

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS IN THE SOCIAL SECTOR OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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This article contains the results of the authors' complete research on the innovations and innovation processes in the social sector of the Russian Federation. The stages of innovation process are considered by the authors with regards to the specific features of the social sector. The article highlights the main factors that determined the strategy of socially oriented innovative development of Russia. It is aimed to reform social policy, the revision of the list and the scope of the social obligations of the state, which largely depend on the level and stability of the country's GDP. Scales of innovative solutions in the social sphere of the Russian Federation are defined by the amounts of financing.

We are considering both external and internal sources of financing of innovative activity of social institutions. External sources of funding are the state and state institutions, regions and municipalities, financial-credit organizations, individuals and non-financial organizations. Domestic sources of financing of innovative activity of social organizations are a part of the profit of organization, part of the depreciation of equity, etc.

Main features of the innovations in the social sector, developed by the authors, are uncertain results of major innovations, complicated procedure of evaluation of its effect and complexity of innovations. Innovative activities are aimed at resolving of variety social problems in the modern society.

Keywords: innovations, innovation processes, innovative activities, social sector, social policy

INTRODUCTION

Basic concepts of innovation in the social sector

Social sector is an independent domain of public life, where diverse social interests arising out of relationships between social subjects are implemented. Social sector is an area where individuals, engaged in it, deliver social goods and render services. Social sector is twofold: it involves not only relationships between subjects, but also a physical infrastructure. In the modern world social sector represents a combination of social relationships and conditions affecting disposition and behavior of people as well as interests of different social groups, interests of the society and individuals, labor relations, daily life, culture, health care and social security.

The current socio-economic situation in Russia proves that the only way to further advancement of the country is the innovative way of its development and economic growth, and that it can be promoted only through the implementation of

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innovations. At the same time innovations are always associated with high risks. To mitigate these risks at least partially, it is necessary to develop and implement special government policies supporting science, technology and innovations. Turning to innovations and innovative entrepreneurship is the core approach in the achievement of a technological breakthrough, and this is where available state resources and funds should be directed to (Schoemaker P. and Amit R., 1994).

At the present stage of development of economics, and in particular of the innovation theory, a number of independent areas of study is being formed, namely: formation of innovations, dissemination (diffusion) of innovations, development of innovative solutions, adjustment and adaptation of innovations to human needs (Rogers E. 1995).

Socio-economic development of the country is largely determined by the presence of social innovations, which are considered the main tool for the improvement of quality of life of the population. Today innovations are in an urgent need of support in the country. Their role is particularly relevant in the health care sector, where the situation is quite grim. Private health care facilities where patients cannot use their insurance are now quite common; however, only about 10-20% of the population can afford them. Considering that, the task of gross domestic product (GDP) doubling can be perceived as secondary to the main task of the state - improving the level and quality of human life.

Innovation is a process of development characterized by specific features and consistent patterns. Innovations are now perceived as a method of accelerated development of complex systems of social domains.

Basic problems in the social sector of the Russian Federation

The principles of formation of the operating social sphere have been the basis for the socialist state and have been inherited by the Russian Federation.

They differed in existence of the wide range of social obligations of the state, the quality of the rendered services being not sufficient. The transition to the market conditions of managing has led to strengthening of social contradictions in the Russian society which have created launching sites for the formation of the social environment in so called "new Russia". First of all, it is necessary to mention:

- sharply fallen standard of living for the vast majority of the population;
- not properly created social structure of the society;
- updated list of social tasks created by the market conditions of managing;
- lack of experience in the solution of new major problems in the field of the social policy;
- insufficient definiteness of the social and economic priorities of the state;
- lack of technical, technological as well as standard-and-methodical means for the solution of many social tasks;

- need of the use the resources, forms and methods of work which remained from pre-reform system of social protection.

