

Understanding the relationship between policy and wellbeing: The Child Support Grant case-study

Presentation at the HSRC Flagship Study Poverty and Inequality: Better Lives in Troubling Times

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Overview of presentation

1. Policies as the products of social, economic and political contexts: policy regimes
2. Wellbeing as multi-dimensional: material, subjective, relational
3. The SA Child Support Grant (CSG):
A product of the SA 'policy regime'; its consequences for wellbeing

Argument of the paper:

- **Child Support Grant is able to aid material wellbeing and alleviate some of the worst effects of poverty, but grants cannot in and of themselves solve relational wellbeing and other structural inequalities**

1. Policies as the products of social, economic and political contexts: policy regimes

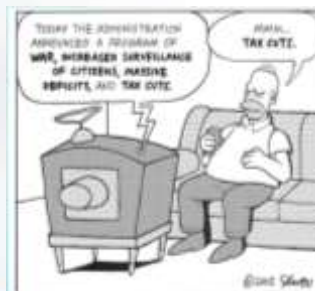
- Social policy as collective efforts towards well-being but...
- Situated in historical, political, economic and social contexts
- Policy regimes as systemic social arrangements and ideological standpoints
- In the global North: Liberal, Corporatist and Social Democratic regimes (Esping-Anderson, 1995)

Policy regimes

- Ways that sets of policies emerge over time due to political, economic, social forces
- Examples include:
 1. Liberal regimes USA, Canada and Australia
 2. Corporatist welfare state Austria, Germany
 3. Social democratic welfare state Norway

2. Wellbeing as multi-dimensional: material, subjective, relational

- Material, relational and subjective well-being
- The relational, bonds between individuals and institutions
- Social cohesion and prejudices
- Mutually constitutive



Policy and well-being

Multidimensional
approach

Assessment of
needs

Assessment of
quality of life

Relations
between people
and power

Paradoxical
effects



3. The SA Child Support Grant (CSG):

- A product of the SA 'policy regime';
- Its consequences for multi-dimensional wellbeing



The CSG: A brief history

- Francie Lund attends an MECs meeting in July 1995
- Motion to abolish State Maintenance Grant (1930)
- Lund objected; Lund committee formed; report in 1996
- First beneficiaries 1997
- In 2007 was accessed by 8 million South African children

Lund committee strategy

- Get a foot in the door- small initial \$\$, then expand
- Follow the child: regardless of parent/caregiver
- Left-leaning/ 'charterist' underpinnings of committee
- From welfare to social development

Unpacking the circumstances in which the CSG emerged: a 21st century Democratic Developmental State

- Balancing industrialisation and redistribution: twin goals of any developmental state (Edigheji, 2010)
- CSG part of a policy regime with ambitions for industrialisation, redistribution and development: how the grant operates as part of a broader state project
- What effects on multi-dimensional wellbeing?

Factors shaping form and rollout of the CSG

- Industrial policy,
- Redistributing wealth to decrease poverty and inequality
- Fiscal/bureaucratic constraints

Post-apartheid industrial policy

- Ideological shift and global circumstances militated against the ANC using industrial policy to redistribute wealth systematically
- Late 19th century Global North and East Asian nations 1950s: substantial state support for national firms
- Redistribution of wealth and reduction of poverty and inequality have partially fallen into the realm of social policy.



Redistribution and social policy

- Grants: post-apartheid state redistributes more GDP through social assistance than any other developing country (Seekings, 2008a).
- 22% of households: social grants are the main source of income,
- Grant fits with social development not welfare: investment in human capital
- CSG but no BIG



Bureaucratic and fiscal constraints on the CSG

- South African state's capacity to deliver social services
- Apartheid state developed without the wellbeing of the entire population in mind
- Post-apartheid government inherited lopsided bureaucratic, security and tax collection systems
- Appeal of cash transfers: political and economic expediency; don't need large-scale bureaucratic capacity
- Cash transfers sweep across two continents of the global South: First cash transfer programme Mexico 1995,
- Now 123 programmes in 28 African countries (Ferguson, 2015).



Industrial and Social Policy, plus practical constraints, create a regime characterized as:

“heterodox paradox” or “inclusive neoliberalism”:
free-market economic principles co-exist with attempts to produce social policy to redistribute wealth (Ballard, 2013 ; Lund, et al, 2009).



CSG addresses material, but not relational wellbeing

- Material wellbeing improves:
- Physical height, less chance of repeating a school year and more money spent in households on food (Coetzee, 2014).

Relational wellbeing:

- Means-tested: creates 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor
- Bifurcated social service systems reinforce inequalities.
- Similarities to global North liberal policy regimes: middle-classes secure private services in healthcare, education and pensions



SA relational wellbeing

- Grants like CSG: poor South Africans' social services happen through relations with the state; wealthy people acquire services in the private sphere

...Combined with:

- Massive income inequality
- Segregated education and health systems
- Extremely high levels of crime and violence
- Tense race relations
- UJ and HSRC study: Children whose parents received the CSG: The structural barriers remain



Conclusion

- CSG not a bad thing...but grants alone cannot ensure multidimensional wellbeing.
- Eradicate worst effects of poverty, 'returns on investment, with limited capacity of civil service'.

But.....

- Also need structural changes for relational wellbeing: Economic inclusion for poor Black majority; address 'dual service system'; national health scheme; SA Schools Act: school fee policies

Conclusion

- Need institutionalised interventions that result in economic inclusion and the transformation of segregated social systems.
- Interventions based on human capital theory can only go so far before ceilings reached, barricaded by class and race based divisions that militate against structural change.
- CSG recipients physically healthier by start of school, but massive structural educational inequalities, like neighbourhood resources, quality of teachers, stresses of parents reproduce inequalities.
- Grants necessary but insufficient part of fostering multi-dimensional wellbeing and reducing inequality.