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# PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

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# EDITORIAL

An International Conference was jointly organized by the Hong Kong Public Administration Association (HKPAA) and the College of Professional and Continuing Education (CPCE) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University on 19 May 2017 at the HK PolyU to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. It was attended by over eighty participants mainly from Hong Kong with some invited guest speakers from the U.S.A., Switzerland, Singapore, and Macau. Around twenty papers were presented at three plenary and four parallel sessions.

In this issue, most of the articles were selected from papers presented at the above conference. The first article is by Jon Quah who discusses Minimising Corruption in Hong Kong and Singapore: Lessons for Asian Policy Makers. It is followed by Raymond Saner, Lichia Saner-Yiu, Noah Gollub, & Doudou Sidibé in exploring Implementing the SDGs by Subnational Governments: Urgent Need to Strengthen Administrative Capacities. Ted Poon and Joseph Lau then look at the Trust Building: the Case of Community College Students and Their Teachers. Alvin Cheung & Cyprian Fong present their case study on Lowering Transport Cost and Social Participation of Elderly in Hong Kong: A Case Study on "Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme". In the final article, Alison Wan, Elsa Chan and Ben Fong conduct a policy analysis on An Evaluation of the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign in Hong Kong.

We wish to thank all the paper presenters and participants of the above conference, particularly for those whose papers have been selected for publication in this issue. We would also wish to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions in helping the authors to improve their papers. I wish to thank our editorial team for their contributions in making the journal publication possible.

**Peter K.W. Fong**

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# Minimising Corruption in Hong Kong and Singapore: Lessons for Asian Policy Makers*

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## Abstract

*Unlike many Asian countries, corruption is not a serious problem in Singapore and Hong Kong because of the strong political will of their governments and the effectiveness of their anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) in enforcing the anti-corruption laws impartially, regardless of the status, position or political affiliation of those persons being investigated for corruption offences. Policy makers in Asian countries afflicted with widespread corruption can learn these five lessons from Singapore's and Hong Kong's success in combating corruption: (1) the critical importance of political will in curbing corruption; (2) addressing the causes of corruption instead of its symptoms; (3) establishing a Type A ACA instead of a Type B ACA; (4) the Type A ACA should be an independent watchdog, not an attack dog or paper tiger; and (5) combating corruption is a continuous work in progress.*

*Keywords: Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, Independent Commission Against Corruption, Hong Kong, Singapore, political will.*

> *"China should learn from the Hong Kong and Singapore model for tackling corruption as both have independent anti-corruption bodies unlike China which relies on the party investigating itself."*
>
> Wang Qishan (2014) Secretary of the Central
> Commission for Discipline Inspection, China

## Introduction

Corruption is a serious problem in many Asian countries judging from their performance on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) in 2016. Table 1 indicates that only seven countries have CPI scores above 50, with Singapore being the least corrupt Asian country as it is ranked 7th among 176 countries with a score of 84, followed by Hong Kong SAR, which is ranked 15th with a CPI score of 77. By contrast, the other 20 countries (74.1 per cent) have low scores ranging from 12 for North Korea to 49 for Malaysia.

Why is corruption a serious problem in most Asian countries? Why are Singapore and Hong Kong SAR more successful than other Asian countries in combating corruption? What lessons can Asian policy makers learn from analysing the successes of the two city-states in curbing corruption? To address these questions, this article begins with an analysis of the favourable policy contexts in both territories before accounting for their success and identifying the five lessons for Asian policy makers.

**Table 1: Performance of 27 Asian Countries by their CPI scores in 2016**

| CPI Score* | Countries | No. (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 80-100 | Singapore (84) | 1 (3.7%) |
| 70-79 | Hong Kong SAR (77), Japan (72) | 2 (7.4%) |
| 60-69 | Bhutan (65), Taiwan (61) | 2 (7.4%) |
| 50-59 | Brunei Darussalam (58), South Korea (53) | 2 (7.4%) |
| 0-49 | Malaysia (49), China, India (40), Mongolia (38), Indonesia (37), Maldives, Sri Lanka (36), Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste (35), Vietnam (33), Pakistan (32), Lao PDR (30), Nepal (29), Myanmar, Papua New Guinea (28), Bangladesh (26), Cambodia (21), Afghanistan (15), North Korea (12) | 20 (74.1%) |
| Total | 27 countries | 27 (100%) |

\* The CPI score ranges from 0 (very corrupt) to 100 (highly clean). To be included in the CPI, a country must have three independent surveys on its perceived extent of public sector corruption.
Source: Transparency International (2017).

### Favourable policy contexts of Hong Kong SAR and Singapore

Hong Kong SAR and Singapore have favourable policy contexts for combating corruption for several reasons as shown in Table 2. First, as city-states with respective land areas of 1,050 sq. km and 719 sq. km, Hong Kong SAR and Singapore have no difficulty in enforcing the anti-corruption laws unlike larger countries like Indonesia and the Philippines. Second, they do not have large populations as Hong Kong has a population of 7,305,700 and Singapore has a population of 5,535,002 in 2015. Third, both are former British colonies which benefited from the introduction of meritocracy in the recruitment and promotion of civil servants with the establishment of the Public Service Commission (PSC) in Hong Kong in 1950 and in Singapore in 1951. On the other hand, both territories have also followed the British colonial method of relying on the police to curb corruption.

Fourth, both city-states have succeeded in economic growth as reflected in Singapore's GDP per capita of US$52,888 and Hong Kong's GDP per capita of US$42,422. Their economic affluence means that their civil servants are adequately paid to discourage them from accepting bribes. Fifth, while Singapore is a parliamentary democracy, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China on 1 July 1997. Finally, apart from having high percentile ranks for government effectiveness and rule of law, Singapore is ranked second and Hong Kong ranked fourth among 190 economies for the ease of doing business in 2017. This means that unlike other Asian countries, red tape does not contribute to corruption in Singapore and Hong Kong and their effective civil services and high degree of rule of law have enhanced their ability to curb corruption.

**Table 2: Policy Contexts of Hong Kong SAR and Singapore in 2015**

| Indicator | Hong Kong SAR | Singapore |
|---|---|---|
| Land area (sq. km) | 1,050 | 719 |
| Population | 7,305,700 | 5,535,002 |
| Colonial legacy | British (1841-1997) | British (1819-1959) |
| GDP per capita | US$42,422 | US$52,888 |
| Political system | Special Administrative Region, China | Parliamentary democracy |
| Government effectiveness | 99.0 | 100.0 |
| Rule of law | 94.7 | 96.6 |
| Ease of doing business rank 2017 | 4th/190 | 2nd/190 |

Source: World Bank (2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c).

### Explaining Singapore's and Hong Kong's success in combating corruption

Table 3 confirms that Singapore and Hong Kong SAR are the least corrupt Asian countries according to their performance on eight corruption indicators in 2015-2016. Unlike the first seven corruption indicators, "Public Trust in Politicians" is an indirect indicator of the perceived extent of corruption because corruption flourishes in those "societies with low levels of trust" and "people are likely to distrust the government" if the anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) and other anti-corruption policies are ineffective (Rose-Ackerman and Palifka, 2016, pp. 256-257). Corruption was widespread in both city-states after the Second World War but is not a serious problem today. There are several reasons for the success of Singapore and Hong Kong SAR in combating corruption.

**Table 3: Singapore's and Hong Kong's Performance on Corruption Indicators**

| Indicator | Singapore | Hong Kong SAR |
|---|---|---|
| Control of Corruption 2015 | 2.1 (97.1) | 1.7 (92.3) |
| PERC Survey of Corruption 2016 | 1st/16 (1.67/10) | 4th/16 (3.40/10) |
| Corruption Perceptions Index 2016 | 7th/176 (84/100) | 15th/176 (77/100) |
| Diversion of Public Funds 2016 | 3rd/138 (6.2/7) | 12th/138 (5.9/7) |
| Irregular Payments & Bribes 2016 | 3rd/138 (6.7/7) | 12th/138 (6.3/7) |
| Organised Crime 2016 | 7th/138 (6.4/7) | 18th/138 (6.0/7) |
| Ethical Behaviour of Firms 2016 | 3rd/138 (6.2/7) | 17th/138 (5.5/7) |
| Public Trust in Politicians 2016 | 1st/138 (6.4/7) | 21st/138 (4.6/7) |

Source: World Bank (2016); PERC (2016, p. 1); Transparency International (2017); and Schwab (2016, pp. 197, 319).

The most important reason for both countries' success in curbing corruption is the strong political will of their political leaders. Corruption was a serious problem in Singapore during the British colonial period because the government lacked the political will and made two major policy mistakes in its anti-corruption strategy. First, the British colonial government made the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) of the Singapore Police Force's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) responsible for corruption control with the enactment of the Prevention of Corruption Ordinance (POCO) in December 1937 even though police corruption was widespread according to the 1879 and 1886 Commissions of Inquiry. However, the ACB was ineffective because it had only 17 personnel and was a Type B ACA that performed both anti-corruption

and non-corruption-related functions. As part of the CID, the ACB's function of fighting corruption was not given top priority and compromised by the prevalence of police corruption. The folly of making the ACB responsible for corruption control was exposed by the revelation of the Opium Hijacking scandal in October 1951 when a gang of robbers, which included three police detectives, had stolen 1,800 pounds of opium worth S$400,000 (US$133,333). The ACB's failure to combat corruption made the British colonial government realise its mistake and resulted in the formation of the CPIB in September 1952 as an independent Type A ACA that performed only anti-corruption functions outside the jurisdiction of the police (Quah, 2007, pp. 14-16).

The second policy mistake of the British colonial government was its failure to provide sufficient legal powers, budget and personnel to the CPIB during its first eight years. The CPIB began its operations in October 1952 with R. Middleton-Smith as its director and 12 officers, who were on short secondment from the police. However, the CPIB was ineffective in curbing police corruption because of its investigation officers' "short secondment and limited time and capacity to conduct thorough investigations" and "the social stigma of investigating fellow police officers" (CPIB, 2012, p. 18).

Learning from the mistakes of the British colonial government, the People's Action Party (PAP) government, which assumed office in June 1959, retained the CPIB as an independent Type A ACA and enhanced its effectiveness by enacting the Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) in June 1960 to strengthen its legal powers and increasing its budget and personnel. The POCA empowers the CPIB Director and officers to arrest and search persons and to investigate their bank accounts, income taxes, and other documents. Most importantly, section 24 assists the CPIB officers investigating corruption cases by requiring those accused persons to account for their "pecuniary resources or property" that are disproportionate to their known sources of income (Quah, 2011, p. 220).

The PAP government also demonstrated its strong political will to curb corruption by providing the CPIB with the necessary budget and personnel to perform its functions effectively. The growth in the CPIB's budget and personnel from 2008-2015 is shown in Table 4 and reflected in the increase of its per capita expenditure from US$2.32 in 2008 to US$4.87 in 2015. Similarly, the CPIB's staff-population ratio has improved from 1:56,163 to 1:23,858 during the same period.

**Table 4: CPIB's Budget and Personnel, 2008-2015**

| CPIB | 2008 | 2010 | 2012 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Budget (in millions) | US$11.2 | US$14.7 | US$20.3 | US$29.3 | US$26.8 |
| Personnel | 86 | 90 | 138 | 205 | 232 |
| Per capita expenditure | US$2.32 | US$2.90 | US$3.82 | US$5.36 | US$4.87 |
| Staff-population ratio | 1:56,163 | 1:56,408 | 1:38,496 | 1:26,682 | 1:23,858 |

Source: Compiled and calculated by the author from the CPIB's budget and personnel in its annual reports and Republic of Singapore (2008-2016).

Corruption was also a serious problem in Hong Kong during the British colonial period. Leslie Palmier (1985, p. 123) contended that corruption was already a way of life among the Chinese population in Hong Kong when the British acquired it in 1841. Hong Kong provided "a fertile soil for corruption to flourish" because the rapid population increase during 1945-1974 severely strained the provision of social services and food, housing, water, schools, health care and other services were in short supply. The government's monopoly and regulation of various activities and the discretion given to those civil servants in charge provided many opportunities for corruption, especially in the police, customs and excise service, immigration department, fire and ambulance services, and the prison service (de Speville, 1997, pp. 11-14).

Even though the police was the most corrupt government department in Hong Kong (Palmier, 1985, p. 123), the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) was created as a special unit within the CID of the Royal Hong Kong Police Force (RHKPF) in 1948 to investigate and prosecute corruption cases (Kuan, 1981, p. 24). As part of the ACB's review of the POCO, a study team visited Singapore in 1968 to examine how its anti-corruption laws worked in practice. The government and the RHKPF did not support the study team's recommendation of establishing an independent ACA. The ACB, which was separated from the CID in 1952, was instead upgraded into the Anti-Corruption Office (ACO) with the enactment of the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (POBO) in May 1971 (Lethbridge, 1985, p. 98). However, the escape of a corruption suspect, Chief Superintendent of Police, Peter F. Godber, on 8 June 1973, to Britain angered the public and undermined the ACO's credibility. The government responded by appointing a Commission of Inquiry chaired by Sir Alastair Blair-Kerr to investigate the circumstances that enabled Godber to leave Hong Kong and to evaluate the POBO's effectiveness (Quah, 2011, p. 252).

The governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, accepted Sir Alastair's advice of considering public opinion and decided for political and psychological reasons to establish a new ACA that was independent of the police. Governor MacLehose's decision was path-breaking because his predecessors and previous committees had deferred to the police for fear that police morale would suffer if corruption control was transferred to an independent agency (Quah, 2011, pp. 252-253). Consequently, the ICAC was established on 15 February 1974 with the enactment of the ICAC Ordinance of 1974. The ICAC's functions are: "to root out corruption and to restore public confidence in the Government" (Wong, 1981, p. 45). The ICAC was provided with adequate budget and personnel to perform its functions effectively. It began in 1974 with 369 personnel and a budget of HK$16,108,152 (US$2,065,148). However, 40 years later, the ICAC's budget has increased by 58 times to HK$937.12 million (US$120.14 million) and its number of personnel rose by nearly four times to 1,358 in 2014 (ICAC Budget, 2014; ICAC, 2015, p.25). Table 5 shows that the ICAC's per capita expenditure has increased from US$13.40 in 2008 to US$17.24 in 2015 and its staff-population ratio has also improved from 1:5,780 to 1:5,408 in during the same period.

**Table 5: ICAC's Budget and Personnel, 2008-2015**

| ICAC | 2008 | 2010 | 2012 | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Budget (in millions) | US$97.7 | US$104.65 | US$112.96 | US$120.14 | US$126.01 |
| Personnel | 1,263 | 1,321 | 1,282 | 1,358 | 1,351 |
| Per capita expenditure | US$13.40 | US$14.89 | US$15.78 | US$16.59 | US$17.24 |
| Staff-population ratio | 1:5,780 | 1:5,317 | 1:5,581 | 1:5,333 | 1:5,408 |

Source: Compiled and calculated by the author from the ICAC's budget and personnel from its annual reports and budgets from 2008-2015.

Apart from providing the CPIB and ICAC with the necessary legal powers, budget and personnel, their governments have also provided these ACAs with the operational autonomy to perform their functions without political interference as independent watchdogs by investigating all corruption cases, without fear or favour and regardless of the position or status of those persons under investigation. Robert Gregory (2015, pp. 130-131) has described the CPIB and ICAC as good examples of ACAs with high *de facto* independence and high operational impartiality. Even though the CPIB comes under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister's Office in Singapore, the Prime Minister does not interfere in its daily operations and the CPIB Director reports to the Secretary to the Cabinet. The CPIB's operational impartiality has been protected by the PAP leaders whose "political self-denial" has maintained its *de facto* independence, which has sustained its impartial reputation and popular legitimacy.

Another important reason for the success of the CPIB and ICAC is their impartial enforcement of the anti-corruption laws in Singapore and Hong Kong, respectively. This means that anyone found guilty of a corruption offence is punished regardless of his or her position, status, or political affiliation. The CPIB has investigated five PAP leaders and eight senior civil servants in Singapore without fear or favour from 1966-2014. For example, the CPIB's Assistant Director, Edwin Yeo, was charged on 24 July 2013 with misappropriating S$1.76 million (US$1.41 million) from 2008-2012. He was found guilty of criminal breach of trust and for forgery and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment on 20 February 2014 (Quah, 2015a, pp. 77, 80-81).

Similarly, the ICAC has not hesitated to investigate political leaders and senior civil servants in Hong Kong if they are accused of corruption offences. The investigation of the corruption scandals involving the former Chief Executive, Donald Tsang, in February and April 2012 culminated in his conviction on 17 February 2017 for misconduct in public office for not disclosing his rental negotiations with property tycoon, Bill Wong, while his Cabinet was reviewing a digital broadcasting licence by Wong's radio company (Scott, 2014, pp. 966-967; *Straits Times,* 2017a, p. A12). Tsang was sentenced to 20 months imprisonment on 22 February 2017. Commenting on the verdict and sentencing, Alan Leong, a former leader of the pro-democracy Civic Party, observed that "the rule of law prevails and is very much alive and kicking in Hong Kong" and "those who occupy public office - especially high office - ought to be whiter than white" (*Straits Times,* 2017b, p. A3).

Finally, Singapore and Hong Kong have succeeded in minimising corruption because of their comprehensive approach in dealing with all corruption complaints. The CPIB has adopted a "total approach to enforcement" and deals with both major and minor cases of public and private sector corruption, as well as "both giver and receiver of bribes" and other crimes uncovered in the investigation of corruption complaints (Soh, 2008, pp. 1-2). Bertrand de Speville (1997, pp. 55-56), the ICAC Commissioner from 1992-1997, has contended that the ICAC has succeeded in gaining public confidence by ensuring that all corruption reports, no matter how small, are investigated and kept confidential. In the same vein, Fanny Law (2008, pp. 98-99) a former ICAC Commissioner from October 2006 to June 2007, has attributed Hong Kong's "sound integrity system" to these four strengths: a strong political will to curb corruption; a common integrity framework for civil servants, politicians, judicial officers, and staff of the watchdog agencies; a vibrant civil society with independent media and nongovernment organisations; and an independent ICAC with a comprehensive anti-corruption programme.

### Five Lessons for Asian Policy Makers

**1. Political will is essential for success in combating corruption**

To minimise corruption in Asian countries, their policy makers must be willing to establish an independent Type A ACA like the CPIB or ICAC to enforce the anti-corruption laws impartially, without fear or favour. Political will refers to the sustained commitment of political leaders to implement anti-corruption policies and programmes (Brinkerhoff, 2000, p. 242). Sahr Kpundeh (1998, p. 92) contends that political will is "a critical starting point for sustainable and effective anti-corruption strategies and programmes" because elected or appointed leaders, civil society watchdogs and other stakeholders must demonstrate "credible intent" to "attack perceived causes or effects" of systemic corruption. Indeed, without political will, promises by political leaders and governments to reform the civil service or combat corruption will "remain mere rhetoric."

