INTRODUCTION

In the social sciences at The University of Hong Kong we rely in part on the impact of our research. We use metrics such as impact factors, citations. These measures and other factors have paved the way for the Faculty of Social Science to play an important role in research impact. However, the non-academic impact and measurement of the project, government officials, businessmen, alumni and potential donors require the lives of Hong Kongers. We must demonstrate the relevance of our research inside and outside the University.

Understanding Non-Academic Impact

According to a LSE Public Policy Group study, impact implies 'recorded or auditable occasions of influence', that are, however, not the same as outputs or activities or outcomes, and that do not depend for their existence on some kind of social welfare gain (LSE, 2011: 5). The Hong Kong Research Grants Council's (RGC) support for public policy research is specifically designed to fund research that aims at this kind of impact. Measuring impact, however, is difficult in the humanities and social sciences. As my colleague, Professor Joseph Chan Chiu-wai, (Department of Politics and Public Administration) has pointed out, 'Those of us working in the humanities and social sciences influence people chiefly through the medium of ideas, not through technology or practical skills (saving lives in medicine, or building bridges in civil engineering). Ideational impact is not only difficult to measure, but also difficult to occur. Impact depends on a great extent on how ideas are transmitted and whether people at the receiving end are persuaded. This depends on the relative power of non-ideational factors such as interests, power, and access to information, and people's open-mindedness. If our research fails to influence people in society, does it imply that our research has no practical value? Policy research or academic research could add immense practical value to society even if the impact is not clearly visible. Simply stated, the impact of ideas is determined by many factors outside of the control of the researcher. On the contrary, scientists, engineers, and doctors often have direct control over the subject/matter they work on, and they can determine the direct and clear impact' (E-m. Davies et al caution: '… misunderstanding and mischaracterization of the impact of research is the case, research policy-making and subject generalizations and ideational we have undertaken'). Thus research choices, but also to the for professional discourse and so on.

These cautions are well taken in the context of non-academic impact of our work. First, we can infer indirect records of our colleagues' impact by directly advising NGOs to the advisory committees. Second, we can impact by directly advising NGOs to the advisory committees. Third, we can impact by directly advising NGOs to the advisory committees. Fourth, we can impact by directly advising NGOs to the advisory committees. Fifth, we can impact by directly advising NGOs to the advisory committees. Sixth, we can impact by directly advising NGOs to the advisory committees. Seventh, we can impact by directly advising NGOs to the advisory committees.

- Discussions of our research media (including print and specialist media such as public policy journals)
In peer review and metrics in order to be certain of the academic impacts, acceptance rates and the prestige of academic presses. Social Sciences to be ranked 23rd in the world by QS.

...of social sciences research. Members of the public, politicians, are evidence of our impact on the development of Hong Kong and research since we depend on the good will and support from both professionals, think tanks, consultancies, trade unions, charities and NGOs;
• Debates and proceedings of Legislative Council and its Panels;
• Papers, publications and website coverage of research by the government;
• Financial data available within the university indicating the scope of our activities outside the university such as research grants, consultancies, contracts, licensing income, payments made for training sessions, conferences and so forth; and
• Participation and/or visits by members of the public, business, government, and civil society to Department/Faculty activities indicating that these external actors found (or anticipated finding) something of value. ‘The more senior these personnel are, the greater the imputed external value of what the department or lab is providing...’ (LSE, 226). Logging the contacts and providing these participants with opportunities to feed back on their experience would be valuable evidence.

The impact of non-academic research focuses on many areas. Faculties of social sciences largely provide research that relates to public policy. Our Faculty of Social Sciences is no exception.
**Tracking Impact on Public Policy**

We can identify two general approaches to demonstrate the impact of research on public policy in Hong Kong: forward tracking (‘producer-push’) and backward tracking (‘user-pull’) (Davies, et al, 2005, 12). Forward tracking (perhaps augmented with user panels) asserts that a particular piece of research has been examined, taken up, incorporated into, or determined a particular public policy. We may understand the RGC’s public policy research grants in this light. Under this scheme the government, through the Central Policy Unit (CPU), identifies some general policy areas of interest to the community, and encourages researchers in Hong Kong to submit proposals to a vetting panel in order to solve these public problems. The extent to which the proposals are likely to have an impact on public policy is one of many considerations for funding. In some cases (e.g., strategic public policy research) the proposals are circulated directly to concerned government agencies as part of the vetting process for determination of relevance. When the projects are completed, summaries of the results are published in a newsletter that is distributed to public bodies, including government. Whether government agencies take up these policy ideas is unclear.

