The Feasibility of Ministerial System in Hong Kong

Chan Yuk Yue

Master of Arts in Public Policy and Management

City University of Hong Kong

September 1999
Abstract

This research project is concerned with the study of the feasibility of ministerial system in Hong Kong. The methodology of data collection was semi-structured interviews with several representatives of political parties in Hong Kong. A review on the existing ministerial systems in the Britain and the America has evinced that the ministerial system enables ministers to govern by a team to which they are held responsible through the elected polity to the people. They are selected by the elected to whom they are ultimately held responsible. In Hong Kong, the introductions of various elections, albeit heightening the aspirations of the public for a more accountable government, cannot hold the top bureaucrats more accountable to the public, not to mention in a direction comparable to the ministerial responsibility in the western democracies. The ministerial systems of the two western countries has been examined with an aim to investigating whether the essence of the systems could be borrowed to Hong Kong for constructing an institution that can be applicable locally. However, this study has showed that the political environment of Hong Kong is not concomitantly accommodated to political changes in recent years, rendering ministerial system unfeasible in the foreseeable future.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION
Aims of the Study ........................................... 4
Analytical Framework ........................................ 4
Methods of the Study ......................................... 7
Organization of the Study ..................................... 8

Chapter 2
THE CONCEPT OF MINISTERIAL SYSTEM
Ministerial Responsibility: The Basic Concepts of Ministerial System .......................................... 12
Ministerial Responsibility in Parliamentary Government ..................................................... 13
Ministerial Responsibility in Presidential Government .................................................... 17
The Role of Ministers ........................................... 19
Ministers in the Ministries ...................................... 20
Selecting Ministers .............................................. 21
The British and American System: Two Distinctive Models of Ministerial Government .......... 22
The Merits and Demerits of Ministerial System ................................................................. 26

Chapter 3
THE POLITICAL FEATURES OF THE HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION
The Origin of the Hong Kong Political Structure ................................................................. 34
Democratization: The Major Political Reforms in Hong Kong ........................................ 37
The Debate on the Idea of Ministerial System ................................................................. 42
The Merits of Introducing Ministerial System in Hong Kong .......................................... 44
Chapter 4
CONSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE
The Issues of Representativeness ............................................. 51
Checks and Balances ............................................................. 54
The Issues of Ministerial Responsibility .................................. 57
The Appointments of Ministers .............................................. 59
Findings ................................................................................. 61

Chapter 5
INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE
Political Appointments of Principal Government Officials as Ministers ...... 66
Political Appointments of Executive Councilors as Ministers ............... 69
Political Appointments of Legislative Councilors as Ministers ............... 72
Ministerial System Model Based on the American Presidential Government ................................................................. 74
Ministerial System Model Based on the British Parliamentary Government ................................................................. 79
Findings ................................................................................. 86

Chapter 6
THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF HONG KONG
The Supportive Views on Ministerial System .................................... 90
The Opposing Views on Ministerial System ...................................... 103
Findings ................................................................................. 107

Chapter 7
CONCLUSION
Summary of the Study .................................................................. 118
Questions For Further Study ...................................................... 122
The Trends Towards a Political Reform ......................................... 124