



DOING FAMILY IMPACT ASSESSMENT: HONG KONG EXPERIENCE

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THE FAMILY AS A CORE VALUE IN HONG KONG

- In Hong Kong, high values continue to be attached to the family unit to an extent which cannot be matched by any other institution (Social Welfare Department, 1991).
- Hong Kong is a predominantly Chinese community with the family as its core value (2007-2008 Policy Address).



THE PERSISTENT CATEGORICAL AND INDIVIDUAL APPROACH IN WELFARE PLANNING AND POLICY MAKING

- “In welfare planning, service delivery modes are determined by the types of service recipients. The provision of social services has not been planned from a holistic family approach” (Policy Address, 2007-2008).
- It is even rare to conduct an impact assessment for a policy on the role, function and capability of the family in supporting each other members (Hong Kong Commission of Strategic Development, 2008)



THE PROPOSAL OF FAMILY PERSPECTIVES IN POLICY MAKING

- The family Council was set up in December 2007.
- ‘On the advice of the Council, the Government is looking into ways to include the family as a factor to consider in its policy-making process’ (Policy Address 2008-2009).



THE PROPOSAL OF FAMILY PERSPECTIVES IN POLICY MAKING

- In proposing effective strategies in eliminating poverty, Commission on Strategic planning (2008) proposed the adoption of a family approach in policy making.
- ‘A family approach in policy formulation does not simplistically mean always giving the highest priority to the needs of family. It is accepted that social policies are always subject to conflicting objectives and constraints. The important point is to identify the considerations of family and various factors in policy formulation and to understand the consequences to family.’ (p.26)



THE INTRODUCTION OF FAMILY PERSPECTIVES IN POLICY FORMULATION

- In 2009, the Home Affairs Bureau, as the Secretariat of the Family Council, introduced general guidelines on the inclusion of family perspectives as a factor in policy formulation for bureaux and Departments to consider on a voluntary basis.
- The assessment of family implications has become a mandatory requirement in all policy submissions and Legislative Council briefs with effect from 1st April 2013 (Home Affairs Bureau, 2013).



THE LACK OF LOCAL EXPERIENCE

- As there is little local experience in applying the family approach, the application of family perspectives and its exact scope could be refined upon gaining more experience in local application.
- It is also necessary to develop a rigorous analytical framework in assessing and evaluating the impact of policy on families (Commission on Strategic Development, 2008).



THE PIONEER ROLE OF NGO IN THE INITIATIVE

- Envisaging the importance of local experience in the application of family perspectives in policy making and the development of a rigorous framework of family impact assessment, Hong Kong Council of Social Service commissioned the first pilot project on family impact assessment to the Department of Social Work, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.





**THE PROCEDURE WE PROCEED
THE PROJECT**

IDENTIFY AND FORMULATING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- An Ecological-Systemic Framework according to the ecological family system theory in USA (Bogenschneider, Little, Ooms, Benning and Cadigan, 2012) and The Three Key Domains and Seven Critical Lever Model in U.K. (Wong, 2010)
- There are mutual and reciprocal transaction among the individual system, family system and social system. Families are the first and foremost influence on individual development. Externally, they help members adapt to changes in their cultural, economic, and social contexts. Policies and programs shape the environment in which families operate and, in so doing, can strengthen or undermine family functioning.



IDENTIFYING AND FORMULATING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- According to the 3D7L model, it is important to examine whether policy **motivates, creates the opportunity** for and **supports** people to value and strength family relationships, to fulfill their family responsibilities and to facilitate the wellbeing of the family.
- These influences can be exerted through the impact of the policy on people's time, finance, place (i.e. geographical proximity and physical environment), relational skills, as well as its influences on social norms, frontline public services delivery. Institutional mechanisms and third sector (Wong, 2010).



SELECT A POLICY OR PROGRAM

- In recommending a family approach in policy formulation, The Commission of Strategic Development (2008) also recommended the set up of the statutory minimum wage protection for low-skill, low-education and low-income workers to secure a minimum and yet reasonable wage level.
- As a policy with extensive social impact, it is able to invite joint participation of stakeholders across sectors. The choice is in line with the agenda of the joint impact driven actions of the HKCSS (2012).



FORMING THE RESEARCH TEAM

- Family impact assessment is most incisive and comprehensive when it includes expertise on (a) families, (b) family impact analysis, and (c) the specifics of the policy.

- The research team:

Dr. Yuk King Lau (Families)

Prof. Wong Hung (Labor and minimum wage)

4 honorary consultants from business, industry and labor sectors

Overseas consultant: Prof. Karen Doneker Mancini, Ph.D (family impact analysis)



DETERMINE WHICH FAMILY TYPES MIGHT BE AFFECTED

- Families with members in the following work status are identified to be most influenced by the implementation of the ordinance:
 - working single parents,
 - Employees who are new arrivals,
 - teenage workers,
 - aged workers,
 - ethnic minority workers,
 - disabled workers
 - low-income employees in general,
 - and those who have become self-employed after the implementation of the ordinance
- Voices of other stakeholders (employers, service users, and policy makers) are included to facilitate the engagement of multi-stakeholders in the family impact assessment.



SELECT A FAMILY IMPACT CHECKLIST

- The latest version of Family Impact Checklist of the Policy Institute for Family Impact Assessment (2012) is adopted with modification.
- Three focus groups were held to refine the translation of the checklist and to decide which principles are most relevant with the targeted policy.
- Very fundamental questions were raised in the focus groups: What is family? How and who should define family responsibilities ?



SELECT A FAMILY IMPACT CHECKLIST

- ‘We do not think defining family is central to conducting family impact analysis. We do not offer a single definition of family, but instead suggest that defining family is based upon context and use.’ (Bogenschnider, Little, Ooms, Benning and Cadigan, 2012)
- We decided to explore the participants’ own definitions on ‘what is family’, ‘who are their family members’ and ‘what are their responsibilities to their families’ in the process of inquiry/interview.



EXAMINING THE FAMILY IMPACT

- Mixed methods are adopted to collect the necessary data for the assessment.
- In the first phase of the study, there are **focus group interviews** with **employees, employers, policy makers** and **service users and/or customers** who are affected by the policy of minimum wage respectively. Their perspectives on how the current minimum wage policy affects families will be explored.
- The relevant principles of the modified Family Impact Checklist are integrated into the question guides of the interviews.



EXAMINING THE FAMILY IMPACT

- The second phase is a **cross-sectional survey**. The target group of the survey will be **employees** who are receiving minimum wage. Snowball sampling will be used and suitable participants will be recruited through trade unions and the network of Hong Kong Council of Social Service.
- It aims to collect further information on the prevalence of the identified impacts among employees receiving minimum wage.
- Content of the questionnaire is formulated according to the data of the focus group interviews.



DISSIMILATION AND APPLY THE RESULTS

The results will be dissimilated through these expected deliverables of the project

- A research report
- A press conference on the findings and one follow-up policy seminar to dissimilate the findings and the implications of the findings
- Publications in local, regional, or international journal
- An indigenous protocol on family impact assessment framework/criteria
- The Family Impact Checklist will be further refined according the insights from the project.



A LONG LONG WAY TO GO

- The refinement of the proposed protocol on family impact assessment framework and family impact checklist, as well as the promotion of family perspectives in policy making requires joint efforts across sectors.
- We need collective mass and continuous efforts in doing quality family impact assessments.
- I would like to appeal for your participation in this meaningful mission.



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