Articulating a Global Social Policy: The Role of International Organizations

ADEWOLE LAWAL
University of Sheffield, UK
Email: amadedipe@liberty.edu

ABSTRACT

Global social policy formation and implementation has never been more important in our history than it is at this moment. The world in recent decades has metamorphosed into a global village. As part of a large body of the United Nations, bad policies in developing countries not only impact these countries negatively, a multiplying effect of this situation also negatively impact developed nations. Consequently, we have to mitigate against lopsided development around the world. Migration influxes from third world countries to developed countries, increase in poverty, increase in crime rates, etc. are some of the problems we face if we do not act in unison. The aim of this paper is to propose a pragmatic public policy model that would encourage Western countries, "the global North" to actively take part in the process of policy formation and execution through international bodies like the G7, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, etc.

Keywords: Global social policy, Global North, Global South, migration influxes, and poverty

---

Introduction

Social policy often arises as a result of social problem which has been recognised by the government in place. The attempt at providing solutions to these problems is what is referred to as social policy making process (Lindblom and Woodhouse, 1993). The formation of social policy is thus a complex one. This is because the government which is seen as the major policy-maker performs this function with families, markets, community associations and others (Manning, 2012). Since social problem that social policy is targeted at affects the majority ofpeople, the solutions to it therefore require a collective effort. Therefore, putting the solution to it in the hands of government alone will not solve the problem.

With globalization, the world has now become a single, shared place (Yeates, 2008b). Though, there are disagreements as regards the existence of globalization with regards to its starting point, consequences and general acceptability (Waters, 2001; Yeates, 2001; 2007; 2008a; 2008b). However, the emergence of global institutions to address global social problems by way of policy has shown that globalization has come to stay. These multilateral institutions together with the academia seek to create universal agreement around ideas that they deem important for the sake of policy (Boas and McNeil, 2004). Today, national social policy cannot be separated from global context of the policy. This is because social policy of countries has elements of global social policy enacted and coordinated by global institutions. The social problems that are addressed by national governments often have global dimensions which require "supranational policy responses" (Deacon, 2007, p.3).

Despite the control of global social policy by global institutions, the Global South is not well represented. This is because supranational institutions, in terms of membership, are dominated by Global North. Therefore, the Global South has little influence in shaping global social policy (Bello, 2004). An hegemonic state like the United Sates plays an important role in influencing the policies made by international organizations (Boas and McNeil, 2004). International organization

cannot be said to "reproduce the redistributive approach of social policy characterised by Scandinavian countries" (Deacon, 2007, p.25). The United States as a global super power has been exercising global governance in its own interests, not mindful of its membership of international organizations (Deacon, 2008). This notion of US interference in the policy making of the Global South could probably be due to the notion of "he who pays the piper dictates the tune." This has made many in the Global South to want to withdraw from the existing global social governance (Bello, 2004).

This essay discusses the role of global institutions in the policy-making process using sub-headings: Social policy making process, global institutions, the role of global institutions in influencing national social policy, challenges facing global institutions in shaping national social policy, articulating a public policy model and the way forward. The essay therefore submits that global institutions play a very important role which needs to be understood in order to understand social policy making process, however, global social policy should address the core problems of global south rather than appearing to be doing something without feeling the impact.

Social Policy making process

The ways social policies are formed depend on some factors which include how national government responds to the demands of transnational and other knowledge-based organization (Hulme and Hulme, 2008). Policy process is much more a political art rather than rational science. It is not a linear and straight forward process as Hogwood and Gun (1984) states. To Hogwood and Gun (1984) the policy process involves 5 stages namely identification of problems, formulation, legitimation, implementation and evaluation. The policy process is not a reality but an ideal as argued by Bridgman and Davis (2003) where they identified 8 stages of policy cycle. This includes identification of issues, policy analysis, policy instruments, consultation, coordination, decision, implementation and evaluation.

