Balancing autonomy and control: The case of professionals in Singapore

by Stella R. Quah

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This study analyzes the role of four professions in Singapore’s historical development and nation-building efforts. Four professions were selected based on two criteria: the importance given to a profession by development planners in Singapore, and / or its status as a classical profession. Engineering and architecture were selected based on the first criterion while medicine and law represent the classical professions. The analysis is presented in four sections. The first section reviews the main conceptual approaches applied to the sociological study of professions. The second section provides a historical background of the development of the four professions including their establishment, growth, organization, and other relevant characteristics. The third section deals with the input of professionals in Singapore’s economic development and modernization since independence. The fourth section draws some inferences from a comparative analysis of the four professions in Singapore with their counterparts in other countries in the region.