

Issues  
and  
Challenges  
of  
Social Policy  
East and West

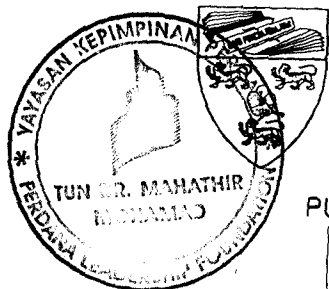
*Editors*

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# Issues and Challenges of Social Policy East and West

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*Skhbas untuk*  
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25/5/01



University of Malaya Press

PUSTAKA PERDANA



1006101

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# PREFACE

The papers, reproduced as chapters in this volume, were first presented at Experts Committee Meeting of Social Policy and Welfare Issues : East and West, held in the University Malaya, Kuala Lumpur during September 1998. Attended by academic researchers, civil servants and officials of NGOs , the meeting was itself a product of an ongoing relationship between the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of Birmingham, UK and academics at the University Malaya who have been involved with its Social Administration program.

The relationship was initiated by Professor Datuk Dr. Zainal Kling, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences who visited Birmingham in 1994 to discuss the possibility of establishing a link. In due course the CICHE (Committee for International Co-operation in Higher Education) was established with financial support and advice of the British council and in 1995 one of the editors of this volume - then head of the Birmingham department - visited Kuala Lumpur and was received by the other editor who was then Coordinator of the Social Administration program. From the start of this program, visits to both universities were made with the intention of exchanging information about the curricula, reading lists, approaches to teaching and so on.

As the three years of the CICHE link came to an end, it was clear to a number of us that, whereas there had been important achievements, there was much unfinished business : Not just about pedagogic and other academic issues, but about other real life social policy. In part this could be seen in the development in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s in which there had been increasing attention paid to the lesson that might be learned from the flourishing economies of some of the south and east Asian countries. Margaret Thatcher, when prime minister, had viewed the flexible labor market and the low social overheads of Hong Kong as a model to emulate. Tony Blair while still in opposition, had visited Singapore to learn of its

Central Provident Fund, and more recently, the commitment resources to education as the basis economic growth in the countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, has been recognized as an important strategy.

But, these attempts to seek policy lessons can be seen as part of a larger body of processes - frequently labeled globalization - that have exposed all industrialized countries in the widest sense to include financial, manufacturing and intellectual capital - to be geographically mobile has made it increasingly difficult for national governments having regard for the impact of their policies on their competitive position in the global marketplace can no longer assume that even social welfare developments, such as expenditure on health care or social security, are simply domestic issues. As some of the Asian economies have slipped into economic difficulties, extent of similarities and the meaning of inter-linkages have become more apparent. In this sense, the destinies of our two countries have come closer together.

Our response to these developments was to conceive the plan of organizing a workshop in which paired papers would be given, that is UM experts on social welfare issues presenting papers on Malaysia would be matched with Birmingham experts presenting papers on the same welfare areas in Britain. The aim was that such an arrangement would allow each author to present analysis of welfare developments in his or her own country whilst allowing all those taking part to draw out similarities and differences, and to advance understanding on both countries.

The degree of success of the workshop will be judged, in part, by those reading the present collection of papers. However, those taking part have certainly come to their own view about its achievement and responded with a commitment to take forward both joint research into the challenges facing the development of social welfare in our two countries and continuing links and discussions on a variety of academic issues.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the financial and other support that has enabled the meeting and the publication to be realized. The British Council continued its earlier support by giving two members of the Birmingham contingent travel grants, the remaining travel costs being met by the School Sciences at the University of Birmingham and by the Department of Social Policy and Social Work itself. The editors wish to express their sincere gratitude to University of Malaya, and in particular to Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, for the continuous support towards building the link and contributions towards the meeting and the book. We also wish to thank the authors for their contributions towards the book. Last but not least, we are grateful to the former Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social

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Science, University of Malaya, Professor Datuk Dr. Zainal Kling, for his vision in linking the Departments, and to Professor Mohd. Fauzi Haji Yaacob, for his support in realizing the link and publication of this book.

Roziah Omar and John Doling