In spite of the problems accumulated and the close attention to their solution, it should be noted that during the Post-Soviet period the social sector in the Russian Federation has undergone very minor changes and have in many respects kept the principles and approaches for its realization which were assumed as the basis during the Soviet period. The strategy of innovative and socially-oriented development of Russia was defined within the program of the development of the country until 2020. It is focused on the reforming of the social policy of the state, as well as on the revision of the list and the scales of social obligations of the state which substantially depend on level and stability of gross domestic product (GDP) of the country influencing the volume of costs of implementation of the state social programs. Meanwhile the Russia's GDP dynamics, depending directly on the level of energy costs which is considered to be unstable, significantly limits the possibility of considerable social changes. In this regard, the scientific research of innovations in the social sphere is becoming more and more actual.

METHODOLOGY

Innovations are a process of development of new approaches, technologies and methods of conducting business (Schumpeter J. 1982). This concept is equally applicable to the means and technologies of work as well as to the behavior, work and actions of organizations or individuals. Though any innovation begins with a good idea, it means much more than that. Innovations are related to the process of turning a good idea into something that could be used, sold or achieved.

Innovation process is a process of converting scientific knowledge into an innovation, which can be depicted as a coherent chain of events, resulting in the transformation of an idea into a specific product, technology or service and its distribution at the time when it is put to practical use. Economic relations between the creators of innovations, resource owners and users of innovations are realized in the innovation process. These relations are mediated by the movement of venture capital and information (Rogers E. 1995).

Social services are an aggregate of industries, enterprises and organizations, which are directly related to and define the style and standards of living of people, their welfare and level of consumption. Social sector is comprised, first of all, of the service industry (education, culture, health care, social security, physical culture, catering, public services, passenger transport, and communication).

Usually, the state implements its social policy through local and regional authorities. Social policy is funded with money from the state budget. The objects of the state's social policy are usually major social groups conforming to either the current ideological standards of the state, or to the long-term values accepted in the society.

The objectives of the state's social policy are to achieve an improvement of the health of the nation, to assure the citizens of the country have sufficient income and adequate social support in certain adverse situations and, overall, to create favorable for the population social environment in the society.

Social policy, being an integral part of the overall social strategy of the state, can be characterized as follows:

- Purposeful activity aimed at the development and implementation of solutions that are directly related to each individual and his/her status in society;
- Granting individual social guarantees, which reflect peculiarities of different groups of population; they are widely supported by the broad public and are implemented by the government and all of its branches and authorities.

Social policy is intended to accumulate, focus on and reflect the situation in the country and the society as well as to identify the needs and goals of social development (Verstina N., Taskaeva N., 2013).

Innovation processes in the social sector

Innovation process can be represented as a sequence of the following stages (The Oxford handbook of innovation, 2005):

- 1) Idea is a more or less conscious decision to study the subject of research, as well as awakening of interest and curiosity toward objects perceived as having potential of success and economic benefit.
- 2) Discovery is establishing the existence of previously unknown phenomena, materials, dependencies, relationships, etc.
- 3) Study is a theoretical substantiation and experimental verification of the discoveries or observations; identification of the causes and impacts, functional relationships, strengthening or weakening of the effect depending on the changes in the parameters.
- 4) Development is a transformation of the results of research and observations into a design, demonstration model and prototype in order to put to use the discovered dependences and to achieve specific goals.
- 5) Invention is an identification of properties and attributes of the innovation suitable for patenting or publication.
- 6) Implementation is a promotion of a new product on the market or commissioning of a new production technology; solving issues with investments that typically arise at this stage, and presenting the product on the market.
- 7) Ongoing implementation is an implementation of serial production and creation of a distribution network.

As a minimum, the innovation process should cover all the stages preceding the introduction of a new product on the market or commissioning of a new production technology. The innovation process is always susceptible to a great risk. The degree of risk varies from innovation to innovation.

As the history of many countries demonstrates, the most favorable period for the emergence of innovations is the period of depression, which follows the stage of crisis. It is believed that the need for innovations intensifies during the depression stage for the crisis to be promptly resolved. If in the periods of growth of the economy the emergence of innovations can instigate destabilization of a relatively stable economy, in times of social and economic decline new ideas play the role of a means helping to resolve the crisis (Freeman C. and Soete L. 1997).

