientation of policies is thus needed if significant progress is to be made. What is suggested here is not a new policy for youth but a shift of policies to illustrate the importance of building up a competent and responsible youth force. This paper provides an opportunity to claim for a reorientation of investment towards the youth and making it a priority.



Acknowledgement

I would like to give my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Eliza LEE, who has guided me throughout the whole study. Her intellectual stimulation has enlightened me a lot in this dissertation journey.

I would like to give my special thanks to my friend, Mok Hon-fai, James, who has provided me insight and support in this dissertation.

Last but not the least, I would like to express my special gratitude to my husband, Anka, for his genuine support and consideration.

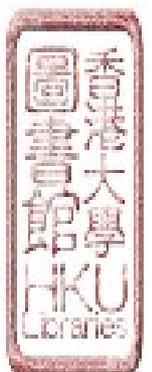
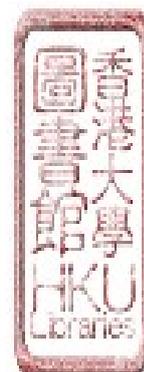


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Chapter 1 Introduction

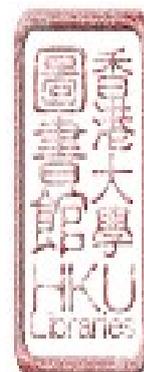
“Young people in all countries are both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. Their imagination, ideals, considerable energies and vision are essential for the continuing development of the societies in which they live. The problems that young people face as well as their vision and aspirations are essential components of the challenges and prospects of today’s societies and future generations.”

(United Nations, 1995)

Today, there is a global trend of committing time and resources to the formulation of youth policies. Youth are the potential strength of a nation and they constitute the pillars upon which a nation is built. A youth policy is of vital importance to empower youth to contribute to building of the nation.

1.1 Background

Does Hong Kong have a Youth Policy? It is difficult to answer to some extent as it depends upon how we define youth policy. If we say yes, Hong Kong does have a youth policy — it has a series of policies that are put in place explicitly to address the needs, rights and obligations of young people after 1997, such as education policies, welfare policies, health services and employment policies, etc. which combine to affect the lives of young people. It also determines the age at which young people have the right to participate in certain “adult” activities, like

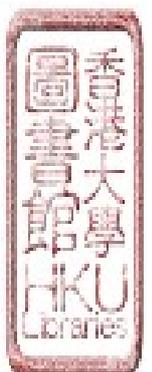


employment, voting, drinking, driving and getting married. But, actually these policies are only a subset of the wider compilation of policies that affect young people, their families, and their communities.

If we say no, then Hong Kong does not have a comprehensive set of youth. There are multiple competing policies and agendas that reflect independent pushes and pulls. Existing policies have their own concerns towards a common vision, and they rarely take into account the inter-relationship between systems, services and youth behaviour.

Hong Kong lacks a coherent policy agenda for young people making the transition from childhood to adulthood. She does not have a policy agenda which focuses on the youth development. Few would argue this point. The question is what should be done to improve the situation?

However, all policies should keep up with the times and adjust to changes to facilitate our society's continuous growth and development. After resuming sovereignty in 1997, the changes in the political and economic environment, the structural change in population, the changing expectations of the youth, as well as the demands on the quality of youth services can all have major effects on the long-term planning of youth policies. As a highly developed and densely populated international city, Hong Kong has experienced increasingly complicated social problems which will pose a greater challenge to our younger generation. In order to prepare our young people for the 21st century, there is a pressing need for the Government to review all the issues related to youth



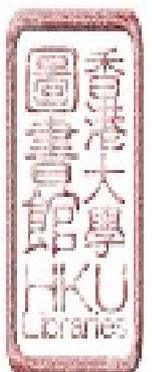
development, and to assess whether it is appropriate to formulate a clear and comprehensive youth policy which is in line with Government's overall blueprint for the SAR's future development.

This paper attempts to explore the possibility of the formulation of a youth policy in Hong Kong and to address the following questions: (1) to assess the major characteristics and the new challenges faced by the youth in the 21st century; (2) to assess whether society has a need for a Youth Policy; and (3) to assess what framework of this Youth Policy will be suitable for Hong Kong.

A comprehensive youth policy that has profound implications on our societal benefits deserves our attention. The formulation of a youth policy involves an engagement process. In order to solicit opinions of related professionals and, in particular the younger generation, regarding the possibility of formulating a youth policy, this paper has been conducted through an integration of relevant data and measurements from youth trends in the current social context, interviews with academics and related professionals as well as a thorough review of local and overseas experiences in developing a youth policy. It is hoped that this paper will provide insights of the issues at hand and will result in recommendations which could be suggested for future planning.

1.2 Methodology

After resuming sovereignty in 1997, the changes in the political and economic

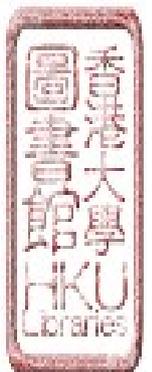


environment, coupled with the change in national identity, all posed a great challenge and pressure to our younger generation. To prepare our youth for the 21st century, there is a pressing need for the Government to review all the issues related to youth development, and to assess whether it is appropriate to formulate a clear and comprehensive youth policy which is in line with Government's overall blueprint for the SAR's future development.

This paper attempts to address the following questions: (1) to assess the major characteristics and the new challenges faced by the youth in the 21st century; (2) to assess whether the society has a need for the Youth Policy; and (3) to assess what framework of this Youth Policy will be suitable for Hong Kong.

This paper has been conducted through a synthesis of relevant data from youth trends in the current social context, interviews with academics and related professionals as well as a thorough review of local and overseas experiences in developing a youth policy to identify the implications that might affect the formulation of a youth policy.

In order to explore into the possibility of formulating a youth policy in Hong Kong, the first question we find necessary is to define “what youth policy is”? The next question is to consider what the framework underlying the policy would be? It would not be a complete study of the youth policy if the issues of youth development and youth problems were not touched. Thus, it would investigate what possible effects the youth policy would have on satisfying youth needs and in alleviating youth problems in the 21st century.

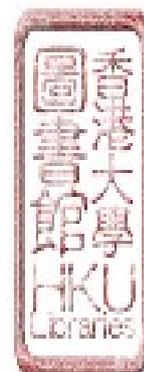


Data collection and Analysis

For the data collection, firstly, in order to have a better understanding of the development of a youth policy in Hong Kong and overseas countries, a thorough review of relevant materials and references is conducted. A review of local experiences can provide valid information on the development of youth policies over a certain period of time in Hong Kong. Also, it can reflect on the process of decision-making and the discourses on various policy proposals. On the other hand, from the review of overseas experiences, it can see that different countries develop youth policies which recognize youth as an important population and link supports for young people to long-term goals. In fact, the emergence and development of any youth policy is linked to the historical and contextual development of a country.

Secondly, another important source for analysis is youth statistics and youth reports. In order to acquire a holistic view of the young people in Hong Kong, a detailed analysis on youth is employed. This paper examines the youth situation, including their demographic characteristics, educational attainments, economic characteristics and civic, social and political participation in the 21st century. The synthesizing of existing relevant data and youth reports helps to map out the major trends our young people show so as to assess how the youth policy should address their needs and problems.

Thirdly, apart from reviewing the local and overseas experiences and analysing

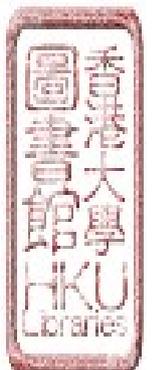


the youth statistics and youth reports, in-depth interviews are used to solicit the views of members from a broad cross section of the sector. They include LegCo Councillors, University academics and educators who have shown great interest and expertise in youth issues and youth studies. Views were also sought from youth workers and senior managers with voluntary youth organizations, as well as youth representatives. A total of 14 academics/experts were interviewed. A list of interviewees is attached in Appendix I. All the interviewees are questioned about their perceptions on the above issues in order to have a deeper understanding on how various people in civil society understand the youth and the youth policy. The questions of the interviews are listed in Appendix II.

For the purposes of data analysis, an integration of relevant data and reports are collected through documentary analysis and in-depth interviews.

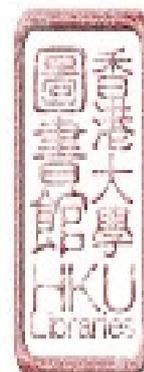
1.3 Organization of the Paper

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part contains three chapters that provide background information on the study. This introductory chapter describes the rationale and the focus of this paper. Besides, a discussion of methodology is included in this part. Chapter 2 reviews the local and overseas experiences in developing youth policies so as to map out the historical development of youth policy in Hong Kong and to identify the determinants of the youth policy. Chapter 3 examines the framework for analysis on the premises underlying the youth policy, namely the concept of youth and youth policy, youth policy framework and the investment-based youth policy approach.



The second part contains the data collection and data analysis that provide the integrated assessment of youth policy in Hong Kong. Chapter 4 analyses the youth situation in Hong Kong to identify the major trends and needs faced by our young people. Chapter 5 discusses the major findings of the in-depth interviews with youth professionals and academics, together with the literature review which will be used for developing the framework for youth policy formulation. In addition, this paper will attempt to propose an investment-based youth policy in Hong Kong.

The third part is the conclusion of the paper which looks forward with anticipation to an investment-based youth policy in Hong Kong.



Chapter 2 Hong Kong and Overseas Experiences in Developing Youth Policies

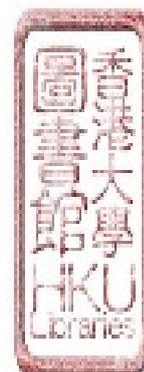
Books and reports concerning youth policies are limited in Hong Kong. In addition, the concept of youth policy is not explicitly stated in most of the local literature. On the other hand, numerous volumes of reports on youth policy are found in foreign countries. These reference materials can complement our understanding of the development of a youth policy in Hong Kong. After reviewing the local and overseas experiences, in this chapter, it will map out the historical development of youth policies in Hong Kong as well as briefly describe the setting of youth policies in some selected foreign countries. Hopefully, this would draw out the main characteristics of a youth policy and also provide some background information on this topic.

2.1 Hong Kong Experiences

During the 1980s to 1997, there were two significant events that came about in the struggle to develop a youth policy. They were the Report on Youth Policy issued in 1988 and the Charter for Youth issued in 1993.

1. Report on Youth Policy

In the 1980s, the political development of Hong Kong entered a new era. With the development of a representative government, the issue of a Sino-British Declaration and the promulgation of the Basic Law had brought great challenges to young people

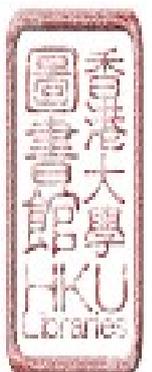


in Hong Kong. Young people became the leaders of future society. Moreover, the International Youth Year in 1985 was a collective ritual to give the young people the label of future pillars of society. It was also a good opportunity for the civil society to strive for a youth policy in which the government could have clear objectives and direction to help our youngsters. Thus, a Central Committee on Youth was established to study the possibility of formulating a youth policy in Hong Kong.

The Working Party on Youth Policy under the Central Committee on Youth finished a *Report on Youth Policy* in 1988 which was endorsed by the Central Committee on Youth. Rosanna Wong, the chairman of the Central Committee on Youth admitted that the Sino-British Joint Declaration had established a historic watershed in 1997 for Hong Kong. In order to maintain the stability and prosperity of society, it was essential to prepare our younger generations to meet the great challenges ahead. In this regard, a youth policy was necessary. The report on youth policy concluded that the government was obliged to have clear direction and commitment towards the future development of youth through the effective deployment of resources and services coordination.

2. Charter for Youth

The Central Committee on Youth published a *Report on the Need for a Youth Policy in Hong Kong* in 1989 and sent it to the Governor. The Report suggested setting up a comprehensive youth policy. However, in the Governor's address in October 1989, the proposal was turned down. Instead, he agreed on establishing a Commission on Youth to give advice on youth issues and to draft a Charter for youth. In February



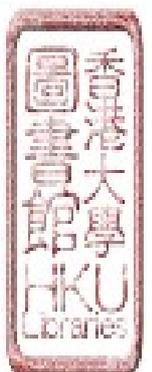
1990, the Governor announced a proposal to establish a Commission on Youth. One of the tasks of the Commission was to draft a Charter for Youth. After 18 months of endeavour, the proposed Charter for Youth was published and consulted for public opinion.

The Charter for Youth was divided into three sections. The first section of the Charter stipulated the principles and ideals on youth development. The second section set out the major rights of youth in the light of these principles and ideals. The third section stated the long-term social goals for youth development.¹ However, the Charter was not a legally binding document. There was a great difference in the meaning of a policy and a charter. A policy affirmed the government's commitment and the provision of resources and while a charter only expressed the principles and the government did not have to make any commitment.

