



Labour Market Policies

Structure and Content, Space and Time

av

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Abstract

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Labour market policies has two aims: cushioning the economic hardship caused by unemployment and increasing employment rates. In many welfare states, responsibilities for such policies are divided between different political-administrative levels. This dissertation aims to enhance the understanding of labour market policies and especially the involvement of sub-national governmental actors, by analysing the role of municipalities in the Swedish context. The dissertation also investigates the involvement of social work and social workers within labour market policies. A theoretical framework consisting of four pillars, structure, content, space, and time, is used to analyse labour market policies. The analysis combines a historical review with empirical data. The findings show that the involvement of municipalities, in active labour market policies, has taken place against the background of three processes: the multi-level governance of financial support, the shifting role of active labour market policies, and the dialectic relationship between financial support and active labour market policies. The divided responsibility for financial support generates incentives for municipal measures that qualify social assistance recipients for nationally funded social insurances. The fear of work disincentives has also been a driving force in the development of municipal activation. The reliance on municipalities to design and deliver active labour market policies opens for greater cross-municipal differences. An ongoing reform of the Public Employment Service, the national agency that provides active labour market policies, that decreases the number of local offices and increases the reliance on private service providers, is likely to change the role of municipalities within active labour market policies. Many scholars criticise the involvement of social workers, within labour market policies, given the use of conditionality through activation. This criticism calls for further empirical investigation, not least in terms of how practicing social workers position their work.

Keywords: labour market policies, activation, unemployment, multi-level governance, local governance, social work, institutional change, scale

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