SOCIAL POLICY PRIORITIES AND PRACTICES IN TURKEY

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Abstract
The globalization process changes the roles of the institutions influential in the field of social policies and assign new roles to the non-governmental actors which have become more influential in the field. The present study presents an overall evaluation of the social policy practices and features a number of practical examples in Turkey. The article further discusses the role and effectiveness of the goverment and non-governmental actors in the social policy practices. Enhanced social interaction and rapid advancement in the communication technologies facilitates dissemination of the social policy practices towards the masses. To this end, the study makes reference to the vitality of communication in publicizing the social policies in Turkey and examines the communication methods used to promote these policies. The article lastly makes some recommendations on the new communication means and opportunities.

Keywords: Social Policy, Poverty, Communication, Turkey

1. Introduction

Under the unique conditions and environment of the industrial revolution experienced in Great Britain at the beginning and in the continental Europe countries later, the states have begun following social policies in late 18th century. In times where the states have decided to pursue social policies, the discipline of Social Policy was considered with reference to the principles that seek protection of the labor class that emerged during the industrial revolution, public decisions and practices. The scope and subjects of social policies have undergone dramatic changes over the time. Social policy practices that were conceived as means to protect the labor class only have currently changed significantly in terms of scope and content and become focused on social equality and social justice.

The understanding of social policy in the 21st century includes a wide range of issues including education, health, poverty, environment, children's and women's rights. Particularly a number of recent developments in the fields of technology, law, sociology and politics have made the scope and subjects of the social policies pretty different than the older versions. To this end, the notion of social policy is defined as a study that seeks to make sure that people will participate in social life as equal and free individuals. Communication has become an indispensable element for individuals and corporations in the current century. Increase in the social interaction and rapid development in the communication technologies facilitated promotion and spread of social policy practices among the large masses.

2. Social Policy Practices in Turkey

The current social policy environment in Turkey is a unique environment shaped by the interests of the corporate history of the country and their integration with the Western capitalism. For this reason, a historical review of its emergence is necessary for a better understanding (Buğra, 2008: 20).

The evolution process of social policies in Turkey has been different than that of the developed countries because of different economic, social and political dynamics in these countries. Late industrialization, uneven urbanization, unstable growth, lack of public expenditure, weakness of social classes and lack of democracy have remained great obstacles before the characteristic of social state.

During the Ottoman Era where the underdeveloped industry was based on foreign and minority capital, we may not talk about organization and assemblage of labor class and a notion of social policy through the Second constitutional movement. During this era, the first labor assemblage was the Labor-friendly Association founded in 1871 to provide social aid for the workers. Following this precedent, the Ottoman Worker Association founded in 1895 and banned one year later was another example. The liberal environment that emerged following the proclamation of the second constitution laid the ground for the emergence of movement of workers who were employed under dire conditions in urban areas and of strike waves. However, a short time later, the harsh measures taken by the Ottoman administration to constrain the labor assemblage and subsequent bans on labor strikes blocked improvement and development of labor union movements (Koray, 2005: 157).

Following the liberal economy era implemented from the initial years of the Republic through the Great Depression in 1929, a shift was made to the statist economy model. In this era, it has been observed that the social policy practices were extensively considered. In 1932, Turkey became member in the International Labor Organization; and in 1936, Labor Law was adopted at the parliament. Liberalization and democratization efforts became more visible and frequent following the end of the Second World War; in 1946, the first bill on unions was adopted. In 1952, the Turkish Labor Unions Confederation (TÜRK-İŞ) was adopted.

Development in the social policies in Turkey accelerated in 1960s. The 1961 constitution adopted following the May 27 coup in 1960 served as an important turning point in the history of social policy making in Turkey. The said constitution involved provisions on the state based on rule of law and social state understanding, further guaranteeing the social rights to work, strike, collective bargaining, membership in a union and so on. In the two development plan eras between 1963 and 1972, particular attention was given to implementation of economic and social policies in a coordinated way in both design and implementation. During this period, the Turkish human force model and training planning put into operation simultaneously with the Mediterranean Regional Project has been cited as the most successful social program in the world (Dülger, 2008). Again in this period, the Social Security Agency (SSK) was founded in 1964 and the Revolutionist Labor Unions Confederation (DİSK) was created in 1967. However,

despite these positive developments in this period, it is not possible to say that social policy practices were embraced by the large segments of the society.

A number of political and economic problems in 1970s including the military intervention in March 1971 also brought a number of negativities in terms of social policies. Starting from the 1980s, neoliberal policies gained acceptance in the world. With the implementation of the January 24 decisions under these conditions, understanding of social policy was swiftly abandoned. This period has become an era where a view was adopted to criticize the social state understanding and to train the people with the principles of the markets (Buğra, 198). The 1982 constitution adopted following the 1980 military coup is being cited as a means developed to eliminate the impacts of the liberal environment generated by the 1961 constitution (Koray, 164-168). Under the 1982 constitution, the rights of the unions, foundations and associations to assemblage were restricted; strikes were banned and fundamental rights and freedoms were repressed under a number of anti-democratic practices.