The policy cycle has thus been criticized as lacking theoretical ability, led by administrator rather than actors, and its focus on process rather than content and context (Colebath, 2005). Bridgman and Davis

(2003) who designed policy cycle for Australia see it as a toolkit and not a theory. The complexity of policy was also described by Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) that policy rarely follows a particular pattern. This is because there are a lot of factors that can influence the policy process. Hudson and Lowe (2004) made us to understand that policy is based on "path dependency" (p.177) and institution makes this possible. Path dependency thus means that the formation of policy involves making reference to previously formulated policy.

In order to understand the nature of social policy, it is important to understand the distinction between "rationalist" and "incrementalist" theories of the policy process (Blume, 1979; Clarke, 2003). The rationalist view policy as a linear and step-by-step approach (like following the policy cycle). To them, policy or decision making process is straight-forward and involves careful imitation of a well-laid down policy approach or policy cycle. However, the incrementalist theory makes us to understand that policy process is never an easy task which is arrived at through following some steps. It involves negotiation, renegotiation and bargaining (Clarke, 2003) before arriving at final decision. Although, the process is interactive (Clarke, 2003) but it gives opportunity to members of the group or individuals to express their views. However, some members do have power over other members to determine the policy to adopt. For instance, the US and the UK could get better bargain from global social policy because of their strong command of world economy and contribution to global institutions.

Like the submission of incrementalist theory, policy making is within the context of politics and people and also involves knowledge and power. Policy making either at the national, regional or global level is never a clear process but a rough and ambiguous one. Social policy-making process is indeed "a complexly interactive process without beginning or end" (Lindblom and Woodhouse, 1993, p.11). Deacon and Stubbs (2013) supported incrementalist approach by their Identification of "politics of scale" (p. 10) as part of the attempt at understanding the global social policy making process. This politics of scale helps us in understanding policy-making process as made up of different sites, layers and diverse actors.

Global Institutions

The global institutions are established international organizations for the ordered pattern of the world. We need to understand what "institutions" means to understand the concept of global institutions. How do we know "global institutions"? It is simply by knowing the institutions that are global in nature. What then are institutions? There are many definitions of institutions (Young, 1986; Keohane, 1989; Hodgson, 2006) but one thing that is common to all of them is that institutions are established patterns of social relationship which direct and shape the activities of its members. They have rules and regulations to achieve their objectives. Institutions can both be a constraint and enablement (Hodgson, 2006), just like power, to its members. In order not to abandon the literature definition of institutions, we therefore define institutions as "recognized practices constituting of easily identifiable roles, coupled with collections of rules or conventions governing relations among the occupants of these roles" (Young, 1986, p. 107).

Institutions can also be viewed as meeting needs and providing solutions to problems. The institutions that we have in mind here are the global institutions whose space goes beyond national borders. They are also called international organizations (Yeates, 2012). Yeates (2012) reported that these institutions have increased to about one thousand recently as against seventy that it was in 1940. The international organization that we are concerned with here is the one whose membership cut across different regions and all continent of the world. For instance, it should be noted that the European Union (EU) is not a global institution but a regional institution. Although, EU is an international organization just like UN but they both differ in terms of membership. It is important to distinguish global institutions or international organizations based on their level of governance. Based on this, we have "international governmental organizations (IGO)" and "International non-governmental organizations (INGO)" (Yeates, 2012). The IGOs includes the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), International Labour

Organization (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) among others (Deacon, 2008; Yeates, 2012).

The INGOs include OXFAM, World Social Forum, World Economic Forum, World Water Forum, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, International Planned Parenthood Federation, International Pharmaceutical Industries Association among others (Yeates, 2012). These global institutions are also called multilateral institution (Boas and McNeil, 2004). These institutions have commitment in terms of donations by members to sustain it and influence global social policy.

