**Assignment 1: Ideologies, Policy Shaping, and Social Reform**

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HSRV322: Ideology and Policy Evolution

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In a world of continuing controversy and societal differences, it is of the upmost importance to understand the contribution that ideas, values, and commitments have in our everyday life on a personal, professional, and societal level. Through the duration of this short essay, it will become apparent to the reader that the contribution that such concepts have within the human services sector and society in general, are significant. By comparing and contrasting such definitions, relating them to human services practices and creating discussion as well as understanding regarding social reform and how it relates to such, such significance will become clear.

**Introduction**

The importance of social reform is perhaps greater than it has ever been. The actions represented by ideologies consisting of certain values, ideas and commitments are also greatly embodied within society today, more specifically within the social work and human services professions. From the main principles presented, we are introduced to the shaping and reformation of policies within professions such as the human services sector. All while being introduced to such concepts and practices, it becomes clear that controversy regarding most, if not all, aspects dealt with in such professional sectors are perhaps the number one contributor for social reform. Thus, the connection between ideas, values, and commitments in the human services sector as well as others alike and social reform become transparent. Additionally, the notion that a clash between ideologies surrounding sensitive subject matter and marginalized populations and conflicting political and societal views is a substantial motive for social reform is validated.

**Topic Analysis: Policy Shaping in the Human Services Sector**

Policy shaping, otherwise know as social policy in many respects varies in definition, dependant on who, or what type of organization is defining it. For instance, Lightman et al (2017) describes the complexity of defining social policy as being occupied with extensive emotional content, but without an agreed-upon meaning overall (pg. 64). Social policy is often seen as a form of charitable giving and a way of helping the less fortunate, an act of self-help and gathering of communities to address common concerns, and a set of values, programs and practices that aim to bring communities together (Lightman, et al., 2017, pg. 64). However, others may have a perspective that social policy is perhaps an insurance policy that protects society against capitalist exploitation (Lightman et al., 2017, pg. 64) For the sake of this paper, social policy is referred to as a community with similar goals, views and opinions that strive to make appropriate choices in attempt to repair divides within society for the greater good.

**Defining Values, Ideas, and Commitments in Policy Shaping**

With consideration to the provided definition(s) of what social policy is and aims to be, already it is clear that the role of values, ideas and commitments within the human services field have great significance regarding the shaping of policies. Although there is much controversy in respect to what social policy is or how it can be defined, one thing for sure is that values, ideas, and commitments all have an impact on how and what social policies are put into place. For instance, Harrison et al. (2003) explains that all political ideologies, whether or not they are political in nature, are seen as a true definition of equality, rights, liberty, justice, and the most appropriate society to the group that holds such ideology (pg. 137). To simplify, the combination of a specified groups values, ideas and commitments are essentially what make up an ideology that such group stands by. Such shared values and ideological stances of a group provide insight into the relevant past, exploration of the relevant present, and frequently a vision of the future that is deemed beneficial (Harrison, et al., 2003, pg. 137).

Clearly, the shaping of values and ideas often lay way for the shaping of ideologies and later on, policies and commitments within society hold a significant role in the formation and continuation of organizations within the human services sectors. Social policies and the underlying contributors such as values and beliefs are present in virtually every aspect of our everyday lives; the creation and advancement of policies and practices in human services organizations are very much dependant on the values, ideas, commitments, and ideologies that underline the expressions of such bodies. Values play an essential role in all policy shaping and policy related choices in relation to achieving particular goals within different political or professional systems (Velez, et al. 2020, pg. 186) including human services sectors. The study conducted by Velez et al. (2020) identifies 4 main principles for how values influence decision making within health systems as: effectively framing problems and concerns, guiding policy development, utilizing values as pragmatic and beneficial instruments to aid decision making, and in the validation of such decisions (pg. 195). Thus, the role that is played by values, commitments, and opinions in the development of organizational policies can be identified as a foundation for decision making, validation and effectiveness of decision making and framing concerns and issues, as well as beneficial mechanisms or tools that are used throughout different processes in regard to decision making.

**Topic Analysis: Social Reform and Societal Differences**

Not everyone has the same values, opinions, or even commitments for that matter, individually or collectively. Although organizations within the human services sector may aim to achieve similar outcomes and hold similar ideologies, often the values, commitments, and policies embedded within the organizations vary. Since it is true that not everyone or every organization holds the same values and policies, it is fair to assume that social reform is a direct result of conflicting values, opinions, commitments, ideologies, and even perceptions. Social reform has existed for decades, perhaps even centuries, and is still very much evident in our society today. Social Reform can be described as a movement(s) that aims to change or eliminate the social and political views of marginalized populations – efforts to change policies all while bringing about public awareness regarding specific issues are common goals in social reform acts (Staff, 2020, para. 1). Essentially, controversies and the clash of differences in values, opinions, perspectives, and ideas as well as conflicting tendencies within society results in things like peaceful protesting, organizational strikes, societal differences and controversies, and ultimately social reform.

**Learning Analysis: Conflicting Tendencies and Changing Societal Perceptions**

This far, it has been made clear that the relationship between values, beliefs, ideas, and commitments that shape ideologies are closely connected to that of social reform and conflicting perspectives. Perhaps a noteworthy statement made by Harrison et al. (2003) is that the meaning of freedom is often vaguely understood, yet expressed in a multitude of ways such as freedom of individuality and freedom of opinion and expression (pg. 85). In relation to conflicting tendencies within society and social reform, it is fair to state that freedom of expression, opinion and individuality directly impact such act of attempted revolutionization. Without doubt, freedom of expression impacts social reform; without the ability to express one’s own opinions, perspectives, or beliefs in an appropriate way, could social reform exist? Perhaps it is the single entity that such expressions of freedom and related belief systems often create conflict and controversy among society which in turn drives advocates and allies to declare change and promote reformation of society and within society.

Of course, it must also be understood that politics directly impact conflicting tendencies and the inevitable changing of social perceptions, whether those perceptions are deemed as negative or positive. For example, Liberalism largely exists on the ideology that freedom of expression and individuality are at greater risk of threat the more involvement and power that the state holds (Harrison, 2003, pg. 85). From a neo-liberal point of view, social services are just like any other service that exists (Lightman, et al., 2017, pg. 98) whereas from a conservative perspective human well being is a personal responsibility and better dealt with through private institutions (2012, para. 2) not viewed as a collective responsibility but rather and individual responsibility. So, if one holds the mindset of liberalism while another holds the mindset of conservatism regarding the opinions and beliefs of social services and programs, wouldn’t social reform be more likely to occur?

**Conclusion**

Clearly, this is a topic of great controversy; a topic which possesses multiple layers and dimensions, perspectives, and opinions. However, upon investigation and analyzation, it is also clear that without values, beliefs, opinions, and commitments, ideologies can not be formed thus social policy shaping is almost non-existent. Additionally, without policy shaping or beliefs and values systems and the conflicts of such within our everyday society, it is possible that social reform would also be non-existent. Essentially, one cannot exist without the others – social reform is driven by conflicting values, beliefs and commitments within society which create ideologies and ultimately create change and appropriate policy making when agreed upon. One cannot be understood completely without understanding the other; our societal gap is largely due to the controversy and misunderstanding of the inherent relationship between the three critical aspects of freedom, peace, equality, and policy.

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