Turkey entered the 21st century under the material and spiritual negativities associated with the 1999 quake. The year of 2001 has been a year where the country's economy was shaken deep crises. From this date on, practices under which the debts were paid by further debts that made Turkey more dependent to external actors were implemented; privatizations were made to eliminate the role of the state in the economy and public expenditures were restricted. Particularly the Social Security Bill and the harsh measures taken to contain the demonstrations in May 1 labor day attracted strong reactions from the labor circles which have remained silent since the September 12 coup; because of these reactions, tension between the government and the unions became more visible.

3. State Role in the Social Policy Practices and New Actors

In social policy, the primary actor is the state. However, with the advance of globalization process, important changes were observed in the role of the state. Frequent discourses on the need to minimize the state intervention were made in this period. However, the current ongoing social issues are more complicated than those in the industrial revolution; they are more difficult to resolve and universal (Şenkal, 2005: 48-60). To this end, it will be meaningful and accurate to argue that the role of the state should be increased in social field.

Turkey has been implementing the economy programs sponsored by international finance institutions like the IMF and World Bank. The primary point of these programs is restrictions in public expenditures, minimization of the state and privatizations. In short, the state should retreat from social life. However, Turkey's most eminent problems in the present time include unemployment and poverty. The primary thing to do to resolve these problems should be

assumed by the state; without its lead role in the implementation of social policy practices, it does not seem possible to address and effectively resolve these problems.

Currently, there are frequent discourses on the need for involvement of civil society organizations in social policy practices. In other words, support and role of the civil society segment is expected in filling the void associated with the minimization of the state under neoliberalization tendencies. The civil society approach entails further involvement of the civil society organizations in the resolution of social problems and its supportive role for the state where it appears to be insufficient to deal with the problems under review. Goals of civil society organizations mostly resemble with the goals of social policies. They make huge contributions to social life and social development in both developed and developing countries like Turkey (Şenkal, 63). However, it will be wrong to defend that civil society organizations should replace the state just because of these properties. As noted earlier in this essay, the primary actor and make of social policies is the state. The success of social policy applications relies on organizational and assembled struggle. Creation of a participatory structure where political parties, civil society organizations and public institutions cooperate under the lead role of the state will hugely contribute to the successful conclusion of the social policy practices.

4. Poverty and Social Policies

We may say that the problems in regards to the social policy may be classified into four groups. These include poverty and social exclusion, massive education, diseases, aging and unemployment. We can define social policy as social security measures and arrangement of working life to support the individual in these situations (Buğra and Keyder, 2006: 9). In this paper, considering this is the main theme of the symposium, we focus on the policies in regards to poverty and fight against poverty.

While poverty is an issue of underdevelopment in essence, it is also a problem in the developed countries. For this reason, it is included in the scope of social policy in recent years. Poverty is a growing problem in the world and in Turkey. According to TÜRK-İŞ data, the poverty line of a four-member family in January 2016 was TL 5.262.18 while the starvation line was TL 1.615.49. These figures are indicative of how grave the situation is considering that the minimum wage is TL 1.603.12 in Turkey.

Social policies of the state are identified in the development plans in Turkey. In the 9th development plan (2007-2013), some of the policies in regards to combat against poverty and social disruption and to improvements in the income distributions are spelled out as follows:

- Gap in the poverty and income distribution will be alleviated and reduced in reliance on sustainable development, growth and employment, education, health and labor policies.

Measures will be taken to ensure that individuals and groups under poverty and social exclusion risks will take part in social life.

- Transfer policies will be made effective via ensuring redistribution of income in favor of the poor. To this end, measures will be taken to make sure that social security system will have a positive impact on the equal income distribution by introducing security with the different segments of the society.

- Services to reduce poverty will ensure that a culture of poverty will be prevented and the poor section will become producers.

- Unregistered poor people will be able to work in regular jobs and have social security benefits.

- Projects that will increase incomes and diversify economic activities for the poor will be supported. Particularly, entrepreneurship in rural and underdeveloped areas will be encouraged.

- To make sure that women participate in economic and social life, special programs will be introduced for them to ensure the likelihood of their employment. To prevent violence against women, measures will be taken to raise public awareness on this issue.

- Education needs of the children of the poor, the handicapped and female students in rural areas will be met to make sure that these sections will have access to proper education and training. Moreover, measures will be taken to address child labor and the measures will be tightly implemented.

- Programs towards families, the ideal environment for raising and taking care of a child, will be supported and promoted.

- Home-care for the elderly will be supported; the number and quality of nursing houses will be increased.

- Measures will be taken to make sure that the social, physical and environmental conditions of the handicapped will be improved in an attempt to ensure their proper participation in social life; specially protected workplaces where the working conditions of the handicapped are specifically arranged will be supported and improved.

- As a result of structural change in agriculture, active employment policies will be developed to reduce the unemployment risk of unqualified poor people who migrated from rural areas to urban cities.

