

The Department of Social and Education Policy brings together two distinct but quite related scientific fields that belong to the area of Public Policy, those of Social Policy and of Education Policy, giving prominence to their interconnection and interaction.

The principles of interdisciplinarity and complementarity, the coupling of theory and practice and the perception of Social and Education Policy as having a common mission determine the profile and the objectives of the Department.

The scientific fields of Social and Education Policy

- use common theoretical approaches given that they both refer to public policies (social and education policies) having as their principal aim the advancement of social welfare and social justice
- use common methodological approaches in the empirical investigation of the issues pertinent to the two fields
- are interdisciplinary fields drawing theoretical and methodological tools from related scientific areas such as sociology, political science, economics, history, law, psychology, social anthropology, epistemology, sciences of education, etc.
- are planned and implemented in a common historical, cultural and institutional context
- presuppose the connection between theory and implementation of policies
- are developed at national, European and international level.

The nation-state does not constitute the sole level where social and education policies are implemented. On the contrary, these policies are promoted through a multi-level governance system comprising the supranational (international organisations), European (E.U.), and local (regions, municipalities) levels. Consequently, the Department places great emphasis not only on the systematic study of the primary role the nation-state plays in social and education policy development but also to the international and European dimensions of policy formulation, as well as the local level of making and implementing policy decisions.

Social Policy is both an interdisciplinary scientific field and an applied science. It examines and analyses the ways in which societies respond to social needs, reduce social inequalities and promote social welfare.

In studying Social Policy, redistribution - of resources, access, opportunities and rights - constitutes a fundamental concept connected to a large spectrum of social needs that are rapidly changing and expanding in the contemporary, fast-evolving, globalised context, while redistribution deficits - in resources, access, opportunities and rights - are becoming more and more complex. In addition, redistribution policies are connected to various ideological and political traditions, social values and material interests. In this framework, although the so-called core aspects of Social Policy include certain fundamental fields of social intervention necessary to the human existence and well-being, such as food and housing security, health, decent work, social security and social welfare, its boundaries may expand to all those areas where inequalities, redistribution deficits or discriminations are observed, such as education, the environment, public security, migration, etc. In other words, social policy encompasses all the fields that are required in order for people to live independently and participate fully in society.

Social Policy examines the ways in which different societies develop the means to address social needs and fight the causes of unequal distribution of wealth. In this context, even though the state is the leading agent in the formulation of contemporary social policy, it does not by any means monopolise its implementation. On the contrary, Social Policy can be conceptualised as a field determined and defined by the triangular relationship of three important social institutions: the state, the market and the family. In this respect, the analysis of the institutions and of the organisational culture prevailing in each society is an important parameter in the study of social policy. At the same time, amidst this triangle there exists a public space comprising non-governmental and volunteer organisations, the Church as well as various initiatives and social movements, consisting a dynamic part of civil society. Finally, as already mentioned, social policy is promoted through a multi-level governance system including supranational, national and local levels.

Education Policy as a scientific field studies: a. the distribution and exercise of power in the area of education and the ways in which decisions affecting the outcomes of educational process are made b. the institutions and mechanisms through which resources (human and material) and responsibilities are distributed, and educational work is produced c. the processes of interaction between the decision-making centres and those who implement policies. Education Policy approaches education as an articulated and organised system with its own structures, rules and regulations. The scope of Education Policy spans from international organisations and the European Union to the nation-state, and from the macro-level of the state to the micro-level of a school, an institution offering new forms of education or a higher education institution, and includes both public and private sectors.

In an environment subject to rapid, sweeping change under the pressure of globalisation and on-going development of ever new technologies, education policy planning constitutes a field of increased interest as education is connected with economic development as well as citizenship.

More specifically, Education Policy shapes the conditions for the production and accreditation of knowledge, skills, abilities, professional qualifications and rights while it co-defines the terms in employment, the labour market, innovation, development. Education Policy contributes significantly to the development of the sciences, the arts, technology, education, culture, national identity, social cohesion, peace and sustainability of the planet. Education Policy as a public policy focuses on the education of citizens and, similarly to Social Policy, has as an ultimate goal social welfare and social justice.

Education Policy shares some common ground with scientific fields cultivated at the various Departments of Education; however,

- it focuses on policy (goals, decisions, methods and processes towards the achievement of the goals, from the level of the state to the level of any given educational institution)
- It focuses on all levels of education
- It places emphasis also on new forms of open and distance learning.