Political will is critical for the successful implementation of anti-corruption strategies as politicians can change "a culture of corruption if they wish to do so" because "they make the laws and allocate the funds that enable the laws to be enforced." Consequently, it is not surprising that those corrupt politicians "who are the greatest beneficiaries of corruption have the greatest power and use the corrupt nature of government to maintain that power" (Senior, 2006, pp. 184, 187). This means that to combat corruption effectively, the policy makers must enact comprehensive anti-corruption laws and provide the Type A ACA with adequate financial and human resources and operational independence to perform its functions impartially, regardless of the status or political affiliation of the offenders.

The political will of Asian countries in combating corruption is reflected in the budgets and personnel allocated by their governments to their ACAs. As shown in Table 6, the strong political will of the governments of Hong Kong and Singapore is reflected

in the high per capita expenditures and favourable staff-population ratios of the ICAC and CPIB, respectively. Conversely, the weak political will of the governments in South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia and India is manifested in the lower per capita expenditures and unfavourable staff-population ratios of the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC), Agency Against Corruption (AAC), Office of the Ombudsman (OMB), *Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi* (KPK) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), respectively.

**Table 6: Per Capita Expenditures and Staff-Population Ratios of Seven ACAs, 2014**

| ACA | Budget (in millions) | Personnel | Per capita expenditure | Staff-population Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ICAC | US$120.14 | 1,358 | US$16.59 | 1:5,333 |
| CPIB | US$29.3 | 205 | US$5.36 | 1:26,682 |
| ACRC | US$58.3 | 465 | US$1.15 | 1:108,430 |
| AAC | US$14.4 | 240 | US$0.61 | 1:97,641 |
| OMB | US$38.8 | 1,214 | US$0.39 | 1:81,631 |
| KPK | US$50.17 | 1,102 | US$0.19 | 1:230,943 |
| CBI | US$65.5 | 5,676 | US$0.05 | 1:228,206 |

Source: Calculated by the author from the budgets and personnel provided in the annual reports of the seven ACAs.

## 2. Address causes of corruption in their country and not the symptoms

It seems obvious that to curb corruption effectively, policy makers should initiate appropriate reforms to address its causes. However, in spite of what is known about the causes of corruption (see Treisman, 2007), most governments in Asian countries have failed to do so because it is easier to deal with the symptoms of corruption than with addressing the root causes (Levitt and Dubner, 2014, pp. 66-67). A good example is President Xi Jinping's five-year old anti-corruption campaign, which is ineffective because it has only introduced regulations to curb official extravagance and gift-giving without tackling the other four causes of corruption in China: low public sector salaries, red tape, low probability of detecting and punishing corrupt Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members, and lack of accountability of local government officials (Quah, 2015b, pp. 84-90).

The British colonial government failed to identify the causes of corruption in Singapore and made a serious mistake by entrusting the function of corruption control to the ACB of the Singapore Police Force (SPF) with the enactment of the POCO in December 1937 even though police corruption was rampant. This first mistake was only rectified 15 years later with the establishment of the CPIB in September 1952. The British colonial government's second mistake was its failure to provide the CPIB with adequate legal powers, budget and personnel to perform its functions during its first eight years.

By contrast, the PAP government has avoided the mistakes of the British colonial government by retaining the CPIB as Singapore's only Type A ACA and enacting the POCA in June 1960 to strengthen the CPIB's legal powers and providing it with adequate budget, personnel and operational independence to perform its functions effectively. Police corruption was widespread during the colonial period but the British colonial government failed to introduce measures to address these causes: the low salaries of policemen, their poor working conditions and ample opportunities for corruption, and the ineffectiveness of the ACB and POCO. However, the PAP government has minimised police corruption by improving salaries and working conditions in the SPF, enhancing its recruitment and selection procedures, strengthening its training programme, including the introduction of values education in 2002, and adopting administrative measures to minimise opportunities for corruption (Quah, 2014, pp. 198-204). More importantly, the PAP government's comprehensive anti-corruption strategy has focused on reducing both the incentives and opportunities for corruption by empowering the CPIB through the POCA and providing it with the necessary legal powers, budget, personnel and operational independence to enforce the POCA impartially without political interference.

## 3. Establish a Type A ACA instead of a Type B ACA

Policy makers in Asian countries have three options to combat corruption. The first option is to follow Denmark, Finland and New Zealand, the three least corrupt countries on the CPI in 2016, which have succeeded in curbing corruption without relying on ACAs but on other institutions like the Ombudsman, the Chancellor of Justice, the Auditor General's Office and the Serious Fraud Office (Quah, 2013a, pp. 226-232). However, this option is not suitable for those Asian countries which do not have other strong institutions to deal with the rampant corruption. Faced with the other two options of relying on a single ACA or multiple ACAs, policy makers should learn from the ineffectiveness of the multiple ACAs in Afghanistan, China, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam, and avoid establishing more than one ACA (Quah, 2013b, pp. 21-23).

Policy makers should establish a Type A ACA like Singapore's CPIB or Hong Kong's ICAC and avoid creating a Type B ACA like South Korea's ACRC, which is a "toothless" ACA because of its inability to investigate corruption cases (Quah, 2010, pp. 41-42). As combating corruption is difficult and requires extensive financial and human resources, it would be more effective for policy makers to establish a Type A ACA that is dedicated solely to performing anti-corruption functions instead of a Type B ACA, which performs both corruption and non-corruption-related functions. Indeed, China's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), India's CBI, South Korea's ACRC and the Philippines' OMB, would be more effective if they focus only on combating corruption and relinquish their non-corruption-related functions to other agencies in these countries.

It is not difficult for Asian policy makers to establish a Type A ACA in their countries if they wish to do so. The challenge for them, however, would be to ensure that the new Type A ACA would have sufficient trained personnel to investigate corruption cases impartially and function effectively as an independent watchdog and not as an attack dog or a paper tiger, as will be discussed below. The most likely scenario would be that the new ACA would have difficulty in recruiting trained

investigators and function as an attack dog or a paper tiger rather than as an independent watchdog.

## 4. The Type A ACA should be an independent watchdog, not an attack dog or paper tiger

How does an ACA help the government that creates it to minimise corruption in the country? An ACA can perform three roles as shown in Table 7, which has classified nine Asian ACAs according to these roles. The first role, which is preferred, is the watchdog role performed by an independent ACA that investigates all corruption cases impartially, without fear or favour and regardless of the position or status of those being investigated. Luis de Sousa (2010, p. 13) has defined an ACA's independence as "the capacity to carry out its mission without political interference, that is, operational autonomy." Examples of Type A ACAs are Singapore's CPIB and Hong Kong's ICAC, which have high *de facto* independence and high operational impartiality.

Second, an ACA can also act as the "attack dog" of the government that abuses its powers by using corruption as a weapon against its political opponents. As mentioned above, corruption charges have been used to discredit rivals and settle political scores in many Asian countries, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam (Djalal, 2001, pp. 32-33). In China, anti-corruption campaigns are used frequently against political foes to undermine their power base in the CCP. In July 2014, the CCDI investigated Zhou Yongkang, the Minister of Public Security from 2002-2007, for corruption and the procuratorates confiscated US$16.05 billion worth of assets from his many residences in seven provinces in China. Zhou was expelled from the CCP on 5 December 2014 not only because of his corruption offences, but more importantly for his conspiracy with Bo Xilai to challenge Xi Jinping's leadership (Quah, 2015b, pp. 79-81).

**Table 7: Roles of Nine Asian ACAs**

| Role | Anti-Corruption Agency | CPI Rank/Score 2016 |
|---|---|---|
| Watchdog | Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (Singapore) | 7th/176 (84/100) |
| | Independent Commission Against Corruption (HKSAR) | 15th/176 (77/100) |
| Attack dog | Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (China) | 79th/176 (40/100) |
| | Central Bureau of Investigation (India) | 79th/176 (40/100) |
| | National Accountability Bureau (Pakistan) | 116th/176 (32/100) |
| | Anti-Corruption Commission (Myanmar) | 136th/176 (28/100) |
| | Anti-Corruption Unit (Cambodia) | 156th/176 (21/100) |
| Paper tiger | Anti-Corruption & Civil Rights Commission (S. Korea) | 52nd/176 (53/100) |
| | Office of the Ombudsman (Philippines) | 101st/176 (35/100) |

Source: Compiled by the author.

Similarly, India's CBI has been perceived by the public as "a pliable tool of the ruling [Congress] party, and its investigations tend to become cover-up operations for the misdeeds of ministers" (Gill, 1998, p. 238). Madhav Godbole (2000, p. 88), a former senior civil servant in India, has criticised the CBI for being used by the then

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as "an instrument of prosecution" and for its "disgraceful" record of investigating corruption cases "involving the high, the mighty and the powerful." More recently, the former Central Vigilance Commissioner N. Vittal (2012, pp. 132-134) has criticised the CBI's lack of independence and credibility because it has become "a football between the party in power and the party in opposition" as the cases initiated by one regime are neutralised by the next.

Other examples of Asian ACAs that are used as attack dogs by their governments are Cambodia's Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU), Myanmar's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau (NAB). In Cambodia, Prime Minister Hung Sen has used the campaign against illegal logging to remove those military officers who threatened his power (Quah, 2016, p. 256). A foreign correspondent based in Yangon has observed that "it is common practice for the government to misuse anti-corruption laws as a means of ousting political opponents" (Nwe, 2012, p. 194). In Pakistan, successive governments have "issued injunctions to control corruption" but, according to Mohammad Waseem (2002, p. 158), "more often than not, it was the political goal of eliminating opposition which prompted legislation and subsequent trials for corruption."

The ACA's third role as a paper tiger is also undesirable because it reflects the government's lack of political will to curb corruption by not providing the ACA with the necessary legal powers, budget, personnel and operational independence to enforce the anti-corruption laws impartially. South Korea's Korea Independent Commission Against Corruption (KICAC) was established on 25 January 2002 as a "poor cousin" or weak replica of Hong Kong's ICAC because it could not investigate corruption cases. The KICAC's successor, the ACRC, inherited not only the KICAC's Achilles' heel of being unable to investigate corruption cases but its anti-corruption functions were further diluted when the KICAC was merged in February 2008 with the Ombudsman and Administrative Appeals Commission to form the ACRC, which became a Type B ACA. South Korea's inability to improve its CPI score beyond 53-56 during 2012-2016 reflects its failure to curb corruption and is an indictment of its futile strategy of relying on such paper tigers as the KICAC and ACRC during the past 14 years (Quah, 2017, pp. 23, 26).

Unlike the ACRC, the OMB in the Philippines can investigate and prosecute corruption cases in addition to its other functions of graft prevention, disciplinary control, and provision of public assistance. However, the OMB's ineffectiveness as the lead ACA in combating corruption is the result of its serious staff shortage, limited budget, poor reputation, and inability to cooperate with the other ACAs in the Philippines (Quah, 2011, pp. 144-146). This explains why the OMB is criticised for being the "Street Ombudsman" that focuses only on petty corruption cases and is perceived as a paper tiger rather than as a watchdog or attack dog. In short, the ineffectiveness of South Korea's ACRC and the Philippines' OMB confirms the futility of establishing a "toothless" ACA or paper tiger to combat corruption in both countries.

## 5. Combating corruption is a continuous work in progress

Combating corruption is a difficult, expensive, and arduous task because, apart from the resources and expertise required by the Type A ACA in the country, the implementation of the anti-corruption laws will be strongly resisted by those intelligent and powerful corrupt individuals and organisations with vested interests to circumvent these laws to avoid arrest and conviction for their offences. Christian Gobel (2004) has described the tasks of combating political corruption, organised crime and vote-buying in Taiwan as "beheading the Hydra," the Greek mythical creature with several heads that grew again when cut off. In the same vein, Laurence Cockcroft (2012, pp. 231-232) has emphasised the need for a sustained campaign against corruption to assure victory, because corruption is like "a snake which will frequently respond with poison, and will only die with repeated attack" and "only if severed at the head."

To combat corruption effectively in Asian countries, their governments must identify accurately the causes of corruption in the country and recommend appropriate measures to address these causes over a sustained period of time. However, many governments, including those in China, India, the Philippines and South Korea, to mention four examples, have not only neglected this important task but have also relied on ineffective and poorly-resourced Type B ACAs to enforce their anti-corruption laws. Consequently, it is not surprising that these four countries have failed to minimise corruption. On the other hand, the success stories of Singapore and Hong Kong SAR show that minimising corruption in Asian countries is not an elusive dream. There is now a wealth of knowledge on the causes of corruption, which policy makers can distil from to enhance the effectiveness of their anti-corruption measures. What appears to be lacking, however, is the political will of the policy makers in many Asian countries to address the causes of corruption.

Even though Singapore and Hong Kong SAR have minimised corruption, this does not mean that their governments can rest on their laurels because of the growing importance of private sector corruption and other threats. The number of private sector corruption complaints in Hong Kong increased for the first time in 1988 and the Hong Ethics Development Centre (HKEDC) was established in 1995 by the ICAC's Community Relations Department to facilitate liaison between the various professional and commercial organisations in Hong Kong (Scott, 2013, pp. 95-96). The HKEDC has published many useful anti-corruption guides for the private sector, including an information kit for business organisations (ICAC, 2003) and a *Toolkit on Directors' Ethics* (ICAC, 2008).

The investigation and conviction of four senior civil servants for corruption offences during 2010-2014 indicates that even though corruption is not a serious problem in Singapore, the CPIB must remain vigilant to deal not only with public sector corruption but with the increasing number of private sector corruption cases in recent years. In January 2017, the CPIB published *PACT: A Practical Anti-Corruption Guide for Businesses in Singapore* to assist business owners to develop and implement an anti-corruption system (CPIB, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, the shocking revelation in July 2013 that the CPIB's Assistant Director Edwin Yeo had misappropriated US$1.41 million during 2008-2012 has tarnished the CPIB's reputation even though he was found guilty and jailed for ten years. At the official opening of the CPIB's Corruption Reporting and Heritage Centre (CRHC) on 6 June 2017, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong reiterated Singapore's zero-tolerance approach towards corruption and stressed that the setting up of the CRHC shows that the government treats corruption complaints seriously as well as the importance of protecting the legacy of clean government left by Singapore's founding fathers (Cheong, 2017, p. A6).

Similarly, the ICAC has also not hesitated to investigate political leaders and senior civil servants in Hong Kong if they are accused of corruption offences. The investigation of former Chief Executive Donald Tsang in February and April 2012 culminated in his conviction and sentencing to 20 months' imprisonment on February 22, 2017 for misconduct in public office. However, Ian Scott (2017, p. 3) contends that, political support for the ICAC was "usually unequivocal and often proactive" until 2012 because recent scandals at the highest levels have raised questions about "the ethical commitment of Hong Kong's leaders to the anti-corruption cause."

### Conclusion

As the lack of political will is the most important reason for the failure of many Asian countries to combat corruption effectively during the past six decades, these countries need substantial doses of political will and capacity to implement impartially comprehensive reforms to address the causes of corruption and to sustain their implementation over a long period of time. However, this is a tall order indeed because of the scarcity and fragility of political will (Quah, 2015c, p. 53).

Whether the policy makers in those Asian countries with widespread corruption can draw lessons from the success stories of Singapore and Hong Kong SAR and the failures of China, India, the Philippines and South Korea, depends on their political will and capacity to establish a Type A ACA and provide it with the necessary legal powers, budget, personnel and operational independence to enforce the anti-corruption laws impartially. This means that the Type A ACA's role should be an independent watchdog that investigates all corruption complaints impartially, regardless of the status, position, or political affiliation of those being investigated. It should not be used as an attack dog against the government's political opponents, or a paper tiger that cannot investigate corruption cases.

As combating corruption in Asian countries is a continuous work in progress, policy makers concerned with improving anti-corruption measures in their countries must be realistic as their prospects for success also depend on their ability to overcome

the constraints of their unfavourable policy contexts, especially in those large Asian countries with huge populations and poor governance. As political leadership is the critical ingredient for effective corruption control, the $64,000 question is: *Whether the citizens in those Asian countries with widespread corruption have the wisdom to elect honest and competent leaders to political office to implement the necessary anti-corruption reforms?* If they fail to do so, corruption will remain a way of life because corrupt individuals in their countries will continue to misbehave with impunity and encourage others to follow suit. The price for inaction against these corrupt individuals is too high for the citizens in those Asian countries affected to pay.

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# Implementing the SDGs by Subnational Governments: Urgent Need to Strengthen Administrative Capacities

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## Abstract

*The international agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals signed in 2015 specify that the SDGs will be implemented by national governments and that countries should also embark on SDG implementation at subnational level such as municipalities or provinces. This paper focuses on SDG implementation at local authority level of large cities and explores the needed competences and capacities in goal attainment. Within the time span 2015-2030, changes of political leadership will be inevitable and hence continuity and policy coherence will be essential to make SDG implementation successful by 2030. The 17 SDGs are interdependent goals requiring effective inter-ministerial policy coordination and equally effective consultation with the private sector and civil society stakeholders. Developing effective mechanisms of coordination and consultations takes time and can be easily overturned subsequent to a change of government and administrators putting the sustainability of the society and gains from SDG implementation at risk. The authors describe the main features of the SDGs and of urban development and suggest that an application of ISO 18091 could be a practical method to ensure continuity of administrative performance needed to sustain implementation of the SDGs at local authority level.*

*Keywords: SDGs at subnational level, local authorities and SDGs, ISO 18091 for SDG implementation at local government level, governance.*

## Introduction

On 25th September 2015, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets which set quantitative and qualitative policy objectives for the next 15 years. It also includes 230 indicators to measure the countries' progress in implementing the SDGs. The goals and objectives span across the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability and are supposed to be achieved by 2030. They are meant to provide a framework which can be implemented by "all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership."[1,2] This ambitious agenda aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

Responsibility for the achievement of the SDGs lies with the national governments,

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however local governments are at the centre of the SDG implementation. There is no doubt about the inherent need for a well-functioning and well-managed local government in order for the SDGs to become lived reality. This paper aims to contribute to the question of how SDGs can be successfully implemented at a local level particularly at the level of cities and larger municipalities. Specifically, the focus of this paper is on the SDGs 16 and two of its targets which provide the necessary instrumentality in carrying out the 2030 Agenda. As such, two of the 169 SDG targets are of particular importance namely, Target 16.6 and Target 16.7. They set the institutional preconditions for a successful implementation of the SDGs. These two targets are aligned with good governance principles often deficient or under-developed in many countries. The two targets are:

· 16.6 *Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels*
· 16.7 *Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels*

The aim of this paper is to discuss the relevance of these two SDG targets for the SDG implementation by national and particularly by local authorities and to offer suggestions and tools on how local authorities could align their governance system to achieve the two targets.