The role of global institutions in influencing national social policy

Deacon and Stubbs (2013) stated that the presence of global structures and actors in shaping national social policy and the patterns of 3Rs (Redistribution, Regulation and Rights) of global social policy, therefore shows the depth of global social policy. They note that the focus on global social policy is not to downgrade national social policy but a way to understand the contribution of global players on national social policy. For instance, global context has been adapted to diverse national contexts in terms of promoting human welfare, rights and capabilities especially in order to attain "human development paradigm" (Alkire, 2010). In shaping global social policy, it is not only the global institutions like the UN, World Bank and so on that do this. There are still some organizations that are extension of national organization that perform this role. These include consultants, INGO experts, think-tankers, policy entrepreneur, global knowledge elites and so on (Deacon and Stubbs, 2013).

Yeates (2007) elaborated on the impact of globalization in questioning the national frame of social policy. He argued that the national framing of social policy makes us to think of social policy as something that took place within the national space without reference to global surroundings or association with other countries or learning from other countries. It is therefore not appropriate to remove wider global geo-political order from national social policy (Yeates, 2007). This is

because the global political order do shape and influence national social policy. Also, in as much as there is 'global in local', there is also 'local in global' (Deacon and Stubbs, 2013). What this depicts is that despite the fact that global social policy shapes national social policy, global social policy could be borrowed from national government. The possibility of global actors learning from national social policy was found in the work of Irving (2011) where she notes that other nations can also learn from Iceland ability to come out very strong from the global economic crisis. It is not only other nations can learn from this (Irving, 2011) but also global actors in their formulation of policy.

Yeates (2012) gives us the role of global institutions as creating opportunity for mutual education, setting international social standards and establishment of a common market which creates a need for regulatory reform. He also notes that global institutions do not always succeed in influencing the social policy of countries. Yeates (2012) therefore sees the act of influencing the distribution and redistribution of resources universally, framing social policy at both national and global level, and shaping the nature of social provision in national contexts as the way international organization implement social policies and programme. In order to understand better the role of global institutions in social policy, we shall now limit ourselves to World Bank roles in shaping policies of countries in the world.

The World Bank acted with some deception of being world anti-poverty agency in which they claim to be shaping national social policy in developing countries by damaging their economies in the 1980s and 1990s (Deacon, 2008). For instance, the World Bank gave loans to Latin America, South Asia and Africa with some conditionality in the 1980s in order to reduce poverty. They were asked to reduce public spending and privatize sectors that were hitherto in the hands of government, and providing basic services to the common man. The notion behind this was that they felt this would help remove money which is concentrated in the hands of middle class to lower class people (Deacon, 2007). The planned act of World Bank of alleviating poverty led to poverty elevation, that is, instead of reducing poverty, it creates poverty the more in the Global South. This has led the Global South to regard the bank as serving Northern interests (Bello, 2004).

Challenges facing global institutions in shaping global social policy

There are a lot of challenges facing global institutions in shaping global social policy. One of these is that they lack centralized government to carry out its obligations worldwide which made the achievement of their objectives difficult (Yeates, 2012). Unlike, the national government with a specified boundary and shape, global institutions lack this. This makes it difficult to discharge their duties.

They also lack independent revenue raising power and are mainly dependent on members for survival (Yeates, 2012). This dependency on members has implications on their policy making role. The major donors like the US and UK are likely going to influence the policy of the global institution like UN to favour their national social policies.

Based on the challenges facing these global institutions, people have argued that new global institutions are needed (Yeates, 2008a). Either we need new institutions or not, what need to be done is that the powerful nations should be fair in their dealings with less powerful ones.

Articulating a Public Policy Model

Articulating a public policy model that is compassionate towards the masses is important. Religious entities are vital in this regard; they shape the moral compass of public policy makers by lobbying and by serving a voice of the people. In the past, the state and the church have consistently shown that religious entities have a huge role to play in the process of public policy. Ademolawa Michael Adedipe asserts that "The fusion of the state and religion ensures that the state is run by God's principle. A religious principle ensures that God's will reigns over human policies" (2018, p1). It is very important to seek for a public policy model that is broad enough to accommodate religion and the will of the masses. Cochran et al assert that

> Policy is not a single action, but is a set of actions coordinated to achieve a goal. Such an action may be manifested in laws, public statements, official regulation, or widely accepted and publicly visible patterns of behaviour, such as the vigorous

implementation of existing laws of control and deter crime, or having the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issue bureaucratic regulations. (2016, p.2)

Cochran (2016) suggests that an effective policy cannot be achieved by a single action. There should be a wide range of contributors. A rational-comprehensive model of public policy instead of restrictive models would ensure diverse contribution from different stakeholders. Proposing that the "Global North" should assist the "Global South" in the formulation and implementation of its policy becomes imperative if we recognize that the world is a global village.

