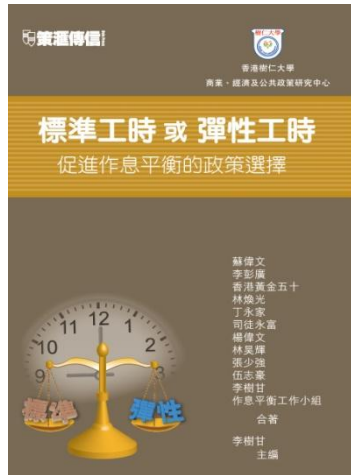




Standard Working Hours or Flexible Working Hours
Policy alternatives to facilitate Work-Life Balance
(Synopsis)

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Overview

In recent years, there is a growing debate over “Standard Working Hour” and “Work-life Balance” among the society, while the government has begun their research on the “Standard Working Hour” Policy. Before we discuss the “Standard Working Hour” legislation in Hong Kong, it is more appropriate to define the concepts of “Standard Working Hour” and “Work-life Balance”, and to outline the reasons for the rise of the society’s concern about “Standard Working Hour”, so that we can have a full picture of the background of the brewing policy

The content of the book is categorized into four areas: “Policy Formulation”, “Work-Life-Family Balancing Policy”, “Studies on Standard Working Hour” and “Flexible Working Hour and Flexible Project Management”. Each of those consists of articles written by featured authors from various professional backgrounds, namely, Mr. Lam Woon-kwong , GBS, JP, Professor Raymond So, Hong Kong Golden 50 and more, providing diverse and rich content to the readers. This

book allows us to think deeper and understand more about “Standard Working Hour”, “Flexible Working Hour” and “Work-Life Balance” from different perspectives.

Chapter I : Policy Formulation

009 A Brief Study: From Standard Working Hour to Public Policy Formulation

Dr Lee Pang-kwong

This article begins with a review in minimum wage and standard working hour policies and extends the discussion to a more general topic, which is public policy formulation, to illustrate how the balance between the public opinions and the government’s attitude, and domestic academia research support from domestic academia can help achieve wide support from the community and establish a well foundation for successful policy implementation.

015 Neo Hong Kong Politics And Labour Policy
Louis Ting

The author has assessed current political environment from the legislation of minimum wage policy and pointed out that such political circumstances have resulted in the fact that the labour interests prevail consistently in labour policies over the general benefits of Hong Kong society. Defense for the advantages of middle-class families and small-medium enterprises is the main suggestion to optimize the policies and improve Hong Kong political environment.

Chapter II: Work-Life-Family Balancing Policy

023 Hong Kong Needs a Pro-Family Attitude
Lam Woon-kwong

The importance of “Happy family” is elaborated with quality of life in the article. Interaction and linkage between “Happy family” and working are expressed as the key to enhancement in productivity and social harmony. Employers and employees are recommended to discuss and strive together for the balance between family and work.

027 Work-life Balance and Standard Working Hour: A Policy Decision Beneficing Family and the Economy
Dr SK Lee

The article has questioned the effectiveness in achieving work-life balance by legislation of standard working hour.

The author has demonstrated the potential consequences, such as intensified confrontation between employers and employees, of the legislation of standard working hour in different aspects with realistic examples.

033 “Work-life Balance” Policy Enhances Attractiveness to Talents

Dr Raymond Yeung

This article briefly analyzed the reasons for work-life imbalance and potential benefits of work-life balance policy, but showed doubt in standard working hour as a solution to the imbalance. The author points out that globalized competition leads to over-long working hours but a successful work-life balance policy can attract talents to Hong Kong, so as to enhance productivity and competitiveness of Hong Kong.

037 In Reference to Foreign Experience to Optimize “Work-life Balance” Policy

Dr Ricky Szeto

Foreign experiences in promoting working-life balance policy are well described in the article. Labour fund ran by Singapore government, Home-office arrangement in the US and funding and tax exemption for Research and Development from the UK government are examples of successful policies to enhance work-life balance without too much harming business environment or relationship between employers and employees.

041 A Policy Decision beneficing Work-life Balance
Dr Ricky Szeto

This article has compared working hours between western countries and Hong Kong to explain why Hong Kong people work for longer hours in terms of cultural difference. Then the focus of discussion has moved deeper to the root of work-life imbalance in Hong Kong: structural cost problem. After all, the author has questioned the effectiveness of standard working hour to solve the imbalance and advised on the role of government in this problem.