Backward tracking involves examining policy decisions or practices to identify research-based influences. We can understand the government’s need for public policy research by examining the contract research undertaken by members of our faculty. Tracking backwards can identify the policies on which the government sought research help from the University. The chain of influence can be identified through interviews with the commissioned government agency and with the researcher.

**What We Are doing**

Members of the Faculty have been elected to the Legislative Council (Dr Law Chi Kong and Dr Yeung Sum) where they influenced public policy, especially in the provision of social welfare and the furtherance of political reform. Members have also been seconded to the HKSAR Government’s Central Policy Unit (Professor John Bacon) or have been advisors to or have worked with Simon Zhao Xiaobin, Dr Ng Kwok-leung and other Consultancies to the CPD. Members have been evaluating public support for the recent referenda on cross border relations with the People’s Republic of China. They have also been involved in the Chief Executive’s Policy address and subsequent cross border relations with the People’s Republic of China. Members of the Faculty have also been involved in a number of advisory committees.

Eight colleagues from the University have received funding for their research projects as part of the RGC’s public policy grants from the Research Grants Council. Public policy researchers have received funding in the last two years for their research projects as part of the RGC’s public policy grants. The RGC has provided funding for research into public policy in Hong Kong as logistics hub in the Belt and Road Initiative (Professor Simon Zhao Xiaobin, Professor Fu Siqian, 2019); Sociology (Professor Lui Tai Wai, integration in Hong Kong, 2009; Professor Lui Tai Wai, Citizenship education in Hong Kong, 2010; Dr Edward Chan Kung, 2010; Dr Ernest Chen, Social care services for the elderly, 2010; Dr Ernest Chen, Social care services for the elderly, 2010; Dr Ernest Chen, Social care services for the elderly, 2010; Dr Ernest Chen, Social care services for the elderly, 2010; Dr Ernest Chen, Social care services for the elderly, 2010; Dr Ernest Chen, Social care services for the elderly, 2010; Dr Ernest Chen, Social care services for the elderly, 2010; Dr Ernest Chen, Social care services for the elderly, 2010; Dr Ernest Chen, Social care services for the elderly, 2010; Dr Ernest Chen, Social care services for the elderly, 2010). (See also http://www.ugc.edu.hk/ for write-ups of the impact of the research on public policy.)

Finally, the Faculty is a major source of intellectual leadership and advice to government agencies in Hong Kong. According to the partial list of contracts held by members of the Faculty, in 2011/12 members of the Faculty held contracts for a total of 57 contract research projects (but also for organizing events) (including a survey of the Hong Kong population, the largest number (9), followed by (4). The Faculty’s Social Work Department held most of the contracts for the 2011/12 academic year (see list in above).

In addition, the Faculty has provided advice on a number of public policy issues to government agencies in Hong Kong. Members of the Faculty have also been advisors to or have worked with Simon Zhao Xiaobin, Dr Ng Kwok-leung and other Consultancies to the CPD. Members have been evaluating public support for the recent referenda on cross border relations with the People’s Republic of China. They have also been involved in the Chief Executive’s Policy address and subsequent cross border relations with the People’s Republic of China. Members of the Faculty have also been involved in a number of advisory committees.

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Faculty have won competitive public research Grants Council with published recommendations for government have three years, through these grants by (Dr James Wang Jixian, Hong in the global value chain, 2009); Lok, life chances and social mobility Professor Wong Siu Lun, locating HK in immigrants, 2011); and Social Work (Dr of new immigrants to Hong Kong, So-ling, domestic violence in Hong iui Wing-tak, integrated home care 2011; Dr Law Chi Kong, consultation (works projects in HK, 2011). hk/eng/rgc/publication/ppd/ppd.htm of their work in the RGC’s Public Mortgage Corporation, the Hong Kong Mandatory Provident Fund, public hospitals in Hong Kong, the Housing Society, the Productivity Council, the Airport Authority, MTRC, the Office of the Telecommunications Authority, and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. In addition to SWSA, colleagues in Geography, Sociology, and the Social Sciences Research Centre were actively engaged in public policy related contract research, indicative of the Faculty’s non-academic impact.

**Professor John P Burns**
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**References**