The Secretary for Home Affairs claimed that although there was no explicit statement under the label of youth policy, the reality was that policies relating to youth and services for their well-being were being implemented by the government and other non-governmental organizations. A specific policy on top of the existing system would create duplication of work and this might not result in the best deployment of resources. Further, it would not be desirable to devise a policy specifically for a particular age group as certain rights and protections applied equally to the young people as well as to all other members in the community. The discourse on youth policy at that time came to an end².

¹ Commission on Youth (1993). *The Charter for Youth*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

² James Mok (1998). *Hegemonic Account of Youth in Hong Kong*.



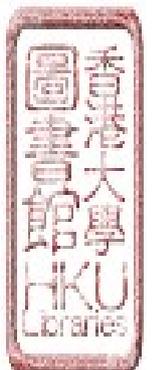
3. Why did the Colonial Government fail to develop a Youth Policy?

According to the analysis of Dr. Cheng, the development of a centralized Youth Policy might not have been the first priority of the colonial government³. In fact, the colonial government lacked a clear youth development perspective. Her priority was to prevent youth from committing crimes and thus developing youth became secondary. The colonial government believed that services provided for youth, including education, welfare, employment, and leisure were sufficient. Also, she believed that services provided by different departments would be more flexible. Therefore, a centralized youth policy was unnecessary. Besides, she worried about creating a divide in society. If centralizing youth policy meant that other functional groups would also ask for an independent policy for themselves, probably there would be an elderly group, women's group, etc. Compared with other important agenda, concerning political and economic issues, youth development might not be the priority under the government agenda⁴.

Hong Kong did not have a youth policy until now. Thus the development of youth welfare services is prominent. Starting from the 1970s, the Hong Kong Government issued a number of “White Paper on Social Welfare Policy” and “Program Plan on Youth Development”. Although these were scattered and disseminated social welfare policies for youth for different periods, their implementation did speed up the development of youth services directly. Those services include children and youth

³ Cheng Shi-ho. *Youth Situation, Youth Policy and Youth Unemployment in Hong Kong*. Prepared for ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific Bangkok, 27 February-1 March 2002.

⁴ Cheng Shi-ho. *Youth Situation, Youth Policy and Youth Unemployment in Hong Kong*. Prepared for ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific Bangkok, 27 February-1 March 2002.



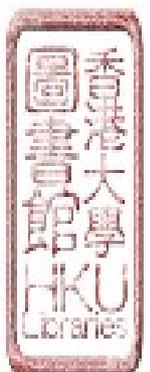
centres, school social work, outreach social work which mainly focused on remedial and preventive work. The problems and needs of young people became the concern of the government. As a result, a problem-oriented approach towards the young people became dominant.

The future of our society is closely linked to young people. Investing in youth becomes a global trend to equip young people with skills and knowledge needed throughout their lives. The issue of setting a youth policy arouses social concern again.

2.2 Overseas Experiences

In recent years, governments around the world have believed the need for a policy response to systemic youth issues. There has been broad international support for undertaking policy reforms that invest in youth. Organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) recognize youth as a population that should be treated separately from children and adults⁵. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child established specific rights for children and youth, and the European Commission published a White Paper on youth providing a framework for cooperation and coordination in the field of youth. Different countries are then developing youth policies that recognize youth as an important population and link supports for young people to broader outcomes and long-term goals. The following illustrate some

⁵ World Health Organization (2002). *Growing in Confidence: Programming for Adolescent Health and Development: Lessons from Eight Countries*. Geneva: Department of child and Adolescent Health and Development.



countries' experiences for reference and consideration.

1. Youth Policy in Europe

The three governing themes - peace, participation and development were declared in the International Year of the Youth by the United Nations in 1985. They moved on to 1989 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and then 1992 and the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life. This led to a more systemic European focus on young people and youth policy. At the meeting in Bucharest in 1998, there was a resolution defining “The Youth Policy of the Council of Europe”:⁶

- Help young people meet the challenges facing them and achieve their aspirations
- Strengthen civil society through training for democratic citizenship
- Encourage young people's participation in society
- Support the development of youth policies
- Seek ways of promoting youth mobility in Europe

The emergence and development of a youth policy is linked to the historical and contextual development of Europe. It is more a consequence of the issues in the lives of young people. First, there is a question of youth transitions that many young people have prolonged. Transitions in the labour market, in personal relationships and in housing are less certain. Second, there is an issue of youth divide when inequality arose between a majority of young people making a positive transition and

⁶ Howard Williamson. A complex but increasing coherent journey? The emergence of “youth policy” in Europe in *Youth & Policy*. No. 95 Spring 2007. UK: the National Youth Agency.



a minority who fell to the margins. Third, there is the problem of exclusion when a cluster of disadvantages are trapped in a vicious circle and cut off from any possibility of mainstream participation. Fourth, there is a need to address and redress such circumstances in order to promote a stronger probability of employability and civic participation. Against this socio-economic background, the scene is set for thinking about youth policy in the European community.

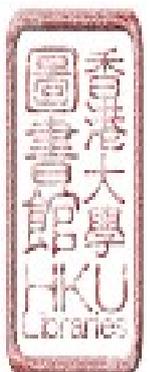
2. Youth Policy in Luxembourg

The 1996 Youth Ministry Policy Guidelines was referred to overcome compartmentalized views in order to meet the needs of young people. With the changing social conditions, it recognized that specific provisions should be made for young people in the stage of transition to adult life. The youth policy is formulated in Luxembourg with the guidelines for coordinating and collaborating youth services. It emphasized youth work and social participation of the young people. Youth can be defined as the age group 12-25, with the upper age limit following the commonly accepted current cross-European definition⁷.

However, with the coming of the 21st century, there is a widespread need for youth policies to be reviewed across Europe. This is partly in the light of changing patterns of youth, and partly a response to the need for some standardization in policy and provision across Europe⁸. Briefly, the ways in which young people make their transitions into adult life are very different from the ways in which their parents did.

⁷ John Demanuele, Gill Jones, ed. *Youth Policy in Luxembourg – Report by an international panel of experts appointed by the Council of Europe*. Council of Europe Publishing, 2002.

⁸ John Demanuele, Gill Jones, ed. *Youth Policy in Luxembourg – Report by an international panel of experts appointed by the Council of Europe*. Council of Europe Publishing, 2002.



Young people, now defined in Luxembourg as aged up to 25 years, with new and different needs.

Thus, Luxembourg youth policies which explicitly set up for young people are being focused on the transitions to social and economic independence in employment, housing or welfare sectors. The underlying principle of youth policy structures in Luxembourg is that all policies for young people should be brought together, so that young people are treated as a unique group. The formulation of the youth policy needs to take on board new challenges facing young people between 15 and 25 and to recognize all the domains in which young people become adults.⁹

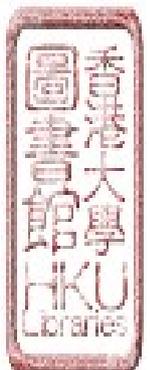
3. Youth Policy in Norway

Norway did not have a youth policy until after World War II. Owing to the changes in social institutions, such as education and the labour market, young people were seen as being separate from adult society¹⁰. When youth became a separate phase of life and young people were defined as a separate category in society, it led to the development of a separate youth policy. Young people have thus acquired their own experience and a life situation distinct from childhood and adulthood. Youth is defined as the age group 12-29 in Norway.

The government established the State Youth Council in 1953 to act as an advisory body on youth policy issues. In the 1970s, official involvement in youth policy became more direct. Measures would be based on the needs of young people.

⁹ John Demanuele, Gill Jones, ed. *Youth Policy in Luxembourg – Report by an international panel of experts appointed by the Council of Europe*. Council of Europe Publishing, 2002.

¹⁰ Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. *National Report on Youth Policy in Norway*. October 2003.

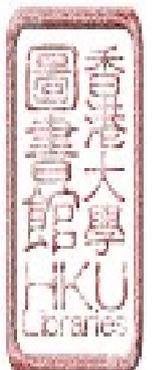


Consequently, a youth policy was formulated to provide services for the young people.

Social changes in the last century have had significant effects on the growth of young people. Social changes have been described in different ways, such as through a multi-cultural society, an information-based society and a knowledge-based society and these indicate which changes are thought to be the most significant. These social changes have resulted in individuality, self-realization and participation which become important values for young people. It is common to regard gradually increasing independence and autonomy as characteristics of the passage from youth to adulthood.

Youth is experienced in different ways because they are significantly affected by social conditions, environmental factors and the resources that individuals have acquired as they are growing up. In this context, the challenges with regards to youth policies are to give young people resources to cope with their existence, to solve problems and resolve conflicts, and to create meaning and coherence in their lives. Today, the goals of youth policies are reformulated to promote a good and safe environment for young people to grow up, with room for diversity. Also, young people must be given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own lives and be encouraged to be independent and participate in what is needed of them. Norway's youth policy has shifted since the 1970s, from a structured and regulated (interventionist) approach to one more concerned with a greater (facilitative) focus on the individual¹¹.

¹¹ Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. *National Report on Youth Policy in Norway*. October 2003.



4. Youth Policy in China

There are about 200 million youth aged between 15 and 24, accounting for 15.5% of the whole population in China¹². Since the founding of The People's Republic of China, the Chinese government has regarded youth development as a priority of national development and decided to formulate a cross-sector comprehensive youth policy.

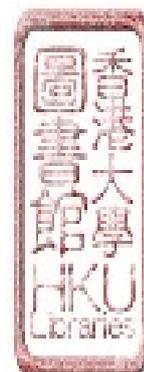
The Chinese youth policy was first presented in item No. 46 of the Constitution of People' s Republic of China which stipulates that “the state will cultivate youth, juveniles and children to achieve moral, intellectual and physical development comprehensively.” The Constitution has also stipulated the rights and obligations of all the citizens including youth and other special groups.¹³

The 21st Century Agenda of China, approved by the Central Government in March 1994, left a special charter for youth in which it formulated detailed goals and programs on education, employment, environmental protection, health and hygiene, protection of rights and interests, participation in politics, economic and social development etc, and also described the medium and long term goals of Chinese youth development.

As there is no specific ministry on youth affairs, the Chinese government works with youth organizations, and hopes that the central committee of Communist Youth

¹² All-China Youth Federation (ACYF). *China Youth Policy*. Website:<http://www.acyf.org.cn/ywb/doc/>

¹³ All-China Youth Federation (ACYF). *China Youth Policy*. Website:<http://www.acyf.org.cn/ywb/doc/>



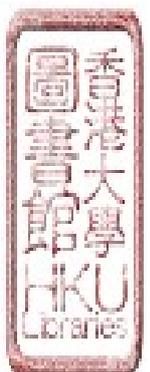
League of China (CYLC) and All-China Youth Federation (ACYF) will assist the government in dealing with youth affairs¹⁴. Many local youth organizations have been established accordingly, which help to form a nationwide integrated coordinated youth work system and to ensure the efficiency of youth work. Since 1990s, the central committee of CYLC and ACYF have successively formulated “Chinese Youth Work Strategic Development Plan” and “Programs of Trans-Century Work of CYLC” which are major components of Chinese Youth Policies.

To encourage youth participation among the representatives of the National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Political Consultation Conference (CPPCC), there are certain percentages of young delegates. Young representatives of NPC and CPPCC represent the will of youth, reflect the voice of youth, and participate in political affairs. The Chinese government also attaches great importance to the promotion and training of young cadres working in government offices. Indeed, there are certain numbers of youth playing important roles in their posts in different agencies in the government.

5. Youth Policy in Taiwan

Youth in Taiwan are defined as those between 12 and 24 years of age. Youth Policy entails guidelines and investments that enable young people to build and utilize their human capital and become productive people. The objectives of the youth policy are to develop the potential of the youth, to sharpen their competitive edges, and to create an appropriate environment in which the youth can develop their right attitudes for

¹⁴ All-China Youth Federation (ACYF). *China Youth Policy*. Website:<http://www.acyf.org.cn/ywb/doc/>



lives, and also care for the society¹⁵.

The National Youth Commission (NYC), Executive Yuan NYC not only is a direct provider of youth public services, but also is an organizer and a leader of national youth policy. Therefore, the NYC, not only needs to strengthen youth policy planning, but also needs to bring together relevant public and private sector organizations and groups to form an effective platform for collective resources, and lead the whole of society forward in the direction of developing youth¹⁶.

In light of these beliefs, the NYC's policy goals are designed as follow¹⁷:

- Assist youth employment and entrepreneurship, and the ability to compete in the global market and adapt to rapid economic structural change.
- Broaden youth public participation, raise awareness of youth participation in public affairs and good citizenship;
- Advance equal access of young people to international society and the ability to take part in international movements.
- Help young people identify with Taiwan through real experiences and feelings.