045 Pros of Work-life Balance on Labour side and Management side
Dr SK Lee and the Work-life Balance Working Group

Benefits of promotion of work-life balance measures across the company have been mentioned in this article. Employee would be more creative and less stressed. Female employees could be easier to manage the balance between their role as a mother and a labour. Moreover, flexibility in workplace and working hours, with the aid of advanced technology, can help the organizations to retain and attract talents.

Chapter III : Studies on Standard Working Hour

051 From High Property Price to Standard Working Hour Professor Raymond So

Long working hours explained the reason for high property price. Apparently, labour income would be raised after legislation of standard working hours, but it would result in a substitution to full-time employees by part-time employees. Employees may work shorter as full-time but they may participate in more than one part-time job, but their real income could still be less than what they would have earned if they worked overtime for their full-time job.

055 From New Town Planning to Standard Working Hour Professor Raymond So

Poor new town planning explained work-life imbalance in Hong Kong. Tin Shui Wai has been taken as an example. Residents in Tin Shui Wai have to spend about longer hours in travel, while standard working hour has no effect on reducing the travelling hour, neither on their burden on transportation cost.

059 Uncertainty to Labour Market Brought by Standard Working Hour Dr Raymond Yeung

This article has listed results of empirical studies on foreign experiences in standard working hour and minimum wage, including number of full-time employees would be reduced while the number of part-timers would increase, but aggregate enterprise profits and production level would be reduced.

063 Work-life Balance Policy should Hit the Nail on the Head Dr Ng Chi-ho

The author pointed out that standard working hour cannot facilitate work-life balance in Hong Kong. For professionals,

who may carry out their work at home, cafe, office or anywhere accessible to internet. For the blue-collar workers, their employers may change their employment term from full-time to part-time to hedge the pressure in cost resulted from standard working hour policy.

067 Pro and Cons of Standard Working Hour Policy: evidence from foreign experiences

Dr SK Lee and the Work-life Balance Working Group

Effects of standard working hour were detailed in this article. Generally, foreign studies proved that standard working hour could bring various effects to different industries/countries. In industry/country with more adequate labour force and more elastic wage level, the effect on actual working hour of standard working hour would be rather limited than it would be if there is less adequate labour force and less elastic working hour. However, unemployment rate would raise in both cases.

071 Standard Hour Work Policy is Social Policy

Dr Cheung Siu-keung

This article assessed the problem on legislation of standard working hour in social aspect rather than economic aspect. It has mentioned that standard working hour reminds us the relationship between society and economy and cultural and social cost of long working hour. This article provides a refreshing viewpoint to the problem.

Chapter IV: Flexible Working Hour and Flexible Project Management

077 Viewing Flexible Working Hour from Enterprises' Perspective

Dr Lubanski Lam

The writer suggested implementation of flexible working hour as it can help increase labour productivity, reduce operating costs and staff turnover rate.

081 Viewing Flexible Working Hour from Employees' Perspective

Dr Lubanski Lam

Benefits of flexible working hour on employees are mentioned in this article. They would be healthier physically and mentally, achieve more job satisfaction and be

less stressed. Successful implementations in Germany, South Korea and Hong Kong have been shared.

087 Standard Working Hour, Flexible Working Arrangement and Work-life Balance Policy

Dr SK Lee and the Work-life Balance Working Group

This article demonstrated a number of evidence to question effectiveness of standard working hour on promotion of work-life balance. Three ideas, namely flexible working arrangement, mental and physical health, and Family-friendliness, are suggested to enhance work-life balance.

093 Core Idea of "Work-life Balance" Policy

Dr Raymond Yeung

The purpose of work-life balance policy is restated as "ability of labour to choose and adjust between work and life", instead of purely "the length of working hour". Companies are recommended to find ways to resolve employees' pressure, so their moral and efficiency can be therefore enhanced.

097 Comments on Work-life balance in terms of Quality of Time

Dr SK Lee and the Work-life Balance Working Group

Work-life balance is all about allocation of time. Therefore, work-life balance policy should take "flexibility" of working hour as principal. The author has discussed four types of time period to illustrate various human needs in different period of time and essentialness of flexibility in working hour. It is concluded that, though it might reduce working hour, standard working hour policy could actually have no significant effect in optimizing allocation of time.

Chapter V: Summary

105 Take the Chance of "Golden 5-Year", Handle Labour Policy Carefully

Hong Kong Golden 50

A number of government policies were commented, including standard working hour policy. It is suggested that we should step back and look at the "Big Picture" of the situation to find out the key of the problem rather than to repeat mistakes.