The following processes can contribute to the emergence of innovation in the social sector:

- Aggravation of social problems, which requires searching for new approaches to solve them;
- Lack of adequate resources for social development, which requires searching for more efficient ways of locating them;
- A tendency to tighten the requirements for quality of service in social institutions and bring them in line with the international standards (Krasnikova E.O., Evgrafova I.Y. 2009).

Once the needs of the social sector for innovations are identified, a necessity arises to produce a clearer and more adequate definition of the “innovation” concept and any other related concepts, which would reflect all the specifics of the social sector. That should help in the development of a set of adequate measures aimed at the increase of efficiency of social organizations and services in their attempt to satisfy social needs of the population.

According to a number of researchers, the exact definition of the term “innovation” contains some methodological contradictions – innovation is described as a process, a result, an idea or a possibility.

Our analysis of current approaches as well as publications on the topic helped us to produce the following general definition of the term “innovation”: “innovation is an implemented creative idea, which resulted in a new value.” Based on this definition, the term “innovation process” can be defined as a process of transformation of an idea into an innovation. It consists of three stages:

- Stage of idea generation (a creative stage),
- Stage of idea materialization,
- Stage of idea implementation (commercialization).

Such a definition of the innovative process allows to look at the problem of the development of innovations, particularly in the social sphere, in terms of the achievement of the objectives set forth for each stage of the process. Therefore, let

us analyze the stages of the innovation process in more detail and highlight the specifics of the innovations developed in the social sector.

The stage of generation of new ideas can be described as a creative aspect of the innovation process. Some researchers assign creativity the leading role, because if there is no idea, there is nothing to implement. The process of creativity “is to look at something everyone sees, but to think something no one else thought about.” This definition reflects the ability of a creative person to look at a situation with “different eyes” and to spot opportunities where others see only problems.

However, creativity is important not only at the individual level; the awareness of what is acceptable within a given system (group, organization, etc.) also affects the intensity of creative activities (De Long, D. W. & Fahey, L., 2000).

The more employees are involved in the identification and solving of problems, the more successful the innovative changes will be. As the best practices of social services and institutions show, participation of workers in the innovation process is regarded as the most important form of staff development. Success of the innovation management in a social organization depends on the following:

- Its team spirit;
- Degree of involvement of manager in the innovation management;
- Ongoing interaction with the staff, and delegating to them the right to make key decisions; it also depends on the willingness of the manager to eliminate stumbling stones impeding implementation of innovations.

It is becoming ever more important to teach social workers to use the methods of management of innovation processes as well as to promote the development of creativity in order to prevent the undesirable reaction of the “resistance of personnel to innovations.” In case when job duties of a specialist are restricted, stereotyped, rigidly fixed in the same sequence of repeated actions and results, different manifestations of professional crippling, reduced efficiency and professional burnout are seen.

In order to boost innovative activities of the staff of social organizations and to prevent the resistance of the staff to innovations, it is necessary to motivate employees in a variety of ways, including financial and moral encouragement of employees-innovators as well as to maintain effective communications within the organization and with third parties. The staff of organizations should be well aware of the strategic and practical tasks, achievement of which is required for further advancement of the organization.

Innovative qualities of a social worker should be manifested in a creative approach to social activities, in the search for new higher quality technologies of services, in the compilation and implementation of best practices and in the ability to use the strengths and weaknesses of a social organization.

At the creative stage of the innovation process it is very important to resort to all available sources of innovative opportunities, such as:

- Identification of possible unforeseen circumstances and accounting for their occurrence;
- Identification of discrepancy between the desired and actual results;
- Identification of changes in the market structure and regulatory restrictions;
- New information and technologies;
- Demographic changes;
- Changes in the perception and stereotypes;
- Urgent needs of clients.

Yet, satisfaction of needs of clients for social services is the most important objective from the perspective of achievement of the overall goal of social work. The needs for such services can be assessed in terms of their volume, nomenclature, available resources of state authorities, organizations or of a particular social worker. Despite the fact that the system of social services is being developed in our country for fifteen years now, the issue of financial aid and helping with clothes and other things still remain the most common among all types of social services (Hippel, Eric von., 2005).