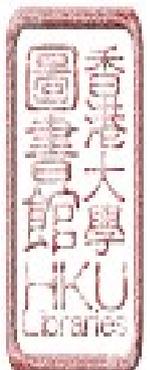
6. Youth Policy in New South Wales

The NSW Youth Policy 2002-2006 is a universal framework targeting all young people in this state. Young people are generally defined as people aged between 12 and 24 years of age. The policy recognizes that young people are a diverse group,

¹⁵ INFOYOUTH. Taiwan of China. Website: <http://www.infoyouth.org/article1585.html>

¹⁶ INFOYOUTH. Taiwan of China. Website: <http://www.infoyouth.org/article1585.html>

¹⁷ INFOYOUTH. Taiwan of China. Website: <http://www.infoyouth.org/article1585.html>



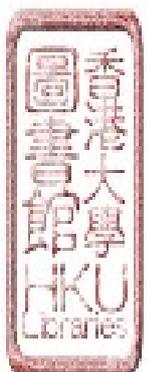
whose needs differ according to their social, economic and cultural backgrounds and their support requirements¹⁸. The policy builds on the directives set in the previous NSW Youth Policy, *Focus on Young People*, released in 1998. The policy has been developed to inform young people, their families and organizations that serve them what exactly the NSW government seeks for young people. It provides strategic direction and an overview of NSW activities for young people under a single framework.

From the beginning young people have been involved in developing this policy. The NSW Youth Advisory Council consulted with 500 young people across NSW about their concerns. Also, local government and non-governmental organizations in the youth field had been involved in developing this youth policy. The principles¹⁹ that guide the work with young people are:

- Participation: Young people should be active participants in the development of policies, programs and services and in decision-making that impacts their lives.
- Connection: Connection to family, school, community and other young people is an essential component in protecting and supporting young people.
- Opportunity: Young people require fair access to opportunities and services so that they can enjoy life and participate in the community.
- Early Intervention and Prevention: Strengthening the capacity of peers, families, schools and the general community to support young people and to promote resilience offers the greatest long-term benefits to young people.

¹⁸ Office of Children and Young People, the NSW Cabinet Office. *NSW Youth Policy 2002-2006*. New South Wales Government, 2002.

¹⁹ Office of Children and Young People, the NSW Cabinet Office. *NSW Youth Policy 2002-2006*. New South Wales Government, 2002.



- Collaboration between Services: Consultation, collaboration and partnerships between organizations working with young people are essential to improving existing services, planning new programs and providing quality services to young people.

Youth Policy is not a static issue. It is closely related with one's historical and contextual development of a country. With various backgrounds, youth policy is varied in different countries with emphasis on a wide range of youth related issues such as prevention and rehabilitation of risk behaviours, protection of rights and welfare, cultivation of proper values, attitudes and behaviours, career development, and developing youth competency and so on.

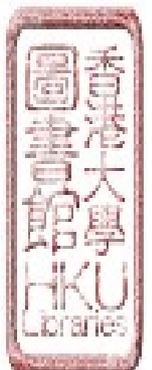
2.3 Conclusion

Synthesizing from the above overseas experiences, one can draw out the main characteristics of a youth policy and what it can do for young people.

A youth policy is:

- a demonstration for the priority of youth;
- a declaration for youth development;
- a vision statement;
- a framework for political action;
- a blueprint of the status, rights, responsibilities and roles of youth.

A youth policy can:

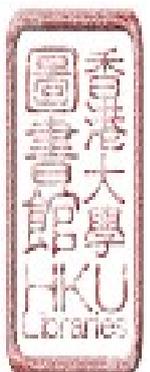


- empower, enable and encourage youth;
- maximize youth participation;
- provide realistic guidelines, a timetable and a framework for governments and other agencies to work together to help youth;
- ensure stronger coordination among youth-serving organizations and enhance service delivery.

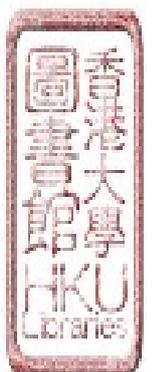
In short, the main implications of a youth policy can be identified into the following points: (1) youth policy is formulated to overcome compartmentalized views to coordinate the youth services provision properly; (2) youth policy is a response to the changing needs of youth in the 21st century; (3) youth policy is set out to ensure the smooth transition of young people into adult life; (4) youth policy is needed to keep up with the times and adjust to changes to facilitate our society's sustainable development; (5) youth policy is regarded as giving young people resources to grow up; (6) most governments are likely to work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure the implementation of the youth policy; and (7) youth policy entails guidelines and investments that enable young people to build human capital.

In fact, one can see that different countries have recognized the need for a policy response to youth issues. The emergence and development of youth policy is closely related to the historical and contextual development of a country. Today, there is a global trend of committing time and resources to the formulation of youth policies and action plans.

The well being of future generations depends primarily on the societies we build



today, on the quality and quantity of assets that future generations will inherit. In this sense, providing a youth policy is of paramount importance to our society. Youth policy is a response to the changing needs of youth in the 21st century to keep up with the times and adjust to changes to facilitate our society's sustainable development. It represents a socially agreed formula for meeting the needs and aspirations of young people and provides a framework for youth development. It is necessary for the SAR government to nurture our youth to take up the responsibility of Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong. The SAR government should reconsider identifying her priorities and directives to the development of her young people.



Chapter 3 Framework for Analysis

A systematic investigation of Youth Policy in Hong Kong is a new attempt. It is inevitably to find an existing theoretical framework for analysis. This chapter will try to define some of the key concepts and provide a theoretical framework for understanding Hong Kong's Youth Policy in order to set the platform for further analysis.

3.1 Youth and Youth Policy

The concepts of “youth” and of “youth policy” vary nationally and historically, and therefore need to be kept under regularly elevation. It is known that the different theoretical perspectives lead to different policy frameworks²⁰.

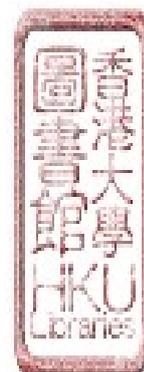
1. The Concept of Youth

An official definition of youth, created by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999 for the International Youth Year, refers to youth as “all persons falling between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four inclusive.”²¹ However, the operational definition of the term ‘youth’ often varies from country to country, depending on the specific socio-cultural, institutional, economic and political factors²². In this paper, unless it is specified, we refer to “youth” as those aged 15-24.

²⁰ John Demanuele, Gill Jones, ed. *Youth Policy in Luxembourg – Report by an international panel of experts appointed by the Council of Europe*. Council of Europe Publishing, 2002.

²¹ Division for Social Policy and Development, United Nations. The Definition of Youth. 1999. www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/g-and-a/define.htm.

²² Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations (1999). *Youth Policy Formulation Manual*. Website: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/escap.pdf>



If, as a working definition, we think of “childhood” as a period of social and economic dependence and “adulthood” as the achievement of independence, then “youth” can be seen as a period of transition from one to the other, characterized by changing degrees of semi-dependence.²³ According to many local researches on youth (youth polls by the HKFYG²⁴), the experience of youth is undergoing significant change. It may be due to the change of the youth’s own expectations, the change of the socio-economic and policy structures, and the change of the global conditions.

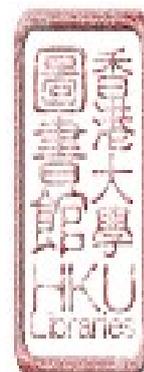
However, there is no longer a normative ordering along a unitary pathway to adulthood (school- to- work transition)²⁵. This kind of pathway was perhaps uniquely seen in the 1970s and 1980s, but today the transition to adulthood can be broken down into different inter-connected pathways. “Progress” to adult independence may involve backtracking, such as a dropout from and re-entry into education or training, possible returns to the parental home, and tentative partnership formation and cohabitation²⁶. Young people can become adults according to one criterion but not another. Thus they can become economically independent but still live in the parental home, or live independently but with parental support. A holistic approach to policy and research is needed to understand the character of youth transitions and identify young people’s needs. Policy interventions which affect one area of young people’s lives are likely to affect other areas as well.

²³ Jones, G. and Wallace, C. (1992). *Youth, Family and Citizenship*. Buckingham, Open University Press.

²⁴ For details, see the website: <http://www.hkfyg.org.hk/yrp>

²⁵ Jones, G. and Wallace, C. (1992). *Youth, Family and Citizenship*. Buckingham, Open University Press.

²⁶ Jones, G. and Wallace, C. (1992). *Youth, Family and Citizenship*. Buckingham, Open University Press.



It can be seen that the period of youth has been extended and has become more complex. There are now more likely to be intermediate stages between school and employment, between living in the parental home and living independently of one's own, and perhaps between being a child in one family and being a parent or partner in another. Each of these stages is, however, potentially problematic²⁷. The significance of individual events within these transitions has changed nowadays.

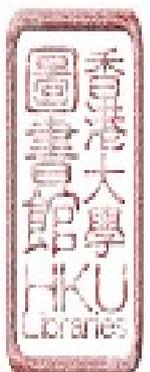
Young people are a heterogeneous group, and people who are of the same age may be at different stages in their transitions to adulthood, and suffer social exclusion in different forms and to different degrees. Transitions are more extended, more complex, and more imbued with risk. Young people nowadays have new and different needs. The youth policy needs to address young people's new challenges and concerns.

2. The Concept of Youth Policy

The concept of "youth policy" is thus changing. There is a gradual change from the traditional focus on youth work towards a policy perspective which recognizes that young people may need support to enable them to make successful and fulfilling transitions into adult life. This latter perspective is both a life course perspective and a holistic one.

The introduction to the Commonwealth Youth Program suggests that a national youth

²⁷ Jones, G. and Wallace, C. (1992). *Youth, Family and Citizenship*. Buckingham, Open University Press.



policy is:

“A practical demonstration and declaration of the priority and directions that a country intends to give to the development of its young women and men. A national youth policy specifically represents a gender-inclusive statement that encapsulates the elements of vision, framework and realistic guidelines from which strategies and initiatives can be developed to facilitate meaningful youth participation and development within a country.”

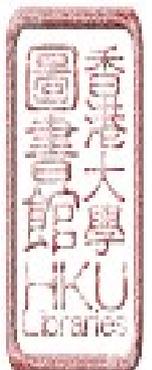
(Commonwealth Youth Program, 1996)

An ESCAP assessment of national youth policies asserts that:

“Effective youth policies can play a major role in creating an enabling environment in which youth can develop their full potential and aspirations through the creation of a framework for action for all agencies and organizations interested in the needs and contributions of young women and men.”

(ESCAP, 1998)

It seems that youth policies serve to facilitate the development of an environment that optimizes the potential of each young person. Specifically, the policy seeks to define a common vision and framework for youth development, articulate the roles and responsibilities of youth in their personal and national development and serve as a tool for advocating youth development issues. Youth policy is by definition a horizontal policy where coherent and coordinated efforts across different policies and administrative sectors are ensured through integrated actions. At all levels, youth



policy coordinates measure up to serve the interests of youth and integrates young people to their social, economic, political and cultural life. Young people are at the heart of any youth policy, but not as clients, rather as actors and contributors to this dynamic process.²⁸

3.2 Youth Policy Framework

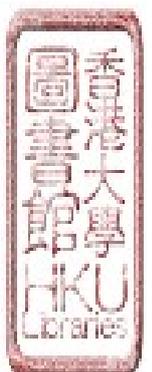
A policy framework is a statement by a government that provides a rationale to guide policy and program development and direct financial resources for a target population or aspect of government service. It often includes a vision and guiding principles and is generally written for a broad audience²⁹. Essentially, a youth policy framework is a model that aims to provide clarity around a government's long-term investment priorities and goals related to youth. It also helps to implement the policy measures by fostering strategic direction, consistency, and accountability³⁰.

To obtain positive youth outcomes and youth issues need to be addressed holistically. Comprehensive strategies can be more effective than single intervention for implementing youth-focused supports because they are tailored to the specific needs of particular groups and communities. A comprehensive youth policy framework explicitly demonstrates the distinctive and complementary roles of governments, non-governmental organizations, and youth groups in supporting successful youth development. Besides, it can help to improve co-ordinations between policy, services, and funding. Unlike isolated policy initiatives, a comprehensive youth

²⁸ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (1999). *Youth Policy Formulation Manual*.

²⁹ British Columbia Ministry for Children and Families (2000). *Youth Policy Framework*. Victoria.

³⁰ British Columbia Ministry for Children and Families (2000). *Youth Policy Framework*. Victoria.



policy framework can extend to policies across departmental boundaries and among all service delivery partners, including stakeholders outside of government³¹. This can help to build a common understanding and support around the ultimate goal of positive youth outcomes.

3.3 Investment-based Youth Policy Approach

“Investing in youth is, indeed, one of the key responses to the challenges created by rapidly changing social, economic and demographic environments. These trends require young people to be more cognitively, socially and politically skilled as well as to have confidence in their future”³².

