

Editorial: Policies and practices under COVID-19 pandemic and more

Public Administration and Policy – An Asia-Pacific Journal (PAP) was first launched and jointly published by Hong Kong Public Administration Association (HKPAA) and City University of Hong Kong in 1992. It was suspended in 2005 and re-launched in 2012 with the new co-publisher, the School of Professional Education and Executive Development (SPEED) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Since 2018, it has been published online in open access on the Emerald Insight Platform. This year marks the 30th anniversary of its first launch and 10th anniversary of its re-launch as well as 5th anniversary of its online publication with Emerald.

PAP now publishes three issues with over twenty articles per year. It is indexed and abstracted by Scopus, Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), CrossRef, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), EBSCO Discovery Service, Google Scholar, Health Research Premium Collection (ProQuest), Healthcare Administration Database (ProQuest), ProQuest Central, ProQuest Central Basic (Korea), ProQuest Central Essentials, ProQuest Central Student, Publicly Available Content Database (ProQuest), Summons (ProQuest) and WorldCat. Academics and practitioners in public administration, management, public policy, and related fields are welcome to contribute papers to this journal.

Summary of articles

This first issue of 2022 consists of eight articles with one speech, three related to the coronavirus pandemic, three on local governments in Bangladesh, Nepal and Tanzania respectively, and one on compliance of listed companies in Oman. A brief introduction of these articles is given below.

The first article on “Can Hong Kong exceptionalism last? Dilemmas of governance and public administration over five decades 1970s-2020” by Anthony B.L. Cheung is a book launch speech to introduce his book which critically reviews the government and public administration of Hong Kong from 1970s to 2020, including the strengths, capabilities, constraints and dilemmas. Five exceptional aspects are identified: (a) Under British rule, Hong Kong was governed as an atypical colony; (b) It was one of the Four Little Dragons as part of the East Asian Miracle; (c) In the 1990s, it was one of the regional pioneers in public sector reform; (d) The unique constitutional status of post-1997 Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China; (e) After reunification with China, the SAR government, though only semi-democratic, is checked by balancing and monitoring mechanisms no less vigorous than some developed democracies. After reviewing the past, the author opined that Hong Kong has entered a “second transition” after 2020, undergoing a bigger test than that in 1997. Hong Kong has to identify its niche areas, not only in economics, but also needs a paradigm shift in how it relates to the Mainland China within “One Country” as well as the world as a global metropolis.



The second article on “Family caring for the elderly during the pandemic in Hong Kong: perspective from Confucian familism” is by Andrew T.W. Hung. He argues for the values of familial caring and relationships in addition to the provision of social media technology during the COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong. The author adopts an inter-disciplinary approach by integrating health care system and psychological analysis, based on cultural and philosophical arguments through the hermeneutic approach of classical texts and critical analysis. The pandemic has exposed the dilemma between the public health measures for COVID-19 and sustaining elderly social-psychological health through familial connection. From a Confucian perspective, the practice of filial piety, which demands taking care of parents, is essential for one’s moral formation and becoming a virtuous person. Such necessity of taking care of elderly parents by adult children is not something that can be explained in terms of consequentialism. Rather, the rising trend of instrumental rationality seems to weaken rather than strengthen the sense of filial obligation. In the face of the pandemic which tends to separate connections between family members, the author argues that Chinese people should emphasize the values of familial caring and relationship because it enhances the elderly’s characteristic of resilience.

The third article on “Corporate Social Responsibility policies and practices on unvaccinated employees during the COVID-19 pandemic: case studies of Israel and United States” by Lilach Litor addresses the tension between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the employees’ right to work in times of the pandemic. The author explores the operation of corporations in adopting policies of mandatory vaccination and the role of the courts regarding the CSR patterns. By examining the court cases of CSR practices regarding unvaccinated employees during the pandemic in Israel and the United States, the findings show that the Israeli system has adopted the regulating for individual discretionary CSR approach which is labor-oriented. The possibility of compelling employees to vaccinate is denied, and it is the obligation of the corporations to consider proportionate measures to isolate the unvaccinated employees while allowing them to continue working. In contrast, the American system has adopted the regulating for ethical-public CSR approach and claims that corporations should advance the public interest in health. While mandatory vaccination is possible, this infringes upon the right to work of unvaccinated employees.

The fourth article is “A review of the long-term care policies under COVID-19 in Thailand’s aging society: implications for ASEAN countries” by Phudit Tejavataddhana, Nalinee Nakittipha Chuakhamfoo and Man Thi Hue Vo. Based on online databases from international, national, academic agencies and SCOPUS database extracted from January 2019 to July 2021, the findings reveal that the proportion of the aging population is increasing due to declined fertility and rising life expectancy. Current and future demand for effective healthcare in ASEAN will be better achieved with policies like the Universal Health Coverage and Primary Health Care system. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a major challenge in implementing long-term care and affected the vulnerable aging population in many aspects. Social protection issues have been brought to the forefront of the political debate and called for appropriate policy responses. With the support from international organizations, ASEAN countries have framed several policy strategies in response to the increasing aging population, such as providing more long-term care services in the community.

