

# Social policy theories, concepts, and issues



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Humans are always in a quest to improve and develop their lives. This is clearly evident as man constantly reforms the areas of education, health care, labor, criminal justice, and social care among many others.

The effort to advance such fields is part of the discipline referred to as social policy. The book *Social Policy Theories, Concepts, and Issues* best explains the various aspects of this field. It a work made possible through the contributions of talented and brilliant minds of Stephen Cunningham, Iaian Ferguson, Michael Lavalette, Brian Lund, Gerry Mooney, Laura Penketh, Alan Pratt, Jonathan Pratt, Jo Tomlinson, Beth Widdowson, and Kath Woodward. All of the contributors are part of the academe and are regarded as the masters and experts of this discipline. In order to make the ideas more organized and structured, University of Liverpool senior lecturer Michael Lavalette (2005) and University of Central Lancashire principal lecturer Alan Pratt (2005) edited and compiled this book.

The book itself explores the theories as well as issues revolving social policy. It begins by first giving an overview of social policy and how it shapes the everyday life. *Social Policy Theories, Concepts, and Issues* also thoroughly examine the different strands that influence the various aspects of this field by critiquing and examining relevant topics. Another good about this book is that it covers an intensive and detailed array of information regarding social welfare and policy. It is organized into three sections which are all geared to discuss various social policy concepts and issues.

The chapters are arranged and structured in a manner that reflects the numerous developments as well as the issues and debates within this field.

Apart from this, the book also takes on new areas and topics such as globalization, politics of food, citizenship, and post-structuralism. Another interesting thing about this book is that it presents a number of practical examples that can help illustrate and point out a theoretical concept. An outline post and an activity guide are also presented on every chapter. This can help the student to effectively understand and grasp the key points in each topic. Students can benefit from this book as it proves to be an excellent reading and learning material.

A reading and reference lists are also provided in order to help students and professors alike in their research about the topic. Similarly, the academe can utilize this book as a reference material. It can also provide them with ideas for their discussion as each chapter presents an activity guide. Section one takes on numerous theoretical approaches in social policy.

The first three chapters of the book provide an understanding of neo-liberalism, Marxism, and social democracy as social policy theories. These three approaches all offer a holistic explanation about its influence on the social world. The latter part of the book on the other hand, will also take on theoretical approaches of feminism and racism and its effects on the formation of policies. According to author Alan Pratt (2005), the neo-liberal theory offers a set of coherent and consistent assumptions and ideologies about the human nature, human behavior, as well as the institutions that surrounds them.

It asserts several important assumptions which include methodological individualism, rationality, and supremacy of the free market. Apart from this,

it also discusses various political concerns such as public expenditure, labor market, rights, culture and values, poverty, and inflation among many others. The issue of poverty for instance, is addressed in this theory by stating that market economy is an effective means to improve living standards. For neo-liberals the most effective and efficient way to abolish the effects of poverty is by creating employment opportunities.

Apart from this; the culture of dependence should be eliminated as it does not help the poor. Instead, it only disfigures their humanity. Thus, the role of the free market should be further expanded. Neo-liberals also emphasize that poverty is also culturally determined. This means that attitudes, ideas, and values greatly affect the living standard and condition of an individual. In order to achieve this policy objective, the institutions that promote welfare dependency should be eliminated.

People should be instead, should be placed into a world of work and enterprise. The theoretical approach of Marxism is also discussed in the first section of the book. The main assumption of this theory evolves with the idea that capitalism is a “ system wracked by conflict” (Lavelette, M. , 2005, p 49).

It is particularly shaped by the class division wherein the relationship between the bourgeoisie or the people who control the means of production; and the proletariat or the working class. For Marxists, the interests between these two classes are irreconcilable particularly because the survival of the upper class depends on the exploitation and subjugation of the working class. This theory also stresses the idea that the capitalist market shapes

everyday life through commodification. Marxists also look at three important components that affect the societal welfare. This includes social and economic requirements, pressures from the mass, and political calculations (Lavelette, M.

, 2005, p. 47). Feminism is also an issue frequently discussed in social policy. In fact, there are now numerous women who are campaigning for the reformation of the social policies that directly affect the female gender.

Social and political topics like domestic violence, nutrition, healthcare, and work environment are just some of the ideas that require further attention. Since this discipline is focused on improving the human condition, it is only essential to review and perhaps, reform the existing policies. In this book, author Kath Woodward (2005) presents and critiques how social policies and welfare states have been developed by the society to devalue the concerns women. She further explores this topic by offering a peek into early policy legislation and how it was developed to create the concept of a “ male-breadwinner”. Similarly, social policy also covers the subject of racism. Most people think that racism is an issue that has been long gone.

The truth however, is that racism still exists in many parts of the world. More importantly, this subject continues to affects the lives of millions upon millions of individuals. This book gives an overview of the feminism and racism as a social policy issue. It also presents different approaches and perspective that can help both the teacher and the students to understand and address the mentioned topics. All of the mentioned components and conflicts greatly affect welfare development in society. Thus, the Marx theory

suggests that it is first essential to first address the process of struggle as well conflict inside a capitalist society.

Addressing such issues would help improve and further develop social welfare and policies. Meanwhile, the second part of the book takes on conceptual topic such as post modernism. In this book, the author underlines post-modernism is a theory that rejects the duality as well as the material approaches in understanding not only in social policy, but in social life as well. This perspective refuses to see the world in its totality.

A reason behind this is based on the idea that there is no singular concept of truth. Instead, post modernists believe that truth is diverse and it comes in various forms. There is no objective reality, only different narratives and discourses. The third section of the book discusses the various social policy issues that surround this field. This includes issues regarding children, labor, and pension.

The issue of pension for instance, covers the pension policy influenced by both demographic and ideological causes. Aside from this, it also tackles the future of contributory pensions and citizen pension. Likewise, the social condition of children is also an important issue in social policy. It focuses on the components as well as the issues that affect the education and healthcare of young people.

The book covers such subjects that will help both the students and the professor to come up with a more thorough insight about the topic.

Furthermore, the book also presents numerous perspective and insights that can contribute in the development of children policy formation. The book

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Social Policy Theories, Concepts, and Issues indeed presents itself as an excellent learning material. It is particularly helpful to students who wish to specialize in the discipline of social policy. The academe on the other hand, will also greatly benefit from this book as it proves to be a handy guide about the important issues and concerns in social policy.

Aside from this, the author provides further areas of research which could then be used as a new module for discussion. This book will also prove to be beneficial to those who will conduct studies and researches about social welfare and social policy. The great thing about this book is that it offers researchers an in depth look as well as historical background of current social issues and topics. The readings and reference materials provided at the last part of the book can also be utilized for conducting further studies.

Lastly, the book provides essential information and approaches that could help general readers have a better understanding and appreciation of this field. As it was mentioned in the introduction page, not many individuals are familiar with social policy as a discipline. This book however, allows the reader to have a better grasp on this academic area of study. More importantly, it will allow them to recognize the importance of this study as it greatly affects the various aspects of life.