



International Research Cooperation project of a consortium of Asian universities, chaired by Chiba University, Japan, with the European Foundation on Social Quality

Applying and Achieving Social Quality for Asia: Developing Social Quality in Asian types of Civil Society

The main objective of our research programme is to provide comparative perspectives on public policies and welfare policy development across Asia. These comparative perspectives will assist in the formulation and implementation of transition strategies towards a Sustainable Welfare Society at national and regional level. The research programme will be a collaboration of a consortium of Asian universities chaired by Chiba University, with the European Foundation on Social Quality, a number of Voluntary Sector Organisations, NGOs and INGOs in Civil Society. This international collaborative research project will be introduced below.

1. Societal trends, public policies and social quality

Societal trends and the interventions by public policies influence the nature of social quality in daily circumstances. Public policies also carry strong impacts on the ways in which people try to pursue their aims and personal goals, and their possibilities of achieving them. The objective of this research project is to expand the ideas of the public perceptions and public policy concerning the relations between, on the one hand, current societal and policy trends, and on the other, the social quality of communities and individual citizens, as well as the implications of these relations for public policies. This also addresses the effects of societal trends and of policies on social quality. Such trends may include: changes in demographic trends related to population ageing and low fertility rates; in gender roles; in social or family relations; in the organisation of care for children, the sick or the growing demand for older people in need of care; in work and use of time; in division of labour and income.

Another important aspect of the concepts in public policy includes the relation between public policies (e.g. social care, employment, education, environment and health policy) and people's coping strategies throughout their lifespan. This should address the relationships between traditional economic indicators of welfare, such as GDP, and measures including subjective and objective indicators of the quality of life advocated by the WHO. Gender aspects of these issues should be examined and a comparative approach is also highly appropriate.

2. New civil society: new compositions of social actors (volunteers and social entrepreneurs) and organisations (voluntary organisation, NGOs and INGOs)

The enlarged FTA zones in Asia may be characterised with considerable international population mobility and an emergence of new social actors and organisations in the regions. This is also a key component of broader cultural diversity. The diversity and the emergence of new civil society may carry important implications for policies in Asia, and options and choices towards a sustainable welfare society. The objective of this research project is to examine the role and implications of cultural diversity and new emergences of social actors (volunteers and social entrepreneurs) and organisations (voluntary organisations, NGOs, and INGOs) in Asia and the EU, specifically in view of the efforts to create a Sustainable Welfare Society which respects cultural diversities and cross-cultural

understanding. This examines the historical, political and cultural developments which have shaped the new compositions of 'social and public' actors and organisations in the civil society in Asia, and which are important for its development in the future. Important factors, promoting an emergence of these actors and organisations in Asia, and likely developments should be identified and analysed. The role of new social actors in a civil society, economy and culture needs to be considered. Special attention should be paid to the reasons for, and consequences of the advent of these new actors and organisations in economic, political, scientific, cultural and other contexts. The importance of this aspect in a sustainable welfare society will be fully examined. In a wider context of the globalisation, the role of voluntary organisations, e.g. NGOs, and INGOs, as a carrier of social and civil movement, will also be researched.

3. Finding development models to meet combined societal and economic objectives

Historically, each Asian society has attempted to combine a number of objectives, and these are reflected to a significant degree in their socio-economic development models. At present there are particular challenges to these aims. The objective of this research project is to assess the past achievements and future potential of various development models in terms of combining the political objectives of social quality, growth, employment, social and territorial cohesion, and sustainable development. This also includes a comparison of Europe and relevant regions of the world, as well as of the variety of socio-economic models within Asia. Historical and institutional assessments of the models will be accessed; this includes their historical origins, their basis in the public and social spheres, for example, culture, values, law, implicit or explicit social contracts, development of a welfare state, industrial relations systems, financial regulation, corporate governance in the wider sense, and gender relations. The relevance of these historically-developed characteristics to current conditions and those of the foreseeable future, in terms of meeting the combined objectives, and the usefulness of traditional indicators of (economic and other) performance will be addressed in this context. Attempts to research on change or path-dependency of models are also addressed, including an understanding of the conditions for and processes of institutional change, and the role of the societies in this.

Dr. Tetsuo Ogawa
Chiba University, Japan

The First Asian Conference on Sustainable Welfare Societies

On 27th and 28th of March a Public Policy Research Consortium Meeting will take place in Tokyo. Topic of debate is: Human Welfare and Public Policy under Social Justice, Equity and Democratic based Relationships: Asian Challenges for Establishing Sustainable Welfare Society.

This meeting is organised by the Research Centre on Public Affairs for Sustainable Welfare Society (ReCPA), 21st Century COE programme, Chiba University, in co-operation with:

the European Foundation on Social Quality (EFSQ),
the Oxford University China Programme (OUCP),
the Society for the Study of Social Policy (JSPA),
the Japan Association for Asian Studies (JAAS),
Taiwan Social Policy Association (TSPA) & the Hong Kong Association of Gerontology (HKAG).