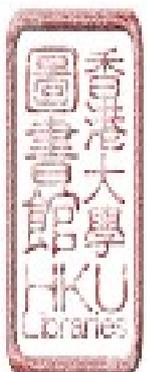
(BEPA,2006)

After resuming sovereignty in 1997, the socio-economic context of Hong Kong has undergone a significant change and has been shaped by wide-ranging technological advancements. The youth in Hong Kong appear to have new trends and characteristics. An investment-based approach becomes the main concern for the formulation of a youth policy. There are four interrelated reasons for investing more in youth³³: (1) to improve the current situation of young people; (2) to speed up the modernization of social policies; (3) to confront demographic trends and inter-generational imbalance, and (4) to prove our sense of responsibility for the

³¹ United Way Toronto. *Youth Policy: What Works and What Doesn't? A Review of Youth Policy Models From Canada and Other Jurisdictions*. February 2008.

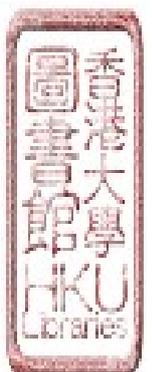
³² Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA). *Investing in Youth: from childhood to adulthood*. October 2006.

³³ Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA). *Investing in Youth: from childhood to adulthood*. October 2006.



future.

In short, the SAR government needs to reposition the status and redefine the needs of Hong Kong young people. Investing in youth now is much more efficient than trying to solve problems later when grown-ups turn out to be unengaged.



Chapter 4 Youth Situation in Hong Kong

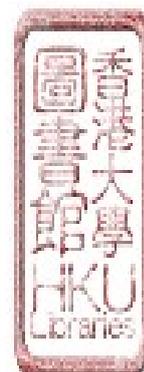
Youth development is not only related to overall social changes, but is also affected by other political and economic activities. There have been substantial changes in the demographic and structural changes over the past decades. This chapter firstly has an overview on the structure and characteristics of the Hong Kong youth, and then it will put the youth analysis in to context. The complicated political, economic, and social problems will greatly influence the planning of youth services and policies. An analysis of the youth situation in Hong Kong reveals that there are a number of major youth issues that need to be dealt with as part of the numerous development strategies in this city. It is therefore necessary to resolve the obstacles and problems within the framework of an explicit, comprehensive and multi-level youth policy.

4.1 Youth Trends

1. Ageing Population

According to the latest population projections announced by the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong's population is projected to increase from 6.72 million in 2001 to 8.72 million in 2031; but the average annual growth rate is projected to decrease from 1.6% to 0.6%.³⁴ These statistics reveal that over the past 50 years Hong Kong has undergone a demographic transition from a high-growth phase to a low-growth phase, and the growth rate is projected to remain low for the next few decades.

³⁴ Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Population Projections 2002 – 2031*. Website: www.censtatd.gov.hk/products_and_services/products/publications/index.jsp



Hong Kong's population is aging. A quarter of its population is expected to be aged 65 or above by 2031. More significantly, the size of the workforce will shrink as the prime working age population declines. The overall dependency ratio is projected to rise from 381 in 2002 to 562 in 2031. The elderly dependency ratio is expected to increase gradually from 158 in 2002 to 198 in 2016, followed by a marked rise to 380 in 2031³⁵, as the post-war baby-boomers (those born in the 1950s and the early 1960s) join the “old-age” group in the latter period. On the other hand, the child dependency ratio will decline from 223 in 2002 to 182 in 2031 (Table 4.1). That means the higher the responsibility of the youth, the faster the rates of aging will be.

Table 4.1 Dependency ratio 2002 - 2031

Year	Child	Elderly	Overall
2002	223	158	381
2006	203	162	365
2011	180	164	344
2016	178	198	376
2021	179	245	424
2026	180	313	493
2031	182	380	562

Notes: Child dependency ratio refers to the number of persons aged under 15 per 1000 persons aged between 15 and 64.

Elderly dependency ratio refers to the number of persons aged 65 and over per 1000 persons aged between 15 and 64.

Overall dependency ratio refers to the number of persons aged under 15 and aged 65 and over per 1000 persons aged between 15 and 64.

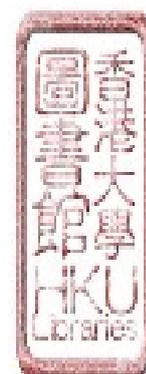
Source: Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Population Projections 2002 – 2031*.

Website: www.censtatd.gov.hk/products_and_services/products/publications/index.jsp

2. Improve Population Quality

A key indicator of population quality is educational attainment. Over the years, there has been a continued shift in the composition of the local population towards

³⁵ Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Population Projections 2002 – 2031*.
Website: www.censtatd.gov.hk/products_and_services/products/publications/index.jsp



higher educational levels. The results of the population census show that, in 2006, some 56% of population aged 15 and over in Hong Kong had at least upper secondary school education, and some 23% had a tertiary degree education. These exceeded the corresponding proportions of 32% and 7% in 1981 to a large extent³⁶ (Table 4.2).

To meet the needs of a knowledge-based economy, the CE announced in his 2000 Policy Address that it would be the Government's target to allow 60% of Hong Kong's senior secondary school leavers to receive tertiary education within 10 years, as against the existing ratio of 30%. This will help improve the quality of the educational attainment of the youth in years to come.

Table 4.2 Population aged 15 and over by educational attainment, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2006 (highest level attended)

Educational Attainment	No. of Persons (%)			
	1981	1991	2001	2006
No Schooling /Kindergarten	604623 (16.1)	557297 (12.8)	469939 (8.4)	423310 (7.1)
Primary	128393 (34.2)	1100599 (25.2)	1148273 (20.5)	1084112 (18.3)
Lower Secondary	679531 (18.1)	837730 (19.1)	1060489 (18.9)	1124583 (19.0)
Upper Secondary^	796403 (21.2)	1169271 (26.7)	1473681 (26.3)	1579774 (26.7)
Matriculation*	135556 (3.6)	214577 (4.9)	528090 (9.4)	351419 (5.9)
Tertiary Non-degree	123753 (3.3)	234912 (5.4)	209878 (3.7)	446889 (7.6)
Degree	125794 (3.4)	255979 (5.9)	708622 (12.7)	914584 (15.4)
Total	3749053 (100)	4370365 (100)	5598972 (100)	5924671 (100)

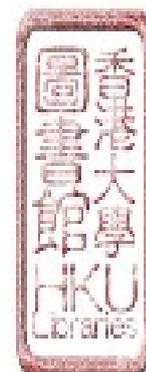
Notes: Figures in brackets represent % of total population.

^ Persons who have attended the "Craft level" are included.

* Persons who have attended the "Diploma / certificate courses in Institute of Vocational Education / former polytechnics" are included.

Source: Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Population Censuses and By-census, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2006.*

³⁶ Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Population Censuses and By-census, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2006.*



3. Widening Dispersion of Household Income Distribution

Between 1996 and 2006, the median monthly household income at current prices edged down, from \$17,500 to \$17,250. Yet households at both ends of the income distribution scale witnessed an increase in shares over the period. The percentage share of households with a monthly household income at current prices below \$4,000 increased from 6.7% in 1996 to 9.2% in 2006, while those with a monthly household income at \$40,000 or above grew from 15.0% to 17.0%³⁷.

Specifically, the Gini Coefficient (GC) increased from 0.518 in 1996 to 0.525 in 2001, and further to 0.533 in 2006³⁸ (a value between 0-1, the larger the GC, the greater the income dispersion). The widening dispersion of household income distribution is explicit (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Household Income Distribution, 1996, 2001 and 2006

Monthly Domestic Household Income	1996		2001		2006	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
< HK\$4000	123869	6.7	163423	8.0	205515	9.2
HK\$4000-39999	1452981	78.3	1513195	73.7	1642558	73.8
>= HK\$40000	278703	15.0	376794	18.3	378473	17.0
Median Monthly Household Income	HK\$17500		HK\$18705		HK\$17250	
Gini Coefficient	0.518		0.525		0.533	

Source: Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Population Census and By-censuses, 1996, 2001 and 2006.*

³⁷ Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Population Census and By-censuses, 1996, 2001 and 2006.*

³⁸ Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Population Census and By-censuses, 1996, 2001 and 2006.*



4. Declining Youth Population

The youth population, aged 15 to 24, has increased by 541,167 or at an average annual growth rate of 2.0% over the past 45 years (i.e. from 1961 to 2006). During 1961 to 1981, the youth population rose from 367,838 to 1,147,757. It then declined to 839,841 in 1991 before a gradual increase to reach 920,445 in 2001. However, the youth population declined again to 909,005 in 2006³⁹ (Table 4.4).

In terms of the proportion of youth in the total population, its percentage rose from 11.8% in 1961 to a peak of 23.0% in 1981, and then dropped continuously over the past 25 years to 13.2% in 2006⁴⁰.

Table 4.4 Numbers of Youth and Average Annual Growth Rate, 1961 to 2006

Population Census/By-census	Youth (aged 15-24)		
	Number	Change	Average Annual Growth Rate (%)
1961	367838	--	--
1971	764197	179097	5.5
1981	1147757	179677	3.8
1991	839841	-173081	-3.7
2001	920445	50934	1.1
2006	909005	-11440	-0.2
1961-2006	--	541167	2.0

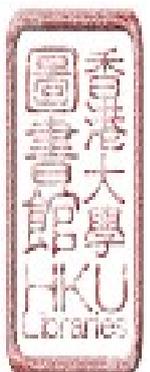
Source: Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Population Censuses and By-censuses, 1961-2006*.

5. Increase of Youth Unemployment

With the impact of the global financial crisis, the economy of Hong Kong has suffered

³⁹ Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Population Censuses and By-censuses, 1961-2006*.

⁴⁰ Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Population Censuses and By-censuses, 1961-2006*.



a severe blow. According to the latest statistics released by the government, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased significantly from 3.8% in the fourth quarter of 2008 to 5.1% in the first quarter of 2009. The number of unemployed persons increased from 141,300 to 187,200.⁴¹

The unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 increased significantly as well. In the first quarter of 2009, the unemployment rate of young people aged 15-19 rose to 16.6%, while that of those aged 20-24 rose to 9.5% (Table 4.5). The number of unemployed persons amounted to 36,500. Hong Kong is expected to undergo a continuous economic slowdown and a shrinking labour force under the financial crisis. Young people, especially those with low educational attainments, low levels of skill and those continuously unemployed, will find it even harder to secure a job.

Table 4.5 Unemployed Persons and Unemployment Rate by Age, 2004-2009

	15-19		20-24		All	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
2004 Q1	25.2	16700	8.5	26800	7.1	249500
2005 Q1	17.8	11300	7.3	23800	5.9	210600
2006 Q1	19.8	11100	8.0	25800	5.0	180500
2007 Q1	16.2	9900	5.7	18400	4.2	152500
2008 Q1	10.7	5600	5.9	18600	3.3	119000
2009 Q1	16.6	7900	9.5	28600	5.1	187200

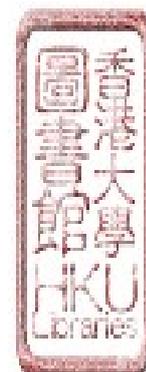
Notes: 1. Numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred

2. Q1=January to March

Source: Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG.⁴²

⁴¹ Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. Website:
http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hong_kong_statistics/statistics_by_subject/index.jsp?subjectID=2&chars etID=1&displayMode=T

⁴² The source of the figures is obtained directly from the written reply of official of the Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG.



6. Prolonged Adolescence

There has been a trend of prolonged “adolescence” as Hong Kong’s youth become more financially dependent. According to the data from the Census and Statistics Department, the median age for the first-time employment was 19 in 1997 and 21 in 2004. In terms of levels of educational achievement, the percentage of first-time employment was higher among graduates from tertiary institutions in the years during 2001 to 2004.⁴³

As more women and men stayed educating themselves and started to work later, the median age of first marriages had risen steadily for both women and men in the period 1981 to 2007. The median age of the first marriage for women was 23.9 in 1981 and 28.3 in 2007 while that for men was 27.0 in 1981 and 31.2 in 2007⁴⁴. The increase in the median age of first marriages for both women and men indicated a trend of late marriage (Table 4.6). The figures below show that there has been a trend of prolonged adolescence among Hong Kong’s youth. It signifies a delay in attaining independence as young people remained financially reliant on their families.

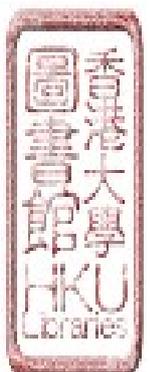
Table 4.6 Median Age at First Marriage by Sex, 1981-2007

Sex	Age						
	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2007
Female	23.9	25.3	26.2	26.9	27.5	28.2	28.3
Male	27.0	28.0	29.1	30.0	30.2	31.2	31.2

Source: Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Women and Men in Hong Kong Key Statistics, 2008*. Website: www.censtatd.gov.hk/products_and_services/products/publications/index.jsp

⁴³ The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (2006). *Youth Study Series 35 – The Transition from School to Work*.

