

# Department of Public and Social Administration

## Postgraduate Work Display

GIBSON Craig Matthew (MPhil)

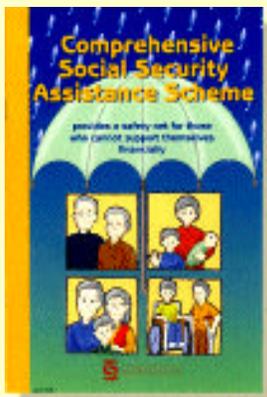
Pension Systems, Policy and Welfare Capitalism in Hong Kong and Singapore

The advent of the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 and subsequent social policy developments in South Korea and Taiwan has sparked considerable debate regarding the possibilities for welfare regime change in these settings. Despite this, both Singapore and Hong Kong exhibit minimal or indeed no substantive social policy development during the period, bar Hong Kong's adoption of the MPF in 2000. Given that these regimes have often been considered as constituting part of a single 'East Asian' welfare regime model, the apparent pension and social policy stagnancy in the latter two poses interesting questions regarding the possibility for continuing to regard them so.



This study will focus upon examining the comparative dynamics of pension policy development in Singapore and Hong Kong as a means to developing greater understanding into their broader welfare capitalist regimes. Pension systems are a potentially very fruitful 'window' into welfare regime configurations, particularly since the populations in both of these places are predicted to age very rapidly in the next twenty to thirty years. This suggests that the politics of pensions and old age are likely to be of increasing salience and policy significance for these governments in the future.

As such, this study wishes to relate deeper understandings of pension policy development to broader questions relating to the continuing viability of ideas of an 'East Asian' welfare model. In particular, the aim is to develop insights that might enable us to answer the following question: why have Hong Kong and Singapore remained relatively stagnant in social policy terms in spite of the altered economic environment and in what differing ways has this occurred? What are the implications of this for welfare regimes in East Asian NIE's more generally?



Primarily being an analysis of policy development, the approach will largely be qualitative and historical in nature. Emphasis will in particular be on – analysis of official primary sources (especially consultative papers and policy documents), position papers of political and interest groups, legislative proceedings and interviews with ex-officials and political actors where possible. In relation to the implications of the analysis for NIE welfare regimes, there is a clear need to undertake a thorough and critical evaluation of the existing literature on the subject.

Where appropriate, use of a variety of statistical data will be made in order to evaluate demographic, socio-economic and fiscal trends. Welfare regimes are dynamic creatures, and thus such a statistical base is central to addressing pertinent questions relating to the continuing utility of a NIE regime model and the possibilities for reassessing the place of these regimes within other extant models.