

Social community to
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Social Organization

According to Jones, Singapore has not had a proper structure of a welfare services since gaining autonomy in late 1950s (2002, p.

57). The ruling party-People Action Party (PAP) - that ruled Singapore from 1959 has steadily resisted efforts to set up welfare services for its people. Consequently, the typical elements that characterize a welfare society such as unemployment benefits, state pension, disability pension, child benefits and allowances have largely been nonexistent in Singapore. Individuals who cannot sustain themselves economically usually rely on public support. However, the rates imposed on public assistance are devised to provide essential support only. Moreover, the state not the sole contributor of welfare services for instance: care for the aged persons; family counseling; support for the disabled; treatment of drug addicts; and child protection.

As a result, the government's expenditure on welfare services has remained a tiny proportion of the aggregate government budget. For example, according to the Ministry of Finance, Singapore government spent 0.9 % of its gross domestic product on social services in 2002 fiscal year (Jones, 2002, p. 58). Welfare needs are vital to the comfort of the people.

Most of social needs have emerged as a result of the state's social and economic reforms that have created a prosperous and wealthy society in Singapore. According to the government, charitable groups have a duty to provide welfare service in Singapore while the state acts as a supervisor and resource donor (Jones, 2002, p. 58). The voluntary welfare organizations (VWO)-including community groups, religious organizations, charitable

groups and self-help groups- have played a vital role in the dispensation of social and welfare services in Singapore. The religious organizations are involved in provision of care for the old and disabled, providing guidance to individuals and families under pressure and offering financial support for the poor. The VWO are also provides services such as nursery education for small children who lack parental care due to work engagements.

The day centers set up by VWO provide conducive environment for the disabled and the elderly to interrelate socially and participate in recreational activities. The student care institutions supervise homework and recreational activities for children whose parents are employed. The VWO also have set up centers to help drug addicts, poor persons and abused children. These programs are usually carried out in all regions of Singapore. They are also established in specific community to provide service for the local residence (Jones, 2002, p. 64). Singapore has recorded rapid economic growth in the last two decades.

Consequently, unemployment rate has been less than three percent while living standards have been exceptionally high. Some of the benefits of rapid economic growth in Singapore include: superior standard of public and private housing, large disposable income, low levels of crime, efficient healthcare structures, well-organized public services and a generally sanitized environment (Jones, 2002, p. 59). However, economic affluence in Singapore has been attained at a price. For example, there has been a marked increase in income and wealth disparities when compared to other Asian countries such as Japan. The average wages for the top 19.

9% of households with respect to prosperity is currently 21 times bigger than the average earnings of the last 19. 9%. It is worth to note that the income gap was slightly above ten times ten years before. Even though poverty has been reduced to bare minimal, income gaps abound in Singapore.

Moreover, economic development, merged with the prevalent Confucianism in Singapore has brought about a strong accomplishment culture, symbolized by the adoption of educational and vocational achievement (Jones, 2002, p. 59). The urge to be triumphant has contributed to considerable levels of personal and family anxiety (Jones, 2002, p. 59). In addition, it has led to a sense of segregation and discontent amongst Singaporeans who have failed to attain expected social status.

The social and economic revolution in the country has also contributed to the substitution of the conventional societies based on the village (kampong) with extensive up to date housing estates. This change eradicated communal identity and a sense of ownership among Singaporeans. More recently, the extensive 3-generation family units are currently facing oblivion due to the emergence in prominence of the 2-generation nuclear family units. The family units and the traditional community offered moral and personal security to individual members in the society (Jones, 2002, p. 60).

Moreover, the assimilation of a substantial segment of female inhabitants in Singapore into the employment sector, especially over 58% of female within the 20-40 age cohorts has created problems related with provision of child care. A notable effect related with economic and social reforms is the ageing of the country's populace, brought about by improved standards of life and

efficient health care services. All these reforms have thus given rise to a wide range of costs synonymous with contemporary urban society.

Individuals and households in need of financial assistance, mounting rates of divorce, child abuse, increase in crime rate, and a growing population of old people in need of welfare services (Jones, 2002, p. 60).

Economic organization

Some of the major economic gains realized in Singapore can be attributed to the state's decision to adopt a Democratic Enterprise due to the defects of the Socialist model in communist states. The basis for this paradigm shift has been necessitated by the emergence of the era of global information and technological advancement that offer a platform for essential reforms in the economic system. The model also offers more liberty from the traditional factors of production: labor, capital and land. It also provides the much needed technology for worldwide integration. The model stresses on the function of information and how it can be employed productively in economic administration. In addition, it incorporates democratic tenets that allow individuals to run the economy.

It thus upholds capitalist enterprise whereas its democratic space curbs social hostility in various ways (Applications, 2010, p. 8). The principal objective of Democratic Enterprise is personal liberty within the society that is combined into several networks that generate a variety of political, social, economical and educational gains. Thus, the core values of the model are autonomy and creativity based on the welfare gains and unlimited dispensation of information. Democratic Enterprise is also known as “

knowledge industry model” of economic growth because it entails a higher level of autonomy to modernize and to correlate with whoever is suitable to develop novel products (Applications, 2010, p. 9). For example, the employment patterns in the contemporary developed economies such as Singapore have effectively reorganized and improved their labor intensive exports by using advanced technologies (Agarwal et al, 2001, p.

18). Some services are outsourced and the firms become flexible, systemized organizations that can be altered if need be. Business ventures cannot be managed from a central point as they require a devolved structure and an efficient communication system.