⁴⁴ Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG. *Women and Men in Hong Kong Key Statistics, 2008*. Website: www.censtatd.gov.hk/products_and_services/products/publications/index.jsp



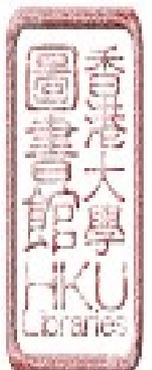
7. Room for Civic Participation

With the development of a representative government in 1991, direct elections to the Hong Kong Legislative Council were introduced. Three years later, in 1994, the Hong Kong government lowered the voting age to 18. After resuming sovereignty in 1997, under the principles of “One Country, Two Systems” and “Hong Kong People Ruling Hong Kong”, youth participation in electoral affairs became an important indicator to address.

The government lowered the age of eligible voters from 21 to 18 in 1994. Since then young people have had more opportunities to take part in local elections. According to the data collected from the recently conducted District Council elections and Legislative Council elections, the voting rates of young people have shown some ups and downs. An initial reflection of the data indicated that the willingness of youth to show up to vote had increased, but they were less active than those in older age groups.

In the LegCo elections of 1995, 1998, 2000 and 2004, the voting rate of those aged 18-25 was 30.8%, 51.2%, 38.4% and 52.9% respectively. Regarding the voter registration rate of young people, two notable increases were found in 1998 and 2004 respectively (Table 4.7).

In the District Council elections of 1994, 1999 and 2003, the voting rate of those aged 18-25 was 32.9%, 27.9% and 39.3% respectively. The last District Council elections in 2003 saw a historic increase in the general voting rate, particularly in that of the



young voters. The total voting rate in 2003 was 44.1% and for those aged between 18 and 25, the rate was 39.3% (Table 4.8).

Besides, the Government relies on a wide range of advisory and statutory bodies to provide advice on its policies and to deliver services. There are over 400 advisory boards and committees, so that the organizational arrangements can consolidate the views and contributions of different sectors of the community. In the 2000 policy address, the Chief Executive said, “young people are the most important elements of our community as they represent our future. We need to enhance our leadership training for outstanding young people to groom them for roles as future leaders of society. Young adults should be given opportunities to play a more active role in community affairs so that we can get a better perspective of the views and aspirations of the younger generation.”⁴⁵ Moreover, in the 2005 policy address, the government said “they will continue with the efforts to uphold the vision of "people-based" governance and will engage more representatives of various groups to join advisory bodies.”⁴⁶

However, according to the figures, only a handful of young people are being appointed in these advisory bodies, and those under 30 only accounted for 1.2% in 2008 (Table 4.9). The government should take the lead in fostering young people’s participation in community affairs. Through community participation, young people can broaden their horizons and enrich their experiences on public governance.

⁴⁵ HKSARG. *The Policy Address 2000*.

⁴⁶ HKSARG. *The Policy Address 2005*.

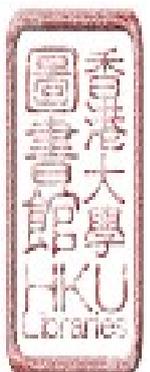


Table 4.7 Voting rates in the last four Legislative Council elections by age, 1995, 1998, 2000 and 2004

Voting Rates (%)	Age		
	18-25	26-35	All Age
Year			
1995	30.8%	30.2%	35.8%
1998	51.2%	48.1%	53.3%
2000	38.4%	38.2%	43.6%
2004	52.9%	50.8%	55.6%

Source: Electoral Affairs commission, HKSARG. Website: <http://www.eac.gov.hk/en/legco/lce.htm>

Table 4.8 Voting rates in the last three District Council elections by age, 1994, 1999 and 2003

Voting Rates (%)	Age		
	18-25	26-35	All Age
Year			
1994	32.9%	28.0%	38.1%
1999	27.9%	26.5%	35.8%
2003	39.3%	34.0%	44.1%

Source: Electoral Affairs commission, HKSARG. Website: <http://www.eac.gov.hk/en/distco/dce.htm>

Table 4.9 Members of Advisory and Statutory Bodies by Age, 2006-2008

Age Group	2006		2007		2008 (end as 31/8/2008)	
	No. of People	%	No. of People	%	No. of People	%
Under 30	32	0.8	41	0.9	53	1.2
30-34	62	1.5	96	2.2	114	2.6
35-39	123	3.0	146	3.3	168	3.8
40-44	271	6.5	333	7.6	349	7.9
45-49	608	14.7	669	15.2	692	15.6
50-54	838	20.2	908	20.7	890	20.1
55-59	878	21.2	898	20.5	872	19.7
60 or above	861	20.8	832	19.0	775	17.5
*Without information	470	11.3	464	10.6	513	11.6
Total	4143	100.0	4387	100.0	4426	100.0

Note: Advisory and Statutory Bodies may be classified by functions as follows: (1) advisory committees; (2) non-departmental public bodies; (3) regulatory boards; (4) appeals boards; (5) trusts; (6) public corporations; and (7) miscellaneous boards and committees.

* Without information

Source: Home Affairs Bureau, HKSARG.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The source of the figures is obtained directly from the written reply of official of the Home Affairs Bureau, HKSARG.



8. Emergence of “Three Low” – Low Educational Attainments, Low Level of Skill and Low Incomes⁴⁸

As the world’s economy continues to globalize and be knowledge-based, the labour market has an ever-increasing thirst for experienced candidates who are highly educated and well trained. Moreover, Hong Kong’s job market has been as competitive as ever, resulting in a yawning gap between the rich and the poor. For those young people who are neither well educated nor adequately trained, they find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of low income, on-the-job poverty and even inter-generational poverty.

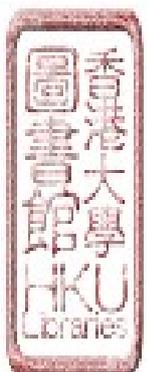
According to the 2007 HKCEE results released by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, among the 69,668 first-time full-time candidates, 6,506 were zero scorers, slightly more than the 6,094 zero scorers of 68,884 first-time full-time candidates in 2006.⁴⁹

In addition, according to the Census and Statistics Department, there were 50,600 “non-engaged youth” aged between 15 and 24 during the period from December 2006 to February 2007 – who were neither working nor studying. Among them, 10,600 had received Form 3 education or below. During the same period, about 91,000 young employees aged between 15 and 24 received a monthly income below \$5000, with 19,600 having Form 3 education or less.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (2007). *Youth Study Series 37 – The Challenges and Difficulties faced by Young People in Hong Kong with Low Educational Attainments, Low levels of Skill and Low Incomes*.

⁴⁹ Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, HKSARG.
Website: http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/tc/hkcee/Exam_Report/Examination_Statistics/

⁵⁰ The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (2006). *Youth Study Series 35 – The Transition from*



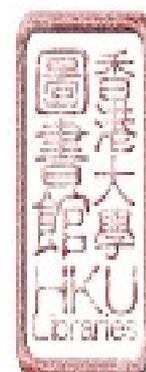
Young people with these low educational attainments, low levels of skill and low incomes are likely to languish along the brink of poverty under the accelerating wheel of a knowledge-based economy. How is it possible to help these resources-stripped young people get out of the plight they are in, away from the vicious poverty cycle and minimize the associated social costs? This will be a matter for the youth policy to address.

9. Problems of the working Poor

The median monthly income of the working youth from their main source of employment decreased by 13.3% from \$7500 in 1996 to \$6500 in 2006. The median monthly income from main employment of the working youth in 2006 was \$6500, about 65% of the median (\$10,000) of the whole working population⁵¹. The comparatively lower median income of youth compared to the total working population may be related to the occupation and industries they were engaged in, their educational attainment and their limited work experience (Table 4.10). The problem of the working poor has become a major concern of youth issues.

Besides, according to the figures released by the Social Welfare Department about the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, the number of CSSA recipients aged 15 to 24 increased from 2,723 at the end of 2007 to 3,389 in late October 2008, up by a total of 666. Work does not merely represent one's working capacity, but also one's livelihood. If one's income cannot support his livelihood, he

School to Work.
⁵¹ Census and Statistics Department. *Hong Kong 2006 Population By-census Thematic Report: Youths.*
Website: http://www.byensus2006.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_962/06bc_youths.pdf



will turn to government subsidies. Young people are the central pillars of economic growth and creativity. If they cannot take part in the labour market or contribute to society, social resources will be lost.

Table 4.10 Monthly Income from main employment of working youth, 1996, 2001 and 2006

Monthly Income(HK\$)	1996		2001		2006	
	Working Youth	Working Population	Working Youth	Working Population	Working Youth	Working Population
<2000	5720	57601	8333	57069	20784	66128
2000-5999	87123	558760	95229	545166	127839	653537
6000-9999	216457	954522	183839	793375	67042	879369
10000-14999	76328	668722	75410	743033	693526	693526
15000-19999	18258	295968	20466	370981	354073	354073
>=20000	7539	480891	8979	719483	698353	698353
Total	411425	3016464	392256	3229107	3344986	3344986
Median Monthly Income(HK\$)	7500	9500	7500	10000	6500	10000

Source: Census and Statistics Department. *Hong Kong 2006 Population By-census Thematic Report: Youths*. Website: http://www.bycensus2006.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_962/06bc_youths.pdf

10. Young Drug Abusers increase

The total number of reported drug abusers in 2008 was 14,175, which was higher than that for the same period of 2007 (13,591). Moreover, the number of reported young drug abusers under 26 was 37.5% higher than that for the same period of 2007 (34.2%), rising from 4,637 to 5,313. An increasing trend of young drug abusers deserves societal concern (Table 4.11).

Regarding the problem of young drug addiction, the Government should launch a large-scale territory-wide campaign to mobilise the whole community in the fight against youth drug abuse. A Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse led by the Secretary for Justice would spearhead cross-bureau and inter-departmental efforts and enhance



collaboration with different sectors of the community to combat the youth drug abuse problem, and draw up strategies covering preventive education and publicity, treatment and rehabilitation, law enforcement, research, and external co-operation.

Table 4.11 Reported drug abusers by age, 2005-2008

Age	2005		2006		2007		2008	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<16	378	2.7	462	3.5	665	4.9	723	5.1
16-20	1900	13.5	2116	16.0	2334	17.2	2707	19.1
21-25	1605	11.4	1584	12.0	1638	12.1	1883	13.3
26+	10232	72.4	9090	68.5	8954	65.8	8862	62.5
Total	14115	100.0	13252	100.0	13591	100.0	14175	100.0

Note: The analyses presented in this table are only based on the reported information available to the CRDA, hence excluding those individuals with unknown information on the concerned data items other than age and sex.

Source: Central Registry of Drug Abuse, HKSARG. Website: <http://cs-crda.nd.gov.hk/en/enquiry.asp>

11. Increase of Juveniles

According to data collected from the Hong Kong Police, the youth crime rates have shown some ups and downs. The crime rate of people aged 15 and under increased from 761 in 1998 to 939 in 2007, while the crime rate of people aged 16-20 decreased from 1,455 in 1998 to 1,133 in 2007⁵². An initial reflection of the data indicated that the crime rates of juniors have shown a rise, but the crime rates of young people have shown ups and downs over the same period (Table 4.12).

⁵² Hong Kong Police, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Police Reviews, from 1998-2007*.
Website: <http://www.police.gov.hk/hkp-home/english/publications/reviews.htm>

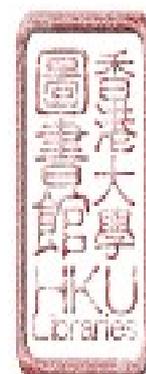


Table 4.12 Young Persons Arrested for Crime, 1998-2007

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Juveniles	5834	5486	6229	5909	5335	5156	4897	4531	4510	4644
Juveniles Crime Rate	761	705	797	779	703	841	954	903	906	939
Young Persons	6613	7038	6465	6145	6027	6018	5812	4780	4974	5023
Young Persons Crime Rate	1455	1541	1409	1357	1355	1382	1332	1093	1134	1133
Total	40422	40745	40930	38829	39665	42051	42991	40804	42228	42940
Overall Crime Rate	659	655	647	618	625	674	693	652	667	665

Note: 1. Juvenile: age under 16
 2. Young Person: 16-20
 3. Crime rate per 100,000

Source: Hong Kong Police, HKSARG. *Hong Kong Police Reviews, from 1998-2007*.

