Public Policy and the Welfare State

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A welfare state is a concept of government where the state plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-being of its citizens. It is based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth, and public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for a good life. The general term may cover a variety of forms of economic and social organization. Although they have similar features, each country has different applications for social protection.

The concept of social policy and welfare state are connected. In a board sense, social policy emerged together with the concept of welfare state after World War II. Therefore, social policy included health services, social security, city, environment, and struggling against unemployment and poverty that affect social welfare. The members of society have such needs as education, social security, health services, and housing. All the policies that ensure that everyone has fair opportunities with regard to income, taxes, wages, education, and social security contribute to the development of social justice. Social policy aims to ensure the welfare of individuals through legislative regulations.

Affected by the wars which broke out in the first half of twentieth century and 1929 economic crisis, the concept of state changed in favor of social policies. With Keynesian economic approach, it paved the way for more inclusive interventions and adopted "welfare state" approach. However, also affected by globalization, the interventionist approach of welfare state to ensure economic and social welfare failed to ensure economic growth, and the position of state was discussed again.

The crises beginning in 1970s and the problems which increased with the effect of globalization led to a transformation in the welfare state. In this new period, where the increase of social expenditures and taxes was perceived as a threat, it was suggested that the social responsibilities of the state should be reduced.

Hence as a result of liberal approach in the economy, two opposing sections emerged in society: the bourgeois class who are the capital owners and working class who are the labor holders. The reduced of wages, poor working conditions, and long working hours have led to social problems in the labor class and to class conflicts.

All of the issues such as health services, elderly and child care, struggle against unemployment and poverty, participation of women in working life, protection of the environment, and gender discrimination became issues for which the state struggled under social policy. The narrowing of social welfare state practices in the process of globalization caused social rights to be restricted.

With the power from capital, the bourgeoisie class began to impose low wages, poor working conditions, and working hours of up to 16–20 hours on workers. The working class was left

totally unprotected with the adoption of a liberal approach which argues that interference with market conditions adversely affects welfare. The increasing social problems led to the formation of social policies. The liberal market economy, which was replaced with Keynesian policies after World War II and 1929 economic crisis, was given up, and thus, the state could interfere with market by means of social policies.

In today's world, the concept of welfare state is transforming and the economic pressures created by globalization have a tendency to narrow social policies. Based on the fact that the reason for the transformation in the welfare state is not just globalization, each state should develop policies and tools that are the most appropriate for its social structure to adapt it to the transformation process.

However one can say that poverty and unemployment rates have not been reduced till now and social welfare policies implemented by the state have not been successful