CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM IN GENERAL

Social Policy is a macro method adopted by many disciplines including social work to eradicate social problems of people. Social policy is commonly understood to have the following objectives: pursuit of equality, provision of welfare for all and elimination of poverty. It has three dimensions - reform, development and welfare. The concepts of social policy and social programmes are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Here, an attempt is made to link social policy with social programmes through which its objectives are put into practice. And the evaluation of social programmes mirror whether the output of the programmes and their impact help in achieving the objectives of social policy.

Research on social policy is comparatively a new field of academic endeavour in social work. In the last few decades this had assumed significance. The most common way of studying social policy has been to rely on the secondary data - statistics of a country, special
surveys, reports and so on. Such studies though provide a wealth of information on the structure and functions of the principal institutions and services, do not help in explaining in analytical manner how policies are formulated and who actually influences what is decided (Levitt, 1979).

Though the studies following the case-study method are analytical in nature, tend to become narrow in focus. For example, they may examine a single organisation (Eckstein 1960), a single decision (Willcock 1967), a single issue (Allen 1979), and a single level of policy-making (Ham 1981), rather than studying social policy as a whole.

While both the approaches to the study of social policy are important, there is need to go beyond as the purpose is not just to study social policy per se' but to know how it is formulated, implemented and evaluated. This means, a study of social policy is not complete unless the programmes through which it gets implemented, and evaluation of the impact of such programmes are studied in detail and linked to the study of social policy.
A model is offered here to establish systematic linkages in the study of social policy, social programme and its evaluation. It can be said that by following this model any social policy can be studied in its genesis, (formulation process), in its transformation into programmes (implementation process) and in its output and impact (evaluation process).

The first model identifies six components - (a) origin and focus (b) goals and objectives (c) programme objectives (d) programme activities (e) organisational structure (f) and evaluation -and establishes the relationship among them. (See Figure 1). Each component of the model is briefly described below:

(a) Origin and Focus:
It is important to explore the origin of the policy as the past experience will enable to understand whether the present focus is in continuation of the past policy or if there is deviation. In both cases, the past experience will help justify the continuation of the past policy or deviation from it. Moreover, the goals and the focus of social policy in any society are determined by the forces operating and the conditions
Figure - 1
MODEL OF SOCIAL POLICY: Formulation, Implementation and Evaluation

Input variables

Origin Goal(s) Objectives Programme

Throughput variables (Implementation)

Output variables

Evaluation

Organisational structure

Efficiency criteria

Effectivity criteria

Impact

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FEED-BACK PROCESS
prevailing in the society like:

(a) political, social and economic systems both at the macro and micro levels;

(b) the levels of existing social and economic development achieved;

(c) the resources at the command of the state and the voluntary sectors; and, above all,

(d) the global exogenous factors like the foreign aid, or the lack of it.

In short, the focus and the goals of any social policy cannot be, and should not be, studied devoid of the forces and conditions prevailing in the society, both from within and without, and in contemporary and past terms.

b) Goals/Objectives

The goals of social policy, however laudable, should be spelt out in the form of objectives of social policy. The purpose is to make the goals attainable by making objectives SMART — a) Specific; b) Measurable; c) Achievable; d) Realistic and e) Time-bound. Even at this stage, the objectives of social policy can only
remain SMART if they are not provided the vehicle of social programmes for transforming them into action. If the social policy is the head, then programmes act like its body without which the goals and the objectives of social policy will remain in abstract form only.

(c) Programme Objectives:
A social policy objective may get translated into action with the help of one or more than one programme. Hence, there is a need to dovetail social policy objectives into programme objectives or programmes. In most cases one notices that programmes either do not have clear cut objectives or their objectives do not match well with the objectives of social policy to which the programmes are supposed to contribute.

Either way, the most vital link between social policy and social programme is snapped and therefore evaluation however effective remains only restricted to programme. Similarly, any review of social policy only takes into account the policy’s intent and content and not its achievements. When social policy objectives are fully converted into programme objectives, the programme serves as a bridge between the focus and the goals of
social policy on the one hand and its implementation and impact, on the other.

d) Programme Activities:
The programme objectives' link with social policy howsoever laudable will become futile, if not crystalised into programme of action, which is only possible when programme objectives are transformed as programmes' specific activities. The care to be taken here is to make the proposed activities as specific, adequate, realistic, achievable and also not at cross purposes with one another as the programme's objectives.

e) Organisational Structure:
Along with the programme planning, it is important to see that the organisational base provided is feasible enough to implement the programme activities. The organisational structure, personnel, their relationship and patterns of communication should be well and clearly defined for developing an effective, significant and efficient service delivery system. Logically speaking, the organisational base should be evolved in line with the focus, policy and programme objectives and programme activities. Any expansion in the scope of policy and
programmes should necessarily take into account the organisational capacity to implement and vice versa.

All the components mentioned so far constitute the input and throughput functions. Having assessed the need, framed objectives, programmes and mobilised organisational resources to meet the same over a period time, there is need to assess the outcome and its impact. The inputs and throughputs can be evaluated in terms of their effectivity, significance and efficiency.

A model of social policy delineating its formulation, implementation and evaluation — is provided in Figure 1.

Moreover, other than the input and throughput resources, certain extraneous factors both anticipated and unanticipated also contribute to the success or failure of the programmes. The exogenous factors may be acceptance or resistance from the people, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, vested interests, political parties and the government itself. Hence, the evaluation component of the model should encompass, the assessment of the total effect in relation to
(a) organisational structure, personnel and communication,
(b) programmes and activities
(c) objectives and goals and
(d) focus of the policy.

A model for studying social policy's formulation, implementation and evaluation given here is applied to social policy and social programmes in Sweden related to the unemployed care because Sweden's welfare state claims to establish proper and adequate linkages between its social policy and programmes. A conceptual discussion on social policy and programmes is offered in the next chapter.