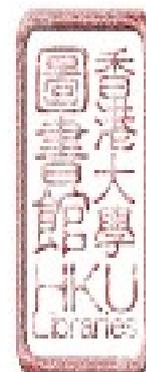
Website: <http://www.police.gov.hk/hkp-home/english/publications/reviews.htm>

12. Strengthen the Identity of Chinese People

According to the HKUPOP, the number of Hong Kong people who would identify themselves as “Hong Kong Citizens” decreased from 35.8% in 1997 to 21.8% in 2008, a reduction of 14%. On the other hand, the number of Hong Kong people who would identify themselves as “Chinese Citizens” increased from 18.2% in 1997 to 34.4% in 2008, a rise of 16.2%⁵³ (Table 4.13). These figures indicate that Hong Kong people have strengthened their identity after 1997.

Being a special administrative region of China, the connection between youth in Hong Kong and the Mainland becomes close, in terms of both distance and culture. Every year, a large number of Hong Kong students go to the Mainland to visit, for an exchange program or to be trained or educated. On the whole, their knowledge of

⁵³ Hong Kong University Public Opinion Program. *Poll on People's Ethnic Identity, 1997-2008*.
 Website: <http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/index.html>



the Mainland and their sense of belonging have been increased.

Cross-border activities have become more frequent with the economic integration of the Mainland and Hong Kong. The number of Hong Kong people working on the Mainland, Mainland young people studying in Hong Kong, as well as cross-border marriages is steadily increasing. Cross-border activities and migration have caused different challenges to our youth. While making policies and planning, there should be supportive and preparatory measures in these aspects.

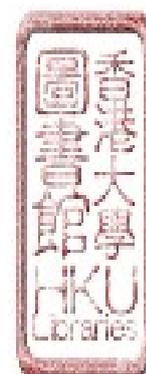
Table 4.13 Survey on People's Ethnic Identity, 1997-2008

Date of Survey	Total Sample	Hong Kong Citizen	Chinese Hong Kong Citizen	Hong Kong Chinese Citizen	Chinese Citizen
9-12/12/2008	1016	21.8%	29.6%	13.0%	34.4%
11-14/12/2007	1011	23.5%	31.5%	16.0%	27.2%
6-12/12/2006	1011	22.4%	24.3%	20.1%	31.8%
9-14/12/2005	1017	24.8%	26.5%	16.9%	30.7%
6-9/12/2004	1007	25.9%	23.1%	16.2%	31.6%
10-14/12/2003	1059	24.9%	23.4%	15.6%	32.5%
13-18/12/2002	1026	31.1%	21.3%	14.3%	29.7%
7-9/12/2001	1052	31.9%	20.5%	10.4%	31.5%
4-12/12/2000	1040	35.6%	19.1%	13.8%	25.2%
13-15/12/1999	529	39.0%	20.9%	17.2%	19.9%
21/12/1998	544	40.7%	22.3%	15.1%	17.2%
8-9/12/1997	500	35.8%	22.9%	18.9%	18.2%

Source: Hong Kong University Public Opinion Program. *Poll on People's Ethnic Identity, 1997-2008*.
 Website: <http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/index.html>

4.2 Contextual Youth Analysis

Youth development is not only related to overall social changes, but is also affected by other political and economic activities. An integration of the captioned major findings and observations, and putting them in a contextual analysis, shows that Hong

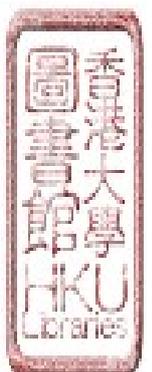


Kong will face severe challenges from economic globalization, democratization, polarization of society and an aging population. The complicated political, economic, and social problems will greatly influence the planning of youth services and policies. In the following part, there will be a contextual analysis on youth in this changing society.

1. Social Changes

First, an aging population increases the pressure on our younger generation. Hong Kong is facing an aging population problem. It is expected that 22 years from now, there will be one elderly person among four people in Hong Kong. With a rising elderly population and dropping birth rate, the elderly dependency rate will increase steadily. At present, two elderly people are supported by 12 working people on average. It is estimated that 22 years from now such a ratio will increase from two elderly people to five working people only, illustrating that the burden of our younger generation will be increased considerably.

Second, the form of family has changed due to first marriage postponement, increasing number of divorces, and the polarization of household income. The structural change in the family has weakened family relationships, and thus the supporting function of family members. At the same time, the internal tension within a family has risen, giving rise to many family problems like family violence, inter-generational poverty and parenting issues, etc. These issues would affect the growth of our younger generation and create a heavy pressure on youth services.

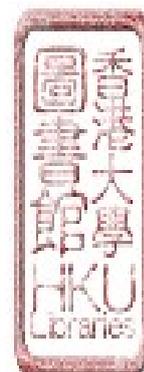


Third, the growth of the “netizen” community and virtual relationships has brought in a new social phenomenon. The networking ability and information access of our young people have greatly expanded. The issues of cyber bullying, net addiction and cyber violence are some of the social problems arising from such a new social environment, which have brought about a new form of social relationships, culture and communication.

2. Economic Restructuring

Hong Kong’s economic growth showed a significant decline to 2.5% in 2008, down from 6.4% in 2007, showing a below-trend performance and a derailment from the upturn of 2002. The labour market has seen rapid deterioration with the unemployment rate showing a 5-year downward trend. Meanwhile, inflation pressure increased considerably. The Hong Kong government has responded swiftly to this financial turmoil by putting forward a series of measures to stabilize the financial market, support enterprises and create employment.

The economy will be cushioned by its huge and growing hinterland. China’s central government has announced measures to boost Hong Kong’s economy by cross-boundary infrastructure projects. Closer cooperation and deeper integration will inevitably increase the dependence of Hong Kong’s economy on that of the Mainland. China’s entry into the WTO will certainly provide employment opportunities for young people in Hong Kong. The mobility of manpower resources becomes the main trend in the labour market. How the young people in Hong Kong better equip themselves and prepare to work on the Mainland is a matter of concern



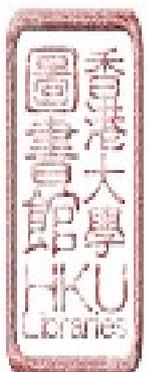
for us. Besides, the fluid border situation and mobile young people will create a new social dimension and challenges that will affect the planning and allocation of social services.

Second, figures show that low educational attainments, low levels of skill and low incomes are the main obstacles that prevent youth from climbing up the social ladder. Recent statistics⁵⁴ reveal that there are tens of thousand of young people who are living in low-income families. If they are not taken care of in the present development of a knowledge-based economy, they will be trapped in a low-income spiral and lose vision of their future prospects. It is detrimental to the long-term development of our society if we fail to match the drive for a knowledge-based economy with a compatible pool of human capital. In view of this, it is imperative to have a holistic and investment-based approach for youth development so as to build a competitive and cohesive society.

3. Political Changes

First, there is a growing urge for a more transparent government and a more open administrative and political system. The betterment of Hong Kong relies very much on the active participation of young people who have a strong commitment to the well being of society and a sense of belonging to the place. To ensure the sustainability of youth participation, it is important to provide real opportunities for them to be involved in decisions that affect both their immediate individual needs, as well as their long-term systemic development. That's why it is imperative to have a youth

⁵⁴ 香港社會服務聯會：《地區低收入人口報告總覽》，香港，2009年出版。



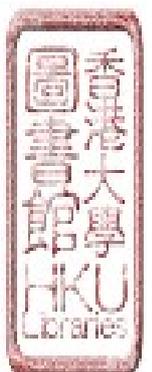
policy to cater to the needs and development of our youth.

Second, figures indicate that Hong Kong people have strengthened their Chinese identity after 1997 which marks a new era in the promotion of national education. Young people should be provided with more opportunities to improve their understanding of the cultural heritage of their country, its social, economic and political development in order to enable our young people to share a perspective upon the political and administrative development of contemporary China. Indeed, providing national education may enhance young people's understanding of the Mainland and cultivate a sense of belonging to their country.

4.3 Implications for the Youth Policy

Every young person is unique in certain aspects and shares some common characteristics and life experiences with different young people. Youths from different backgrounds have some similar values, beliefs, aspirations, needs and behaviours. However, variety also exists among young people because of diverse cultures, social, economic and political environments. As a result, different components demonstrate varying effects on youth's values, identity, behaviour, needs and problems, which require a central policy and practiced intervention.

In short, one can articulate three main youth trends which bear implications when formulating a youth policy. Policy makers should address these main trends and prepare our youngsters to face the challenges.

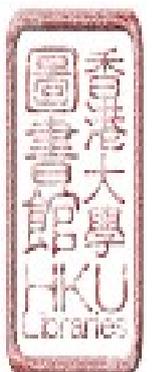


First, it will be the century of the Net-Generation. Before 1997, digitally speaking, it was a different world. There was no Google, no Facebook, no Twitter, no Blackberry's and no YouTube; young people had to watch a music video on TV. But, today our youth grow up surrounded by the digital media and they can see computers in their homes, schools and offices. The way of learning and thinking of youngsters has been changed by the digital media.

Nowadays, the Internet plays a pivotal role in the lives of youth. Besides being new technology with which they can play, learn and communicate, the Internet has changed how our youth socialise. Internet-Relay Chats (IRC), instant messaging, chat-boards for example are among the commonly used vehicles that our cyber youth use to expand their social networks and form relationships.

However, while the Internet is educating our young people, it is at the same time increasing the chances of them encountering other risk situations. Our youth must learn how to use this rich information source, while at the same time protect themselves from being pulled into the quicksand of cyber pornography, cyber crimes, or cyber bullying.

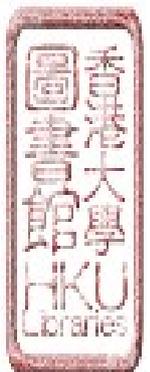
Second, following the reunification to become the first special administrative region of China in 1997, young people in Hong Kong in particular should re-affirm their Chinese identity and get a better understanding of their motherland and the roots of their heritage. In fact, figures show that people in Hong Kong have strengthened their Chinese identity and also have a higher expectation towards political participation after 1997.



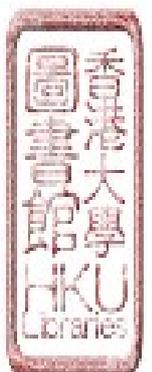
The concept of “One Country, Two Systems” and “Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong” has a profound and far-reaching influence on our youth. Hong Kong youngsters have a responsibility to learn the culture and history of their country and people, with this learning process becoming an integral part of their upbringing. It is only through this that they will be able to build up a firm sense of duty towards themselves, their families, the community, the country and the people, thereby becoming truly committed and contributing to themselves and society.

How we can help young people get a better understanding of the history and culture of their motherland, so that they can form a proper sense of social values, to prepare them to be a responsible Chinese citizen, and also to develop their sense of commitment and passion to society are what can be expected from youth policies in order to give direction to the young people in Hong Kong in this new era.

Third, young people in Hong Kong are facing difficulties in pursuing further studies and seeking jobs under the prevailing high and sustained unemployment rate as part of economic restructuring. At the era of the new millennium, the economic situation for young workers in Hong Kong is worse than it was 20-30 years ago. Employment and earnings have deteriorated for youth and adults relatively. Real earnings are lower for young people than they were in the 1980s and 1990s. Unemployment is higher among young people and the economic position of young people has even deteriorated in the past decade. The youth unemployment rate is about twice that of adults, so that increases aggregate unemployment bringing about larger increases in youth unemployment; the effect on teens is especially large.



As the world's economy continues to globalize and be knowledge-based, the labour market has an ever-increasing thirst for experienced candidates who are highly educated and well trained. Hong Kong's job market has been as competitive as ever, resulting in a gap between the rich and the poor. For those young people who are neither well educated nor adequately trained, they will find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of low income, on-the-job poverty and even inter-generational poverty. How is it possible to help those young people get out of the plight they are in, away from the vicious poverty cycle and minimize the associated social costs? This may be one of the directions for the youth policy to focus on.



Chapter 5 An Investment-based Youth Policy in Hong Kong

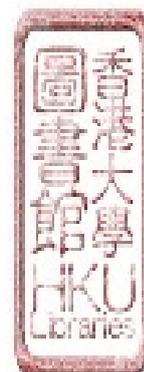
This chapter will firstly present the major findings of the interviews and related discussions for the direction of youth policy. Afterwards, a synthesis of observations from major youth trends in the current social context will be added to the interview analysis, as we try to propose an investment-based youth policy in Hong Kong.

5.1 Major Findings of the Interviews

A total of 14 academics/experts are interviewed, including LegCo Councillors, University academics, educators, social workers and youth representatives. Their observations and opinions are sought and analysed. The following are the major findings of interviews for further discussion and reference.

