

SOCIAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN EUROPE

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Abstract

The social subject-matter in the management theory and practice has been dominant during the last years. The reasons for this are most different - the increasing asymmetries in the living standard of particular groups of society, the dynamic, even turbulent, changes in some areas of development, which create risks which are increasingly more difficult to overcome, particularly for vulnerable groups, and last but not least - the politicians' desire to give a quick, though not always an adequate reply to the social challenges. The manner of carrying out these policies is an additional problem. It is an elementary truth that there is no way they can simultaneously solve all problems of society. Therefore it is a question of priorities, i.e. of sectoral and local policies, the choice of objectives and means of achieving significant results.

Keywords: policies, social development, social policies, programmes, perspective.

1. INTRODUCTION

The social subject-matter in the management theory and practice has been dominant during the last years. The reasons for this are most different - the increasing asymmetries in the living standard of particular groups of society, the dynamic, even turbulent, changes in some areas of development, which create risks which are increasingly more difficult to overcome, particularly for vulnerable groups, and last but not least - the politicians' desire to give a quick, though not always an adequate reply to the social challenges. The manner of carrying out these policies is an additional problem. It is an elementary truth that there is no way they can simultaneously solve all problems of society. Therefore it is a question of priorities, i.e. of sectoral and local policies, the choice of objectives and means of achieving significant results.

In this complex environment, every detailed research of social systems, policies and programmes for social protection, is more than necessary. It gives the basis for adequate prevention and becomes the scientific foundation of the approach of governments and local organs of power.

2. SOCIAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN EUROPE

In his diversity of publications connected with social policies and programmes, the monographic research "Social Policies and Tools" of Venelin Krastev Terziev deserves particular attention. He is a full member of the Russian Academy of Natural Science, D. Sc (Ec.), D.Sc. (National Security). He is currently a Professor at Angel Kanchev „University of Rouse", at „Vasil Levski" National Military University, town of Veliko Tarnovo, and at the High College of Telecommunications and Posts, city of Sofia. He has occupied a number of leading positions in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and in the private business, which determines the practically applicable character of a large part of his scientific research in the field of economics and management of different hierarchical levels.

The monographic work is directed towards a field which is not easy to research - social development and the administration's capacity to provide effective social assistance. Without a doubt, the topic is particularly current, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically - because the research and analyses in this field concern only particular aspects of the problems of social development and often miss "the big picture". On the other hand, the author has chosen to apply a unified, integrated approach in which structural, normative, functional and prospective analysis of the object and the subject of the research is combined. This requires very profound knowledge of the system in different angles, and also prospective thinking and high prognostic culture, which few researchers have.

The topic is current also practically due to the complex character of the social system, which is saturated with a multitude of contradictions - between particular social groups, between needs and tools for satisfying those needs, between short-term and long-term impact from policies and tools for regulation, etc. These painful inconsistencies for society reduce the effect of the functioning of the social system, and due to this the scientifically based suggestions for their solution or removal are more than necessary, current and significant.

By examining the possible alternatives for action with the goal of overcoming the arisen contradictions, Venelin Terziev clearly states his intentions to give an answer at least to some of the most pressing problems in the object of research. Still, in order to limit the field of study, he has chosen as an objective the creation and verification of a scientific theory with an applied character for social development and developing adapted scientifically applicable models for increasing the effectiveness of social assistance, directed to the development and improvement of social policy, social enterprises and the preparation of specialists in social activities, through continuing professional training.

Structurally, the work is divided into four differentiated parts which are logically substantiated and closely connected with the research tasks.

The problems connected with the contemporary approaches in the research of social policy and social work are examined and critically analyzed in the first part. The achievements of leading authors are extensively analyzed, new scientific theoretical formulations are deduced, defining social development and social policy. The good European and world practices in the field of social security and their reflection on the approaches of management and on the capacity of the relevant administrations in Bulgaria are critically made sense of. The principles of social policy have been deduced on this basis.

In this chapter the theory of social work as a process is also additionally enriched and developed further. A retrospective economical analysis of the tendencies in the world and in Bulgaria has been conducted, and the necessity for the development of social work has been deduced. Key concepts are defined, such as „institutionalization”, „identification” and „internationalization of social work”. Based on scientific theoretical and applicable analysis, a number of concepts have been additionally enriched, such as „social country”, „social security”, „social protection”, „social benefits”, „social services”, „social security”, „social insurance” and „system for social assistance”.

The author has analyzed in depth the structure of the system for social assistance and the organization of the activities on social protection of the vulnerable groups in Bulgaria. A definition of the „social worker” profession has been introduced, as his profile and necessary qualification have been outlined. This is an important starting point in the process of providing the system for social assistance with competent specialists.