The methodology used for this study is both normative and narrative. Normative in the sense that the authors consider effective functioning of local governments a very important and understudied factor of SDG implementation. Narrative in the sense that the authors will draw on existing documents from credible sources. An interdisciplinary perspective will be adopted in order to gain insights from these sources and in order to build adequate arguments why well-functioning local governments are needed for the objective stated above. Subsequently, a transfer of knowledge based on a quality management system is used to propose a toolbox to move the agenda forward. The methodology used for this study borrows from work done by Anne Sigismund Huff et al (2009).

## Why improvement of local governments essential for SDG implementation?

It can be difficult for citizens to participate in the policy-making process at a national level, especially when there are few possibilities to participate and engage with governments, and when the governance and government infrastructures are too weak or simply too remote for civil society participation. On the other hand, it is relatively easier to participate at a village, town or city level for instance by participating in a local council or by communicating with the urban council or the city administration through personal networks. The close proximity between citizen and local government allows for direct communication which is an important aspect of the local administration. Besides providing effective and efficient service delivery, local government are obliged (in most cases) to provide a forum for citizen inputs regarding service delivery so as to enhance its service quality, service coverage and responsiveness to citizens' initiatives.

*"Local governance ... includes the diverse objective of vibrant, living, working, and environmentally preserved self-governing communities. Good local governance is not just about providing a range of local services but also about preserving the life and liberty of residents, creating space for democratic participation and civic dialogue, supporting market-led and environmentally sustainable local development, and facilitating outcomes that enrich the quality of life of residents. (De Vries, 2016, p.67)"*

Faced with the complex tasks of managing the transition to sustainability, creation of viable local governance conditions based on transparency, participation and accountability, are crucial since an integrated and cross-sector approach to development is novel and little tested especially in the developing countries. Institutional learning is urgently needed in this context, which relies on a steady and reliable flow of feedback loops from government to civil society and business stakeholders, and vice-versa. Countries with limited capacity and limited public policy competence have already encountered difficulties in collecting census data from their citizens and business organizations. They will have even greater challenges to overcome when attempting to collect performance and impact related data or citizen feedback to improve their administrative processes and services. Such information gaps create barriers to understanding the needs and wishes of their citizens and difficulties to provide the social services expected of them. Referring to a publication by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the following citation is relevant for our study which states:

*"Without a well-managed urban transition in developing countries, it is difficult to see how the SDGs could be achieved. Further, city governments are responsible for implementing many of these goals. A recent study suggests that up to 65% of the SDG targets are at risk should local urban stakeholders not be assigned a clear implementing role (Cities Alliance, 2015). Although decentralization levels vary by country, it is often within local governments' remit to deliver basic services - water, sanitation and land-use decisions leading to housing provision, amongst others - that are closely linked to many of the goals. In short, to achieve the SDGs, local governments need to be involved (Lucci and Lynch, 2016). Yet, with few exceptions (UNSDSN, 2016; Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments et al., 2016), little work has explored to date the implementation of the SDGs at city level." (ODI, 2016, P. 3)*

One may also add, little work has been done on how governments learn and adapt in a structured coherent manner. Hence, it is not clear how local administrations could gear up their management capability and respond innovatively to the needs and expectations of their stakeholders. Without institutional adaptability to the rising performance demands and expectations, it is also difficulty to imagine that local administrations could leverage the multitude of opportunities that SDG implementation offers for smart and sustainable development.

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Efficient and effective government and respect of the law are the additional ingredients of good governance and are especially important at local level where governments interact with citizens and communities on a daily basis. Improving local governance can boost economic development, maximize administrative efficiency, and ensure social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Essentially, to strengthen the governance capability and government performance is a necessary precondition for effective implementations of the SDGs. The question is what tools are available to advance the quality of governance and the performance capacity of local authorities in a sustained manner through continual learning and improvement?

**Urban context of SDG implementation**

Urbanization is one of the most important drivers that will shape the global economy in the coming decades of the 21st century. For the first time in human history, over half the world's population (54%, according the UN DESA Report in 2014) now lives in urban areas. As a proportion of global population, the urban population is expected to reach 60% by 2030, with urban areas growing at a rate of 1.3 million people every week. Historically, high income countries have tended to go through rural to urban transitions, driven by dynamic cities that act as regional economic hubs and engines of growth. According to the World Bank, "72% outperformed their countries in terms of economic growth" (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 2). Consequently, the potential benefits of this urban growth are substantial. Urban growth is rapidly transforming the economic landscape of emerging markets, while the economic importance of cities in high income countries will continue to grow. Although the potential benefits of urban development are substantial, poorly managed urban growth is likely to occur economic costs as well.

The urban context is important for the implementation of the SDGs especially in the developing countries where urban populations are growing rapidly, particularly in Asia and Africa, the least urbanized regions to date (ODI, 2016). Several West African countries found their level of urbanization increased to almost 50% during the period from 1950 to 2010. For example, urbanization reached 48% in Côte d'Ivoire, 48% in The Gambia, 47% in Cape Verde, 46% in Nigeria, 46% in Togo, and 45% in Ghana (OECD, 2016). In India, "the urban population will increase from 28% in 2001 to nearly 50% by 2020" (Sridhar, Kashyap, 2014). This new trend is accompanied by sustainable development issues such "high population density, environmental pollution and deprivation" (Prono, 2017) not to mention housing shortage, traffic congestion, air and water pollution and crime.

The economic potential of urban growth is driven by increased productivity resulting from the concentration of people, talents and economic activities in cities. Concentrated economic and social interactions create a vibrant market and fertile environment for innovation in ideas, technologies, products, services and processes. However, poorly managed urban growth can reduce the economic benefits of urban concentrations and increase material and immaterial costs. Poorly managed growth is

defined here as urban development that results in substantial economic, social and environmental externalities. These externalities can arise from, among others, urban sprawl, inefficient public transport infrastructure, energy inefficient buildings, air pollution, social exclusion and a lack of basic services such as energy, water and waste. These characteristics can be seen in many cities worldwide, as part of a business as usual scenario. Poorly managed urban growth also leads to the inefficient use of energy, waste and excessive greenhouse gas emissions. Urban sprawl and high levels of motorization can increase urban carbon emissions substantially, both in terms of embedded emissions in the production of infrastructure and from transport operations, creating a vicious cycle of dense population, low efficiency and high negative spillover effect of production and daily activities.

The choices that countries and cities make today about managing urban growth will lock-in economic and climate benefits - or costs - for decades to come. The life span of capital intensive, largely irreversible urban infrastructure investments such as waste and water treatment, roads and buildings typically range from 30 to 100 years, and the path dependencies created by urban forms are sustained over centuries. Historical path dependencies can be seen in the widely varying rates of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions today among cities with similar per capita income and climate, due to past policy decisions that have shaped their urban centers, transport systems and energy efficiencies. Over the next decades, this will be particularly important for cities in emerging economies. For example, 70-80% of the urban infrastructure that will exist in India in 2050 has yet to be built (Floates, Rodehttps, 2014).

Local government can make a difference when designing the national and global development agenda. For instance, local actions can avoid mistakes made in the past prior to the current level of knowledge and scientific evidence regarding man-made climate warming. To illustrate this point, Colombia can be a good example of making inclusive investment at the local level in line with the good governance principles. Columbia is among the first countries to include 92 out of 169 of the SDGs targets[3] in its national development plan (Lucia et al, 2015). Bogota's mayor made efforts to significantly improve the sustainability and social equity of its transport systems[4].

## The 2030 Agenda negotiation process and the participation of local authorities

Since the first United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 - known as the Earth Summit, it was recognized that achieving sustainable development would require the active participation of all sectors of society and all types of people. Agenda 21, adopted at the Earth Summit, drew upon this sentiment and formalized nine sectors of society as the main channels through which broad-based participation would be facilitated in UN activities related to sustainable development. These are officially called "Major Groups" and include the following sectors: Women,

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Children and Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Non-Governmental Organizations, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Scientific and Technological Community, Farmers and other stakeholders like the Elderly and Disabled People.

Two decades after the Earth Summit, the importance of effectively engaging these sectors of society was reaffirmed by the Rio+20 Conference. Its outcome document "The Future We Want" highlights the role that Major Groups can play in pursuing sustainable societies for future generations. In addition, governments invited other stakeholders, including local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and families, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities, to participate in UN processes related to sustainable development, which can be done through close collaboration with the Major Groups.[5] Organizations which partake in the Major Group play an important role as they prepare negotiation positions during meetings at the United Nations pertaining to Sustainable Development agenda items. The negotiation process was analyzed by Yiu & Saner (2014).

'Local Authorities' are one of the major groups that has been designated by the Agenda 21 to represent all the local authorities of all of the UN member countries with the aim to contribute to the implementation of the SDG implementation process. An important sector specific organization, "United Cities and the Local Governments (UCLG)", is acting as one of the organizing partners of The Local Authorities Major Group (LAMG) and brings together international networks and organizations that represent local and subnational governments from all continents in the world.[6]

The representative organizations of LAMG consist of "ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability" based in Bonn, Germany; "United Cities and the Local Governments (UCLG)" based in Barcelona, Spain and the "nrg4SD Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development" based in Brussels, Belgium.

UCLG represents and defends the interests of local governments on the world stage, regardless of the size of the communities they serve.[7]  In keeping with the goals of SDG 16.6 and 16.7, UCLG's work programme focuses on:

· Increasing the role and influence of local government and its representative organizations in global governance
· Becoming the main source of support for participatory, effective, innovative local government close to the citizen
· Ensuring an effective and participatory global organization.

As UCLG represents all forms of local governments, large or small three categories are used to create common and differentiated approaches:

1. regions, towns and small municipalities
2. intermediary cities
3. peripheral cities, metropolitan cities

Each category is distinct and faces different challenges. Not only do the cities between and within the categories differ in size, each city is a unique complex phenomenon with its own economic, environmental and social processes and structures, which are set in and build upon a particular cultural context and historical background. When approaching problems at a local level the contextual, structural, institutional and human resources conditions need to be evaluated and fully understood so that local authorities can be enabled to implement the SDGs successfully.

### The interdependence of the SDGs and corresponding challenge to local government

The 2030 Agenda has been advocated as an "indivisible whole" due to the significant interactions of the social, economic, and environmental dimensions which exist between and within the goals. Although some of these goals and targets are mutually supportive, others are constraining. (Nilsson et al, 2017).  The interlinkages and interdependencies amongst the 17 SDGs have been analyzed by David LeBlanc (2015) an example of his analysis is given in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1 SDGs as networks of Targets (Le Blanc, David, 2015)**
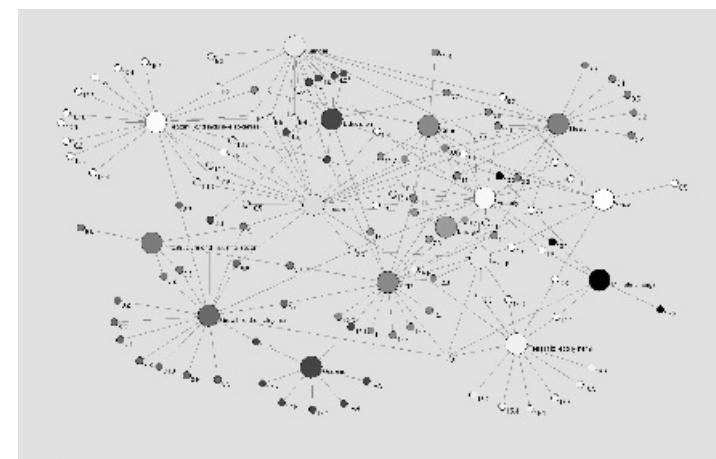


Source: UNDESA Working Paper No. 141, ST/ESA/2015/DWP/141; New York.

Hence, implementing the SDGs at national or subnational levels of government means knowing and working with policy trade-offs and seeking multiplier effects through bundling goals as much as this is possible. It is impossible to attempt implementation of all 17 goals the same time. Instead, the prioritization of development needs of a city or municipality is required which in turn requires a SDG implementation strategy that reaches towards 2030 (Boas et al, 2016), that can be financed, implemented by a sufficient number of able civil servants and negotiated with a city's main stakeholders (citizens, business, academics, NGOs). How to maintain timely information flows and how to keep track of the state of affairs of their citizens and business community, becomes a challenge in itself. Effective functioning of Information management as well as of knowledge management necessitates a systemic

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approach consisting of centralization of key information in a transparent manner but at the same time ensuring inclusivity and participation of the respective stakeholders. Such an information management infrastructure could support a more integrated approach to sustainability and safeguard (hopefully) of coherence of the parts.

Policy coherence of SDG implementation requires that local government officials actively engage in inter-ministerial (cross-sector) policy coordination and at the same time conclude government to stakeholder policy consultations. Policy coordination and consultation (inter alia PCC) requires know-how and ability to design and manage governmental policy mechanisms (Saner, 2009a, 2009b). Without PCC mechanisms and practices, government officials will continue to work in silos and in a vertical manner at the expense of managing horizontal interfaces needed to achieve greater policy impact and desired outcome of enhanced sustainability.

According to the 2030 agreement, the SDGs should be implemented based on transparency, inclusiveness and participation. These important principles represent major challenges to national and local governments such as:

1.  Citizen Participation

    According to the UN Public Administration Glossary, citizen participation:

    *"...implies the involvement of citizens in a wide range of policymaking activities, including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects in order to orient government programs toward community needs, build public support, and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within neighbourhoods." (UN On-line Glossary)[8]*

2.  Accountability

    The UN General Assembly resolution 63/276 defines accountability as such:

    "*Accountability is the obligation of the Organization and its staff members to be answerable for delivering specific results that have been determined through a clear and transparent assignment of responsibility, subject to the availability of resources and the constraints posed by external factors. Accountability includes achieving objectives and results in response to mandates, fair and accurate reporting on performance results, stewardship of funds, and all aspects of performance in accordance with regulations, rules and standards, including a clearly defined system of rewards and sanctions." (UN General Assembly, 2010, p.5)*

3.  Transparency

    *Denotes "unfettered access by the public to timely and reliable information on decisions and performance in the public sector" (Armstrong, 2005, p.1)*

4.  Inclusiveness

    According to the UN DESA strategy to promote social integration:

    *"An inclusive society is a society that over-rides differences of race, gender, class, generation, and geography, and ensures inclusion, equality of opportunity as well as capability of all members of the society to determine an agreed set of social institutions that govern social interaction. (Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Social Integration, Helsinki, July 2008)" (UNDESA, 2009, p.8)*

These new areas of work resulting from implementing the 2030 Agenda in order to "leave no one behind" could be daunting for public administrations that have been used to operate behind closed doors taking decision unilaterally without consulting either citizens or other administrative agencies. New competencies and capabilities need to be acquired in order to better manage the SDG's inherent inter-sectoral interfaces and partnership arrangements.

## Importance of capacity building to achieve effective administrative functioning of local authorities (structures, processes and regulatory instruments)

Citizens expect all their needs to be satisfied in such a way that public programmers and services will express authentic public policies and values, taking into consideration ethical principles and basic human rights. Short of living up to these expectation, unintended consequences may result, such as apathy, a lack of development impetus, poverty trap and exodus.

It is possible to build stronger regional, national and even global government working from the local level, based on managing the quality of the public products/services and increasing the confidence of the citizens in their government at local, regional and national level. Citizens expect Local government to respond to for example calamities with resilience, in a timely and effective manner when natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes and tsunami occur. These disasters are increasing due to climate change and extracting disproportional costs in material, physical and human life terms.

These expectations have to be met with a well-functioning "machine" at the local level, which cannot be achieved without robust organizational and management tools, clear work procedures which define cross-sector roles and responsibilities and skilled civil servants. Unfortunately, these conditions are often missing at the local administrative level in the developing countries.

Public administrations in all parts of the world are also faced with multiple pressures to innovate and improve effectiveness and efficiency. Reforms range from New Public Administration (NPM) to other forms of reorganizations like "gestion

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publique par contrats" (France, Belgium) resulting in various variance of New Public Administrations (NPA). While many of these reforms may have proven successful, criticism vis-a-vis all forms of public administrative reforms have increased. Neither NPM nor NPA have a documented track record of success and debates abound about the democratic legitimacy of NPM or the economic effectiveness of NPA.

Concerned citizens and government officials alike are looking for methods to find a common ground to assess the quality of public administrations be they based on NPM or NPA. Quality assessment methods offer a transparent method of assessing the performance of public administrations and provide feedback for continual improvement (Saner, 2002).

Although levels of decentralization vary from one country to another, local governments are often responsible for delivering and maintaining basic services such as road, water, sanitation and land-use decisions leading to housing provision, amongst others. Basically, local governments are challenged to improve access, coverage and quality of services which are necessary for successful implementation of the SDGs without necessarily getting budget increase.  For them to operate efficiently local governments need, among other things, competent personnel and good organizational structure. Local governments have to embark on an organizational learning journey on a continuous basis taking for example the case of Slovenia at the time of its nation building (Saner & Yiu, 1996). Government and administrative learning can be fostered through the capacity building enhancement of quality management systems.

**Strengthening Institutions of Local Authorities of Municipalities**

Strengthening institutions of local governments goes hand-in-hand with the consolidation of stable and well-functioning institutional and organizational arrangements. The achievement of sustainable urban development and ultimately the success of the New Urban Agenda (a more detailed definition of SDG 11 states "Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable") and further "ensure peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all (SDG 16)" are intimately conditioned on the quality of human resources, the strength of institutions and the institutional and regulatory frameworks that they operate (Targets 16.6 & 16.7).

Often cities are confronted with three common issues which will become even more acute when more than 7 billion people will be living in urban areas by 2050. These should be the priority areas for capacity building and competence development:

1. Affordable housing: *uncontrolled urbanization, slum formation (due to scarcity of affordable housing), informal land development processes, lagging investments in infrastructure, lack of housing planning and zoning by city and local governments*

2. Sustained Financing: *weak capacity to levy and collect revenues, inability to apply land-based finance instruments, lack of application of modern tools regarding*

*urban land management, and effective use of alternative financing instruments such as public-private partnerships for financing the SDGs.*

3. Generation of decent jobs and employment*:  the density of populations too often creates exploitation and precarious working conditions.  Weak capacity in work force planning and skill development coupled with poor labour inspection and welfare administration have condemned many to the fate of working poor without minimum social protection.*

Understanding the underlining challenges of urbanizations and having tools and knowledge to solve them are key but not enough if the institutional and organizational environment as well as the urban governance systems are not developed along with the initiative to strengthen the capacity of individuals and cadres.

Capacity building should not be limited to the administration either. Other stakeholders need also to cooperate in order to create the systemic capacity needed by the local authorities which would in turn enable them to implement the SDGs, namely:

· Local governments**:** technical skills, ability to connect different areas of urban development and manage conflict resolution between interests and demands on location and land use

· Civil society organizations**:** technical skills, knowledge and the ability to meaningfully participate in decision making while exercising their rights and press for safeguarding the public goods

· Private sector**:** capacity to participate in urban development and to contribute where they are best in terms of innovations, technology, finance and management tools

· Universities**:** development of knowledge, practical skills and competencies required to understand and manage urbanization within a dynamic and volatile environment; ability to play an active role as a stakeholder in sustainable urban development

As with other aspects of SDG implementation, collaboration, partnerships and exchange of experiences will be crucial to advance the integration of SDG implementation at local, national and global levels (Chaitanya et al, 2016, Coopman et al., 2016).

