

# Teaching social policy (practice) to social workers in Australia

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# Outline

- Nature of teaching social policy practice to social workers
- Extent of teaching social policy practice to social workers
- Successes of teaching social policy practice to social workers
- Challenges of teaching social policy practice to social workers

Nature of teaching social policy  
practice to social workers

## **SOCIAL POLICY SUBJECTS' OBJECTIVES**

Objectives	Sub.outlines frequency
To acquire a conceptual understanding of social policy (SP)	5
To understand the historical development of social policy	5
To discuss politics, political system, state and government	9
To understand the theoretical discourse/ social theory	9
To study social values and goals	7
To explore factors influencing social policy processes	8
To develop policy analysis skills	8
To understand the implementation of social policy	1
To discuss evaluation of the impact of the policy	3
To discuss specific issue areas, issues and debates	9
To study the impact of globalization	2
To explore the link between SP and economic policy	5
To study the link between SP and social work practice	4
To analyse comparative policy	2
To follow the social change process	1

# TOPICS/LECTURES COVERED IN SOCIAL POLICY SUBJECTS

Topics/lectures	Freq. in sub. outlines
Introductory/conceptual	15
Historical contexts and social policies	7
Theoretical	14
Current reforms (privatisation, managerialism, etc)	5
Comparative policy	3
Economics	7
Issue based topics	12
Policy analysis	8
Policy making process	13
Policy implementation	4
Policy evaluation	2
Policy practice	4
Local NGOs' work and discussion	1
Conclusion/review	10

# ISSUE BASED TOPICS INCLUDED IN SOCIAL POLICY SUBJECTS

Issues	Frequency
Aboriginal policy	8
Poverty	7
Social security system/safety net, work and unemployment, Health , Housing	5
Race and racism, Multiculturalism, Gender/feminism, Education	3
The aged/elderly, Child welfare, Disability, Families and communities, Redistributing -wealth/taxation	2

## READING RESOURCES INDICATED IN THE SUBJECT OUTLINES

Resources	Yes	No
Textbooks (18)	9	6
Recommended reading list	15	0
Required reading list	4	11
Lecture/topic-wise reading list	13	2
Internet addresses	2	13
General reference list	9	6



# USE OF TEACHING METHODS

Teaching methods	Subject frequency
lecture and tutorial	11
Only lecture	5
Presentations	8
Simulation games	2
Site visits	1
Issue based/SF	1
Work-shop Seminar	8
Guest lectures	7
Case study	1
Workbook	2
Distance education	

