

Who is willing to take up positions in public affairs?

Activity in public affairs

Hong Kong has 509 public sector boards and committees of which 229 are statutory and 280 are non-statutory. Young people are not strongly represented on them. Taking up a position of responsibility on any public or professional body involves giving up time and developing skills like public speaking and networking. Nevertheless, the majority in this survey agreed that being public-spirited was generally positive and that it led to an increase in sense of belonging and commitment. They also appreciated the altruism, community spirit and contributions that it involved.

Attitudes and values

- A clear majority said they felt a sense of belonging for Hong Kong.
- Over half enjoyed volunteering and were concerned about public affairs.
- Over a fifth had a role in public affairs.
- Over a quarter were willing to take up such roles.

Concerns

- Too few young people are members of public advisory or statutory bodies.
- Many felt that society would not have confidence in them if they took up such a role because they lacked experience.
- A fifth did not know how to take up a position in public affairs.
- Nearly two-thirds did not trust the government and considered the administration to be poor and appointments to lack transparency.
- The same proportion considered themselves powerless to bring about policy change.
- Another obstacle was getting time off work: as members of a competitive society, they gave priority to career development.
- Peer recognition was needed.

Practical responses

- Over half thought that they could have a greater impact by forming their own action groups rather than by taking up posts in the government.
- Training in communications, teamwork, and critical thinking etc. was considered a prerequisite for public service.

Suggestions and recommendations

- Set a quota for non-official members aged 40 or under on government advisory and statutory bodies.
- Promote a workplace culture friendly to participation in public affairs including incentives to attend meetings.
- Arrange more international forums to provide mutual support and networking opportunities.
- Build a platform for dialogue between government, stake-holders, and young people to enhance mutual understanding and strengthen trust.
- Offer training in skills for public affairs.



by David Woo
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No. 3

Comments from Youth I.D.E.A.S. think tank conveners

Governance & Constitutional Development group

Richard Cheng “There should be a benchmark quota for a specific percentage of non-official members aged 40 or under on government advisory and statutory bodies. Currently, the low representation of young people weakens their voices and opinions in contrast to those of older members.”

Yuri Hung “There is fierce competition nowadays meaning that young people struggle to find a balance between personal career development and participation in public affairs. Employers should provide incentives such as allowing up to four hours leave per month to attend meetings. This would represent a maximum of just 2.5% of a month’s working hours.”