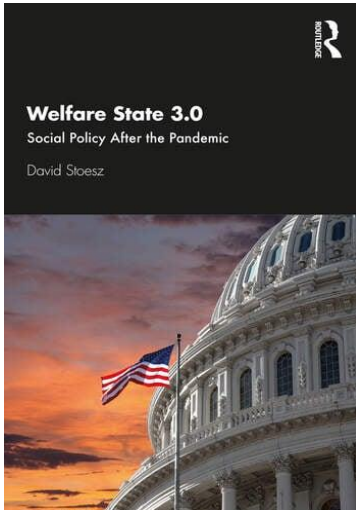# บทวิจารณ์หนังสือ (Book Review)

วัชระ เพชรดิน[1]
Watchara Pechdin[2]

ชื่อหนังสือ: Welfare State 3.0: Social
Policy After the Pandemic

ผู้แต่ง: David Stoesz

สำนักพิมพ์: Routledge, New York

ปีที่พิมพ์: 2021

จำนวนหน้า: 224 หน้า

ISBN: 978-0-367-70039-3,

(paperback)

Dr. David Stoesz has masterfully crafted a policy analysis of formal social welfare in the United States that not only stands as a beacon of accessible knowledge but also unfurls a rich tapestry of comprehensive insights, informed perspectives, incisive critiques, and alluring storytelling. His work not only dissects the intricacies of social welfare but also weaves them into a captivating historical narrative that keeps readers on the edge of their seats, turning pages

[1] อาจารย์ประจำคณะสังคมสงเคราะห์ศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์ กรุงเทพฯ ประเทศไทย
E-mail: w.pechdin@tu.ac.th

[2] Lecturer of Faculty of Social Administration, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand.

with curiosity and fascination. Throughout 12 chapters of the book "Welfare State 3.0: Social Policy after the Pandemic.", the reader will be addressed the uncertainties of welfare development and its accuracy and reliability on providing successful interventions from the USA case study.

The book begins by tracing the evolution of the welfare state from its modest '0.0' origins, marked by a lack of legal structure and limited provisions for citizens' well-being due to scarce resources. This historical journey takes us on a path of enlightenment, highlighting the crucial role of the welfare state as a tool to support the well-being of disadvantaged individuals. In the 'Welfare 1.0' era, which emerged during the turbulent period of industrialization, a momentous turning point arrived with the enactment of the Social Security Act in 1935. This transformative policy shift, described in the book, underscored the significance of social insurance, granting citizens much-needed financial assistance. It stands as a pivotal moment in history, signifying a transition towards a more comprehensive and compassionate approach to safeguarding the welfare of the population. Following that, the book delves into 'Welfare State 2.0,' shedding light on the provisions of public assistance during the 1960s' War on Poverty, with a primary focus on initiatives such as Medicaid and nutrition programs. In this era, Stoesz highlights the ongoing debate between Democrats and Republicans regarding the

redistribution of national resources to address the uneven opportunities within a capitalist society.

Within the context of 'Welfare State 3.0,' Stoesz's book highlights the imperative measures that followed the Great Society era of 'Welfare State 2.0,' during which American citizens became increasingly reliant on government assistance, giving rise to concerns about the effectiveness of liberal policies. Chapter 5 of the book engages in a focused discussion of policies that notably contributed to a dependent syndrome within the realm of public assistance. This discourse specifically focuses on Nixon's proposals, Clinton's strategic shifts, and the policies of the Bush administration.

The interplay between these policies added a layer of complexity to the development of the welfare state, aptly described as "dystopian benevolence" in the book. This term encapsulates a scenario where costs escalated, access to benefits became more challenging, and skepticism became prevalent in the political landscape, as pointed out on Page 89. Consequently, the diminishing support for the welfare state cannot be solely attributed to the factors of increasing complexity, rising costs, and limited access; other influences have played a role as well.

Throughout the development of the welfare system leading up to the pandemic, Stoesz has methodically organized and articulated a set of strategies for the post-pandemic era, aimed at

ensuring the well-being of American citizens. These strategies encompass policy consolidation, application harmonization, equity expansion, and the undertaking of innovative experiments, which mentioned in Chapter 8-11.

Beginning in Chapter 8, the policy consolidation is presented with a particular emphasis on the need for program integration, healthcare reform, bolstering income support, embracing digital transformation, and promoting equity and inclusion, especially in the context of unemployment benefits. During the pandemic, the challenges of information sharing among public agencies were apparent, resulting in delays in delivering social assistance to citizens. This resonates with Stoesz's assertion that "the issue is not more government or less government, but smarter government," a concept that can be achieved by bridging the welfare state with the information age, as indicated on page 141. This underscores the importance of establishing a robust social infrastructure and mechanisms for the reliable and swift exchange of data among relevant stakeholders.

In Chapter 9, the discussion shifts to the concept of harmonizing applications, where Stoesz draws a compelling analogy by likening social benefits to a labyrinth that often ensnares impoverished individuals in a cycle of poverty. On page 148, he highlights the detrimental consequences of the lack of coordination

among various public agencies, especially in terms of achieving the core goal of public assistance— self- sufficiency. Notably, this challenge is exacerbated when local agencies only act when it is obligatory. Within this context, Stoesz endeavors to propose potential solutions to enhance the harmonization of related agencies within public assistance programs. This pertains particularly to improving accessibility to higher education and establishing more robust financial aid programs, ultimately resulting in a more effective implementation of welfare initiatives.

Exploring the expansion of equity, Chapter 10 of Stoesz's work highlights the intricate relationship between social solidarity and political polarization. The author illustrates how Americans seeking assistance from a growing array of programs, created in response to the advocacy for various vulnerable groups, often encounter complex bureaucracies and confusing application processes. These systems appear to be tailored more towards the needs of civil servants than those of the individuals in need. In this context, the author astutely observes that the metaphor of a "safety- net," which has served as a liberal symbol for many years, suddenly seems inadequate (page 164). Moreover, he also constructs a discourse and arguments regarding diverse American policies which raise pertinent inquiries about social inequality within American society. Stoesz attempts to shed light on how this inequality was

exacerbated during the pandemic, especially when the Trump administration sanctioned the Federal Reserve to disburse trillions of dollars in stimulus to support markets and employment. These thought-provoking questions he addresses catalysts for exploring how policymakers factor in redistributive considerations and how such measures can contribute to fostering productivity, an essential component in rectifying the imbalanced economic landscape that currently disadvantages the vast majority of Americans.

The final strategy, as outlined by Chapter 11, involves conducting experiments. This strategy holds paramount significance in the post-pandemic era, primarily because insights from scientific research can pave the way for the delivery of enhanced services to the members of society. It is imperative that both natural and social sciences engage in tandem, harnessing evidence-based principles to formulate new experimental approaches. Notably, Stoesz underscores the pivotal role of federal funding in expediting research progress and its application. Equally critical is the role of researchers in curating content that aligns with the preferences of consumers and clients, as elaborated on page 206. Failing to emphasize these roles could leave the government vulnerable to accusations of exploiting citizens and breaching the social contract, a concern addressed on page 207.

In closing, "Welfare State 3.0" not only offers a comprehensive exploration of the welfare state's evolution but also opens the door to further thought on collective determination as a driving force behind societal well-being. As a significant resource for advanced social welfare courses, Stoesz enriches the social sciences and challenges the intellect of a discerning and engaged readership, inviting continued dialogue on the dynamic landscape of social policy.