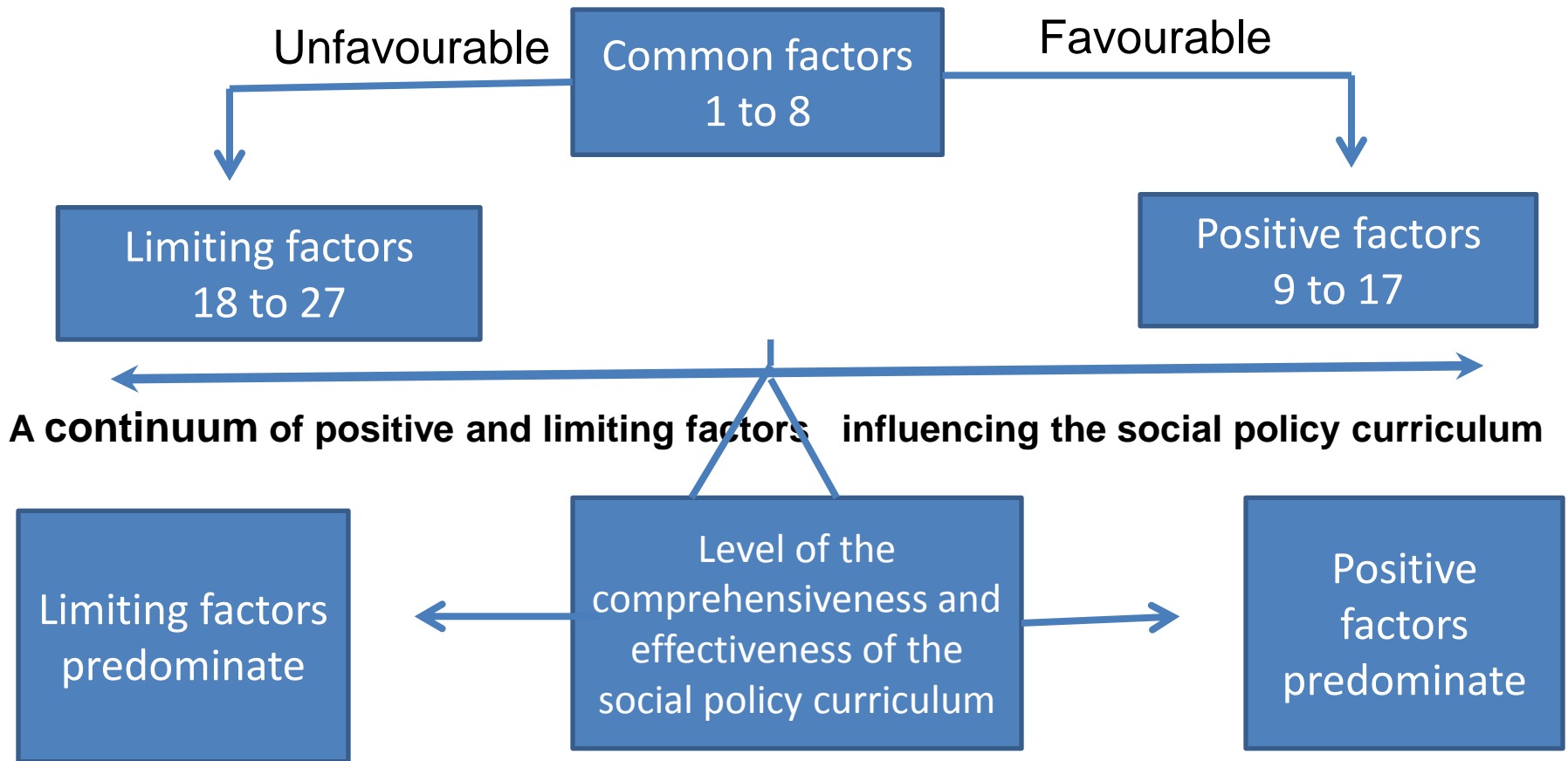
## ASSESSMENT METHODS EMPLOYED IN SOCIAL POLICY SUBJECTS

ASSESSMENT METHODS	Yes
Only assignments	11
Assignments and examination	5
Tutorial presentation in the class	9
Take home examination	4
Participation in tutorial/ seminar/debate	9

# Significant variation

- What are the probable factors that influence the development of social policy subject?
- Why does the coverage of topics significantly differ from one subject outline to another?

# A MODEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY SUBJECT



# Common factors

1. Background and interest of the educator
2. One's own ideology, thinking and imagination
3. Tradition of the school/department
4. Objectives of the whole course
5. Inclusion of certain topics in other subjects of the same course
6. Interdisciplinary nature of the subject
7. Broad and many topics
8. Revision of the curriculum

# Positive factors

9. Application of social work profession's mission and objectives
10. Awareness of a clear objective and purpose of the subject
11. Students' learning need and feedback
12. Consultation with interest groups/peer advice
13. Incorporation of local and regional issues that are close to learners' life experiences
14. Periodic and systematic revision of the curriculum
15. Connecting social policy with social work practice
16. Integrating social policy with Social Work Theory and Practice subject
17. The use of appropriate teaching and assessment methods

# Limiting factors

18. Blind 'adoption' of subjects developed by other educators
19. Limits of one's own perception and imagination
20. Development of the subject under certain pressures (time, urgency)
21. Learning by trial and error
22. Practical considerations such as number of hours available for the subject
23. Irregular and unsystematic revision of the curriculum
24. Lack of any guideline or yardstick to develop a subject
25. Non-availability of textbooks and resource materials
26. Treating and teaching the social policy subject separate from social work subjects
27. The use of inappropriate and ineffective teaching and assessment methods

# Example

## Social work and social policy practice

- The main thrust of this subject is to analytically discuss social policy making processes and to develop social policy practice skills. Particularly, it will emphasise the role of social workers in policy making processes.



# Topics addressed include

- policy processes at the three levels of government;
- policy making models;
- social policy analysis frameworks and factors which influence them;
- policy implementation and evaluation;
- social policy practice skills and
- social workers' social policy vision.

# On successful completion of this subject, students will

- be able to critically analyse the contributions of the three levels of government and various institutions involved in the policy making process
- be able to identify and analyse significant players/participants and the interest they represent
- demonstrate an understanding of policy making and policy analysis frameworks and be able to point out missing links

- demonstrate an understanding of the processes of policy implementation and evaluation and their importance in achieving social goals
- demonstrate an ability to apply the theory and practice knowledge gained in Social Policy subjects in social work practice
- be able to identify relevant phases in the policy process and appropriate methods of intervention in the identified phases and
- be able to develop social work vision for social policy and society.

Extent of teaching social policy  
practice to social workers

# Extent

- Social policy subject is a course accreditation requirement.
- Among other methods of social work practice, social planning and social action, and social policy analysis are required learning in the social work course.
- The number of social policy subjects included in the course varies: at least one or two.

# Extent

- The extent of theory and practice in the subject is not clear and it differs from subject to subject.
- Breadth and depth depends upon design of the curriculum, teacher and students.

# **Successes of teaching social policy practice to social workers**

It is a difficult variable to measure

# Criteria of success

- Presence of social policy curriculum in the course
- Subject completion by students
- Good evaluation of students
- Engagement of social workers in policy practice
- Contribution to scholarship of teaching
- External recognition/ awards



- Curriculum is compulsory in all social work courses.
- Great majority of students successfully complete the subject

# Students' evaluation

- In the 7 point scale, mean rating was above 5.
- Qualitative comments included:
  - “Manohar was very approachable.”
  - “Well organised and the lecturer was always available for consultation”
  - “Both assessment tasks provided opportunities to put skills into practice.”
  - “The course material, handouts, readings, articles were extremely helpful.”
  - “excellent study guide and readings”

“Would like to thank you for your assistance and for opening up the world of social policy to us. This was a subject which I initially thought would be dry, however I was surprised by how much I have learnt I now see the links between direct practice and the policies which direct practice, either by their presence or absence. This subject has increased my understanding of what sits behind policy development and structures to assist me in influencing current and future policies.”

- Have contributed to the scholarship of teaching.
- Not successful in updating regularly.

# Challenges of teaching social policy practice to social workers

# Challenges relating to the learner

- Changing the students' perception of social policy subject
- The use of internet and forum, and the issue of fairness
- Assignment focused versus understanding focused
- Policy practice assignments are different from other usual assignments

# Challenges relating to the curriculum

- Curriculum design – what to include and exclude
- Overall space in the program for the social policy subject
- Mixing introductory and in-depth curriculum
- Regular updating of the subject

# Challenges relating to the teaching and program

- Teaching by choice or teaching by requirement
- Periodic change in teaching of subjects





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Thank you

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