1. Youth policy should remain high on the policy agenda. But, there lacks a central direction for youth development.

An interviewee said that there lacked a comprehensive framework such as is established to guide the policies for youth in Hong Kong. The policy that does exist tends to focus on specific areas, such as health, employment and welfare, etc. or focus on particular target populations, such as young drug abusers or youths at risks, etc. Different government bureaus or departments take responsibility for certain aspects of youth services, such as the Education Bureau, Social Welfare Department, Labour Department, Health Department and Home Affairs Department which provide a lot of services and measures for our youth. However, it lacks a central direction for



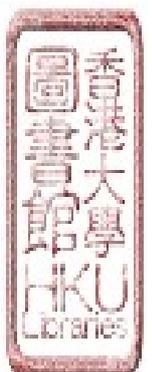
specific youth development.

As the youth of today are the future society builders, young people and youth issues should remain high on the policy agenda. Upon reunification with the Mainland and to face challenges of the 21st century, Hong Kong needs to formulate a youth policy to address the changing needs of the youth as well as to train the young people to become tomorrow's leaders. It is because those youth need to rebuild Hong Kong.

2. Creating a common vision for youth is the first step in developing an effective policy framework

An interviewee said that given that youth policy traverses several public policy areas, such as health, education, employment, crime and welfare, etc. the crucial point is that policy development for young people in these areas must have a complementary, rather than a conflicting agenda. Therefore, the process of getting to a common vision for youth is important.

The changing condition of youth demands a changing consideration of youth policy. To set out a blueprint for youth policy, it should firstly address the idea of youth and the idea of youth policy. Besides, it also relates to the legislation, structures and resources that are essential for the delivery of any youth policy. Moreover, it should be directed towards different strands of the policy, such as health, labour, education, welfare, leisure and culture, etc. which have a bearing on the lives of young people.



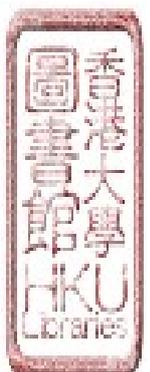
3. The needs and the problems of youth are becoming more complicated, and a new set of youth policies will come into sight.

A scholar that was interviewed said the needs and the problems of youth become more complicated, such as youth delinquency, youth poverty, youth inequalities, youth exclusion, etc. The government needs to help the youth to solve their problems as well as to invest in youth in order to re-position the status of youth in Hong Kong. The government needs to set up a mechanism to centralize youth issues to meet the rapid growth of society. Indeed, youth policy will become an important political agenda and it is believed that setting up a centralized youth policy with a clear and long-term goal will be accepted and supported by the general public now.

Besides, the global trend has pointed to the significance of multi-disciplinary and holistic approaches for understanding the complexities of youth issues and transitions. These shifts also emphasize the importance of monitoring youth trends to predict the youth's future development. Therefore, the government should collect relevant data and oversee youth issues, in order to establish long-term strategies for youth development.

4. Fostering young people's civic participation is a long-term task, with far-reaching effects in developing a civil society. The government should take the lead to formulate a youth policy to enhance young people's confidence in taking part in societal affairs.

An interviewee said that young people form a significant part of human capital in any

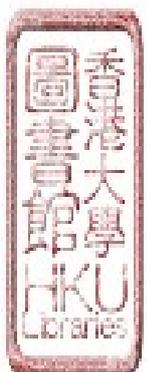


society. Their senses of belonging and civic participation have been perennial subjects of youth studies. Therefore, the earlier young people take part in societal affairs, the easier it is for them to get involved in Hong Kong's affairs in the future and the better it is for the development of our civil society. The government should take the lead to formulate a youth policy to provide more channels and opportunities for young people to participate in.

The benefits of having young people involved in this policy development process are that it can receive different views and ideas during decision-making and also can gain the support from young people for their processes and initiatives. In fact, young people may feel empowered through a better understanding of public systems and the way the government deliver services to the community. Therefore, they can gain skills for future participation in decision-making. This way, the government pays more attention to the views of young people and this in turn increases young people's confidence through taking part in the policy-making processes.

5. In view of the changing context, Hong Kong needs a youth policy in the long run to address the problem of youth unemployment.

An interviewee said that with the impact of the global financial crisis, the economy of Hong Kong suffered a severe blow. The problem of youth unemployment between the ages 15-24 calls for public attention. The unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 has increased significantly. Hong Kong is expected to undergo a continuous economic slowdown and a shrinking labour market under the financial crisis. Young people, especially those with low educational attainments, low levels



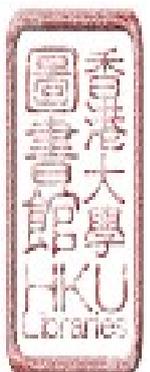
of skill and those continuously unemployed, will find it even harder to secure a job. To find a way and offer them support so that they will not be marginalized in the labour market is the major concern of planning a youth policy.

Besides, in a knowledge-based society, employers are looking for well-educated and skilled candidates. Young school leavers, without skills and experience, will find that their careers have a rather gloomy outlook. In the 1980s, the problem of youth unemployment was not explicit as the labour-intensive industrial and commercial sectors provided them with working opportunities. However, the economic restructuring together with the industry and commerce moving to the mainland, has turned youth unemployment into a social problem in Hong Kong.

In light of this changing context, it is time for Hong Kong to rethink the youth policy to address the youth unemployment problem. When the youth policy emerges, corresponding measures in terms of education, family and labour will pool together to deal with youth unemployment. In the long run, the Government should consider whether there are merits for setting up a dedicated agency for implementing the “unemployment-to-work” youth policy.

6. To prepare young people for the next decades, they should be fostered to have a better understanding of the Mainland’s development and a stronger sense of national and cultural identity.

An interviewee points out that there has been a growing sense of national identity in society following Hong Kong’s return to the motherland. Seeing the Mainland’s

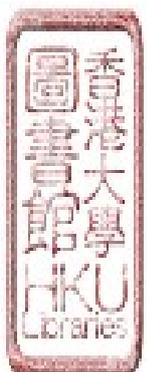


achievements on the world stage, such as the economic boom, the first astronaut into space, brilliant performances of athletes in the Olympic Games etc. carry different degrees of impact on the young people. But, their feelings towards the motherland may be more pragmatic and superficial. National identity should not hinge only on national achievements. More importantly it should be recognition of the national development and culture and concern for the people.

The future lies with the young people. In the interest of the country's development and the continued success of "one country, two systems", the youth policy should promote national education among young people. The focus of national education should be to encourage youth to think critically as well as to enhance their awareness of the development of the Mainland. One of the directions of the youth policy is to prepare young people to have a better understanding of the Mainland and a stronger sense of national and cultural identity.

7. Policy responses to youth issues are aimed at creating synergy among various policy sectors and different stakeholders.

An interviewee points out that the provision of youth services is not solely the responsibility of the government. The NGOs, business sectors, individuals and families should also play a significant part in youth development. Their roles are inter-dependent. As for the government, it plays a significant role in promoting the youth policy. Besides acknowledging the core values of youth development, the government should create a favourable environment for the development of youth. The government can also formulate youth policies through studies, evaluations of



service necessities, public consultations, etc. Moreover, it is responsible for coordinating youth policies with other policies, setting the related regulations and weighing the possibility of the effects of various policies on society.

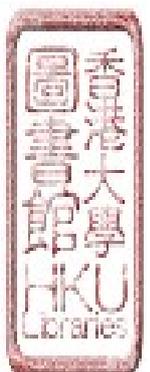
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are important allies of the government because they can respond more flexibly to the needs of society and explore new initiatives. Furthermore, the NGOs and the government can work together to evaluate the necessity of services, set service priorities and formulate youth policies.

The business sectors should take part in youth development not because they have adequate funds or human resources, but because it is their responsibility to make contributions to society as corporate enterprises.

A scholar that was interviewed said youth policy planning was a consultation process that involved stakeholders on various consultations, including government officials, the business sector, experts or scholars, service providers as well as users. Their participation in identifying needs and assessing policy performances could make the policies accommodate to social needs better.

8. There is a growing dependence on the Government among Hong Kong youth and they generally lack the commitment to solve their problems by their own means. A youth policy may help to empower the youth by declaring a blueprint of the status, rights, responsibilities and roles of youth.

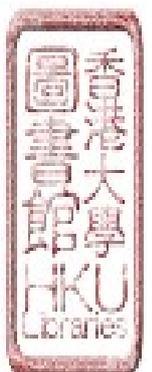
An interviewee said that there is a growing dependence on Government among Hong



Kong youth. Hong Kong People's self-sufficiency, entrepreneurial spirit and their energy become so eroded that people now seem automatically to think that only the Government must solve every problem of theirs. Before 1997, Hong Kong people were very enduring. They relied on themselves to face challenges and overcome problems. However, in recent years, maybe as a result of Hong Kong experiencing one financial crisis after the other, the government turned to the Mainland for economic assistance and the people of Hong Kong then started turning to the government for solutions. Actually the people of Hong Kong can and must do better.

This creates a culture of dependence and people would turn to thinking that the government should be running and doing everything in society. And our youngsters grow up in such an environment and adapt to this dependency culture. They turn to ask what their government can do for them but do not ask what they can do for society. As a result, generational dependency on the government is established.

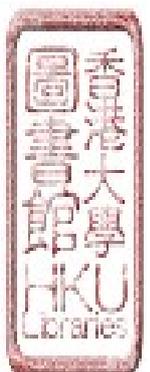
Under this growing dependence culture, young people in Hong Kong, in general lack the commitment and motivation to help improve or solve their problems by their own means, but instead they develop help-seeking practices and automatically turn to the government for assistance. They just focus on their short-sighted interests and neglect the well-being of society as a whole. In the long run, if this dependency culture persists, it will deteriorate the competitiveness and the ability of our youngsters to endure and may hinder their future development. A youth policy may help to empower the youth by declaring a blueprint of the status, rights, responsibilities and roles of youth.



9. A youth policy is to give young people the necessary tools to enable them to spend their youth time in constructive and valuable ways so as to obtain a smooth transition to adulthood.

An interviewee said that youth are experienced in different ways because they are significantly affected by social conditions, environmental factors and the resources that individuals have acquired as they are growing up. In this context, resources mean the ability that young people have developed to cope with their existence, to solve problems and resolve conflicts, and to create meaning and coherence in their lives. Environmental factors refer to relations with family members and persons in the community, and the way a person gets along with his or her peers. Social conditions relate to the way education, work and leisure are organized and arranged. These economic, social and cultural factors influence the way young people cope with their life and also indicate where the policies must be implemented.

A youth policy is to give young people the necessary tools to enable them to spend their youth in constructive and valuable ways. The government has a responsibility for providing the youth with the necessary tools to ensure a smooth transition to adulthood. The youth policy does not merely help to solve problems or to choose courses of action and values, but it is a matter of resources allocation which bears resources implication. That means the youth issue will be on the agenda for policy makers' considerations.



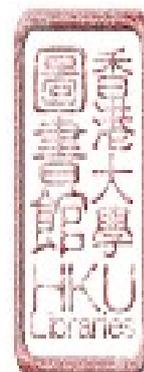
10. The future of Hong Kong is closely linked to young people. Investing in youth is one of the key responses to the challenges created by rapidly changing social, economic and demographic environments.

To succeed in tomorrow's world, today's young people in Hong Kong must develop their human capital and this involves a complex multi-faceted investment strategy. Investing in youth is complex since it requires a combined effort of the youth themselves, their parents, schools, non-governmental organizations and the government. This means that a concerted effort is needed to invest in youth.

Early investments are essential to nurture all aspects of human capital. Investing in youth is much more efficient than repairing broken pieces later when grown ups turn out to be unskilled, unemployed, depressed or deviant. An investment-based approach to youth policy can give young people a chance in life and equip them with the skills and knowledge needed throughout their lives⁵⁵. It can help to increase the youth's sense of belonging towards society as well as to enhance their confidence in their future. That is the importance of investing in youth.

From the above major findings obtained in the interviews, one can see that there are three far-reaching challenges regarding the direction of youth policies. First, after resuming sovereignty in 1997, the number of youth identifying themselves as Chinese citizens is strengthening. The 21st century is said to be the era of Asia, especially with the economic development of the Mainland being so remarkable. With the economic connection with the Mainland becoming closer, young people in Hong

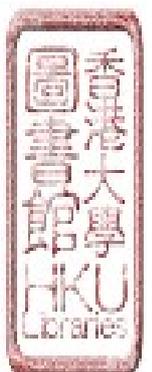
⁵⁵ Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA). *Investing in Youth: from childhood to adulthood*. October 2006.



Kong acknowledge that it will provide them opportunities for career development. The youth in general much appreciate the economic status of the Mainland. However, they are not familiar with the political and administrative development of the Mainland. To a great extent, it will hinder the youth from cultivating their sense of belonging towards their country. In a sense, the national education needs to keep the youth abreast with knowledge of different political, social, economic, cultural and legal systems of the Mainland.