Experience of a number of countries shows that innovative social work involves an offer of advanced heuristic services that would generate an informed demand for them. In particular, innovations in the social sector may, to a great extent, relate to:

- Employment, income, quality of life;
- Health care, maternity and childhood, protection of lives of people;
- All types and forms of education;
- Culture and leisure;
- Social protection;
- Ensuring citizens' rights to housing;
- Public safety;
- Environmental protection;
- Work with refugees and internally displaced persons;
- Public guardianship of children, disabled, elderly and low-income citizens (Russell D. Archibald (2002).

Conception of innovative ideas should be the main result of the creative stage of the innovation process. But any idea, no matter how wonderful it was, requires efforts for its materialization. Under the materialization of an innovative idea a set of explicitly organized actions is understood resulting in its transformation into a

product (goods, a service, a process or a technology). The stage of the idea materialization involves an assessment of the idea's potential, calculation of the quantity of resources required for its implementation and development of an organizational model.

For the expansion of quality social services in the social sector, there is required a strong government support of those social institutions, which act as a center for the development and implementation of innovative methods and technologies of work with different groups of the population, should be offered. Innovative activities of such institutions may be funded both through external and internal sources).

External financing involves mobilization of resources of the state, financial and credit institutions, individuals and non-financial institutions. Internal sources of financing innovative activity of social organizations may include a share of the organization's profit, depreciation allowances, equity, etc. In some regions of Russia it has become a common practice to fully or partially, and on the competitive basis, finance innovation programs and projects from the budget of a particular region or with budgetary loans are provided to finance social innovations. Elaboration and introduction of new regulations to the organizations rendering social services, contributing to the development of innovative activities in the regions, is becoming an important practice as well.

By today, the process of materialization of innovations has been rather well developed at the theoretical level. There are many models describing different aspects of materialization of innovations. The project method is one of the most common methods of implementation of innovations in the social sector (Stepanova E.A., 2003). According to experts, one of the advantages of this method is that the goals of a project can be achieved within the limits of the set parameters: deadlines, cost, quality, etc.

However, it is necessary to account for the specifics of non-profit relationships, while implementing innovations in the social sector. As is known, the model for funding of non-profit organizations is based on the budget (external) funds rather than on profit (equity) of the organization. In addition, a non-profit organization has a large number of interested parties, which, considering the social nature of its activities, reduces the potential of innovations. The fact that non-profit organizations focus on the achievement of certain standards makes it difficult to assess their performance through the comparison of cost and performance results. It is these specifics that explain difficulties of materialization of innovations in the social sector (Joe Tidd, John Bessant, Keith Pavitt (1997).

Stage one is creation of an innovation, research and development, preparation of design and technological documentation.

Stage two consists of an implementation (commercialization) of the innovation. Since an innovation can be considered as such only if its implementation has brought a result useful for the target group, the main objective

of the innovation process at this stage is to get some value from the implementation of an innovative idea.

The value can be determined in terms of quality and uniqueness of the product as well as in terms of how well the product satisfies the needs of the target group or solves its problems. Additional benefits associated with the implementation of an innovation can also be considered the product's value. The main objective of an organization implementing an innovation is to increase the value of the final product to the maximum. In practice, the value is determined in different ways: as a financial gain, increased quality, increased convenience or cost reduction (Akimova E., Knyazev D., 2015). A receipt of a return on investment cannot be considered a criterion of success in non-profit organizations and, therefore, the value of innovations should be determined through other criteria associated primarily with social standards and norms of the society.

Accounting for risks and use of the most appropriate organizational structures are important aspects of the implementation of an innovation. Due to intricacy and complexity of the process of implementation of social innovation, presence of a large number of stakeholders and danger of high risks, a need arises for the creation of specialized agencies with the duty of combining the efforts and resources of the participants collaborating to achieve mutually beneficial goals. These agencies may be represented by technologically active complexes with an integrated organizational structure specialized facilities, R&D centers as well as other support bodies. These complexes should be organized to ensure a sustainable relationship within the vast innovation infrastructure and have well developed networks for the informal exchange of information required to create channels for the implementation of social innovation.