The second part is devoted to the social economy and, more specifically, the social enterprises, which are presented as a model for effective social assistance and social development. The European social model is been examined, as a universally recognized key instrument for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth in accordance with the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy, and already as a vision for „Europe 2030”. A very interesting and thorough analysis of the conditions and prerequisites for development of social entrepreneurship in Bulgaria is presented, as normative conjunctions and limitations, sectoral and territorial characteristics, tendencies in development are outlined. The author pays special attention to the typology of social enterprises from the perspective of their objectives (including social goals), size, forms of assistance to groups at risk, phases of development, social effects and others. The proposed typology is a methodological issue of extreme importance. It is connected with the metrics, analysis and evaluation of social enterprises in view of providing objective, reliable and relevant information on their regulation with suitable policies and instruments. Last but not least, the author presents an extensive vision for the innovations in the field of social enterprises and for promotion policies, both at national as well as at regional level with different financial and non-financial means and tools. The presented innovative practices are particularly interesting,

such as “positive discrimination”, introducing the brand „Product of social enterprise” and others, which break up the established stereotypes in this field and contribute to the imposition of a new contemporary, modern understanding of the social enterprises phenomenon.

The strategic framework for the development of social entrepreneurship complements the exposition in chapter two. The relevant European and national strategic and operative documents are given. The possibilities for support of social entrepreneurship in Bulgaria are outlined, but not only as financial instruments but also as partner initiatives, models and different proven good practices for strengthening the institutional capacity of social enterprises, of organizations from the public sector and of the sector as a whole.

In support of the defined objective, the third part of the research is devoted to the continuing professional training. The author’s essential contribution is that he enriches the theory of continuing professional training as a tool for social development. The legislative and institutional framework of continuing professional training, the trends, factors and challenges, and also the methodological foundation of continuing professional training in the context of studying throughout the whole life, are consecutively examined. The most adequate forms for continuing professional training in the social sphere are deduced, and a methodology for the application of continuing professional training on the basis of the conception “studying throughout the whole life” is proposed. The author’s ideas regarding the preparation and professional qualification of specialists in social activities in Bulgaria through continuing professional training are presented in the fourth part. The emanation of the work is the developed model of a system for preparation and professional qualification of specialists in social activities in Bulgaria through continuing professional training. The steps for adopting the model are proposed and the expected benefits from its application are outlined.

Different theoretical and empirical methods for analysis have been used in the work, adequate for the object and subject of study, as they have all been used correctly and competently. The research is based on a solid empirical base of data from national research conducted by specialized institutions.

As a researcher who works mainly in the field of economics, administration and management, I am greatly impressed by the fact that the author pays attention to one of the key problems in management - the metrics of results from the activity of a given system and the concepts related with it, such as effectiveness and efficacy, especially that they are examined within their social context. The precise solution of the metrics problem is an extremely challenging task from a researcher’s point of view, and is a basic condition for the validity of the conclusions regarding the relevance of the policies and tools for social development.

Perhaps the most important message which Venelin Terziev makes to the readers is connected with improving the sustainability of social policy. This is the leading idea of the whole work, which is mentioned as early as chapter two - in the analysis and assessment of the perspectives for development of social economics and social enterprises, but is developed further in the next part, where the sustainability problem is treated also as part of the long-term and medium-term strategic impact from social interventions.

Without a doubt, the author demonstrates his high erudition, both in terms of research as well as practice, showing profound knowledge of the logic of processes, of the applicable tools for proving the defined research theses, of the limitations which shape the study’s framework. He reveals the different aspects of the object of study - social policies and tools as a foundation for developing and building a capacity for effective social assistance, by showing their forms of manifestation, the connection with other systems, the possible transformations and the potential consequences thereof. The logical validity of this author’s choice is an excellent prerequisite for the creation of a research product with high utility, both for the practice as well as for the theory of social policy and social assistance.

3. CONCLUSION

Among the most important merits of the work is that the author has a clearly constructed vision for the development of the Bulgarian social model and the challenges which stand before its successful application, in view of bringing it in conformity with the European legal framework and the peculiarities in the country. I find that the significance of this monographic work exceeds the limits of what is common in the field of scientific research and presents the author not only as a serious theoretician and practician, but also as a professional with a responsible attitude towards the management of the social system, who continues to be dedicated to the “social development” cause.

The author has a sufficiently good experience in investigating and studying social policies and programmes. His main publishing and research work is connected with this (Terziev et al. 2016-b; Terziev et al. 2016c-d;

Terziev, 2016e; Terziev, Arabska, Nichev, 2017; Terziev, 2017a-e; Terziev, Arabska, 2017f-g; Terziev, 2017h-i; Terziev, Nichev, 2017j-l; Dimitar, Terziev, 2017m; Terziev, Stoyanov, 2017n-q; Terziev et al. 2017r; Terziev, Nichev, Stoyanov, Georgiev, 2017s-t; Terziev, Kanev, 2017u; Terziev, 2018-d; Terziev, 2018e; Terziev, Bekiarova, Georgiev, 2019; Terziev, Nichev, Georgiev, 2019a-b; Terziev, Georgiev, 2019c-f; Terziev, 2019g-u).

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