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# **PREFACE: FIVE POLICY FIELDS AND CHALLENGES**

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## **Abstract**

*This is a symposium dealing with public policy toward lessening poverty in the United States and in the world. The articles in this symposium recognize the importance of five policy fields in reducing poverty.*

## **Five Policy Fields**

### ***Economic Policy***

Economic policy especially includes national income economics directed toward increasing national productivity and income through increased training, technology, competition, and free trade. The assumption is that increased national income will partly trickle down to the poor just as all boats rise with a rising tide. That is a partly false assumption since some poor people are unable to take advantage of the increased income opportunities. It may be necessary to have programs that are more specifically focused on the problems of the poor as one segment of the economy, rather than just focusing on the total economy.

An economics perspective is thus also concerned with how to move poor people out of welfare and/or poverty into meaningful jobs that they will not soon quit or be fired from and that can lead to even better jobs. That is the subject of the first article by Jonathon Jacobson on “Simulating Effects of Welfare Reforms.”

### ***Education Policy***

Education policy in this context refers to lifetime learning from the cradle to the grave, especially job-related learning. Such learning is supplementing or even replacing the liberal idea of providing welfare from the cradle to the grave. That time period can be divided into three unequal segments of approximately equal importance.

The first segment is preschool socialization where little children learn such useful things as (1) getting along with other people, (2) the work ethic of keeping reasonably constructively busy, (3) learning new knowledge and developing new skills, (4) the importance of merit treatment, (5) freedom to disagree, (6) fair procedures when one is accused of wrong-doing, and (7) resolving disputes and controversies in a peaceful way, possibly in a win-win way.

The middle segment is from kindergarten through college. It is important for learning advanced reading, writing, and arithmetic. It is also a time for learning major or occupational specialty, but preferably on a reasonably high level of generality to increase flexibility.

The third segment is adult education from about age 20 to age 90. That time period requires a lot of continuing formal and informal education in order to keep up with changing technologies.

The second article by Wong, Dreeben, Lynn, and Sunderman deals with elementary and high school reforms that especially apply to inner-city schools.

### ***Merit Treatment Policy***

Ethnic groups that are discriminated against tend to be disproportionately poor. That is true of blacks and Latinos in the United States. It is true of Native Americans in South America and gypsies in East Europe. Discrimination helps cause poverty especially in the absence of education, and then poverty adds to discrimination.

Gender discrimination also adds to poverty because poor families are disproportionately headed by a woman who may miss opportunities due to her ethnic background, gender, poverty, and lack of education. The third article by Marc Bendick after this introduction deals with ethnic discrimination and the role of affirmative action in employment.

### ***Political Policy***

In order to reduce poverty, it is quite helpful for poor people to have more political power. Such power can ease the passage of legislation designed to provide job facilitators, more educational opportunities, and less discrimination. Such power comes from voting facilitators, such as (1) having elections on non-working days, (2) allowing voters to vote either where they work or where they live, and (3) requiring no advance registration. Redistricting and census counts can be fairer to allow poor people to be more influential in having legislative representation.

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On a more basic level, we are talking about democracy whereby (1) poor people are allowed to vote and run candidates for office and (2) where there is an ideological choice between candidates. The fourth article by Gary Prevost discusses the process of democratization in developing nations, using Central America and Nicaragua as case studies.

### *Legal Policy*

All public policy that has an intended prospective effect is law. The concept of legal policy, though, tends to emphasize the use of courts as policymakers, interpreters, and appliers. In order to use the courts more effectively, poor people need attorneys. Attorneys, however, are expensive and not so available unless there is a right to counsel at least in criminal cases, as in the United States.

Better yet, there is a need for a right to counsel in cases that involve employment, education, discrimination, political rights, housing, and other rights. A poor person may be much more harmed by being wrongly fired, wrongly evicted, or wrongly denied a government benefit than by spending a night in jail for a misdemeanor.

Lawyers are especially helpful in establishing new legal precedents regarding the rights of poor people. Having those rights enforced can facilitate getting out of poverty or at least making poverty more bearable. The fifth article by Elaine Junqueira emphasizes programs designed to provide legal services for the poor in Brazil and the United States.

## **Win-Win and the Challenges**

### *Win-Win*

After going through those five fields of public policy, we then come to the concluding article on “Win-Win Poverty Reduction and Prevention.” That article argues that poverty policy need not and should not be viewed as a confrontation between the rich and the poor, or between the haves and the have-nots.

It is possible in all five fields of public policy to arrive at feasible solutions that are capable of enabling both the rich and the poor to come out ahead of their best initial expectations simultaneously. This is true in the fields of economic policy (including national productivity and employment), education policy (including financing and integration), discrimination policy (including race and gender), voting rights (including making voting easier but vote fraud more difficult), and right to counsel (including criminal, civil, and test cases).

*The Challenges*

Before going through those five fields of public policy, we should first address in this Introduction such issues as (1) who the world's poor people are, (2) whether the poor are getting richer or poorer and why, and (3) whether the inequality gap is getting smaller or bigger and why. The answers to those questions are mixed. Poverty is not such a simple subject and both reducing and preventing it are even more complex.

This symposium is referred to as an international symposium because it has articles not only dealing with the United States, but also articles (such as this Introduction) which deal with Africa, Asia, East Europe, and Latin America. The symposium could be called a three I's symposium because it not only has an international orientation, but also an interdisciplinary and impact orientation. It is interdisciplinary in discussing (1) economic policy and economics, (2) education policy and psychology, (3) merit treatment and social policy, (4) political policy and political science, and (5) legal policy and law.