**Strengthening local authorities through application of ISO 18091**

In an attempt to adopt the experiences gained by private sector companies, big or small, in applying a quality management approach to their strategic planning and operational management, a group of international experts within the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) has worked to develop a new quality management standard suitable of the local authority. In its Introduction Section, the following rationale was given:

*"One of the great challenges that societies are facing today is the need to develop and maintain citizens' confidence in their governments and their institutions. In this respect, local governments have a mission to make possible the development of sustainable local communities. Management of quality in local governments can result in sustainable economic prosperity and social development at local level, including deployment of, and interaction with, national and regional policies in a coherent and compatible way. Citizens expect to have a community providing all public products/services with quality, such as safety and security, roads in good conditions, availability of public transportation, ease and speed in processing of documents, transparency, availability of public information, availability of health and education systems, (and) infrastructure (ISO 18091, 2014, Introduction section)."*

The purpose of ISO 18091 is to serve as a guideline for the implementation of a quality management system that will help local governments meet the needs and expectations of their citizens. Achieving high quality of local government enables the whole system of government to become stronger. Coherence of such approaches can help to create reliable and sustainable governments at local, regional and national level which in turn is needed for a successful implementation of the SDGs.

ISO 18091 titled "Quality management systems – Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2008 in local government" is an adapted form of the ISO 9001 – Quality Management Systems: Requirements – which has been modified to serve as specific guidelines for local governments. A quality management system is a framework to ensure that whenever a process is performed within an organization the same information, methods, skills and controls are used and applied consistently. By doing so it helps to establish clear requirements, communicate policies and procedures, monitor how work is performed and improve teamwork. ISO 9001 presents the quality management systems requirements, based on seven quality management principles (Dale et al, 2007):

· Customer (citizen) focus

· Leadership

· Engagement of people

· Process approach

· Improvement

· Evidence-based decision-making

· Relationship management

The two principles which particularly stand out in relation to SDG 16.6 and 16.7 are *customer focus* and *engagement of people*. In ISO 18091, the quality management system is applied to local government instead of to an organization, thus the term

"customer" used in ISO 9001 has been changed to "citizen". ISO 18091 calls on the responsibility of local governments to create sustainable local communities. It states that an environment should be created where citizens feel that their local government represents them.

A quality management system such as ISO 18091 will always be subjected to differences in local government in regards to policies, objectives, work methods, resource availability, administrative practices as well as terms and definitions. However, the importance lies not in creating a one-size fits all solution, but about establishing an easy to understand system within the local context that will yield consistent, effective and reliable results. ISO 18091 puts am emphasis on local government's *transparency and accountability* and views them as vital in gaining citizens' trust and confidence. This value orientation is in line with SDG 16.6 and 16.7.

Table 1 below illustrates how the ISO 18091 principles of quality management systems align with the good governance principles and the SDG 16.6 and 16.7 targets.

**Table 1: Shared Elements of the Guiding Principles represented by Good Governance, ISO 18091 and SDG Targets 16.6 & 16.7**

| Good Governance Principles | ISO 18091 Principles | SDG 16.6 and 16.7 Targets |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Fair Conduct of Elections, Representation and Participation | Engagement of people | -Representative decision-making -Participatory decision-making |
| 2. Responsiveness | Customer Focus | Responsive decision-making |
| 3. Efficiency and Effectiveness | (part of the QMS requirements) | Effective institutions |
| 4. Openness and Transparency | Process approach | Transparent institutions |
| 5. Rule of Law | Improvement | n.a. |
| 6. Ethical Conduct | Relationship management | n.a. |
| 7. Competence and Capacity | (part of the QMS requirements) | n.a. |
| 8. Innovation and Openness to Change | Under discussion for the coming revision of the ISO 9001:2008 | Innovative methods (OGC) |
| 9. Sustainability and Long-term Orientation | n.a. | n.a. |
| 10. Sound Financial Management | n.a. | n.a. |
| 11. Human rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion | n.a. | Inclusive decision-making |
| 12. Accountability | Evidence-based decision making | Accountable institutions |
| n.a. | Leadership | n.a. |

Source: Saner, Yiu & Golub

ISO 18091 can be a valid tool for furthering SDG 16.6 and 16.7. SG 16.6 (Develop effective, accountable transparent institutions at all levels) and SDG 16.7 (ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making) as Table 1 illustrates. It therefore should be deployed by the local authorities especially for places suffering from weak institutions. This is of particular urgency since effective government, especially effective local government with citizen cooperation serves as the foundation of all SDG attainment. The 2016 Global Peace Index Report supports this by showing that the SDGs place an emphasis on high levels of human capital and well-functioning government (figure 2 below).

**Figure 2 Positive Peace Factors and Violence by SDG Coverage**
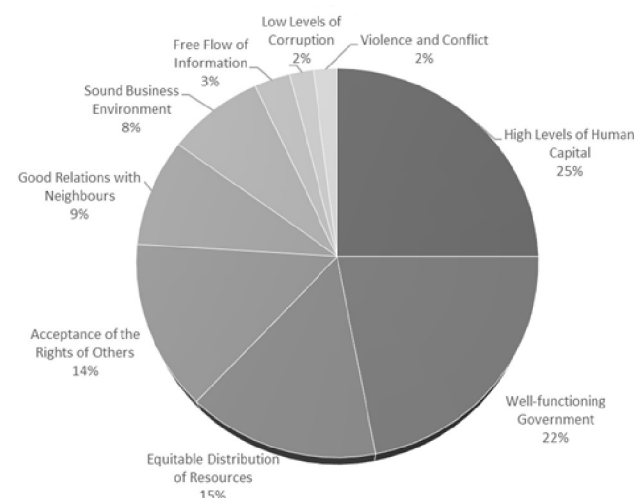


Source: Global Peace Index Report 2016, Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)

ISO 18091 puts emphasis on the close proximity between local government and the population. In ISO 18091 every part of the process-based quality management system (management responsibility, resource management, service realization and measurement, analysis and improvement) stresses the principles of SDG 16.6 and 16.7 by repeatedly stating the need for local government to be transparent and accountable, as well as responsive, participatory and representative. Additionally, the 'measurement, analysis and improvement' process of ISO 18091 can be used as a tool for SDG 17.19 which aims to build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement GDP, and support statistical capacity building in developing countries. Data on measuring citizens' satisfaction with the services that they have been provided by their local government would be useful and likely reliable, since transparency is one of ISO 18091 principles.

The process of continuous improvement set in place by quality management systems is the basis for innovation, as well as well-managed, effective and participatory local government.

Once effective policy coordination and consultation mechanisms for SDG implementation have been put in place and strengthened, they can subsequently be mapped and institutionalized and in order to safeguard implementation continuity despite the inevitable coming changes of political leadership, an application of ISO 18091 could help guarantee sustainability of SDG implementation and stop a potential sliding-back to a state of operations when domestic political elites turn policy space into rent seeking opportunities.

**Future research needed**

One of the largest looming challenges of SDG implementation is policy coherence

and effective policy management. Coupled with weak institution and executive capacities, reaching the 17 SDGs will not be possible in most countries if governments are too weak and unable to implement the SDGs. According to Mans Nilsson et al, 2014, the SDGs, albeit being presented as an indivisible whole, however not all goals are mutually supportive, in fact there are probably just as many goal conflicts and trade-offs as there are synergies. These trade- offs and synergies between sectors of the 2030 Agenda are of a concern to policy makers. However there is currently a lack of literature, scientific research or a framework to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of these interactions. Before polices can be formulated, empirical research into SGD interactions needs to be conducted and developed, so as to provide a useable knowledge base for both policy-level decision support and the design of implementation strategies.[9]

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that "[t]he challenges and commitments contained in these major conferences and summits are interrelated and call for integrated solutions." It also notes that "interlinkages and the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realized. This section takes a look at some of the tools that are available (Saner, 2009a).

Future research will be needed to deepen the understanding on the relationship between SDGs and local authorities' ability to conduct policy coordination and policy consultation. Once effective policy coordination and consultation mechanisms for SDG implementation have been put in place and strengthened, they can subsequently be mapped and institutionalized and compared with other cities and municipalities who are also involved in SDG implementation but might have different coordination and consultation mechanisms. The objective of future research would be to analyze the links there might be between local government's competencies, institutional functioning, policy coherence and sustainable success of SDG implementation.

Achieving the SDGs requires data to support decision making and policy coordination and policy consultation to mitigate competing policy objectives. A deployment of ISO 18091 would provide a process framework that could guide the inner workings of a local administration and could enable more rational and transparent decision making processes with all its variants. Institutional learning and innovation cannot happen at the system wide level when actions taken and decision made are not monitored nor retrievable for review by the Programme administrators and citizens. They remain sporadic, ad-hoc and personal. Pilot projects are needed to test the applicability of ISO 18091 for SDG implementation.

## Conclusion

Most demographic projections see 70% of the worlds estimated 9 billion people living in cities by 2050. Prior to that there will be an additional 1 billion people living in cities by 2030, this will put an enormous strain on cities. In order for cities to deal with this massive influx of people they need to begin planning now. With 1 billion new

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people living in cities by 2030 the challenge to provide affordable, responsive, effective and efficient public services for all residents will be even more difficult. If managed well, the potential benefits of this urban growth are substantial. The economic potential is driven by raised productivity resulting from the concentration of people and economic activities in cities that leads to a vibrant market and fertile environment for innovation in ideas, technologies and processes. Similarly, well-managed cities in high income countries could continue to concentrate national economic growth, through re-densification and the roll out of innovative infrastructure and technologies. However, poorly managed urban growth is likely to have substantial economic costs. Urban sprawl, poor public transport infrastructure and a lack of basic services such as energy, water and waste can hinder accessibility and mobility, increase air pollution and exacerbate urban poverty, reducing the economic benefits of urban concentrations and increasing costs. This growth pathway also tends to lead to unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions, social exclusion and a range of other environmental and social costs.[10]

In order for the SDGs to be implemented in an effective way, the authors propose that SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7 *be given priority attention. SDG goal 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.* As such it should be given priority and research should be focused on the institutional aspects of SDG 16 and its crosscutting implications should instead be highlighted, i.e., *"building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels"* The Rio+20 follow-up document, Key Messages and Process on Localizing the SDG Agenda, notes that "many of the critical challenges of implementing the SDG Agenda will depend heavily on local planning and service delivery, community buy in and local leadership, well-coordinated with the work of other levels of governance.".[11] Establishing SDG 16 on a local level is crucial to ensuring a bottom-up approach, which could transform policies on a national level. Local and sub-national governments have a unique role and contribution to play in the advancement and implementation of global agreements and sustainable development laws, policies, strategies, standards, programs and  actions.[12]

The authors have argued that in order for local government to become effective institutions that meet SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7 criteria, they should adopt 'ISO 18091: 2014 – Quality management systems – Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2008 in local government' as a management and governance tool. ISO 18091 provides guidelines for a holistic approach in line with the principles of SDG 16.6 and 16.7. It also contains 39 targets and 310 indicators in the areas of institutional development for good governance, sustainable economic development, inclusive social development and sustainable environmental development.

ISO 18091, similar to the ISO 9001 for the private sector, can be an effective tool in strengthening the functionality of local authority.  When applied in urban areas that take priority in regard to local SDG implementation, a positive feedback could be established to monitor, track and promote performance and innovation.  As a quality

management system, ISO 18091 also leverages its management review function and information management system for good governance and institutional learning.

ISO 18091 also addresses one of the principal issues for local governments with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals in designing coherent policies and practices. Both are part of successful strategies for implementation of the 17 SDGs given their scope and complexity. Adapting these global targets to national, regional and local contexts is a delicate process that requires careful planning and methodology to ensure that the process is inclusive and effective. In light of this realization the CSEND *Discussion Paper in support of the CALL FOR URGENT REMEDIAL ACTION of Major Shortcomings of the Secretary General's Report on "Critical Milestones toward Coherent, Efficient and Inclusive Follow-Up and Review at the Global Level"* highlights the importance of SDG 16 as a cross-sector foundation and a vertical integration for achieving the desired outcomes of all other SDGs.[13]  ISO 18091 fills the operational gap and provides the institutional platform for consistency and coherence in practices.

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### Notes

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# Trust Building: The Case of Community College Students and Their Teachers

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## Abstract

*While fear and trust have an inextricable relationship and subtly affect human communications, the communication between student and teacher could determine whether student learning is successful. Eighteen recent graduates of different associate degree programmes were interviewed and the data collected were transcribed and thematically analysed. The results indicate that some students show strong fear of their lecturers and would avoid unnecessary contacts with them. However, these students do not necessarily fear their teachers as 'persons', given that they possess just the same status of being an adult.  The students' fear derives more directly from the worries that they may be forced to switched to a "child/student" role while interacting with their teachers.  Interestingly, male students tend to consider themselves more as someone having equal status (i.e. friends) as their teachers.  In this regard, they would consider asking someone of equal status for help as a gesture of weakness. They would also averse to losing 'faces', taking the risk of being rejected or judged by their lecturers for asking questions that are 'too simple'. Hence, the fear involved for these students should be more collocated with the perceived humiliation when interacting with the lecturers. Lastly, for students who show desire to play the role of adults, their reaction to such denial of adulthood can be fierce, provoking open confrontations and other destructive behavior in classrooms. This study reveals that teachers having good human skills can effectively create a better student-teacher relationship. The essence of such good human skills lies in catering to student self-esteem and fostering trust in the relationship.*

*Keywords: Teacher-student relationship, teacher-student communication, learning experience, trust building, student's voice, student satisfaction*

## Introduction

Communication between teachers and students is both content and relational driven (Frymier & Houser, 2000).  While communication in terms of methods of teaching is noticeably essential, the nature of communication as such is equally important (Frymier & Houser, 2000).  Extant research has looked extensively into the relational factors based upon teacher-student communication and their effects on student learning and performance, examples include: immediacy (Andersen, 1979); caring (Teven and

McCroskey, 1997); explicit and engaging instruction (Paolini, 2015); self-disclosure (Sorensen, 1989); and compliance-gaining (Plax and Kearney, 1992). Furthermore, teachers engaging in positive interpersonal behaviours such as providing encouragement and offering individual feedback are perceived more favorably pertinent to student learning and satisfaction (Heckman & Walker, 1990).

While there are relational factors which could impact student learning positively, there are also scenarios of the reversal. Students' fear in the classroom, for example, has been discussed by scholars like Bledsoe and Baskin, (2014); Cox, (2009) and Moltz, (2009). Cox's (2009) study, for instance, describes that students would often admit that they were intimidated by their professors. Looking at the situation in Hong Kong, it is not uncommon to see that students avoid communication with their teachers; some behaviors include: students not seek help from the teachers despite facing difficulties; students not visit teachers alone even if they have problems with their studies; when communicating with the lecturers (telephone or email), students deliberately hide their identities (not revealing their names); they are not comfortable to have their names called in the classroom by their teacher. These phenomena suggest that students may actually find teachers to be intimidating, thus fear generated towards them. In this light, the current study probes on whether fear and trust in teacher-student communication could determine students' success in learning.

Transactional analysis has served as a popular language in describing teacher-student relationship (Mei, 2016; Rajan and Chacko, 2012; Stuart and Algar, 2011). Educational transactional analysis, in particular, has assumed a stronger presence in schools with substantial support provided to educational practitioners (Barrow, 2015). In connection to the phenomena described above, Berne's (1961, 1964) theory in transactional analysis sheds light on the nature of fear and trust. According to Berne (1961, 1964), the Child is one's internal domain which forms reaction and feelings to external events. The Child is the seeing, hearing, feeling, and emotional body of data within each of us which sustains the life position of Not OK. Negative feelings are perpetually recorded in the Child upon its reaction to the early situation of the childhood (Harris, 1995). Fear, for example, is a negative feeling which could condition and dominate the life of an individual and would require the person to substantially deal with in order to attain the position of I am OK (Harris, 1995). In contrast, the Not OK position can be seen as not feeling good about oneself and a lack of trust in others. The negative life position further hurdles the individual in forming trusting and lasting relationships with others (Solomon, 2003).

Berne's (1964) classic definition of games states that "A game is an ongoing series of complementary ulterior transactions progressing to a well-defined, predictable outcome" (p.48). Games are the most common way for people to deal with the predominant Not OK position (Harris, 1995). While human communication is part of the complex transactions from which games could occur, the Not OK feelings including fear could affect communication in at least two forms: First, the ulterior motive in the communication is to ease the burden of the Not OK or overcome such estrangement generated by the position (Harris, 1995). Second, the individual will continually be more caught up in an anxious "scorekeeping of good and bad works" (Harris, 1995, p.221). The nature of Not OK transaction or communication is what Berne (1964) refers to as the "tragic script" which leads to despair. On the other hand, the "practical and constructive script" (Berne, 1964) results in happiness providing that other cast in the transaction are well chosen and play their parts satisfactorily.

In the realm of education, the pivotal question then lies in what kind of communication is narrated by students as "practical and constructive"? How are we going to ensure satisfactory transaction between teacher and student? Poon and Lau's (2014) study on community students' perception on effective part-time lecturers (PTLs) provide a succinct summary of such satisfactory, unintimidating transaction:

*"Showing friendliness by using humour and smiling; helping students in their career or personal problems are all the gestures that can improve relationship. Sharing one's own personal experience with students, and paying attention to students' needs, and communicating with students in and out of the class can be signs of being psychologically open to students. They can be considered as indications the teacher is not looking down upon the students - students are 'at par' with the teacher and they are not being ignored."* (p. 66)

Poon and Lau's (2014) study points out that students genuinely prefer PTLs who demonstrate high Relationship Oriented Behaviour. In this connection, it would be interesting to further investigate how teachers who assume a different status quo with students in terms of relationship and communication will be perceived through the eyes of their students.

## Methodology

### Data collection

Students' perception for an effective teacher is a feeling that cannot be easily observed or directly recorded. The semi-structured interviews were selected, therefore, as the data collection method for the present study because it is considered the best way to "find out what is on people's mind–what they think or how they feel about something" (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006, p.455). It is most effective to research about students' experience in interacting with their teachers by asking them to directly explain their feelings in their own words (Seidman, 2006). Face-to-face interviews are also effective in handling apparent contradictions found among responses of the same participant or among responses of different participants in a group interview. 'Unusual' responses can be probed for explanations and elaborations to uncover valuable points. Also, in a face-to-face interview, participants' body movements and facial expressions can also be observed, and this can supplement a richer meaning to the interview.

