

Ageing population any resolutions?

Sociology, Population



Ageing population —any resolutions? According to the World Health Organization, a country or a city is defined as an ageing society if the number of elders who aged 65 or above exceed 7% of the whole population. With 14% of elders in population, the country would be considered as an aged society. Worse still, if the amount of elders still keep on increasing and reach 20% of the population, the country would be classified as an hyper-aged society. Recently, the ageing population has been under the spotlight all over the world. This worldwide issue has aroused public concern and surely Hong Kong is not an exception. According to the Hong Kong Population Projections published in July, 2012, there are in total 13% of elders who aged 65 or over in our population, which means that Hong Kong is going to transform into an aged society. What's more, it is predicted that we would turn into hyper-aged society in 2026, with 23% of elderly people in population. Such shocking data actually did a good warning effect, which successfully remind government to take long term measures at once to tackle the problem. Or not, ageing population would lower Hong Kong's labour force, which would then affect Hong Kong's productivity and hence our competitiveness in the world market. Furthermore, the ageing population would also burden the health care system. To solve the problems, people from all walks of life have raised different suggestions. It is proposed to import talents from other parts of the world, and implement effective policies to convince children born here to non-local parents and their families to stay here in order to alleviate the shortage of labour force. On the other hand, the tension in existing health care system can be eased by several programmes held by the hospital authority, like the psychological support programme,

which can help strengthen staff morale and address their work stress. As the above mentioned, one of the severe problems provoked by ageing population is the shortage of labour force. According to the Summary Results of the 2011 Population Census published in February, 2012, the labour force participation rate has dropped from 61.4% in 2001 to 59.7% in 2011. In addition, with reference to the Hong Kong Population Projections, the overall dependency ratio is predicted to rise from 352 to 712, which is over a double increase. Besides, it is also estimated that every three persons in the workforce will need to support one elder by 2029. Therefore, we can see that ageing population not only lower our labour force, and hence Hong Kong's productivity and competitiveness in international market, but it would also put more burden to the workforce, which bring great challenges to Hong Kong economy. To increase the supply of labour force in near future, it is believed there are few ways to do so. Firstly, we can introduce more talent admission schemes and seriously investigate both push and pull factors affecting talents to stay or to leave Hong Kong. For instance, the government are now expanding the international school system. There would be in total 5000 additional international school places in the coming four years. Furthermore, the government is planning to invite the international schools to express interest in expanding their school by using several vacant school premises. These actions definitely help import talents from other countries, but the government should note that it should not be a short term measure. The government should keep improving the education in international school and try best to assist international school to have more resources so that more school places are available for the talents and talents

would stay here for better education. Or not, the students from outside Hong Kong may choose to study in other countries with better education, other than Hong Kong. Yet, there are some critics believes that it is totally not enough to solve the population problem by only those talent admission schemes. Therefore the babies born in Hong Kong to non-local parents have been seen as a simple way to alleviate the problem. But whether those babies and their families would stay here or not later on, it mainly depends on the government efforts to implement policies for that purpose and see whether the city can promise them a stable and good enough future.

Compared to the talent admission schemes, it is a more effective means to meet the uprising demand of manpower as the number of mainland families who stay here is greater than those talents. This can be proved by the results of our 2011 Population Census . According to the Hong Kong Population Projections, about 77% of the Mainland women whose husband is a Hong Kong Permanent Resident, would bring their children back to Hong Kong later. And about 53% for those Mainland women whose husband is not a Hong Kong Permanent Resident would also later bring their children back to Hong Kong. Other than the shortage of labour force, the ageing population would also burden the health care system. More elderly people would definitely increase the demand of medical services and it would increase the work stress of frontline staff in hospital and the financial burden to the government. To strengthen the staff morale and ease their work stress, it is suggested the Hospital Authority can hold more relaxing measures , for instance, improving the working conditions, recruiting more full-time and part-time staff and preventing excessive overnight duties. All these are

useful ways to reduce frontline workload, and it is believed it can help lower the staff turnover number, and hence help prevent the manpower shortage in public hospitals. Just like the psychological support programme which help staff deal with work stress has lower the overall turnover rate of physicians in public hospitals from 5.2 % in 2010/11 to 4.8% in 2011/12. And the overall turnover rate has further decreased to 4.4 % in the first 4 months of 2012/13. All in all, it is the responsibility of the government to stop our aging situation from being worse. The government should plan detailed and long term policies to solve the aging situation. Or not, Hong Kong will be suffered badly with economic and social problems in the near future. (Word count: 1035 words)

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