Today, the migration of people from developing countries to developed ones to seek greener pastures has shown that ineffective policy formulation and implementation in one country can affect the life of people in another country. As shocking as recent rhetoric of Donald Trump is concerning alleged rapist immigrants, and migrants from "shit-hole" countries, these kind of rhetoric is an evidence of how frustrated some Western countries are with the continued influx of immigrants into their county. These kinds of remarks are unnecessary and racist. What should be done to resolve influx of immigrants from other countries is to help them with policy implementation and formulation. As mid-term elections approach in the United States, it is not surprising that key issue at hand is the influx caravans filled with migrants from central America attempting enter America illegally. While we attempt to resolve global poverty issues that stems out of policy crisis, we need to encourage a compassionate approach to dealing with victims of bad policies in developing countries. Fisher enumerates some criteria of governance that is compassionate and God driven: "The first is that government operates under authority of God; and the second is that government is designed to prevent evil" (Fisher, 1998, p.16). This might seem a moralistic assertion, but I believe that at critical times in our development as a species, we need to use of moral compass to navigate these problems. As we take a compassionate approach, a long term solution would be proactive policies that are facilitated by developing countries. Ideally, the Group of Seven (G7) should be the driving force of this kind of initiative. At the moment, they contribute to developmental project. Concrete long term policy

formulation and implementation would better stabilize third-world countries. It would ensure the reduction of poverty levels, and most importantly, it would reduce the embarrassing influx of migrants to developed nations.

The Way Forward

Based on the perceived influence of global institutions in the social policy making process, providing them independent source of funding perhaps from global taxes could strengthen them in the discharge of their duties. This will also reduce the extent to which some nations will control them to pursue their own selfish interests. Also, people working in the global institutions should reflect global status by ensuring that every region or possibly every country has representative in the global institution like the United Nations (UN) for instance.

There is the need for the enablement of easy participation in these global institutions of Global South by the Global North. This is based on the perceived power of Global North to influence policy of Global institutions. This power can also be used to make sure that policies are favourable to the Global South and developing countries as well.

Another proposal is to change the international financial system - private and public - towards developmental goals, by restricting short-term capital flight, enabling the access of low income countries to medium-term capital via better access to bond markets or conversion of the IMF into a development fund, reducing the debt burden of countries, and ensuring that aid supports human well-being (White, 2001; Stiglitz, 2002).

Conclusion

There is no doubt that global institutions play a significant role in the social policy making process. They shape and coordinate the affairs of national social policy by showing that power and politics still matter. This is because some countries like the United States and the United Kingdom are able to influence the social policy of global institutions by virtue of their strong economic power. This does not mean that national social policy is irrelevant. National social policy is not only relevant but

also helps in the design of global social policy. In order to evaluate the roles played by global institutions, we could look at how fair the national social policy is to global social policy. This means that as long as we can understand global social policy by looking at national social policy, we can also understand national social policy by looking at global social policy. The regional social policy also matters and should not be abandoned. Therefore, the national, regional and global institutions are all interrelated and interdependent.

Although, globalization is the major reason for global social policy studies (Yeates, 2008; Deacon, 2013) the current form of globalization is under serious attack because of its perceived problems of creating inequality especially between the Global North and Global South (Bello, 2004). There is the need to make the formulation of social policies that are compassionate and havea human face. In fact, there should be collective responsibility for the mitigation of inequality inherent from globalization, and global governance should aim at win-win outcome.

References

Adedipe, A.M. (2018). *Religious Activism in Postmodernist America*. Unpublished manuscript.