Since the semi-structured interviews were utilised, interviewees were encouraged to elaborate their points if needed. Jumping back and forth among items with interviewees was quite common to clarify any problems if necessary. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) suggest, interviews are usually carried out in a fashion "where a schedule is prepared but it is sufficiently open-ended to enable the contents to be re-ordered, digressions and expansions made, new avenues to be included, and further probing to be undertaken" (p.146). At the end of each interview, interviewees were invited to further add any points they wanted.

The eighteen interviewees (fourteen females and four males) were recent graduates from a targeted local community college (Community College). Regarding programmes of study, twelve interviewees were from business related programmes, two from Health Studies, two from Applied Social Studies and two from Arts. The higher number of female interviewees reflected the fact that business programmes were popular among female students. Students who had been enrolled in the classes taught by the researchers were not interviewed to avoid any possible conflict of interest claims. As these graduates had already left their school, the researchers had to contact them through the snowball sampling techniques (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). To protect the privacy of the interviewees, all names shown in this study are pseudonyms.

Ten students were interviewed in the first batch. Data collected were briefly scanned after the first batch to determine if any arising issues should be further investigated in the following interviews. A few more students were then interviewed, and the data were analysed to see if data saturation had been reached (that no more new code could be generated). In this study, data saturation was reached after twelve interviews, which was consistent with the study of Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) where data saturation of purposive non-probability sampling was achieved within the first twelve interviews. Nonetheless, eighteen interviewed were conducted eventually such that the targeted sample size was achieved.

**Data analysis**

For the current study, all interview data associated with students' perception were analysed by means of qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis is effective in discovering patterns, coherent themes, and meaningful categories. It uncovers new ideas and improves understanding of a phenomenon or process. The depth unfolded by qualitative analysis is believed by many to be the best method for understanding the complexity of education problems (Suter, 2006).

After each interview, the tape was transcribed word-for-word by a research assistant who previously had helped to prepare the transcripts of the pilot studies. The transcripts were then double-checked by the researchers for accuracy, and any errors or omissions were corrected. When final transcripts were prepared, they were sent to the interviewees who were interested for comments or corrections. No interviewees had indicated there was any error in their transcripts. All interviews were conducted in Chinese (Cantonese). As subtle meanings may be blurred or lost during translation, transcription and analyses of the interviews were implemented in Chinese. All data were translated into English only at the final stage of the analysis when the results were presented. The final translation version was checked by a qualified translator, and differences between his translation and the researchers' were discussed and reconciled.

Finally, thematic analysis was used in this study to interpret the data obtained from interviews. While many scholars, for example: Attride-Stirling, (2001) and Boyatzis, (1998) have described the process of thematic analysis in many different fashions, the present study followed the method as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) for its clarity in steps and explanations, along with useful examples.

## Findings

At the end of the thematic analysis process, four final main themes: *Knowledge Skills*, *Human Skills*, *Technical Skills* and *Others Traits* were identified as the characteristics of an effective teacher. The main theme that is most essential for this current study is the *Human Skills*. *Human Skills* involved the abilities to work well with other people both individually and in a group. In this case, *human skills* of teachers included any abilities or techniques that teachers need to deal with students as human beings. Teachers with good *human skills* know how to communicate, motivate, lead, inspire enthusiasm and build trust. Similar to good actors, teachers with good human skills can utilise their language, facial expressions, gesture and body language to cast a suitable image to establish a proper relation with their students.

There are different aspects in human skills. One of the key aspects of human skills is establishing the proper psychological stage in students so that they are willing to interact with the teachers. Students must have *trust* in teachers before they will approach the teacher. Emotionally, they must believe that teachers will *not hurt* them psychologically. Academically, they must have *assurance* of the correctness of the teachers' answers before they will listen to them. These points are considered very important by students.

**Trust and Emotional belief**

*Trust* and *assurance* are both subthemes of Human Skills. The word *trust* was mentioned so many times in interviews that a special discussion on it is therefore appropriate. An analysis in this regard revealed that students used this word to indicate two different things - their *emotional belief* on personal *friendliness* of the teacher, and their *assurance* on the *technical correctness* of what the teacher said.

Students prefer a teacher whom they can trust. That is, they believe that the teacher will be friendly and do not cause students any emotional harm. This is similar to the Benevolence concept described by Colquitt, Scott and LePine (2007) - student wanted a teacher who would be willing to protect and save their 'faces'. In the example of Amy[1],

an interviewee, if she perceived that the teacher was not friendly, she would be scared:

*"When he is very serious, I will feel that...will he consider me stupid because I have asked such a simple question." (400624)[2]*

She would be afraid that the teacher might be "laughing at her" (400644) and she was scared that she "may feel very bad" (400634) if she had to interact with the teacher. These fears of being emotionally hurt by the teacher would prevent her from contacting the teacher and getting her problems solved.

Furthermore, if she felt that she can trust the teacher and the teacher would not cause her any emotional harm, she would raise her hand and ask questions.

*"But if he is nice and he treats me like a friend, then it will be more convenient and I will be more active, if I have any questions, I will ask him directly." (400616)*

Another student Oscar supported this argument:

*"If you take his subject, you are required to listen to him. But if you have some questions after the lecture ... and if he (the teacher) is not approachable ... you dare not ask him (questions) ... then it may affect the learning process ... you may ask another teacher or discuss the problem with other students ... or you may search the internet or look up some books ... so it will be less effective." (460044 ~ 460064)*

In dealing with teachers, students emphasise that a teacher should act as a 'friend'– someone with an 'equal' status. Hence, teachers should not "put on his superior manner." (400602) Students want teachers to be friendly because they are afraid that if they ask an unfriendly teacher to explain something, they would be mocked, criticised or belittled – in other words, they are afraid that they may lose faces. Similar fear toward teachers is also reported by Cotten and Wilson (2006) in their study of the interaction between US undergraduate students and their teachers. They find students avoid interacting with teachers because students are uncertain, or even skeptical, that teachers are interested in interacting with them. In many cases, students are intimidated by teachers because they had had bad experiences with other teachers. As expressed by one of their interviewees in Cotten and Wilson's (2006) study:

*"... they make you feel like an idiot. And it's their demeanor, it is the way they speak to you, it's the tone of voice that they use, and it's the hurriedness of their body language. Like, you're wasting my time, you're in my space, get out. Or, you know, they just make you feel like you're another number and you're completely unimportant" (Cotten and Wilson, 2006:501).*

Hence students are fearful of their teacher because they are uncertain whether they will be psychologically mistreated by their teachers. The impact of such uncertainty is much stronger on community college students. They are often perceived as 'loser' students (Wong, 2011) with relatively high sense of insecurity, hence, more sensitive to even slight signs of belittlement. The situation is made more complicated by the fact that these students may also have a relatively strong need of social status among their peers. They do not easily accept any indication of their shortcomings – even if those are true. One of the interviewees, Fred, explained the situation clearly with one example. Students do not believe that it is their fault that they cannot understand or remember something. As a matter of fact, they will reject any suggestions of such deficiencies; hence teachers should handle any negative comments tactfully.

*"I am not saying the teacher should accept the (student's) wrong answer; I am saying that the teacher should use a good method to make students reconsider... he should not tell them directly that they are wrong ... the teacher should use a more appropriate method and not be so straight forward." (371377 ~ 371389)*

Teachers should be highly sensitive when it comes to saving faces or feelings of students. In the less damaging case, teachers who fail to do so will scare off or alienate the more passive students, and "students will not communicate with the teacher again" (371375). In the worst case, nevertheless, students who felt their self-image threatened may start confrontation against their teachers.

Rogers (2003) proposed that adult learners assumed two identities at the same time:

*"For many, their construct of 'adult' (autonomous, responsible and mature) will contradict their construct of 'student' (incomplete, dependent on the teacher, in deficit). Much will depend on their previous experiences of schooling, whether they see their adult engagement with learning-conscious learning as similar to or different from their previous engagement with such learning. They will construct the teacher/facilitator in different ways." (Roger, 2003:16).*

For some students, their identities as an autonomous adult are actually in conflict with their identities as a dependent student. They are afraid that they may have to scarify their adulthood in the process of learning. Therefore, they feel the threat when teachers take on a superior position of 'carrying a superior air' or 'wearing a scowl'. They will shy away from teachers because they do not want to put their adulthood at risk by being forced to take on the role as a student. On the other hand, if teachers take on an equal status and "treat them as friend", the relationship will move to a much more comfortable adult-adult relationship level.

Reverting to transactional analysis discussed in the beginning of the paper, students have a tendency to yearn for an equal-level (Adult-Adult) relationship with their teachers and they will prevent any possibilities of being forced to adopt a junior (Adult-Child) or even inferior (Parent-Child) position (See Exhibit 1). On the other hand, some community college students are 'novice adult' who may still be comfortable with the

past role of 'child/student' and submit to the control of the teachers. However, some may have already commenced the role of 'adult', and thus demand a more equal status with teachers. That is why the indication of wanting the teacher to act as their 'friends' can be heard in many occasions.

**Exhibit 1: Preferred and not preferred mode of communication**
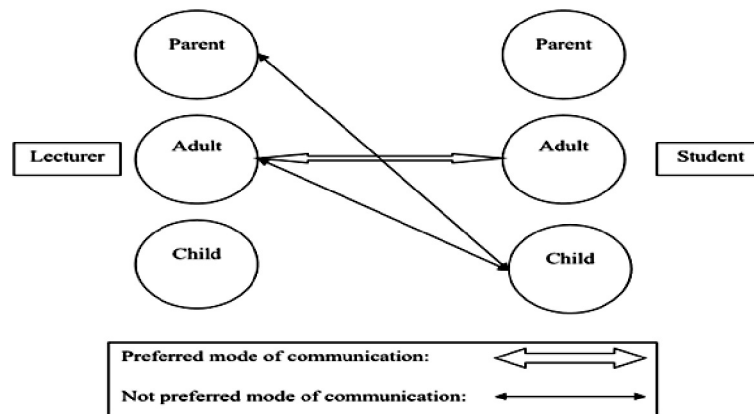


**National culture**

Chinese societies like Hong Kong have high power distance, and inequalities in power distribution are prevalent and accepted (Jackson and Bak, 1998). Community college students in Hong Kong are much younger students who recently graduated from high schools. Traditionally, they still keep a much higher respect for senior and accepted the status difference as a fact of life (Walker and Dimmock, 2000). A graduate, Barbara, has explained in an interview that why "a teacher should be *respectful* to the students" is not that important:

*"To a certain degree, a little mocking or joking is nothing, it is acceptable, and everyone just laugh. It is not really necessary to be polite to students. Well, it is O.K. if the teacher is polite, even if he is not, I do not see it as a big problem ... I see teacher as an authority. It is not necessary for them to be too friendly like going to Karaoke together (with the students). I am kind of traditional in this respect." (310446 ~ 310448)*

This situation is more acute for male students. A male student, Fred, declared clearly in his interview, "If a teacher who cannot be a good friend (to the students), he cannot be a good teacher" (370172). For students who desire to play the role of adults, their reaction to the denial of such rights can be very strong. Robinson (2005, p.19), in a study of secondary school students, reports that "... the importance of popularity, acceptance and young men's fears within male peer group cultures" may propel male students to participate in aggressive behaviours that they would normally avoid.

Confrontation of this kind, even in its more subtle form like complaining to the school, can be damaging to the teacher-student relationship (Jenkins, 2008). Open confrontation can be destructive to a classroom environment. Therefore, teachers must be very skillful in handling their power relationship with their students.

**Assurance**

In many occasions, students also used the same word *Trust* to indicate a very different meaning - the *assurance* they have on the technical correctness or truthfulness of the knowledge or information provided by the teacher. For example, Jenny indicated:

*"(What you teach) must be true, must be accurate ... I attend your class, I listen to you, I have complete trust in you ... if you (the teacher) make any mistake, you must correct it. It is not an issue of behaviour or integrity... For teaching ... whatever you teach, you have to be 100% sure (what you teach) are true." (350464 ~ 350472)*

Another interviewee Carol explained:

*"(If the teacher knows more than what is included in the textbook) ... I will feel he is more reliable, more like a teacher ... he knows more than I do ... I will have more faith in what he says."(320211 ~ 320217)*

Students rely on their teachers as their primary source of knowledge and show low interest in searching for information and knowledge elsewhere. Teachers who cannot create assurance in an accuracy of the information are considered as ineffective; students will have no faith in what the teacher says and subsequently lose interest in his or her teaching. Hence, teachers must maintain this assurance by being well-prepared for their classes. Students' assurance toward a teacher can also be improved if the teacher uses more current examples for teaching. Ivy said:

*"If you (the teacher) use the same materials all the time, the students will doubt whether the teacher had just prepared one version of the notes once, and then he has used it for many years ... A lot of examples that were listed in the textbook were old and very distant from us ... I feel they may not be very useful to us ... but if you use some more current examples ... I will feel that those stuff I study can actually be useful ... and (those examples) make it easier to understand ... Many of those information change all the time, if you don't use the latest information, I will doubt whether the situation may have changed, and what you are telling me are no longer true ... I feel the current information is more true." (340502 ~ 340527)*

Hence, those two different aspects of trust are both salient in determining an effectiveness of a teacher. The first aspect, *emotional belief* influences to what degree the students are willing to approach the teacher and solve their learning difficulties. The

second aspect, the *assurance* affects the students' interests in listening to their teachers.

## Discussions

The major findings of this study are orientated toward the relational factor of students' fear which can be compared with other studies such as Cotten and Wilson (2006).  Students are afraid of losing 'faces' and will not take the risk of being rejected by their teachers for asking questions that may be considered as 'too simple' (Cotten and Wilson, 2006). While many students have indicated that a strong fear of their teachers, their recurrent fear is so strong that they would eschew contacts with their teachers. Without specific indication of prior bad experiences, it is not clear why students develop such strong fear. Some authors (for example, Kowner and Wiseman, 2003) try to explain this as a status-related behaviour in the culture. Kabir (2007) argues that some Asian teachers showed extreme authoritarian attitude toward their students.

In reality, tertiary institutions in Hong Kong, self-financing ones in particular, often emphasise "caring in teaching" and teachers are expected to treat students very nicely. Also, student feedback questionnaires are prevalent and complaining channels are easily accessible by students in these institutions, so it is reasonable to say that the balance of power had shifted in favour of the students (Lau, 2016).  It is not very likely that teachers of the students in tertiary education will show any extreme authoritarian attitude or any abrasive behaviour like scolding to their adult students.  Even students may have claimed they are fearful of their teachers, their charges are only: "the teacher carries a superior air" or "the teacher always wears a scowl"; no extreme behaviours like scolding or worse have ever been reported.  Given that the presence of teacher is a fear triggering factors in classrooms, what is the cause of such strong fear in students' minds?

Apparently, community college students are not fearful of the teacher as a person. According to the personal observation of the authors gaining from teaching for years in tertiary educational institutions, students are not afraid of their lecturers, and students demonstrated this through various acts of resistance (Moltz, 2009; Alberts, Hazen and Theobald, 2010). So, the fear involved is more like the fear of the humiliation which they perceived that they may have to suffer when they interact with the teacher. In the above discussion, it is suggested that the power relationships between teachers and students are influenced by the expected roles played by the students and the teachers (Rogers, 2003). The students' fear is originated from their worries, and they may be forced to degenerate from an "adult" role to "child/student" role. Further study in this regard about community college students is needed to testify the above idea.

It is apparent that different students prefer different teachers in terms of teacher qualities and teaching styles.  For instance, male students like to consider themselves as someone with equal status (friends) to their teachers, and they would consider asking someone of equal status for help as showing weakness. Female students tend to have a better view of their teachers than male students (Jules and Kutnick, 1997; Poon and Lau, 2016, 2017) and they accept the teachers' superiority in social status. Hence, even if the teachers were unfriendly, female students would accept it more readily and take it as a price they have to pay for getting their answers. That is why even in the classroom that is highly dominated by teachers, female students still perceived their environment more favourably than male students (Coll, Taylor and Fisher, 2002). As revealed by the current study, it is likely that gender has effect on the way students feel about their teachers.  Further research is needed in this area which is to confirm this gender difference and to find out how it should be handled properly.

This study has revealed that teachers with good human skills can effectively establish a better student-teacher relationship, but it is not exactly clear how teachers can project a proper image of open-mind and how they demonstrate their goodwill. Past researchers have suggested using interpersonal variables like verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy (Sanders and Wiseman, 1990); caring (Teven and McCroskey, 1997); self-disclosure (Cayanus, 2004); and use of social media like Facebook (Mazer, Murphy and Simonds, 2007). Teachers should take a contingency approach and experiment with different ways before they find the technique that work best for their own students. This echoes with Wehrwein, Lujan, and DiCario (2007) hypothesise that using students' varied learning style preferences to improve student motivation and performance can be done by adapting teaching approaches, and that learning style preferences are "the manner in which, and the conditions under which, learners most efficiently and effectively perceive, process, store, and recall what they are attempting to learn...students have a variety of learning style preferences" (p.153).

To illustrate, while students in the study of Buskist et. al. (2002) prefer a teacher who can remember them by their names, students from Cotten and Wilson's (2006) study find such a teacher threatening. In the current study, students cited social interaction like "going to karaoke together" as an example of friendly behaviours.  This can be compared with Lau's (2016) study that students prefer teachers who could share common interests with their students outside the classroom and regard the student as an important individual.  While not every teacher may find this approach of 'befriending students' of much younger age to be something easy to accept, younger teachers, especially those who graduated from university not too long ago, may find it easier to take up the role of service providers (Ling, 2012) and 'serve' their students (Wilkenson, 1992). Mature teachers who espouse the more traditional view which entails teacher superiority (Gu, 2001) will have to try much harder to relinquish their traditional dominant role of a knowledge provider (Huo, 2006). Similarly, teachers who treasure their personal privacy may find it hard to attract students by self-disclosure as suggested by Cayanus (2004).

## Conclusion

This study has offered an alternative perspective to demonstrate that fear and trust between teacher and student communication could affect student learning and performance. The current study reckons that relational factors of communication play a

significant role in the transaction between teachers and students. The focus on students' knowing and doing, however, limits teacher-student interaction from its most authentic sense where positive and negative feelings are inevitably involved. While traditional boundaries are inevitably stretched under the momentous changes in the environment (Salmi, 2001), controversies intensifying across boundaries of academic disciplines and skills have generated heat which demands different ways of cooling down (Strathern, 2008). In terms of learning encounter, despite communication takes a pivotal role, whether it is effective should depend on how capable it can cross the subject boundaries (Woods, 2006). It is obvious that students have different voices within and among the subject disciplines but these voices are often vulnerable because they are often suppressed if not fractured (Batchelor, 2008). These are the ontological voices of students which reveal the inner nature and vulnerable aspects of student personal identities. The present study advocates that, given the necessary spaces, teacher-student communication can be enhanced such that student's ontological voice can be authenticated and reinstated.

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## Notes

1.   All names shown are pseudonym.

2.   The number inside the bracket, for example (400624) refers to the serial number of the quote in the interview transcript.