Since innovations of efficiency (supporting innovations), aimed at the modification of existing mechanisms and practices, improvement or modification of social services and social programs, are more typical for the social sector, there is a need to make alterations to the way social organizations conduct their business.

As practice shows, the need for innovations in the social sector is largely due to the internal needs of social organizations for the enhancement of resources through innovations. The main feature of innovative organizations is their welcoming attitude toward innovations, which then becomes their second nature and standard of their business. The following features are typical for the business of such social organizations:

- Ongoing efforts aimed at the conception of innovations;
- Separate financing of innovative and daily activities.

Thus, the efficiency of the innovation process is determined by the combined effect from the introduction of innovative ideas, i.e., their value for the target group. Social innovation should have an objective of delivering solutions to the most acute problems faced by the state and society, which are related to the assurance of

social welfare and social rights of the population (Tidd Joe, Bessant John, Pavitt Keith. (1998).

The following areas can be identified as the areas of innovative activities with high potential in the social sector:

- Expansion of the range of social services satisfying the needs of different social groups (social service);
- Increase of the number of organizations engaged in innovative businesses, involving them in the process of solving social problems of the general public (social partnership);
- Computerization of the social sector - as the basis of the modern scientific and technological progress;
- Familiarization of social institutions and services with innovative strategies associated with the development of new higher-quality goods and services for the population, etc.

Sustainable innovative development implies the implementation of social policy based on new principles, including:

- Mutual joint and several liability of all subjects of social policy (the state, non-governmental organizations, businesses, social workers, citizens) for the results of social development;
- Transparency of social policy;
- Development of traditional forms of social services rendered to citizens who find themselves in a difficult situation.

The mission of social work, if we consider social work as a form of activity, is aimed at achieving positive changes in various areas of life. Social work, as a specific method of management of integration processes in the society, is intended to assure social peace and well-being of the society. Therefore, the search for alternative ways of renewal is closely associated with the implementation of innovations in all spheres of life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Mechanisms of Implementation of Social Policy

The development and functioning of the mechanism of implementation and management of social processes are determined by the actual needs and trends of social development. The needs and trends determine the structure, set of elements and procedure for the use of this mechanism.

At its core, the mechanism of implementation of social policy is a complex system of institutional and non-institutional subjects of social life, analysis of its interactions allows for theoretical interpretation and formalization of social interests of individual citizens and social groups in general in order to develop a social

strategy of the state, elaborate social programs and organize coordinated practical activities of public authorities and institutions of the civil society as well as citizens for the implementation of them in compliance with the existing regulations.

The mechanism of implementation of social policy in Russia is fine tuned to solving critical social problems.

The mechanism of implementation of social policy in the social sector has a complex structure and includes (McDermott, R., 2001):

- Subjects of the political sphere – the state, including all of its authorities involved in the regulation of social relations; political parties; socio-political movements and other institutions of the civil society;
- Objects of the political sphere : social processes in society in all their substantial variety and various forms of manifestation; ;
- Systems of regulatory legal acts governing interactions between subjects and objects of the social domain;
- Methods of implementation of social policy in the social sector:
- Object-oriented political activities addressing social problems at various stages, including the assessment of the efficiency of social programmes.

Analysis of innovations in the social sector in the Russian Federation

Today Russia experiences an immense hunger for social innovation. Every aspect of social sector has to be renovated.

Traditionally, the social sector is considered to be very conservative. People get used to living in certain conditions and are afraid of changes even in the areas where they are urgently needed. Secondly, almost all innovations in the social sector are approved without regard to the opinions of citizens. Unfortunately, we have not learned how to interact with people and prepare them for innovative changes.

For example, the process of transition to electronic media is skidding just because many people, especially older generation, do not have the most essential skills of PC operators. Sometimes they do not even know how to turn a PC on. That explains why a computer literacy training program for older people was established. Until our citizens learn how to enjoy the benefits of innovative achievements, we will continue running into a stonewall.

Over the past three years, about 200 projects have been processed by the Center for Social Innovation. However, the system of education was among the first, where innovative changes have been pioneered.

