

The Handbook of Social Policy and Development, edited by James Midgley, Rebecca Surrender and Laura Alfors. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019. pp. 485. ISBN: 978-1-78536-842-4 (cased), ISBN: 978-1-78536843-1 (e-book).

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The recent expansion of social assistance programmes, services and budgets in developing countries has created a new interest in evaluating the effects of these welfare reforms, and in understanding the political factors that drive the welfare expansion. While there is an increasing debate among scholars in social policy and political science about how theories on the development of the welfare state and on new social risk can shed light on the welfare expansion, there is at the same time a strong focus in development studies on issues related to social welfare and poverty reduction.

Containing a collection of chapters written by leading scholars in the fields of social policy and development, *The Handbook of Social Policy and Development* marks an important turning point in efforts to enhance collaboration between these two fields. This *Handbook* examines the complex challenges of integrating the studies of the two disciplines of social policy and development with the view to meeting global social needs. The subject matter of the *Handbook* looks closely at this relationship and registers an advance in the search for closer collaboration between the two fields.

In their introduction, the editors set out clearly what the *Handbook* seeks to achieve, explaining its scope and structure, and briefly sketch what each part and chapter is devoted to. There are three parts divided into twenty-four chapters, which are helpfully presented by means of a preliminary showcase that provides a compelling invitation to explore the *Handbook*.

Part I, “Social Policy and Development Origins”, sets the scene with the first two chapters. One chapter offers a comprehensive historical and theoretical overview of the evolution and presents characteristics of social policy and development studies. The other chapter critically examines how models and concepts of social policy can be useful in understanding the dynamics of developing countries. It concludes that single subjects – such as social policy or development – may be inadequate for understanding



and explaining the policy landscape in the developing world, and emphasise the need for stronger integration and cross-disciplinary collaboration between subjects.

Part II, “Key Issues and Debates”, comprises twelve chapters that focus on issues such as poverty, gender and human rights, in which the fields of both social policy and development are involved. Distinguished authors provide excellent scholarly debate on the importance of exchanging and integrating knowledge in the fields of social policy and development. Two chapters stand out from the rest: one squarely deals with the need to change frameworks for understanding gender and development, the other argues that integrating social policy frameworks into national legislation and policy is critical for national development. Two other contributions outline the different conceptualisations of urban and rural development from the divergent social policy and development perspectives, and suggest greater interaction between the two fields. A number of chapters argue that it is important for social policy and development to engage with different interpretations of subjects, such as the role of social movements in social change, social and human rights, security and development, and environmental sustainability, in order to enhance rapport between and collaboration with one another.

The ten chapters in Part III, “Services, Programmes and Policy Sectors”, look at a wide range of traditional social services and some programmes that facilitate social, economic and political development of people in the Western and developing world. Most of these chapters discuss the contribution of traditional social services – such as health, education, housing, social protection, social work and family – to development in their respective countries and policy sectors. Two other chapters provide a provocative analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of financial inclusion and community development programmes to illustrate their contribution to development. The final chapter in Part III examines the important role of non-governmental organisations in implementing social welfare and development policies. It explains their potential for promoting social welfare development and social justice in Western and developing countries, which will require scholars in social policy and development to integrate the similarities in their divergent conceptualisations of the function of these organisations in society.

The strengths of the *Handbook* are considerable. Perhaps the shortest and simplest way to describe this 485-page tome is to say that it is a landmark contribution to enhancing collaboration between the two fields of social policy and development. The *Handbook* editors and contributors deserve to be commended for attempting to push the boundaries of social policy and development studies and for showing how each field can benefit from adopting insights from the other discipline. The *Handbook* critically examines how a wide range of countries and case studies can improve the integration between these fields and offers a comprehensive overview of the vast possibilities inherent in the collaboration between these fields.

The *Handbook* is geared for those scholars who wish to review the contemporary debates about welfare expansion in developing countries and the Western world through social policy and development lenses. It can serve as a thought-provoking directory and valuable reference for scholars, students, researchers, specialists and practitioners in both fields. The *Handbook* is a comprehensive work, likely to arouse interest and provoke discussion, both now and in the future.