
BOOK REVIEW

Daniel R. Kelemen, *Lessons from Europe? What Americans Can Learn from European Public Policy*, California: Sage Publication Inc, 2015, 220 pages

Presently American policy makers are seeking solutions for major public policy challenges, such as unemployment, an unaffordable health care system, a failing public school system, climate change, an immigration system which has room for improvement, economic inequality, an increase in the number of aged, rising pension costs, growing government debt and so on. In order to deal with these formidable challenges American policy makers and intelligentsia have to join their heads to formulate suitable reforms in public policies, so that the previous ones can be discarded or at least modified. One model from which lessons could be drawn is Europe.

In this regard, 'Lessons from Europe' is an ideal piece of work which brings together leading experts in their respective fields to offer even-handed comparisons of what American policymakers and citizens might learn from European experiences across a wide range of policy areas. The book begins with an introduction by editor, Daniel R. Kelemen, followed by eight policy area case-study chapters in which authors explore what US policymakers can learn from a variety of European policies in a particular field.

The first chapter of the book debates why American policy makers can draw lessons from the European experiences, to counter the perplexing common public policy challenges the sole superpower, the United States, is facing in the twenty-first century. To try to learn from the European experience, appears anomalous, for presently Europe itself is confronted with an acute economic crisis which has overwhelmed the weak struggling economies like Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland. However, despite the bogus depiction of Europe by the American right wing, researchers and analysts have highlighted that the European countries are still among the top twenty in international ranking of most measures of success, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, standard of living, economic competition and good governance. Rather they stand out in fields such as

healthcare, education, workers' training, social welfare, transportation and so on.

The second chapter examines the European work-family reconciliation policies in three main areas: parental leave, working hours, and state supported child care system. This is followed by an analysis of whether these present a suitable model for the United States' work-family milieu, capable of equally satisfying the demands of employment and parenthood. The research of the author reveals that compared to the European system, the US provisions are not very conducive to women's employment.

The third chapter compares the health care policies of the United States with the European health care system. The author then evaluates the America Affordable Health Care Act (ACA/Obama Care), for the benefits it has brought to the American people. The author goes on to explore the European health care strategies: how the system is funded, its governance, coverage and disbursement. This close examination of both health care models reveals that the European system upholds uniformity and equity, while the US health care system is rather disorganized and inequitable.

The fourth chapter examines the European pension system. The author observes that previously European pensions were generous, but the system proved to be unsustainable, particularly owing to the prolonged economic crisis. The European governments had to lower the overall rate of pensions and this time Europe drew lessons from the US approach which combines modest public pensions with a system of individual savings accounts.

The fifth chapter illuminates the strengths of the labour market policies of Denmark and Germany which could be a useful lesson for the United States. The author emphasizes that in an era of globalization and fierce economic competition, the advanced industrialized countries need dynamic labour market policies which could simultaneously increase their production and facilitate their workforce.

The sixth chapter compares the European and US immigration policies and the author arrives at the conclusion that the American immigration policies have been mostly successful because they are more well-defined and consistent and receive more social and political support unlike the immigration policies in Europe, so far.

The seventh chapter discusses the EU's policies on climate change, in particular policies on emissions trading, renewable energy and energy efficiency. The author suggests that the US should draw lessons from the EU's climate change policies. He points out that European countries, such as Germany and the Nordics are very serious about constantly pursuing their climate change policies, and these have not had an adverse impact on their economies.

In the eighth chapter, the author compares the public policies of Germany and the US on sustainable urban transport. The author contends that Germany is comparable to the US in many relevant respects. He presents a detailed case study of Freiburg's sustainable urban transport system and identifies seven specific areas from the German system which can help transform the American urban transport system. The author points out that the US has already adopted the German model of urban transportation at the local level in some areas but not at the national level.

The ninth chapter discusses a different aspect of the issue, i.e. the political process, which actually determines the proper regulation and application of reformed policies. The author highlights that though there are some significant flaws in European democracies but they are better organized with regard to policy making and policy implementation as compared to the American style of consensus seeking in policy formulation.

The concluding chapter of this book draws the reader's attention towards the existing literature on the public policy making process and policy diffusion. It explores from all aspects, the possibilities of American policy makers drawing lessons from European experiences. But it also highlights the fact that there are high political and institutional barriers in the United States for adopting the European models.

The book is an interesting and informative piece of work for the students of comparative public policy and European and American politics. In a concise manner and with clarity, it provides substantial information and analysis and offers suitable solutions for the American public policy challenges. It is strongly recommended for policy-makers, researchers and students of political science and public policy.

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