- Measures will be taken to make sure that all sections will work in a coordinated fashion including central administration, local administrations and civil society groups in the implementation of policies on poverty and social exclusion and the services on education, sheltering and employment for these people.

Even though there are frequent talks on policies to deal with poverty in Turkey, applications of these policies are not that frequent. It has been observed that interest in poverty issues is limited to the interest by a few voluntary associations and that attempts to assemble political associations to address these issues are very rare. It has also been observed that the political parties paid little interest in comprehensive policies on poverty. The only exception in this matter is a pro-Islamic

party which pays attention to poverty on local level to attract popular support (Şenses, 2003: 310-11).

The points that need to be considered during the implementation of social policy practices include the following:

- Considering all elements including economic, social, historical and cultural ones in the relevant fields in the preparation of social policies

- Maintaining social awareness relevant to the concerned area and creation of a sensitive environment

- Securing contributions and support by civil society organizations to make sure that the issue remains on the popular agenda

- Securing civil society assemblage to ensure full participation of the society in the implementation and further participation

- Securing support of public opinion in local, regional, national and international dimensions

- Maintaining communication and cooperation between national and international institutions

- Preparation of effective and influential campaigns and creation of relevant projects to promote the practices among the public.

4. Importance of Communication of Social Policy Practices

Communication is an interaction process made through messages (Mutlu, 1995: 168). In the combat against poverty, it is necessary that political, social and cultural institutions have mutual relations. In the establishment of this relationship called social interaction and its improvement, communication plays an extensive role.

Television is the most frequently used communication tool in the social policy practices and applications in Turkey. Television has replaced radio which was used to publicize new laws and regulations in the past. Internet also offers great opportunities with the advancement of technological enhancements. E-government and e-municipality systems created within the public institutions create positive results in social policy practices.

Use of information and communication technologies in social policy practices gains greater importance. Information and communication technologies ensure sharing of the experiences and facilitates this process. It also offers great opportunities for access to the information on public services including education, health and so on and participation and support for social policy practices. Use of communication technologies in the field of education (for instance, computer aided education, e-learning, interactive television, open universities) provide those who rely on

interactive methods with additional skills. In the field of health, sicknesses and epidemics spread in the events where the poor have little information on health issues (Yücesan, 2004: 104-105).

Influential communication campaigns play a huge role in the promotion of social policies among public. Communication campaigns make contributions to ensure public participation and attract people's support for the said policies. Social communication campaigns may be defined as efforts to rely on mass communication devices, to make noncommercial contributions to the society or the individuals. These campaigns are mostly based on face to face communication in the local levels; they seek to raise awareness among the target groups and to ensure behavioral changes among the individuals. Both public institutions and civil society organization should follow the following phases for their communication campaigns in the promotion of social policy practices:

- **Identification of goals:** Specific goals consistent with the requirements and properties of the place where the campaign is made are identified.
- **Organization:** A core team of communication experts and assistant teams to support this team are created.
- **Research:** With primary and secondary research methods, public polls are carried out to identify the proper issues for review.
- **Identification of target groups and creation of communication networks:** Specific messages should be sent to the specific groups. Media, civil society organizations, universities, opinion leaders of the international institutions in the country and many others are included in the list of target groups. Works are carried out among these institutions through communication networks that will be freshly established.
- **Design of the messages:** Messages are defined in consideration of the socio-psychological, demographical and cultural properties of the target groups and submitted accordingly.
- **Identification of communication methods and tools:** Proper tools consistent with the campaign goals and target groups are identified (radio, television, internet etc.). Radio and TV programs, newspaper ads, seminars, written materials, interactive web sites, fliers, and reports are used to publicize the campaign messages among the target groups. Face to face interviews, meetings, visits and surveys are made to achieve the previously specified goals.
- **Budgeting:** The budget required to carry out the campaign is determined. Source suppliers and sponsors are further identified.
- **Feedback:** The success of the campaign is evaluated via researches to be made after the campaign.

6. Conclusion

Social policies and applications are important factors effecting social and economic development of a country, inter alia, they are the indicators of development level. Understanding of social equality and social justice in developing countries are reshaped on the basis of contemporary principles within social policies, where poverty, children's and women's rights, education right

and health insurance and services acquire new norms. The civil society approach in Turkey have shown that the goals of civil society organisations and social policies coincide in many aspects and emphasis is put to the cooperation between public institutions and civil society organisations in various areas. Turkey has experienced many restrictions on rights of the unions and strikes were banned at times depending on economic and political developments, which slowed down social practices naturally. Currently, social policy practices are in retention because of the economic problems in the country. In the new era of communication technologies, public institutions and unions have tremendous opportunities to publicise social policies and its applications. In Turkey institutions do not make the best of the new communication technologies and methods, which is one of the important tools of the application, in spreading social policies. Public institutions should make use of research techniques in the promotion of social policy practices and create communication networks. For the planned communication activities a budget should be allocated. The use of internet to achieve the dissipation of information and messages in accordance with the set policies is important. Communication campaigns for short periods through printed media and television are considered to be very effective in Turkish society.

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