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# Lowering Transport Cost and Social Participation of Elderly in Hong Kong: A Case Study on "Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme"

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## Abstract

*This research focuses on investigating the impacts of the "Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities" (the Scheme). Focus groups, as well as face-to-face interviews with questionnaires, were conducted and recorded for analysis. Via the focus group interviews, several themed impacts by the Scheme were identified, including its positive impact of enabling elderly to travel further and more frequently. The Scheme also enabled the elderly to become more socially active and increased their level of well-being. Eligible interviewees (aged over 65 or with Disabilities) increased their frequencies of using elderly community centers or medical facilitates. They also visited their friends or relatives more frequently. Their usage of recreational facilities or going to hiking was also increased.*

*Keywords: transportation, social participation, elderly, learning motivation, classroom management*

## Background

### Introduction

The Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities ("the Scheme") is an existing scheme targeting elders aged 65 or above. People aged under 65 can also benefit from the Scheme if they are recipients of either Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme with 100% disabilities or Disability Allowance. Using their elder or personalized Octopus cards, eligible persons (aged over 65 or with Disabilities) only need to pay HK$2, or less, per trip on designated public transportation.

### The Scheme and the Elderly

With an aging population[1], Hong Kong needs to prepare for a shrinking labour force and a surging cost of elderly welfare. To minimize the possible burden of an ageing society, active aging is identified as a solution. Active aging refers to increasing aging people's quality of life by lengthening their activeness, in terms of work and social participation, and by enhancing their health and wellbeing.[2]   To maintain the

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elderly's social participation, the Government launched the Scheme. As elderly citizens only need to pay HK$2 for every trip on the designated public transportation, it is the intention of the Scheme that the lowered public transportation fare could increase the elderly's activeness and social inclusiveness.

**Aims of this Research**

This research focuses on identifying the Scheme's impacts on senior citizens. The Scheme is selected because of its wide coverage of benefited elderly.

This paper first reviewed the literature related to impacts of mobility and public transportation on elderly, as well as the common methods to be used for valuing non-market impacts. Then it discussed the impacts discovered from the focus group interviews.

Analysis of the questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part was related to the interviewees' behaviors in using public transportation. It served to provide evidence of behavioral changes invoked by the Scheme. The second part looks into the importance of lowering transportation cost by rating.

## Literature Review

Previous researches showed that mobility was one of the major problems that may affect well-being of the elderly. Ahern and Hine (2012) and Mattson (2011) proposed that social participation in elderly was limited by insufficient transportation support. Previous studies pointed out that the elderly had more navigation problems as age increased (Burns, 1999), but they wanted to travel as frequent as if they were young (van den Berg, Arentze and Timmermans, 2011) and they needed to travel at least once a week (Grant and Rice, 1983). Transportation could also affect the heath care visits of the elderly (Mattson, 2010).

Buchan (2010) calculated the social return on investment (SROI) for the Dial-A-Community Bus service in Scotland. By engaging stakeholders, Buchan discovered that insufficient mobility was the main problem faced by the elderly and the main outcome of the service was enhancing social interaction. By using financial proxy to value the outcomes, Buchan (2010) found that the service could generate £3.03 for every £1 invested.

## Methodology

**Focus Group Interviews**

Focus group interviews were conducted from June 2016 to July 2016. Interviewees with and without the concession were included. There were 60 participants in our focus group and, among them, 38 of them were eligible for the Scheme and 22 of them were not. 6 of the participants left after focus group interviews and the remaining 54 participants, 47 females and 7 males, joined the interviews for questionnaire. 34 of

them were eligible and 20 of them were not.

All the 20 interviewees, who were not eligible in the Scheme, were aged below 65. Among the 34 eligible interviewees, one of them was aged below 65, but with disability. The age groups of the remaining 33 eligible interviewees are shown below:

Table 1: Number of interviews eligible for the Scheme by Age Groups

| Age Groups | Number of interviewees eligible for the scheme |
|---|---|
| 65 to 69 | 6 |
| 70 to 74 | 4 |
| 75 to 79 | 8 |
| 80 to 84 | 7 |
| 85 to 89 | 6 |
| 90 to 94 | 2 |

All of the five focus group interviews were conducted in public housing estates. The locations were purposively selected such that the participants were expected to travel mainly by public transportation rather than private vehicles.

Two focus group interviews were conducted in Tin Shui Wai, with 15 and 17 participants respectively. One group was conducted in Lam Tin with 12 participants. The remaining two groups were conducted in Kwun Tong with eight participants each. All focus groups were recorded and transcribed for content analyses.

After focus group interviews, each participant was invited to an individual face-to-face interview to complete a questionnaire for his / her behavior of using transportation and importance of lowering transportation cost.

## Focus Group Analysis

Focus group interviews were conducted to identify the Scheme's potential outcomes invoked on the elderly.

**Themes identified among Eligible Participants**

*Advantages of the Scheme*

Among those participants eligible for the Scheme, seven advantages were identified.

Table 2: Perceived advantages of the Scheme from Eligible Participantsps

| Perceived Advantages of the Scheme | |
|---|---|
| Advantage | Number of Times Mentioned[3] |
| The Scheme enabled senior citizens to travel further and more frequently | 41 |
| The Scheme helped senior citizens save money | 17 |
| The Scheme increased senior citizens' social participation and wellbeing | 13 |
| The Scheme enabled the elderly to take bus instead of walking | 4 |
| The Scheme was helpful to the elderly | 3 |
| The Scheme increased senior citizens' incentive to use medical facilities | 2 |
| The Scheme increased senior citizens' activeness and changed their daily routines | 1 |

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According to the advantages identified in the focus group interviews, "The Scheme enabled senior citizens to travel further and more frequently" was mentioned the most. Below are some of the quotes:

*"I rarely travelled around previously without the Scheme and just went to places nearby. And I am now happy to travel more frequently with the concession."*

*"I will go to Yuen Long or Sheung Shui and even Central in my spared time because of the Scheme. I did not travel that often before having the Scheme."* (The participant lives in Lam Tin.)

*"Before having the concession, my friends came and visited me, but now I can visit them and hang out with them."*

The second advantage recognized was "The Scheme helped senior citizens save money", but with the frequency of mentioned less than half of the first one. Below were some examples of quotes related to this advantage.

*"There is a big difference between spending just two dollars and over 10 dollars per trip. We do not have any income and the Scheme can really make a difference."*

*"The Scheme can help me save lots of money. Although the public transportation fare was halved for the elderly, it was still expensive to spend over ten dollars per trip. Up to several hundred dollars of expenses on transportation can then be saved with the Scheme. We do not have any income right now and need to rely on the Old Age Allowance which is very minimal at around two thousand dollars per month. The allowance was not enough for daily expense and we could not afford travelling around. We are now much better off with the Scheme."*

*"Transportation expense would have been a great burden if I had not had the Scheme."*

The third advantage identified in the focus group interviews was "The Scheme increased senior citizens' social participation and wellbeing". Below are some examples of quotes related to this advantage.

*"The Scheme helps create better interpersonal relationships as we can visit our friends or relatives easier and more frequently. It has mental and physical benefit to us which, in turn, can help the Government save its medical expenses."*

*"The Scheme can benefit the elderly as they can go travelling with three or four friends."*

*"I have become more socially active."*

The above quotations from interviewees have shown that the main advantage of the Scheme is the betterment of elderly's social interaction by lowering their travelling cost.

Some participants mentioned that the Scheme did not have any impact on their lives because their traveling habits were not changed and they travelled only if needed. This type of "no impact" statements was mentioned five times in the focus groups.

The three major advantages identified were consistent with the intended outcomes of the Government to launch the Scheme, which was to encourage the elderly to participate more actively in the community. Although some of the participants thought the Scheme did not invoke any impact, the frequency was much less than that of the three major advantages.

### Purposes of Using Public Transportation

Participants also mentioned their purposes of using public transportation during the focus groups.

**Table 3: Purposes of Using Public Transportation of Eligible Participants**

| Purposes of Using Public Transportation | |
| --- | --- |
| Purpose | Number of Times Mentioned |
| Medical check | 7 |
| Visit relatives | 6 |
| Shopping | 3 |
| Work | 2 |
| Entertainment | 2 |
| Diet | 2 |
| others | 2 |
| Grocery shopping | 1 |
| Visit friends | 1 |

Going for medical checkups was the most frequently mentioned purpose, followed by visiting relatives.

Although medical check was one of the main purposes of using public transportation, eligible participants indicated that they did not increase the frequency of using medical services simply because of the Scheme and only used the services when necessary.

### Factors Affecting the Usage of Public Transportation

Factors that affected the elderly's frequency of using public transportation were discovered. The factors included:

*Physical strength:* there were two opposite dimensions of influence. Some elders were too weak that they were not willing or able to go out at all. Another influence was that if they were moderately weak, they were willing to travel around but would take public transportation even for a short distance. Frequency of using public transportation was decreased by the first one but increased by the second.

*Distance:* if destinations were not too far away, the elders preferred to walk instead of taking public transportation.

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Fare of public transportation was not a main factor for the eligible participants. Eligible participants provided the following comments and suggestions for the Scheme.

**Table 4: Comments and Suggestions on the Scheme of Eligible Participants**

| Comments and Suggestions on the Scheme | |
|---|---|
| **Suggestions or Comments** | **Number of Times Mentioned** |
| Suggested providing free public transportation | 10 |
| Suggested lowering the age limitation of the scheme | 9 |
| Thought tourists aged 65 or over should not enjoy the Scheme | 5 |
| Suggested providing free public transportation for elderly aged over 70 | 5 |
| Recognized the positive effect of the Scheme | 4 |
| Recognized Hong Kong's public service | 2 |
| Thought that the target age group of the Scheme was acceptable | 1 |
| Was satisfied with the coverage of the Scheme | 1 |
| Was satisfied with the concessionary fare | 1 |
| Suggested improvement to the public transportation vehicles | 1 |
| Thought that the transportation cost in Hong Kong was high | 1 |
| Suggested further lowering the fare to HK$1 per trip | 1 |
| Suggested providing free transportation for the elderly aged over 80 | 1 |
| Thought that the age requirement was reasonable | 1 |

The most frequently mentioned suggestion was to provide free public transportation for the eligible. Some of them thought that the free public transportation should be provided to those with age over 70. They explicitly compared the Scheme with that in China where the elderly enjoyed free public transportation.

Another frequently mentioned suggestion was to lower the age limit. Among participants with this suggestion, 60 was their most preferred threshold age.

Some of the participants were against the inclusion of tourists over 65 in the Scheme and they thought that it was not justified to subsidize tourists with the Government's expenditure.

**Themes Identified among Non-Eligible Participants (Aged under 65 and without Disabilities)**

**Table 5: Expected Advantages Proposed by Non-Eligible Participants**

| Expected Advantages Proposed | |
|---|---|
| **Expected Advantage** | **Number of Times Mentioned** |
| The Scheme enables senior citizens to travel further and more frequently | 14 |
| The Scheme increases senior citizens' social participation and wellbeing | 3 |
| The Scheme helps senior citizens save money | 2 |
| The Scheme enables senior citizens to take bus instead of walking | 1 |
| The Scheme is helpful to senior citizens | 1 |

Their expectations were consistent with those realized outcomes stated by the eligible participants, with the most frequently mentioned expected advantage as "enables senior citizens to travel further and more frequently".

Unlike the eligible participants, public transportation fare was the most influential factor and physical strength was not particularly mentioned. Moreover, taking public transportation for grocery shopping was common for them, but not for the eligible ones.

Apart from the distance to destination, the factors affecting eligible and ineligible participants were diverse. The fact that the eligible participants were not concerned about the fare can be explained by the impact of the Scheme. However, physical strength was a key difference between the two groups that might affect the effectiveness of the Scheme.

Physical strength declines with age (Trombetti et al., 2016). From the focus groups, it can be hypothesized that the elderly tend to use more public transportation if their physical strength starts to decline to a moderate level. However, when they get older, their physical strength may decline to a level that they are not able to travel around and, thus, reduce the use of public transportation and the effectiveness of the Scheme. The proof of this hypothesis is beyond the scope of this research, but related researches are worth conducting to investigate the potential change of effectiveness of the Scheme.

The main suggestion to the Scheme from this group of participants was to lower the age limit to 60, though some of them were satisfied with the current Scheme and were willing to wait until 65.

## Analysis of Questionnaire

**Eligible Interviewees (Aged over 65 or with Disabilities)**

*General Information*

There were 34 valid responses from the interviewees eligible in the Scheme. They were categorized as "eligible interviewees".

*Health*

Among the eligible interviewees, most of them claimed to have normal health condition, while some of them stated that they had either "good" or "bad" status. Two interviewees stood out, reporting to have "very bad" and "very good" health respectively.

**Table 6: Heath Condition of Eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Health Condition Self-evaluation | |
|---|---|
| **Health Condition** | **Number of Interviewees** |
| Very good | 1 |
| Good | 9 |
| Normal | 17 |
| Bad | 6 |
| Very Bad | 1 |

Six interviewees reported that they had no diagnosed chronic illness(es). Others suffered mainly from hypertension, diabetes and cataract.

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**Table 7: Diagnosed Chronic Diseases of Eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Diagnosed Chronic Diseases | |
|---|---|
| **Diagnosed Chronic Illness** | **Number of Interviewees (Can choose more than one, except the option "No")** |
| No | 6 |
| Hypertension | 19 |
| Diabetes | 11 |
| Coronary heart diseases | 7 |
| High cholesterol | 6 |
| Cataract | 11 |
| Stroke | 1 |
| Alzheimer's disease | 1 |
| Parkinson's disease | 0 |
| Others | 14 |

*Family and Living*

Most of them had one to four children, while some of them had seven or more children.

**Table 8: Number of Children of Eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Number of Children | |
|---|---|
| **Number of Children** | **Number of Interviewees** |
| 0 | 2 |
| 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 5 |
| 3 | 11 |
| 4 | 5 |
| 5 | 2 |
| 6 | 0 |
| 7 | 3 |
| 8 | 2 |
| 9 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 |

Although only two interviewees reported to have no children, only one third of the interviewees lived with their children and half of them lived alone. The figure was not consistent with the statistics from 2011 Census which showed that there were just 12.7% of elderly living alone in Hong Kong. A possible reason for this bias was that the interviewees were mainly invited through elderly community centers and elders living alone were more likely to reside in these centers.

Although the figure was not sufficient to be generalized to represent the population, the importance of enhancing social inclusiveness for elders living alone is supported by the literature. Alfred, Bohdan, Patricia and Georg (1992) showed that the elderly living alone could probably have higher depressive symptom, causing health problems and exerting more severe effect on them. Seeman, Lusignolo, Albert and Berkman (2001) demonstrated that better social support and relations could avoid declines in cognitive ability in the elderly.

**Table 9: People Living with Eligible Interviewees**

| People Living with Interviewees | |
|---|---|
| **People Living with** | **Number of Interviewees (Can choose more than one, except the option "Living alone")** |
| Living alone | 17 |
| Spouse | 9 |
| Children | 8 |
| Grandchildren | 0 |
| Other relatives | 1 |
| Maids | 0 |
| Other | 0 |

*Travel Habit*

The responses were consistent with the impacts identified from the focus group with "visiting relatives or friends" and "going to elderly community centers or medical facilities" as the two most common purposes of using public transportation.

**Table 10: Purpose of Travel of Eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Purposes of Travel | |
|---|---|
| **Purposes of Travel** | **Number of Interviewees (Can choose more than one)** |
| Shopping | 5 |
| Hiking or using recreational facilities | 4 |
| Using medical / elderly community centers | 10 |
| Visiting friends / relatives | 17 |
| Grocery shopping | 9 |
| Others | 10 |

Public transportation and walking were the interviewees' most common means of transportation. However, it cannot be generalized since the interviewees were purposively selected such that the impact of the Scheme could be identified. This aim could not have been achieved if the focus groups mainly consisted of elders from the high income group who do not commonly use public transportation.

Most interviewees needed to walk less than 15 minutes to the closest stations / stops of their commonly used public transportation, with only two needed to walk more than 15 minutes.

**Table 11: Means of Travel of Eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Purposes of Travel | |
|---|---|
| **Means of Travel** | **Number of Interviewees (Can choose more than one)** |
| Walking | 14 |
| Bus / Minibus | 21 |
| MTR / Light rail | 23 |
| Taxi / Private vehicle | 1 |
| Pick-up service | 0 |
| Others | 0 |

From the above statistics, the interviewees can serve to reveal the impacts of the Scheme as public vehicles were their main tools of transportation and they had convenient access to public transportation.

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## Behavioral Changes of the Interviewees Eligible for the Scheme

The questionnaire contained questions related to the interviewees' behavior before and after being involved in the Scheme. The behaviors being investigated included "frequencies of using public transportation", "frequencies of visiting elderly community centers or medical facilities", "frequencies of visiting relatives or friends" and "frequencies of using recreational facilities or hiking".

According to the responses, interviewees used public transportation more frequently after being involved in the Scheme. They increased their frequencies of visiting elderly community centers and medical facilities, visiting their relatives or friends and using recreational facilities or hiking. The responses showed that the Scheme increased social participations among those interviewees with largest effect on usage of recreational facilities or hiking.

**Table 12: Usage of Public Transportation of Eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Usage of Public Transportation | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | Number of Interviewees | | | |
| | Before the scheme | % | After the scheme | % |
| <3 | 22 | 64.7% | 16 | 47.1% |
| 4-7 | 8 | 23.5% | 7 | 20.6% |
| 8-10 | 0 | 0% | 3 | 8.8% |
| >10 | 4 | 11.8% | 8 | 23.5% |

**Table 13: Usage of Medical Facilities / Elderly Community Centers of Eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Usage of Medical Facilities / Elderly Community Centers | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | Number of Interviewees | | | |
| | Before the scheme | % | After the scheme | % |
| <1 | 23 | 67.6% | 16 | 47.1% |
| 1-2 | 2 | 5.9% | 7 | 20.6% |
| 3-4 | 2 | 5.9% | 3 | 8.8% |
| >4 | 7 | 20.6% | 8 | 23.5% |

**Table 14: Frequency of Visiting Friends / Relatives of Eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Frequency of Visiting Friends / Relatives | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | Number of Interviewees | | | |
| | Before the scheme | % | After the scheme | % |
| <1 | 24 | 70.6% | 18 | 52.9% |
| 1-2 | 7 | 20.6% | 10 | 29.4% |
| 3-4 | 3 | 8.8% | 6 | 17.7% |
| >4 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |

**Table 15: Frequency of Using Recreational Facilities or Hiking of Eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Frequency of Using Recreational Facilities or Hiking | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | Number of Interviewees | | | |
| | Before the scheme | % | After the scheme | % |
| <1 | 29 | 85.3% | 20 | 58.8% |
| 1-2 | 2 | 5.9% | 5 | 14.7% |
| 3-4 | 2 | 5.9% | 7 | 20.6% |
| >4 | 1 | 2.9% | 2 | 5.9% |

## Non-Eligible Interviewees (Aged under 65 and without Disabilities)

### General Information

Participants aged under 65 and not meeting the eligibility for disability were grouped into this category of "non-eligible interviewees". They, at the time of the interviews, were not qualified for the Scheme and thus did not enjoy the concessionary fare when travelling by public transportation. The total number of interviewees categorized in this group was 20.

