

Adam Kubów (ed.): WYZWANIA POLITYKI SPOŁECZNEJ. WYBRANE ASPEKTY [CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL POLICY. SELECTED ASPECTS]. WUE 2020, 146 pp.

The reviewed monograph, being a joint publication, proves that we are continually facing the overlapping of politics and economy in the reality we live in as well as in science, asking questions and searching for answers, elucidating, and analysing this reality. After all, despite 'political' entries in legal deeds and the approval of the scientific disciplines catalogue, it is generally recognized that both economics and political science, including public and social policy sciences, are social sciences. Moreover, Edwin R. A. Seligman, the twentieth-century American economist and co-author of *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, divided social sciences into three groups and classified the above-mentioned sciences as the so-called general sciences (*purely social sciences*). 'Semi-social' sciences (like ethics and pedagogy) comprise the second group, whereas the third group includes those which only influence the general sciences (such as biology, geography, medicine, and art).

The authors of the articles present social policy with its challenges and perspectives and strongly underline the crucial relationship between the problems in society and in economy. Obviously, this is not a ground-breaking statement. However, the dynamically changing elements of the socio-economic reality (with different intensity of these processes) provide almost an unlimited research field for scientists to continually undertake up-to-date surveys. This, in turn, prompts researchers to produce more scientific publications on the problems occurring 'here and now', including their causes and effects. They indicate social experiences and the phenomena which took place in the past but often provide the prognoses for the nearest or even distant future.

This, in fact, is the role of science, to explain, study and explore ceaselessly and systematically, producing interesting studies which discussing important scientific issues. The reviewed publication, *Challenges for Social Policy. Selected Aspects*, edited by an outstanding researcher in social policy, Professor Adam Kubów from Wrocław, unquestionably serves this purpose.

The authors' research fields and explanations are both definitely of high importance and socially sensitive, i.e. they concern poverty, unemployment, exclusion and marginalisation, and various disabilities. Social policy is to provide support, combat and solve such social challenges.

The monograph *Challenges for Social Policy. Selected Aspects* is composed of an introduction and five chapters. The title reflects the content of individual chapters. It is very general, however at the same time it defines the authors' message for the readers and clearly indicates what the research subject matter is. Apart from the second chapter being clearly longer, the remaining chapters are of similar size. The monograph numbers 145 pages, and thus is not too extensive considering its title. The introduction reflects on this issue and explains that "the monograph includes only selected areas and problems" (p. 8), also mentioning that "the authors intend to

continue their research on this essential field of social policy, which includes the issues of social security. They are also planning to publish a subsequent work” (p. 8).

The monograph is a product of work and research in the field of social policy conducted by five academic staff members at the Department of Sociology and Social Policy of Wrocław University of Economics . The study by Stanisław Kamiński, entitled *Social Economy versus Social Policy in Poland*, is the first chapter of the monograph. The author proves that it is necessary to build a coherent social policy which will answer actual needs as we are facing dynamic transformations of the socio-economic situation. Due to the usually limited public financing it is critical to find new solutions (to establish new entities, create instruments) to satisfy the needs. Social economy is an example of such relatively new activity forms. The author elaborates on the entities of a social economy, their development, organisation, and importance in the implementation of the social policy in Poland. It also indicates the need to provide an appropriate environment for the further development of social economy.

The research paper by K. Sipurzyńska-Rudnicka entitled *Challenges of the Polish Labour Market at the Threshold of the Third Decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Selected Aspects*, constitutes the second chapter of the monograph. The author indicates that the labour market situation is a factor which influences the entire socio-economic life, as the occurring effects of the tensions and problems affect all entities. Thus, it is unquestionable that the labour market is particularly important in the currently pursued social policy. The reader learns from the introduction that: “due to the extent and importance of the labour market issues, this chapter of the monograph is more extensive, but it still presents only the basic tendencies observed on the Polish labour market. The chapter also provides an outline of this market’s problem areas. The problems, if left unsolved, may lead to numerous limitations of and threats to the socio-economic development such as disadvantageous changes in the size and age structure of the labour force, significant extent of unused labour force, spatial differentiation of (un)employment in the labour market, low wages and other unsatisfactory aspects of work conditions, and challenges in adapting education to the needs of the labour market. That is why these problem areas should be addressed by the social, as well as economic, policy pursued now and to be pursued in the future” (p. 8).

In the following chapter, *Support Instruments for Disabled Students* its author, K. Gilga, underlines the fact that despite significant progress in supporting the professional and social activity of the disabled, these people are still being discriminated against and thus their full participation in social life is limited. The analysis in the chapter focuses on the issue of providing support in the educational process, mainly on the higher level, as education plays an important role. The chapter’s first part introduces the issue of disability and, in particular, describes the level of education and situation on the labour market of people with disabilities. The next part of the chapter presents the legal, financial, and organisational instruments supporting students with disabilities, particularly worthy of the reader’s attention as it analyses an important and still unresolved problem.

J. Szczepaniak-Sienniak's paper entitled *Changes in the Instruments of Social Policy toward the Family in Poland after 1989*, is the following chapter of the monograph and introduces yet another problem area. The author identifies, systematizes, and explains the most important changes related to the state's intervention in the life of families undergoing the process of deinstitutionalisation. She distinguishes the programme (the government authorities' actions) and the institutional-legal changes in the context of the economic, social, and political transformations in the selected period of the analysis, above all focusing on the financial instruments, stressing that most changes were introduced in this area. The author also includes new and modified solutions in the remaining instruments. What determines the paper's substantial value is that the author described with remarkable precision the instruments and their evolution from 1989.

The monograph concludes with Adam Kubów's study entitled *Social Infrastructure as an Instrument of Social Policy*, which in the reviewer's opinion is located appropriately as it refers to the matters discussed in the previous sections. The author draws the reader's attention to the fact that social infrastructure, being a foundation for providing social services, is a tool enabling the satisfaction of fundamental human needs. The solutions provided in the services are always critical as they can generate some social problems on the one hand and address these problems on the other. Yet whether the social infrastructure is an effective tool of social policy depends on its material and personnel resources, their distribution patterns, financial outlays, and organisational solutions in this field, which determine the availability of social services.

In my opinion the reviewed monograph is a valuable work contributing to the discussion on the current challenges, problems, institutions, and phenomena occurring in the socio-economic reality in Poland, and relating to the pursued social policy. The issues provided in the monograph should be taken into consideration as important and conducive to discussion. Undoubtedly the reviewed publication can be valuable for those interested in the discussed topics.

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