The role of state is thus limited to provision of infrastructures and social and economic policies to promote economic activities (Applications, 2010, p. 9).

Among the advanced economies, Singapore was identified as one of the countries that adopted the Democratic Enterprise model in 1995. The function of the government was to facilitate an enabling economic infrastructure that augmented sound economic development in Singapore. Since globalization allows firms to decentralize their operations in numerous locations, most governments face mounting pressure to draw viable domestic and foreign investments by offering low taxes, social infrastructures and highly efficient information structure, nominal regulations, novel technologies, skilled labor force and product market.

Thus, the ability to adopt this new model developed Singapore into one of the most advanced cities in Asia. Although the city is not endowed with natural resources and has a tiny population, Singapore has attracted over 3,

000 firms by developing a highly sophisticated economic infrastructure and public Information Technology. As a result, Singapore was voted as one of the highly competitive economies in the globe by the Global Competitive Report (Applications, 2010, p.

9). The adoption of the Democratic Model promotes socialist and capitalist approaches to global information technology that fosters a system of individual ingenuity in Singapore. The city has thus been able to create an efficient structure of education, excellent worker-management bond and efficient communication system. Firms in the country have designed their own global commercial systems in partnership with domestic teams that act as semi-autonomous units. The new business enterprises are characterized by alliances between unions, firms, government and workers.

Under the Enterprise model, mutual benefits demand an amalgamation of local and international partnership with the co-dependent enterprise of all stakeholders. Singapore has successfully implemented this new economic model through privatization, involvement of labor unions and minimal government involvement (Applications, 2010, p. 9). The government has thus realized that the mutual integration of business ventures and human principles is more fruitful and effective than previous methods used to manage economic activities in Singapore.

The structure of public governance employed by Singapore entails five general tenets that tell them apart from other countries where economic rational model is the main driver of economic activities. The first is the recognition of the prominent role of state in creating liaison between public

sector, business enterprises and civil organizations. Second, the tactical scheduling of national aims that encompass all segments of the economy is perceived as vital to national growth and is acknowledged as a state duty. Third, the population is perceived as a critical element to economic development and that full employment is the optimal way to repay their contribution.

The state has thus supported efforts by civil organizations to provide financial and welfare needs of the population. Fourth, the Singapore's government is seriously committed to display its obligations through a variety of lucid procedures. Finally, the government is committed to implementing sustainable economic policies as opposed to economic rational policies that are short term in nature.

Thus the public governance model has been successfully used in Singapore. The gains of economic growth have also been spread to the population more evenly than before (Callender & Johnston, 1998, p. 168).

Political organization

The democratic systems adopted in Southeast Asia have employed the principles of Asia and western countries as precise cultural constructions underlining the legality of some political engagements and institutions. In nutshell, these cultural principles have been used to legitimize a type of political statute called, Asian Democracy, which has been used by political leaders in Singapore. The proponents of Asian Democracy claim that the model echoes authentic Asian traditional ideals such as community, agreement and consensus. These values are distinguished from the Western

cultural values such as conflict, egoism and individualism (Lawson, 1995, p. 1).

Asian Democracy has significantly limited the democratic space for opposition parties. In Singapore, these parties are denied media coverage and opposition dissidents are sometimes arrested without formal court proceedings (Lawson, 1995, p. 2). The tenets of Asian democracy used in Singapore normally entail principle of relativism, more so with respect to the ideals of the culture. Those who support this model argue that democracy is not fit for everyone.

Even though the structure of democracy has diverse forms and political parties may not concur with regard to the importance attributed to diverse tenets of democracy, there are nevertheless constrains to the types of governments that can lawfully be referred to as democratic (Lawson, 1995, p. 3). For instance, Singapore has been run by the People's Action Party (PAP) for over three decades. Despite the fact that political parties in the country are allowed to vie for office, the PAP regime has used a number of oppressive tools to ensure that valid political contest for the office is restricted thus ensuring that PAP maintains its uninterrupted rule (Lawson, 1995, p.

9). In Singapore, the creation of cultural precepts from which the values of Asian democracy are formed has been linked to a Confucian legacy. As a result, a number of cultural spats used by political elites in Singapore in recent times merit consideration with respect to creation of cultural norms. Also, the country offers a lucid model of how official organizations related

with democracy cannot assure that democratic activities, especially those related to political antagonism and expression are in fact operational (Lawson, 1995, p. 13). The PAP government has sustained its rule in Singapore since 1959 via a number of political strategies.

For instance, the PAP's ability to deliver high economic growth and improved living standards among its population with negligible level of corruption has entrenched realistic consent among the populace. The state has carefully used public consent via repressive strategies for example arresting political dissidents without trial and constraints on a number of public rights such as freedom of speech. Moreover, the PAP has bolstered public consent by promoting a number of Asian values. For example, in 1982, the ruling party created Institute of East Asian Philosophy (IEAP) to promote Confucian ideas which would later be redefined and adjusted to the needs of the modern society (Lawson, 1995, p. 14). Singapore cannot be classified as a welfare state because it does not provide social services to its citizens. The major providers of these services are voluntary and religious organization.

However, the government has done exceptionally well on economic reforms that have improved incomes and living standards of its people. The government has liberalized the economy and attracted foreign investments by developing efficient social and economical infrastructures. However, the democratic set up of Singapore is still oppressive and political parties and dissidents are oppressed.

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