### Health

When asked about their self-evaluation of health condition, more than a half of non-eligible interviewees (12) viewed their health condition as "normal", while four and three interviewees self-evaluated as "good" and "bad" respectively. The remaining one rated her health as "very bad". Generally, the health of the interviewees was acceptable.

**Table 16: Heath Condition of Non-eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Health Condition Self-evaluation | |
|---|---|
| Health Condition | Number of Interviewees |
| Very good | 0 |
| Good | 4 |
| Normal | 12 |
| Bad | 3 |
| Very Bad | 1 |

While six interviewees claimed that they did not have any diagnosed chronic illness(es), seven and four interviewees reported that they had hypertension and diabetes respectively. Leg problems were also prevalent as four interviewees complained that they were plagued with leg pain, joint degeneration or rheumatoid arthritis. These physical problems may decrease patients' activeness and increase their reliance on transportation in case they need to travel.

**Table 17: Diagnosed Chronic Diseases of Non-eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Diagnosed Chronic Diseases | |
|---|---|
| Diagnosed Chronic Illness | Number of Interviewees (Can choose more than one, except the option "No") |
| No | 6 |
| Hypertension | 7 |
| Diabetes | 4 |
| Coronary heart diseases | 2 |
| High cholesterol | 2 |
| Cataract | 0 |
| Stroke | 1 |
| Alzheimer's disease | 0 |
| Parkinson's disease | 0 |
| Others | 8 |

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Most of the interviewees in this group had three children, similar to the eligible interviewees. Yet, none of them had more than four children.

**Table 18: Number of Children of Non-eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Number of Children | |
|---|---|
| Number of Children | Number of Interviewees |
| 0 | 1 |
| 1 | 3 |
| 2 | 6 |
| 3 | 8 |
| 4 | 2 |

Unlike those eligible interviewees, who mostly lived alone, most of the ineligible interviewees lived with their spouses and / or children.

**Table 19: People Living with Non-eligible Interviewees**

| People Living with Interviewees | |
|---|---|
| People Living with | Number of Interviewees (Can choose more than one, except the option "Living alone") |
| Living alone | 2 |
| Spouse | 8 |
| Children | 16 |
| Grandchildren | 0 |
| Other relatives | 1 |
| Maids | 0 |
| Other | 0 |

*Travel Habit*

13 interviewees revealed that they mainly travelled by bus / minibus, and eight of them travelled by MTR / Light rail. 10 interviewees preferred walking. Only one interviewee chose taxi / private vehicle as a major means of transportation. The common usage of public transportation implies that the interviewees can provide more informative idea about the impacts of the Scheme.

**Table 20: Means of Travel of Non-eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Means of Travel | |
|---|---|
| Means of Travel | Number of Interviewees (Can choose more than one) |
| Walking | 10 |
| Bus / Minibus | 13 |
| MTR / Light rail | 8 |
| Taxi / Private vehicle | 1 |
| Pick-up service | 0 |
| Others | 0 |

The main purpose of travel was found to be groceries shopping as seven interviewees reported. Other common purposes included visiting medical facilities and elderly centers (6) and paying visits to friends and relatives (6). Only four interviewees

picked recreation as one of their main purposes of travel. The distribution demonstrates that non-eligible interviewees travelled around for grocery shopping, socializing and visiting friends and relatives.

**Table 21: Purpose of Travel of Eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Purposes of Travel | |
|---|---|
| Purposes of Travel | Number of Interviewees (Can choose more than one) |
| Shopping | 4 |
| Hiking or using recreational facilities | 4 |
| Using medical / elderly community centers | 6 |
| Visiting friends / relatives | 6 |
| Grocery shopping | 7 |
| Others | 6 |

In terms of frequency of travelling to use medical facilities / elderly community centers, visit friends and go for recreational activities, the non-eligible interviewees were not active, as they mainly travelled for the above purposes 0-2 times per week.

**Table 22: Usage of Public Transportation of Non-eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Usage of Public Transportation | | |
|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | Number of Interviewees | % |
| <3 | 8 | 40% |
| 4-7 | 4 | 20% |
| 8-10 | 2 | 10% |
| >10 | 6 | 30% |

**Table 23: Usage of Medical Facilities / Elderly Community Centers of Non-eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Usage of Medical Facilities / Elderly Community Centers | | |
|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | Number of Interviewees | % |
| <1 | 12 | 60% |
| 1-2 | 7 | 35% |
| 3-4 | 1 | 5% |
| >4 | 0 | 0% |

**Table 24: Frequency of Visiting Friends/Relatives of Non-eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Frequency of Visiting Friends/Relatives | | |
|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | Number of Interviewees | % |
| <1 | 9 | 45% |
| 1-2 | 8 | 40% |
| 3-4 | 1 | 5% |
| >4 | 2 | 10% |

**Table 25: Frequency of Using Recreational Facilities or Hiking of Non-eligible Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Frequency of Using Recreational Facilities or Hiking | | |
|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | Number of Interviewees | % |
| <1 | 11 | 55% |
| 1-2 | 7 | 35% |
| 3-4 | 1 | 5% |
| >4 | 1 | 5% |

**Discussion for the Behavior of Using Public Transportation**

**Findings**

Both groups of eligible and non-eligible interviewees relied on either walking or public transportation for travelling. This showed that they can provide information about the impact of the Scheme.

**Table 26: Comparison of Means of Travel of Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Means of Travel | | |
|---|---|---|
| Means of Travel | Number of Interviewees (Can choose more than one) | |
| | Eligible Interviewees | Non-eligible Interviewees |
| Walking | 14 | 10 |
| Bus / Minibus | 21 | 13 |
| MTR / Light rail | 23 | 8 |
| Taxi / Private vehicle | 1 | 1 |
| Pick-up service | 0 | 0 |
| Others | 0 | 0 |

While most non-eligible interviewees lived with their children, most of the eligible ones lived alone. Although, as mentioned before, the figure may not match with those from census, the problems caused by solitary as shown by Alfred, Bohdan, Patricia and Georg (1992) could be more severe among eligible interviewees and their needs for better social inclusiveness should be higher as indicated by Seeman, Lusignolo, Albert and Berkman (2001).

**Table 27: Comparison of People Living with Interviewees**

| People Living with Interviewees | | |
|---|---|---|
| People Living with | Number of Interviewees (Can choose more than one, except the option "Living alone") | |
| | Eligible Interviewees | Non-eligible Interviewees |
| Living alone | 17 | 2 |
| Spouse | 9 | 8 |
| Children | 8 | 16 |
| Grandchildren | 0 | 0 |
| Other relatives | 1 | 1 |
| Maids | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 0 | 0 |

The main purpose of travelling for non-eligible interviewees was grocery shopping, but the number was just marginally higher than those of other purposes. The purposes of travelling for eligible interviewees were concentrated on "going to elderly community centers or medical facilities" and "visiting relatives or friends". The figures showed that social interaction is an important element of eligible interviewees' daily life. One of the possible reasons for the differences between two groups of people could be attributed to the fact that most eligible interviewees lived alone while non-eligible interviewees mostly lived with their spouses or / and children. Eligible interviewees' need for social interaction was higher as a result.

**Table 28: Comparison of Purposes of Travel of Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Purposes of Travel | | |
|---|---|---|
| Purposes of Travel | Number of Interviewees (Can choose more than one) | |
| | Eligible Interviewees | Non-eligible Interviewees |
| Shopping | 5 | 4 |
| Hiking or using recreational facilities | 4 | 4 |
| Using medical / elderly community centers | 10 | 6 |
| Visiting friends / relatives | 17 | 6 |
| Grocery shopping | 9 | 7 |
| Others | 10 | 6 |

The frequency of using public transportation among eligible interviewees before joining the Scheme was less than that of non-eligible interviewees. One of the possible reasons was that the Scheme commenced in 2012 and some eligible interviewees might already be retired by that time and did not need to travel frequently for work. However, eligible interviewees' frequencies of using public transportation increased after joining the Scheme.

**Table 29: Comparison of Usage of Public Transportation of Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Usage of Public Transportation | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | % of Eligible Interviewees | | % of Non-eligible Interviewees |
| | Before the Scheme | After the Scheme | |
| <3 | 64.7% | 47.1% | 40% |
| 4-7 | 23.5% | 20.6% | 20% |
| 8-10 | 0% | 8.8% | 10% |
| >10 | 11.8% | 23.5% | 30% |

67.6% of the eligible interviewees visited the medical facilities or elderly community centers less than once per week, more than that of non-eligible interviewees (60%). But the frequency improved to 47.1% after those eligible interviewees joined the Scheme.

**Table 30: Comparison of Usage of Medicle Facilities / Elderly Community Centers of Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Usage of Medicle Facilities / Elderly Community Centers | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | % of Eligible Interviewees | | % of Non-eligible Interviewees |
| | Before the Scheme | After the Scheme | |
| <1 | 67.6% | 47.1% | 60% |
| 1-2 | 5.9% | 20.6% | 35% |
| 3-4 | 5.9% | 8.8% | 5% |
| >4 | 20.6% | 23.5% | 0% |

Eligible interviewees did not visit their friends or relatives as frequently as non-eligible ones, regardless of whether they had joined the Scheme or not. However, the frequency increased after eligible interviewees joined the Scheme.

**Table 31: Comparison of Frequency of Visiting Friends/Relatives of Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Frequency of Visiting Friends/Relatives | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | % of Eligible Interviewees | | % of Non-eligible Interviewees |
| | Before the Scheme | After the Scheme | |
| <1 | 70.6% | 52.9% | 45% |
| 1-2 | 20.6% | 29.4% | 40% |
| 3-4 | 8.8% | 17.7% | 5% |
| >4 | 0% | 0% | 10% |

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85.3% of the eligible interviewees used recreational facilities or went hiking less than once per week: this number was much higher than that of the non-eligible interviewees (55%). But the frequency was much improved to 58.8% after the eligible interviewees joined the Scheme.

**Table 32: Comparison of Frequency of Hiking or Using Recreational Facilities of Interviewees**

| Interviewees' Frequency of Hiking or Using Recreational Facilities | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency (Per Week) | % of Eligible Interviewees | | % of Non-eligible Interviewees |
| | Before the Scheme | After the Scheme | |
| <1 | 85.3% | 58.8% | 55% |
| 1-2 | 5.9% | 14.7% | 35% |
| 3-4 | 5.9% | 20.6% | 5% |
| >4 | 2.9% | 5.9% | 5% |

From the above three tables, the eligible interviewees' participation in these three types of activities was less frequent than that of non-eligible interviewees before they joined the Scheme. The differences can be attributed to other background factors such as availabilities of facilities, communication technologies and public policies. Yet, more in-depth studies should be conducted to investigate the real reasons.

However, after the eligible interviewees started enjoying the Scheme, their frequencies increased to a similar level as that of the non-eligible interviewees.  This changes of behavior were consistent with the impacts identified from the focus groups and could demonstrate the Scheme's substantial impact on the eligible interviewees.

**Limitation of the Research**

The participants of the focus groups were purposely selected such that those selected were dependent on public transportation for travelling. It could provide more information about the impact of the Scheme. However, the impacts of the Scheme on those with higher income and travel by private vehicles may not be the same.

Participants of the eligible and non-eligible group had different demographics backgrounds, and these confounding factors could affect the results.

Lacking pre-Scheme interviews makes the research less effective in controlling other factors.

Moreover, the cognitive ability of the participants, especially those of higher age, may not be sufficient enough to recall clearly their uses of public transportation and other engagement of social activities before joining the Scheme.

The question "Usage of Medical Facilities / Elderly Community Centers" should also be separated into two questions for visiting medical facilities and elderly community centers respectively, since the function of the two types of centres are not the same.

This research also does not look into the externalities created to other stakeholders.

For example, public transport may be crowded, affecting other younger users.

## Conclusion

The traditional acute care system is not sufficient to fully address the ageing problem in Hong Kong because of its ignorance on the social life of elderly. As shown in our literature review, easiness of transportation is a vital factor in elderly social life. Via studying the Scheme, we found that lowering transportation cost can enhance the social interaction of elderly, including the frequencies of visiting their relatives, friends and using recreational facilities.

The Scheme is worth to be further studied and the research can be improved. For example, a group of elderly with age just lower than 65 can be tracked for their change of wellbeing because of the Scheme.

While studies relating transportation and elderly social life is plenty in other regions, they are lacked in Hong Kong. We hope that this research can induce more local studies regarding transportation and elderly social life.

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## Notes

1. According to Thematic Report : Older Persons from Census and Statistics Department in Hong Kong, there were 13.3% of total population aged 65 or over in 2011.
2. World Health Organization, "Ageing and life-course," http://www.who.int/ageing/active_ageing/en/, accessed 23 May 2016.
3. Each participant can mention the same themed quote more than one time during the discussion. Therefore, the numbers do not sum up to the total number of eligible participants.

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# An Evaluation of the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign in Hong Kong

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## Abstract

*The EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign has been launched since 2007 in order to cultivate a healthy eating habit in Hong Kong. EatSmart restaurants to provide customers with the healthier dishes, containing more vegetables and less oil, salt and sugar. This Campaign is a good way to encourage citizens to eat healthily when dining out. There are some deficiencies in its promotion, resulting in the unsustainability of the Campaign. The supervision of EatSmart restaurants is not enough and can hardly guarantee the quality of healthier dishes. Moreover, it cannot attract restaurants to join due to the lack of incentives and the tedious application process. The contents of promotion materials are also unclear. Although the Campaign has been implemented for around 9 years, the obesity rate is still increasing slightly. The effectiveness of the Campaign seems to be doubtful, while the Nutrition Labelling Scheme has been carried out successfully and more efficaciously. It is necessary to improve the EatSmart@ restaurant.hk Campaign. The Government plays a crucial role in this health promotional initiative, not only in its sustainability, but also in providing a supporting policy to enhance community awareness. The catering industry and restaurants are also the keys to the success of this Campaign in making the healthy eating choice an easy choice.*

*Keywords: EatSmart, obesity, healthy eating, eating out, government role, promotion strategies*

## Introduction

Many people in Hong Kong are overwhelmed with long working hours in this cosmopolitan city. Most of them are too busy and do not take care of their personal health, particularly regarding the importance of healthy eating. Hong Kong residents frequently eat out as part of the local culture. In a survey in 2012, only half of the respondents were concerned about the calories intake when they ate out (The University of Hong Kong, 2012). Another study has found more than 80 percent of people consume inadequate fruits and vegetables daily, or less than 5 servings a day (Department of Health, 2016a). Such unhealthy dietary habit is the main contributor to obesity, resulting from excessive energy intake from high energy-dense food consumption and inadequate fiber intake. Moreover, eating behaviors may be motivated by external stimulations such as the unhealthy food advertisements.

It has been proven that healthy diet and adequate dietary fiber intake can prevent obesity (Slavin, 2005). The Government of Hong Kong implements different policies to promote healthy eating, including the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign and Nutrition Labelling Scheme. The influence of the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign is far below expectation compared to the labelling scheme. This article will evaluate the effectiveness of the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign in terms of its outcome and deficiencies, to compare the different healthy eating promotion programmes, and to give suggestions to bring about a greater influence on a local eating out habit.

## Obesity and eating behaviour

Obesity is associated with frequent dining out in Hong Kong (Ko et al, 2007a). A person, whose Body Mass Index is over or equal to 25.0 kg/m$^2$, is classified as obese. The obese population in Hong Kong is about 20%, affecting nearly 15% of adult females and a third of adult males (Census and Statistics Department, 2016). Based on the data from Behavioural Risk Factor Surveillance System, about 40% eat out between two to four times a week. More remarkably, nearly one in ten people eat out at least five times or more a week (Centre for Health Protection, 2012a). However, restaurant dishes are often high in fat, sugar and salt, and the portion size of food has been getting larger. In the Baseline Survey for the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign (2007), more than half of the respondents have expressed that a serving size of vegetables and fruits is too few, whereas, fat is too much in food served in restaurants. Therefore, people who eat out may consume higher intakes of energy-dense foods than those who normally eat at home (Bezerra, Junior, Pereira & Sichieri, 2015). Undoubtedly, the risk of overweight and obesity may be increased.

In addition, unhealthy food advertisement may influence people's eating behaviour. Food companies have been increasing advertising for non-nutrition foods that may encourage the consumption of junk food. These foods are commonly high in calories and low in nutrients, and attribute significantly to obesity. For instance, a lot of fast food advertising is broadcasted on television these days. Many fast food restaurants advertise their products with an emphasis on low prices and big portions to attract more consumers. The promotion is reinforced by making health or wellbeing one of the popular advertising appeals such as 'Good for health'. In Hong Kong, there are more than six out of ten unhealthy food advertisements that promote at least one health-related claim (Chan, Leung & Tsang, 2013). It comes as no surprise that exposure to food advertising during television viewing contributes to obesity (Harris, Bargh & Brownell, 2009).

Unhealthy eating habits also bring out many negative effects on health, including diabetes and heart disease. These chronic diseases will increase morbidity and mortality, and raise the financial burden for health care. Therefore, the importance of healthy eating cannot be ignored. Without health, people can do nothing more. Health is regarded as a basic element of the society and for personal development. Eating habit is affected by social, economic, cultural and environmental factors, in either good or bad way (Ma, 2015). Therefore, health promotion should take good advantage of these factors to favour better and healthier eating behaviours.

The Government of Hong Kong implements various policies and activities to promote healthy eating so as to prevent overweight and obesity. The EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign was introduced in 2007 to change the unhealthy eating habit by educating the public and providing them with healthy choices. It also promoted healthy cooking in restaurants by attempting to build a friendly and healthy-eating environment with the aim to raise health consciousness when people eat out. Restaurants can provide customers with healthier meals and promote a healthy and balanced diet. The restaurants need to fulfill some requirements, and will pass an assessment to obtain the EatSmart Restaurants (ESR) door decal, which represents that they offer customers healthier food choices regularly.

These EatSmart Restaurants are expected to constantly provide EatSmart dishes - 'More Fruit and Vegetables' and '3 Less', i.e. less oil, salt and sugar, dishes. They benefit from the recognition of being socially responsible business operators, and from the support of Department of Health to enhance their nutritional knowledge and food quality. For patrons, there are advertisements and EatSmart Restaurants Coupon Promotional Activity to encourage them to dine in EatSmart restaurants (Department of Health, 2012).

