

Chapter 1 Introduction

The Commission on Youth first produced the Statistical Profile of Youth¹ in Hong Kong in 1988, which was subsequently updated in 1992 and 1997. The Statistical Profile 1997, as well as its previous editions, are basically straightforward presentation of youth statistics organized into twelve social areas². In 2002, Social Sciences Research Centre (SSRC), the University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) were invited by the Commission to work on *Youth in Hong Kong – A Statistical Profile 2002*. The SSRC was responsible for collecting data related to youth and preparing a descriptive report. Based on these data, the HKCSS would prepare a commentary section on six topical youth issues, namely poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, as well as human, social and cultural capital formation. The discussions would also include international comparisons so as to reflect the conditions of the well-being of youth in other countries.

The purpose of this report, which is the commentary section of the *Statistical Profile 2002*, is to develop a set of key indicators to provide policy makers, researchers, service providers, media and the public with extensive and organized data so as to facilitate the understanding of the various aforementioned six issues faced by the youth in Hong Kong.

1.1 Scope of the research and methodology

In order to construct the framework of six specific youth issues, a review of literature on youth studies and youth indicators was conducted. The present study focuses on the following six youth issues, including:

- three youth problems that are often of top concern to policy makers, social advocates and the public – namely poverty, unemployment and substance abuse; and
- three broadened notions of capital which are considered to be crucial in the well-being of the youth and that have lately generated much interest among policy makers, social advocates and researchers – namely human capital, social capital and cultural capital.

¹ The Commission on Youth defines youth as those persons aged 15 to 24 with a margin of five years on either side of the age group.

² They include demographic characteristics; family background and dynamics; physical health; mental health; education; non-attendance and school dropouts; economic characteristics; youth culture and development; civic, social, and political attitudes and participation; youth and crime; youth sexuality and new arrivals.

Key indicators were proposed with reference to the findings as well as other scientific and practical considerations, such as data availability, timeliness, quality and consistency. The following criteria are referred to for selecting the related indicators:

- clarity and comprehensiveness in coverage;
- positive and negative outcomes;
- common interpretation;
- consistency over time;
- forward-looking; and
- scientifically rigorous data collection methods.

Apart from examining findings drawn from a number of related social areas in local context, the discussions also include international comparisons. Data on selected topical youth issues was collected from various countries and international organizations so as to reflect the trend and conditions of the well-being of youth in these countries.

1.2 Limitations of the study and directions for future research

The discussions of the present study were constrained by data availability within data collection period. Such data are mainly collected by government departments, social welfare organizations and academics, and hence could be said as mainly reflecting their concerns and priorities.

Specific dimensions of these six topical issues are suggested to be collected in future studies and they are listed as follows:

- Proficiency and competency in language and IT of youth;
- Working conditions and structural constraints on youth employment status;
- Dimensions of social exclusion, including contact with friends and family, availability of and participating in public/private services, as well as affordability of public/private services;
- Dimensions on treatment demand data, drug-related health problems, as well as risk and protective factors to the youth; and
- Data on cultural awareness and cultural identity of youth, as well as social cohesion and trust among the youngsters.

Furthermore, it is suggested to incorporate the views and perspectives of the youth into future research.

1.3 Organization of the report

The report is composed of eight chapters. Key findings of the six selected topical youth issues have been summarized in the previous chapter. This chapter is an introductory chapter on scope of the research and methodology, limitations of the study and directions for future research, as well as an organization of this report. A review of literature on the concerned topic will be presented in each chapter. Then, examples of indicators will be listed and key findings of each topic will be examined. Finally, the key findings will be summarized and issues of concerns in the future study will also be raised.