The fifth article on “Assessing fiscal health of local governments in Bangladesh: evidence from some south-western municipalities” by Tasnim Murad Mamun and Sajib Chowdhury investigates the fiscal health of 18 south-western municipalities in Bangladesh. By applying Wang, Dennis and Tu’s solvency test and Brown’s Ten-Point Test, the result shows that one-tenth of the entire municipalities are endowed with better position, whereas almost 39 percent of municipalities are in the worst situation, and nearly 50 percent of municipalities are in the

average category. Because of having limited liabilities, the municipalities are endowed with more than enough cash solvency and reasonable level of long-run solvency. The key problems are that budgetary solvency of all municipalities is not satisfactory, and service expenses are more than their revenue generation. The authors suggest improving the financial capabilities of the municipalities through properly using their resources, generating loans, and claiming a need-based budget from the central government.

The sixth article is “A study of the capabilities and limitations of local governments in providing community services in Nepal” by Keshav K. Acharya and John Scott. The authors discuss the possibilities and limitations of local government in implementing constitutionally guaranteed rights to transform local communities. Drawn from 56 in-depth interviews with elected representatives, political parties, and government officials from 14 local governments in seven provinces at both national and local levels, the findings indicate that capacity is a major constraint for local governments, which should be addressed to achieve successful local governance, inclusive citizen engagement, and strong technical, administrative and fiscal capabilities. The authors propose that the lack of local autonomy, political conflict, social class differences, external engagement, and conservative hierarchic government bureaucracy are major hurdles to growing capacity. The article also attempts to understand to what extent the Nepali local governments are capable in delivering the services at the local level as the closest unit of the citizens.

The seventh article “The influence of ethical leadership in the delivery of agricultural advisory services in Tanzania local government authorities” by Wilfred Uronu Lameck adopts a comparative case study to investigate ethical leadership, particularly the leader-follower relationship in the delivery of agricultural advisory services in two local governments: Morogoro Municipality in Eastern Tanzania and Hai District in Northern Tanzania. The findings show that the delivery of the services in Tanzania is guided by formal rules, including the roles and responsibilities of local government officials and field workers, which are driven by national-level guidelines written by the Ministry of Agriculture. In developing the working schedule, agricultural extension workers at the village and ward levels are guided by an annual calendar that defines the seasons of the year and the relevant knowledge required by farmers. Nevertheless, the implementation of these schedules is compromised by a lack of resources and morale of field workers, who in turn cope through charging for the services, which is considered as their prime motives.

The last article on “A study on listed companies’ compliance with value-added tax: the evolving role of compliance officer in Oman” by Mohammed Muneerali Thottoli examines the companies’ compliance with value-added tax (VAT) and the evolving role of the compliance officer in the listed companies at Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), Oman. After analysing various compliance measures and real data of specific compliance or disclosure measures set by Capital Market Authority (CMA) on all companies listed under MSX from 2011 to 2019, the author identified that there is a lack of timely compliance by companies under the existing law. These companies may face pressures for compliance with VAT enforcement in Oman. Therefore, to comply with the disclosure requirements of listed companies, there is a growing need to appoint a full-time compliance officer and do a compliance audit. The results indicate the value of full-time compliance officers and compliance audits. The findings are able to aid in the appraisal of VAT accounting, compliance audit research, and in the selection of proper assessment methods and criteria.

I wish to thank all the authors for contributing their papers to this issue and the reviewers for their critical but constructive comments in helping the authors to improve their papers. Finally, I thank Emerald and our editorial team as well as the members of both the Asia Pacific Editorial Board and International Editorial Advisory Board for their contributions in making the successful publication of this issue possible. We hope these articles will enhance

the understanding of various issues on public administration and policy across different regions in the world.

Editorial

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About the Editor-in-Chief

Professor Peter K.W. Fong, PhD (New York University), is President of Hong Kong Public Administration Association and Editor-in-Chief of PAP Journal. He teaches strategic management and supervises DBA students' dissertations of University of Wales TSD and lectures Public Policy Values and Ethics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He held Advisory/Visiting Professorships in Tongji, Tsinghua, Renmin, Tianjin Universities and HK Poly U. He has been members of HK Institute of Planners & Planning Institute Australia. He was a Teaching Fellow of Judge Business School, University of Cambridge; Director of EMBA programme, HKU Business School; Associate Professor, Department of Urban Planning, HKU; Executive Vice President of City University of Macao; Honorary Professor, China Training Centre for Senior Civil Servants in Beijing; Studies Director, Civil Service Training & Development Institute, HKSAR Government; Visiting Scholar, MIT; Director, Delta Asia Bank; Consultant, the World Bank. Peter K.W. Fong can be contacted at: fongpeter@netvigator.com