Second, youth participation promotes the opportunity for young people to be involved in policy making at different levels, in particular those decisions affecting their lives and welfare. In recent years, the focus of concern is on the level and channel of youth participation and the ways to empower the youth to foster them with a sense of citizenship. However, it remains challenging as the extent to which youth participation both at the institutional level and community level is limited. It may either be because the participation focuses on elite young people or those young people are simply token representatives. The youth are not being trusted by adults. Indeed, the participation of young people in social and political affairs both benefits community building and the young people themselves. The youth policy needs to enhance youth participation in the community to strengthen their civic competence.

Third, the transition from school to work is a critical milestone in the life of young people and plays a crucial role in how their future careers develop. But, the problem of youth unemployment becomes serious. Most likely the youth unemployment rate is twice that of the total unemployment rate. Especially in a knowledge-based society, where the human resource market is tilting towards the highly educated, those



with lower educational attainments and low levels of skill are bound to face difficulties in the labour market. It is imperative to have a holistic approach to help this marginalized group of young people overcome their plight and make a decent living.

In short, Hong Kong needs a more macro and forward-looking planning mechanism that would steer its youth development steadily in the long term. Therefore, the youth policy framework must keep abreast with the youth trends and the pulse of society, and also have enough flexibility to address youth changes and problems at a strategic level.

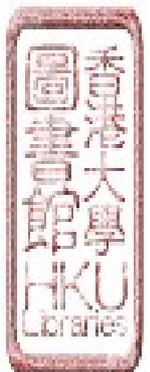
5.2 A Proposal for an investment-based Youth Policy

Youth of today are the future of Hong Kong. Young people and youth policy should remain on the policy agenda. However, the existing youth services and measures have been proposed or enacted only to act in response to present youth problems and might not be able to meet the ever-changing needs of young people. An alternative of an investment-based youth policy might be considered.

1. Reasons for Investing in Youth

An investment-based approach aims to ensure every young person achieves his or her potential at every stage of development. There are four inter-related reasons for investing more in youth⁵⁶: (1) to improve the current situation of young people; (2) to

⁵⁶ Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA). *Investing in Youth: from childhood to adulthood*.



speed up the modernization of social policies; (3) to confront demographic trends and inter-generational imbalance, and (4) to prove our sense of responsibility for the future.

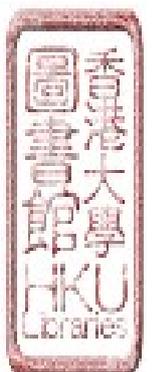
First, to improve the current situation of young people: the current condition of young people is matter of considerable concern. A scholar that was interviewed said the needs and the problems of youth in Hong Kong had become more complicated, such as youth delinquency, youth poverty, youth inequalities and youth exclusion. These situations will undermine the young people's integration into society. The government needs to help young people improve their current situation.

Second, to speed up the modernization of social policies: investing in youth is a way to respond to social protection and modernize social policies⁵⁷. A successful policy should take a lifelong view on individuals from the very youngest to the most senior. Early investment in youth can avoid their latter development problems, especially those disadvantaged groups. This implies a shift of social policies from cure to investment.

Third, to confront demographic trends and inter-generational imbalance: figures show that Hong Kong is facing an aging population problem. With a rising elderly population and dropping birth rate, the elderly dependency rate will increase steadily; illustrating that the burden of the younger generation will be increased. This calls for a new inter-generational contract between generations. It therefore needs a sustainable policy that helps to manage future risks and enhance fertility.

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⁵⁷ Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA). *Investing in Youth: from childhood to adulthood*. October 2006.



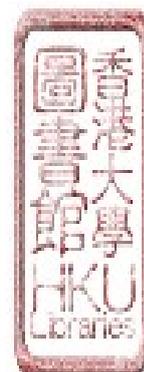
Fourth, to prove our sense of responsibility for the future: investing in a youth strategy aims to enhance the chances of the current and future generations. In this regard, three inter-generational equity and efficiency issues have to be addressed⁵⁸: (1) breaking the poverty cycle; (2) a risk of uneven sharing of the burden between generations; and (3) the well-being of future generations depends on the society we build today.

2. Priorities in Investing in Youth

From a synthesis of the current youth trends and the findings of the interviews, it can be articulated that the major priorities which help in planning the direction of a youth policy are that we first need to invest in youth and favour a more rapid and more secure entry in the labour market. A failure in employment is a waste of human resources and may have also a series of negative impacts on the young people. The new trend in the labour market implies that the transition period from school to work is less standard and becomes more complex. Young people need to be prepared and equipped for this transition in their lives. One way is to adapt to the labour market functioning and employment policies.

Moreover, investing in young people to recognize themselves as citizens is highly necessary. New initiatives are needed to facilitate the development of active citizenship and also to shape their social and political identity. The earlier young people take part in societal affairs, the easier it is for them to get involved in Hong

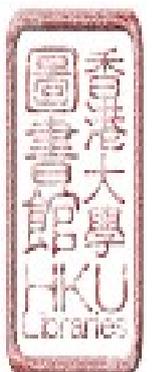
⁵⁸ Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA). *Investing in Youth: from childhood to adulthood*. October 2006.



Kong's affairs in the future and the better it is for the development of a civil society. The government should take the lead to provide more channels and opportunities for young people to participate actively in.

In addition, a sense of belonging is critical for the development of a civil society and it could also be a guarantee for societal cohesion in the future. Investing in youth so that they can form an identity with their motherland becomes a high priority. After reunification with the motherland and with the challenges of the 21st century, the government needs to invest in youth to cultivate their sense of belonging towards the Mainland as well as to rebuild Hong Kong. Promoting national education and encouraging cultural learning are needed to keep the youth up to date with the knowledge of different political, social and cultural systems of the Mainland.

As today's young generation is the future of the world, offering the best development opportunities for them to face the challenges of globalization, permitting them to experience and form a new reference framework of values and identities, turning their aspirations into achievements, and realizing not just personal goals but also social and international ones is therefore significantly essential. Needless to say, this bears a significant relationship with the development of an investment-based youth policy.



Chapter 6 The Way Forward

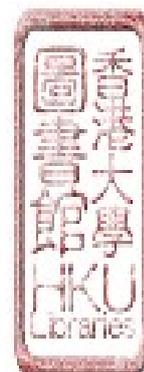
According to the Commonwealth Youth Program, a youth policy is a practical demonstration and declaration of the priorities and directions that a country intends to give to the development of its young people.⁵⁹ A youth policy is a response to the changing needs of youth in the 21st century that should keep up with the times and adjust to changes to facilitate our society's sustainable development. As youth are the future of our society, a youth policy should remain high on the policy agenda. It is necessary for the SAR government to re-identify her priorities and directives to the development of our young people.

6.1 A Proposal for the Formulation of a Youth Policy

In this paper, an investment-based approach is proposed from the findings presented in the preceding chapters for the formulation of a youth policy in Hong Kong. The framework is considered as a dynamic process which involves the following three major processes listed below.

First, developing a vision: The youth policy should state the mission and vision clearly so as to provide a direction for youth development. The scope of the youth policy should include: (1) Mission, vision and value statements; (2) Strategies for overall services planning, development and delivery to meet the changing society; (3) Overall resource policies; and (4) Policy objectives and policy priorities.

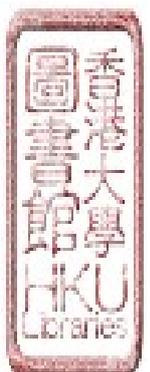
⁵⁹ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations (1999). *Youth Policy Formulation Manual*. 1999. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/escap.pdf>



Second, getting data: This process includes youth assessment, an allocation plan and an evaluation plan. Youths need assessment and this should be conducted systematically and accurately ensuring that the youth policy planning process is responsive to the changing needs of the young people. Also, an assessment of needs may help to set the policy priorities so that mechanisms are in place to ensure that timely needed information is channelled into the policy planning processes. Moreover, a thorough allocation and decision making process should be created that is used to drive budgets and to define criteria for measurements.

Third, putting heads together: In deliberating the mission of new strategies and priorities of youth policy, the participation of society at large should be strengthened, which will help to mainstream the youth issue as a public agenda. Indeed, it is important to engage various stakeholders so that efforts can be pooled to achieve the goals and values of youth development. Also, there is a need to review the process of youth policy regularly so as to accommodate the changing needs of society.

However, the success of any youth policy effort hinges on the engagement of youth-related government departments. It is necessary to consider a cross-agency leadership forum that brings together the heads of related departments which is responsible for youth affairs. In fact, the rise of competing issues alerts external environmental influences to the recognition of the policy proposal; and the existing government authorities may resist any drastic change. The scale of change to carry out the policy proposal will directly affect the effects of the policy. It may propose an additional unit under the bureaus or modify the existing structure to make the policy possible.



In short, the policy proposal contains clear and specific directions with implications for resources and a tolerable change of existing structure.

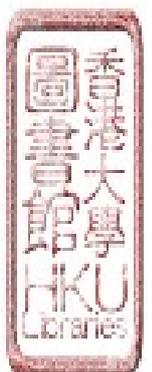
6.2 Conclusion

The changing conditions of youth demands a changing consideration of youth policy. To set out a blueprint for youth policy, it should create a common vision for the youth and develop an effective policy framework. A wide range of opportunities and measures should be provided for young people to develop their potential to the full to meet the challenges of the ever-changing world.

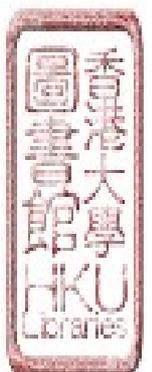
An investment-based youth policy can equip young people the necessary tools to enable them to spend their youth time in a constructive and valuable way so as to obtain a smooth transition to adulthood. It may also help to empower the youth by declaring a blueprint of the status, rights, responsibilities and roles of the young people. The aims of an investment-based approach youth policy are to help build up the strength of the young people so as to further develop their human capital, social capital and financial capital.⁶⁰

The future of Hong Kong is closely linked to young people. Investment in youth should be built upon an across-the-board policy vision and investment strategy to fully develop the potential contribution of young people to growth, jobs and the future of Hong Kong. A major reorientation of policies is thus needed if significant progress is to be made. What is suggested here is not a new policy for youth but a

⁶⁰ *The Forum for Youth Investment*. Volume 1, Issue 3, November 2003.
Website: www.forumforyouthinvestment.org



shift of policies and resources to account for the importance of building up a competent, adaptable and responsible youth force. This paper provides an opportunity to call for a reorientation of investments towards making investing in youth a priority.



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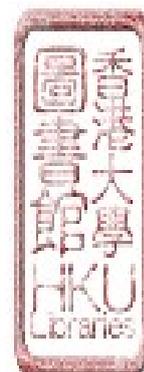
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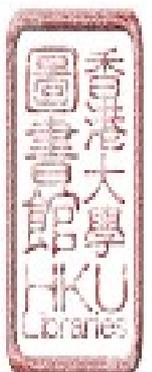
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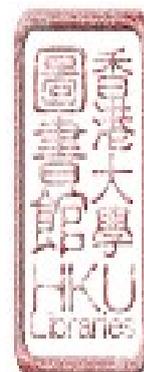
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Appendix I: List of Interviewees

List of Interviewees

No.	Name of Interviewee	Status
1	Mr. Mok Hon-fai, James	Social Worker (Supervisor)
2	Mr. Chan Kam-cheung, Paul	Former Deputy Director of the HK Federation of Youth Groups
3	Hon. Chan Hak-kan	Legislative Council Member (Geographical Constituency-NTE)
4	Prof. Ngai Ngan-pun	Professor (Department of Social Work, CUHK)
5	Dr. Ho Kit-wan, Helen	Assistant Professor (Department of Applied Social Sciences, HKPU)
6	Dr. Li Chi-mei, Jessica	Lecturer (Department of Applied Social Studies, CityU of HK)
7	Mr. Shiu Ka-chun	Lecturer (Department of Social Work, HKBU)
8	Mr. Wong Chi-kin	Former Curriculum Development Officer, EB
9	Mr. Fong Fu-lak	Vice-Principal (Secondary School)
10	Mr. Tong Kam-fai	Teacher (Secondary School)
11	Mr. Cheung Chi-wai	Social Worker (Youth Employment)
12	Mr. Lam Cheung-chi	Social Worker (Youth Services)
13	Mr. Wong Mau-chung, Max	Youth (Member of Commission on Youth 2002-2006)
14	Mr. Chan Chun-ho, William	Youth (Member of Commission on Youth 2004-2009)



Appendix II: Interviewing Guidelines of In-depth Interview

Interviewing Guidelines of In-depth Interview:

(A) Youth in the 21st Century

1. What are the new challenges faced by the youth in the 21st century?
2. What are the major differences on the perspectives of youth after the resuming of sovereignty in 1997?
3. What are their major characteristics and needs in the changing society?
4. How do we need to prepare the youth for the new century?

(B) Youth Policy in Hong Kong

1. How do you define the term of Youth Policy?
2. Does Hong Kong need a Youth Policy? Why?
3. If yes, what is the framework of youth policy?
4. How to facilitate the formulation of youth policy?

