Title: Child Wellbeing in developing countries – limitations of the United

Nations-Child Rights Convention (UN-CRC) Framework while developing children’s

social policies

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Abstract: (300 words)

While the Child Rights Convention (CRC) has become the key framework for

interpreting child welfare/wellbeing, its inherent complexities and the

persistent deprivations experienced by children in developing countries calls

for alternate political economy approaches such as welfare regime theory while

formulating children’s social policies.

Child rights have limitations to understanding and addressing social problems

children face globally (Pupavac, 2001). A key debate concerns prioritisation of

rights when the resources are limited or when rights conflict. Due to the

principle of progressive realisation of socio-economic rights based on

available resources (CRC, Article 4) and the general trend of negative rights

getting priority over positive rights (Steiner et al, 2008), the CRC obstructs

accessing basic needs as these form the core socio-economic rights. Because

social policy is about re/distribution of resources, such a conflict hinders

creation of socio-economic conditions required for wellbeing.

Hence this paper argues that children’s social policies should be developed

using a political-economy approach such as a welfare regime theory (developed

by Gough and Wood, 2004). It helps to depart from the dominant discourse on

child rights by prioritizing social rights. It expands established framework of

welfare state theory to suit socio-economic conditions of developing countries

through the notion of declientelisation in addition to that of

decommodification. Specifically current/protection needs are prioritized with a

call to transform informal to formal regimes. While the notion of ‘welfare

state’ is not new and has been successful in combating absolute child poverty

in the west it is rarely applied in the south. Global children’s rights

advocacy seeks to globalize post-industrial childhood norms without globalizing

the material conditions that fostered those norms (Pupavac, 2009).

This paper concludes that children’s social policies have to go beyond the

limited normative framework of the UN-CRC and include more confrontational

resource re/distribution approaches to promote their wellbeing.