## Evaluation of the Campaign

EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign aims to promote a healthy eating habit and decrease obesity rate in Hong Kong by raising healthy eating awareness and introducing EatSmart dishes for customers to choose. Before launching the Campaign, there was 78% of people having less than 5 servings of fruit and vegetables per day in 2008 (Centre for Health Protection, 2008). The figure increased slightly to 81% recently (Centre for Health Protection, 2014). Moreover, the number of people with overweight or obesity have been remaining at the similar level, more than one third, from 2007 to 2014 (Census and Statistics Department, 2016). The Campaign barely influenced on the eating behavior and the decrease of population with obesity-concern.

The Campaign appears to be ineffective in promoting healthy eating, and only very few restaurants support it. In 2016, there were more than 10,000 licenced restaurants, but only 661 restaurants joined the Campaign (Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, 2017; Department of Health, 2017). The participation rate is very low indeed. Hence, the accessibility of EatSmart restaurants is practically limited.

Customers can hardly patronize and dine at EatSmart restaurants, leading to even fewer restaurants willing to join the Campaign because of the unfavourable operating environment. The EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign is no longer attractive to the restaurants (Centre for Health Protection, 2012b).

More importantly, the majority of participating ESRs belong to restaurant chains, and so there are few choices for the customers, let alone the healthier ones. Besides, the restaurants awarded the EatSmart decal are not monitored regularly. Hence, it cannot guarantee the quality of healthier dishes and to ensure whether the restaurant complies with the guidelines to offer customers healthier food.

### Sustainability of the Campaign Promotion

In 2008, when the Government first launched the Campaign with the aim to create a healthy eating environment for the public. Regular briefing sessions had been organized for staff of interesting restaurants. In addition, various activities were carried out to promote the Campaign, such as Smart Talks, dining offers, promotions at Food Expo, and the ESR Newsletter.

Sustainability of health promotion activities is very crucial in achieving the goal of promotion and in maintaining the benefits to the communities and population. A sustainable action will continue to be delivered within the available resources, such as the limits of finances, expertise and infrastructures (Smith, Kwok & Nutbeam, 2006). However, the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign has not been promoted continually. Consistency in efforts and activities are not evident.

**Table 1:** Smart talks by celebrities, chefs and dietitians in years 2013 to 2016.

| Year | Celebrities | Chefs | Dietitians | Total |
|------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
| 2013 | 18 | 5 | 9 | 32 |
| 2014 | 15 | 4 | 6 | 25 |
| 2015 | 15 | 5 | 9 | 29 |
| 2016 | 10 | 3 | 6 | 19 |

Source: Smart Talks http://restaurant.eatsmart.gov.hk/eng/smarttalks_list_celebrities.asp

The number of Smart Talks has decreased in the last few years as noted in Table 1. Moreover, only two EatSmart Restaurant Cooking Competitions were held in 2009 and 2010, with no more similar events held ever since. In 2015, the Secretary for Food and Health, officiated the "Kick Off Ceremony for Joyful Fruit Month @ EatSmart Restaurants" for EatSmart restaurants to provide a free serving of fruit to students. However, this was a once-off event in a new initiative of the Campaign. Another once-off event is also noted on the official website, and it is the "Fruity Recipe Competition", which was organized in 2013 with a view to encourage restaurants to provide more fruity choices for customers. By now, the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Newsletter appears to be the only Campaign tool. Even so, the number of issues has dropped from 5 to 7 issues in the first three years after launching the Campaign to only 3 in 2015 and 2016, with no production in the year 2014 (Department of Health, 2012)!

## Incentives to becoming ESR Restaurants and Quality Dishes

Although the restaurants can receive the decal to enhance their image and reputation, the incentive is not enough to attract more restaurants to join. Indeed, the application procedure is quite complicated as the restaurants need to design at least five EatSmart dishes and submit the EatSmart Recipes Submission Form, which contains a lot of items. Simultaneously, the staff should enroll via yet another form and attend the briefing session. Most restaurants may not have the resources or time to fully comply with the requirements. Therefore, due to the lack of tangible incentives, administrative supports and monetary subsidy, many are not willing to participate, resulting in a very low participation rate.

In terms of Campaign management, supervision of EatSmart restaurants is far from adequate. Although joining this Campaign is entirely voluntary, there is no supporting policy to maintain the Campaign, such as monitoring the EatSmart restaurants. Dishes with less sugar, oil and salt are not assured, apart from the submission of recipes upon registration. On top of this quality issue, there has been no innovative improvement since the launching of the Campaign. Nonetheless, the Government is still granting eligible restaurants decals but the outcome is doubtful.

## Problems of promotion materials and community awareness

The government made use of the promotion website, leaflets and posters to promote this Campaign, but there are problems with the promotion materials. According to the six-stage model of communication, it is necessary for a sender to let a receiver gain attention, understand and accept the message so as to change the behaviour in order to improve health (Rice & Atkin, 2012, p. 307). The posters and leaflets related to the Campaign only show the slogan, "*Dishes with less oil, sugar and salt*", without adding the gains from participation in the Campaign. The promotion materials do not convey the clear messages of the benefits of healthy eating and the disadvantages of continuing unhealthy eating habit. Thus, people cannot percept and interpret the messages of the Campaign adequately. As such, people are unlikely to change their behaviour. It is believed that the monotonous and unidirectional promotion materials have led the Campaign to failure.

Community awareness will add to the success of the Campaign. According to the Centre for Health Protection (2012b), there is a significant relationship between awareness of the Campaign and the consumption of healthier dishes. It has been shown that more than 90% of the people, who are not aware of the Campaign, would not choose EatSmart dishes. Many people do not really care about their dietary habit and would not actively seek for the information of health campaigns, even when there is a call for healthy eating out. So, when customers have no idea about the Campaign, they may refuse to try healthier dishes in the EatSmart restaurants, or simply turn to other restaurants. Therefore, the impact of the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign in Hong Kong is very limited, partly due to the lack of advocacy in the community.

As a result, there are mainly three deficiencies in this Campaign, including unsustainability of campaign promotion, lacking inducement of becoming ESR restaurants, and using inappropriate promotion materials. Therefore, the Government should evaluate the outcomes regularly for improvement and modification of tools, including redesigning the posters, making them more informative. Moreover, the low community awareness of healthy eating would not make the Campaign successfully, particularly if sufficient and effective health promotional activities are lacking. Undoubtedly, the Government has introduced and implemented various policies and measure to raise the awareness of health issues in the society.

## Similar and related government initiatives

### EatSmart@school.hk and StartSmart@school.hk in Schools

Apart from the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign, the Department of Health also launched EatSmart@school.hk and StartSmart@school.hk Campaigns in 2006 and 2011 respectively in order to cultivate students in healthy eating with a sustainable healthy lifestyle. The Government carries out promotional activities such as EatSmart School Accreditation Scheme and Joyful Fruit Month. Moreover, primary and secondary schools need to comply with the nutritional guidelines on lunch provision for students while pre-primary institutions should formulate healthy eating and physical activity school policy. Interventions targeting at the schools can make a significant impact, as the obesity detection rate of primary school students has been declining. In 2008, there are 22.2% of primary students being obese. But, the figure decreased gradually to 18.7% (Centre for Health Protection, 2016). Thus, the outcome of the promotion of healthy eating habit in schools is more effective and successful than in the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign as there are supporting policies and sustained promotion in schools.

### Nutrition Labelling Scheme

Apart from the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign, the Nutrition Labelling Scheme was also released in 2007, with the mission to ensure that food sold in Hong Kong is safe and fit for consumption. Through the tripartite collaboration among the Government, food trade and consumers, the scheme is far more successful. The Scheme is empowering people to make better food choices in purchasing, and regulating the misleading or deceptive nutritional claims and labels. The amount of energy and seven nutrients, protein, carbohydrates, total fat, saturated fatty acid, trans fatty acid, sodium and sugar, also known as the (1+7) labels, are required on most of the pre-packaged food as the World Health Organisation recommends (Centre for Food Safety, 2016).

Nutrition labelling is mandatory. Citizens no longer blindly access the food information from advertisements. The Scheme helps them make better purchasing choices. The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) has frequent press releases and achieves over forty publications in peer-reviewed journals throughout these years. In addition,

annual Trade Consultation Forums are held to provide a platform for CFS to exchange views on food safety matters and to conduct risk communication with various food trade associations. There are also several continuing promotional activities and continuing training programmes. Courses about nutrition labelling are conducted in centres of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, schools and community centres to enrich the knowledge among the general public (Centre for Food Safety, 2017a). Roving exhibitions, which include exhibition, video display, games and souvenir distribution, are held at various places such as housing estates and shopping malls to reach residents of different socioeconomic status. More importantly, the continuous promotion can refresh the knowledge of nutrition labelling of the public to keep them alert in choosing health food, leading to enhanced community awareness (Centre for Food Safety, 2017b).

These nutrition labelling promoting strategies are more diversified. There are more interactions with the public and consumers, compared to the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign that has relied on overwhelmingly on printed materials such as promotion website, leaflets and posters. Overall, the continuous promotions of the labelling scheme are the key to its sustainability and have made the Scheme more effective and long-lasting to the community than the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign.

## Improving the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign

The EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign should be re-examined and improved, making reference to the successful policies and activities described in the last section. The government, catering industries and citizens should support the Campaign jointly to make it work for the community and the industry in a structural model shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1** Proposed Model
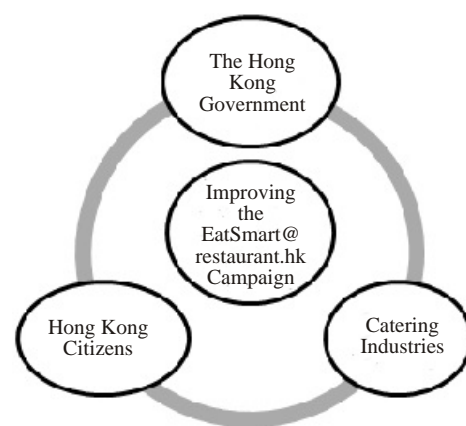


### The Government's role

The Government plays the key role in all public policies and initiatives, particularly in community health practices. Actions by the Government are crucial to the effectiveness and sustainability of the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign. More continuing interactions among the Government, medium and catering industry shall facilitate the success of the Campaign. Instead of just releasing the online newsletter on the official website, the Government should promote the Campaign vigorously, widely and regularly through different mass media, such as newspapers, radio and television to raise the community awareness. Furthermore, tactful utilization of the social media can effectively refresh the memory of the people about healthy eating, particularly the younger population. The government can also, in collaboration with the ESR restaurants, recruit high school students to act as Campaign Ambassadors to promote and educate the community directly on how to select the EatSmart dishes. This can be done in conjunction with the EatSmart@school.hk Campaign as a synergistic activity. Regular marketing can also boost up the demand of the population due to the increased publicity. Therefore, with an increase in public awareness of healthy eating, more people will be expected to attempt to choose healthy dishes in EatSmart restaurants.

According to the Health Belief Model, perceived susceptibility has been found to be predictive of health promotion behaviours, and people will be more motivated to behave in healthy ways if they are vulnerable to a particular negative health outcome (Orji, Vassileva & Mandryk, 2012). So, promotional materials in leaflets and posters should include information on the disadvantages and consequences of unhealthy eating habits in order to introduce a cue to arouse people's awareness, and to drive people to change their eating behaviour. On the other hand, promotional materials for restaurants should state the benefits of joining the Campaign, including incentives, so as to attract more restaurants to join. When the participation rate is increasing, non-participating restaurants may begin to consider joining this Campaign.

The Government should also provide a supporting policy to the Campaign, in order to uphold the food quality and, at the same time, to encourage restaurants to join. The Department of Health can provide more and regular training to restaurant operators and staff, in addition to the "once-off" briefing sessions. It will help them know better the healthy meal standards and how to improve and enhance nutritional values of recipes. At the same time, the Department should visit and evaluate the EatSmart restaurants more frequently to make sure they offer the dishes with less oil, salt and sugar. The ESR restaurants must be supported and assisted. As a practical gadget, measuring spoons can be provided to remind them to avoid adding an excessive amount of unhealthy ingredients. Additionally, the application procedures of EatSmart restaurants should be simplified and be much more user-friendly.

### Initiatives of the catering industry

Equally important, initiatives of the industry are also the key to the success of the Campaign. The catering industry has a responsibility to co-operate with and be responsive to the Government's policy to promote the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign as well. They can encourage and assist the restaurants to enroll in the Campaign. Moreover, the industry may help to change Hong Kong's eating culture, and

to convince the public that dishes contain less sugar, salt, and oil can also be delicious. Chefs and restaurant operators can be educated to change their belief and alter their practice. Using less of the condiments, the dishes can still be as tasteful and attractive but healthier.

Restaurant operators must understand the aims and objectives of the Campaign. As good citizens, they have the corporate social responsibility to help to maintain the customers' health through the provision of healthier food choices. ESR restaurants can display prominent and attractive healthy eating posters, with clear messages about the benefits of healthy diet and disadvantages of unhealthy food, on the walls and around the dining hall to remind patrons to pay attention to eating habits and to choose the healthy dishes.

The media have spot-checked ESR restaurants and have found dishes not meeting the standards or being below the WHO standards. Such incidents may affect the reputation of EatSmart restaurants and jeopardise the efforts of government adversely. At times, when a participating restaurant fails to meet the requirements, follow-up actions should be carried out by both the Government and the industry, in order to uphold the quality of food and hence the trust of the public (Centre for Health Protection, 2012b). Apart from the current annual evaluation, spot-checks by the Department are recommended in order to keep the customers' faith and confidence in eating out at EatSmart restaurants. "Irregular" checking can encourage the ESR restaurants to be more vigilant and alert in their services. Essentially, the Government, the catering industry and the media ought to collaborate more closely in a coordinated effort to make the Campaign a success for the long-term benefits of the people of Hong Kong.

**Community awareness and customer actions**

EatSmart is not merely a slogan to advocate healthy eating habit and to change people's undesired eating patterns. The effectiveness and outcome may not be satisfactory as expected with the lack of community awareness of healthy eating. Fewer customers eating at ESR restaurants have resulted in fewer restaurants willing to join the Campaign due to the unfavorable environment. According to the report conducted by Centre for Health Protection (2012b), there is a significant relationship between awareness of the Campaign and the consumption of healthier dishes that people who are not aware of the Campaign. More than eight in ten people have indicated that they would be attracted by the EatSmart restaurants, if they have known the Campaign, and more than 90% of them do not choose EatSmart dishes. Indeed, the Government, together with the catering industry and restaurant operators, should enhance public knowledge in the community to facilitate customer actions (Centre for Health Protection, 2012b).

However, healthy eating out should not be the sole responsibility of the Government nor the catering industry alone. The general public should support the

EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign by patronizing ESR restaurants. These customers will then encourage more restaurants to join the Campaign. Indeed, some healthier ingredients are perishable easily, such as farm-fresh vegetables and fresh meats. Hence, a reasonable turnover is needed to keep the ingredients from being wasted or thrown into the bins. More business would indirectly help to guarantee the quality of food. In addition, customer surveys should be conducted to obtain opinions and feedback about the choices, quality and taste of the healthy dishes so that restaurants can improve the menu to better serve the customers.

The findings can also enhance and strengthen personal autonomy in the face of health risks as people learn more about their personal health risks (Bayer, Gostin, Jennings & Steinbock, 2007). The community can constantly receive the message that high oil, sugar and salt intake may increase the risks of obesity and heart diseases. Practically, healthier dishes and healthy eating out should become more attractive to the customers, making the healthy food order an easy choice for the community. Through the joint cooperation of various stakeholders, the "EatSmart@restaurant.hk" Campaign can be sustainable and successful.

**One single EatSmart Campaign**

Originally the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign is designated to be a primary prevention initiative. It would help to prevent the onset of diet-related diseases in order to reduce the incidence in the long term. In fact, the Campaign is a good public health strategy to promote healthy eating as it really fits in Hong Kong people's eating out culture, and to prevent the negative effects on health, such as obesity, high blood pressure and heart diseases. In fact, the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign has achieved some success at the very beginning, in that television advertisements, printed promotional materials and celebrity effect make it well-known.

Due to the lack of continuing efforts, the campaign seems to come to "an end". In contrast to the EatSmart@school.hk and StartSmart@school.hk Campaigns and the Nutrition Labelling Scheme, the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign is short of continuous promotion. The only publicity activities are the two Newsletters, appearing about three times a year. There are no press releases nor public forums as in the other programmes.

The Department of Health should seriously consider running the three campaigns as a single EatSmart Campaign (https://www.eatsmart.gov.hk/) to allow for a better coordinated, and more effective health-promoting programme. Efficiency can be achieved through the economies of scale of coverage and the avoidance of duplication of efforts. Healthy eating culture should cover the entire population, although it is desirable to begin with the young children. There is also much to be gained from joining the EatSmart Campaign with the Nutrition Labelling Scheme, which is not only concerned about food safety, but bodily health as well. Furthermore, regular and systematic review of all the food and eating programmes is an equally essential task so

that the Government can assure the effectiveness of these activities and improve the programmes, based on evidence.

## Conclusion

Owing to the eating habit and culture, and the sedentary lifestyle of Hong Kong people, people frequently eat out and have few serving sizes of vegetables and fruits. These factors may increase the risk of suffering from obesity-related health problems. Therefore, the Hong Kong Government have endeavored to launch different schemes, programs and policies to promote and improve public health and wellness, including EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign as well as the Nutrition Labelling Scheme. However, there are several inadequacies in the promotional strategies of the EatSmart@restaurant.hk Campaign, particularly the sustainability of the promotion and problems of promotional materials. If the government care to pay more attention to health issues and to diligently re-evaluate the outcomes of this Campaign, it is the authors' strong belief that the increasing prevalence of obesity in the local population can be effectively decreased by creating a healthy-eating-out environment in the long run. More efforts by the Government and the industry are required in further improving the Campaign. It is time for food and health officials to seriously review the programs and to make practical changes for the benefits of our community.

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# HKPAA 香港公共行政學會
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## Objectives

1. To enhance the quality of research and practices of public administration in Hong Kong and the region;

2. To provide a forum for the identification and debates of public administration issues; and

3. To stimulate discussion and to increase public understanding on issues of importance and relevance to public administration.

## Membership

The Association is a non-partisan organization which welcomes those interested in public administration to join.

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* Admission of application is subject to the approval of Executive Committee and formal notification to the applicant will be confirmed upon acceptance. (Full time student's annual subscription fee is HK$150).

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# PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY
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## <u>Notes to Contributors</u>

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Scott, I. (2010). *The Public Sector in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Fong, P. & Postiglione, G. (2011). Making Transnational Collaboration Work: The Case of China's Hong Kong System. In Sakamoto, R. & Chapman, D. (Eds.),

*Cross-border Partnerships in Higher Education: Strategies and Issues*, 169-190. New York: Routledge.

Mok, K.H. (2003). Globalization and Higher Education Restructuring in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 22, 117-129.

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