

**LETTERHEAD OF HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

19 February, 2001

Mrs. Percy Ma  
Legislative Council  
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
of the People's Republic of China  
Legislative Council Building  
8 Jackson Road  
Central, Hong Kong

Re: Comments on the Policy of Accountability for Principal Officials

Dear Madam:

In submitting my comments to the captioned topic, the following basic assumptions are made:

- a. The Chief Executive (CE) is the Head of all Government civil servants and all Principal Officials report to him. He and his team represent the Executive arm of the SAR Government of HK.
- b. The CE and his team are responsible to draft policies and to implement them after they have been approved by LEGCO.
- c. The CE is held accountable to the Central People's Government (PRC) and HK SAR Government.
- d. The role of the Executive Council (EXCO) is advisory.
- e. There are many committees/boards affiliated to various Government bureau/agencies and their roles are quite different - some are advisory but others are empowered in decision/policy making.

The issue at hand: Can Principal Officials be held accountable and if so, in what aspects?

1. Since most Principal Officials have been playing the role of explaining and implementing approved Government policies, they can only be held accountable in aspects which involve the preparation and execution of approved policies.
2. Preparation can include problem identification, visionary planning, developing viable options, problem solving, identifying stakeholders and collaborators, marketing strategies, financial implications, and time-lines for achieving targets.

3. Execution can include the successful launching and implementation of the approved policies, ensuring that targets are achieved, value-added measures are attained, a system of monitoring and assessment is developed, and crisis management is ready and in place.
4. If the issue involves policy matter, then the corresponding Committee/Board should be held accountable. In most cases, the Committee/Board Chairperson will be held accountable if wrongful interpretation or failure to comply with approved policies are permitted. It is believed that the role of the Executive Council should play a more important and supportive role to the CE and his Principal Officials while many existing statutory committees/boards can in turn assist, advise, and collaborate with senior Government officers/Principal Officials in their respective jobs.
5. Committees/Boards which are empowered by legislation can assist LEGCO in interpreting approved policies and be held accountable for them.

It is believed that Principal Officials should be held accountable for their effectiveness and leadership as heads of their respective bureau in general, and in the preparation and implementation of approved policies in particular. They report to the CE and are held accountable to him for their performance. In policy matter, which are political in nature, the EXCO and other statutory committees/boards should be held accountable. There is also a dire need to trim down the numbers of existing committees/boards to a workable size and to improve their working relationship with LEGCO.

Yours sincerely

Professor Frank Fu

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