

Title: A study of anti-poverty policy in the welfare state : the case of public assistance programmes in the Republic of Korea

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Abstract:

The main aim of this thesis is to examine how Korea might establish a welfare state through analysing the experience of the Korean development process and the anti-poverty policies of the other welfare states. During the last three decades, the Korean government has put top priority on economic development and considered economic growth as a mechanism to extend the welfare of people through income increase within growth maximisation policy. To pursue only economic growth to the detriment of social welfare has brought much social and political instability, which in turn makes further growth itself impossible. The current public assistance programmes and social security system have the character of anti-social welfare and widen inequality within the population. The conceptual foundation of current anti-poverty policy has been a combination of the "starvation" and "subsistence" approach, plus the "minority group" approaches, without any reference to the "relative deprivation" approach. The "relative deprivation approach" relates not only to anti-poverty policy for the poor but also to national development policy in constructing a welfare state in Korea. Without the adoption of a "relative" approach, it would be impossible to establish a welfare state. The growing relative deprivation felt by the poor and also the working class in an extravagant consumption society and labour's growing demand for participation in both a political and economic capacity, and the international trade situation suggest different possible directions for the future of Korean welfare policies. The Korean welfare state is at a crossroads. The only way to solve the poverty problem would be to conduct structural surgery on Korean society through the "relative deprivation" approach, to modify the economic growth first policy of the last three decades and give greater attention to social development as well as welfare. The Korean development policy needs to adopt a more balanced "relative" approach to poverty, rather than the insufficient and meagre "subsistence" and "basic needs" approaches.