Alkire, S. (2010). Human development: Definitions, critiques and related concepts. UNDP *Human Development Research Paper* 2010/1. New York.

Bello, W. (2004). *Deglobalization: Ideas for a New World Economy*. London: Zed Books.

Blume, S.S. (1979). Policy Studies and Social Policy in Britain. *Journal of Social Policy,* 8(3), 311-34.

Boas, M., and McNeil, D. (2004). Power and Ideas in multilateral institutions: towards an interpretative framework. In M. Boas and D. McNeil (eds.), *Global Institutions and Development: Framing the World?* (pp. 1-12). New York: Routledge.

Bridgman, P., and Davis, G. (2003). What Use is a policy? plenty, if the aim is clear. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 62(3), 98-102.

Cochran, C. E. (2016). *American Public Policy: An Introduction*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Clarke, A. (2003). Research and the policy-making process. In N. Gilbert (ed.), *Researching Social Life*, 2nd ed., (pp. 28-42). London: Sage.

Colebatch, H. K (2005) 'Policy analysis, Policy Practice and Political Science' *Australian Journal of Public Administration,* 64(3):14-23.

Deacon, B., and Stubbs, P. (2013). Global Social Policy Studies: Conceptual and Analytical Reflections. *Global Social Policy*, 13(1), 5-23.

Fischer, Kahlib. (1998). *Biblical Principles of History and Government.* Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University.

Hodgson, G.M. (2006). What are institutions? *Journal of Economic Issues*, 40(1), 1-25.

Hogwood, B., and Gunn, L. (1984). *Policy analysis for the real world.* Oxford: OUP.

Hudson, John & Lowe, Stuart, (2009). Institutions. In J. Hudson & Stuart Lowe, *Understanding the policy process* (pp. 173-194). Bristol: The Policy Press.

Hulme, R., and Hulme, M. (2008). The global transfer of social policy. In N. Yeates (ed.), *Understanding Global Social Policy (*pp. 49-71). Bristol: The Policy Press.

Irving, Z. (2011). Waving not drowning: Iceland, Kreppan and alternative Social Policy Futures. In K. Farnsworth and Z. Irving (eds.), *Social Policy in Challenging Times: Economic Crisis and Welfare Systems (*pp. 199-218). Bristol: The Policy Press.

Keohane, R.O. (1989). *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Lindblom, C.E and Woodhouse, E.J. (1993). The Policy-Making Process. 3rd Ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Manning, N. (2012). Making Social Policy in a global context. In J. Baldock, L. Mitton, N. Manning, and S. Vickerstaff (eds.), *Social Policy* (pp. 52-77). New York: Oxford University Press.

Shires, P. (2007). *Hippies of the religious right*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Stiglitz, J. (2003). Globalization and the economic role of the state. *Industrial and Corporate Change,* 12(3), 3-26.

Waters, M (2001). *Globalization*, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

White, H. (2001). *Pro-poor growth in a globalized economy,* Journal of International Development, 13, 549-69

Yeates, N. (2001). *Globalization and Social Policy*, London: Sage.

Yeates, N. (2007). Globalization and Social Policy. In J. Baldock, L. Mitton, N. Manning, and S. Vickerstaff (eds.), *Social Policy,* 3rd ed. (pp. 627-653). New York: Oxford University Press

Yeates, N. (2008a). Social policy and Supranational Governance. In P. Alcock, M. May and K. Rowlingson Eds.), *The Student's Companion to Social Policy*, 3rd ed. (pp. 292-300). Oxford: Blackwell.

Yeates, N. (2008b). The idea of global social policy. In N. Yeates, *Understanding Global Social Policy* (pp 1-24). Bristol: The Policy Press.

Yeates, N. (2012). International Organizations. In P. Alcock, M. May and S. Wright (eds.), *The Student's Companion to Social Policy*, 4th ed. (pp. 306-313). Oxford: Blackwell.

Young, O. (1986). International Regimes: Towards a New Theory of Institutions. *World Politics, 39(1),* 104-122.