Innovations in the educational system

The reform of the system of education should be governed by the principle of “do no harm.” It should focus on the organizational and technical conditions of the

system of education, especially in the institutions offering general secondary school training in rural areas and small towns of the country. A special attention should be paid to the vocational education where professionals able to be integrated into the world of new and emerging technologies are trained (Verstina N., Taskaeva N., Akimova E., 2012; Verstina N., Taskaeva N., Akimova E., 2013). The objective of restructuring of the system of higher education is to train highly qualified professionals, whose academic training will go hand-in-hand with scientific research.

The system of education should be financed from three sources: the state budget (predominantly of the regional level), companies that train staff with specific skills for themselves and citizens who choose paid programs of study (Detelina Marinova, 2004).

The state, represented by its legislative authorities, determines the minimum educational “basket,” available to any citizen of the country.

Implementation of social reforms in practice identifies three features of the implementation algorithm (Clark Jon., 1995):

- The main conditions for the successful implementation of reforms are consistency and compliance with the overall strategy of the social policy;
- The key element of the reform of all the segments of the system of education is the transformation of the wage model;
- In the conditions of drastic polarization of the society and the ideology of social reforms has to be re-distributive in nature, where redistribution is implemented through the systems of taxation and social insurance.

CONCLUSION

To conclude the paper, a brief summary of the main findings, which were revealed in the course of a multidimensional analysis of innovations in the social sector, will be presented.

As a result of the analysis, we recognize social innovation as a consciously organized current development or a new phenomenon in the practice of social work, emerging at a certain stage of the development of a society and conforming to the changing social conditions. The purpose of social innovations is to achieve effective positive changes in the social sector.

Innovative social technologies are such techniques and methods of innovative activities, which focus on the creation and materialization of innovations in the society and implementation of such initiatives, which result in qualitative changes in various domains of social life and facilitate a rational use of financial and other resources in the society.

Today, there is virtually no area of social life, which would not be affected by innovation process to at least some degree. The dynamics of changes occurring in

the country, however, have had almost no effect on the institutions of social services. It is still too soon to speak of any real prospects of emergence and development of the market of social services while the state continues playing the leading role in this sector. Consequently, such conservatism inhibits initiative of the existing public institutions of social services, and discourages the emergence of private institutions in this sector.

The main objective of innovative activities in the social sector is the search for solutions to social problems in the modern society. If a proposed innovation can at least alleviate the acuteness of a social problem, it ought to be supported by public administration. Such innovations are deemed effective since they improve the quality of life of the population.

In addition to the achievement of the main objective, innovations are intended to solve the following problems (Fleischer Ê., Bensussan B., 2005):

- Improve the efficiency of enterprises and organizations of the social sector;
- Boost the quality of social services through the delivery of services better satisfying demands of the society;
- Mitigate social inequality by making services more readily available to the population.

Innovations in the social sector have the following features:

- Results of major innovations are highly uncertain;
- Procedure of evaluation of the effect of innovations are complicated;
- Complexity of innovations: a new concept of the conception of an innovation triggers the need to develop new methods and introduce changes to the organizational structure.

In addition, innovations in the social sector have an impact on large groups of people and often have non-commercial nature or involve a long-term return on investments.

The following are the main areas of innovative activities in the social sector:

Expansion of the range of subjects involved in the search for solutions to the social problems of general population, which is expected to result in stronger social commitment and social initiative, as well as to lead to social self-sufficiency of the population.

Computerization of the social sector. Computerization of the social sector implies socio-economic and R&D process of creation of adequate conditions able to satisfy the information needs of population and to facilitate exercise of rights by the citizens, public authorities, local governments, organizations, public associations on the principle of development and use of information resources.

Customization of social services and shifting away from mass production. Increase of the number of diverse organizational forms and technologies for satisfaction of social needs.

Social sector is one of those domains characterized by an urgent need for innovations. Ultimately, innovations open new horizons to progress and to finding new, more efficient and intelligent solutions to the raised issues. Without new technologies we would remain stagnant. Life, however, goes on and issues at stake are becoming ever more complicated and require new approaches for their solution.

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