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SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AS AN ECONOMIC CATEGORY

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The article deals with theoretical problems of studying social infrastructure as a complex economic category. The domestic and foreign scientists' views as for the content of given category have been generalized. The author propounds her own definition that enriches its content.

Keywords: *theory of infrastructure, social infrastructure, ménage, forms of interaction, a service.*

Problem statement. No cognitive process is done without using categories. The category is known to represent the profound concept itself in which the widest connections, relations of a specific phenomenon are reflected. The economic category in science is theoretical representation of the relations existing in an economy. In research activities knowledge displayed in the enrichment of the category content is developed, in this case – the content of “social infrastructure”.

Social infrastructure is one of the main constituents of an economy which directly influences the sphere of human vital activity. Research of social infrastructure as a market category requires clear explanation of the conceptual apparatus. The formation of theoretical principles of social infrastructure investigation is one of the least developed and at the same time one of the most important problems of modern economics. The research is based on the starting theory. The main components of any theory are conceptual apparatus and starting empirical basis; starting conceptual foundations – initial assumptions, postulates, axioms, restrictions, general laws that idealize the object; the rules of logical conclusions and grounds; totality of concluded from theory statements with their argumentation.

National scientists prove the urgency of solving pointed out problems. Especially V. Bazylevych and others note “Transition from industrial to spiritual-informational society, transformation of models of economic development under the influence of globalization of economy, intellectualization and labour individualization generate new problems on principle which do not go in the limits of traditional notions of economic

theory and require new conceptual decisions and methodological approaches. Modern realia of social life characterized by tendencies of humanization, socialization, intellectualization, ecologization and globalization generate the need in the development of economic knowledge, thorough comprehension of economic processes as an integral constituent of human vital activity” [3, c.13].

Analysis of the latest investigations and published works. A considerable contribution in the research of social infrastructure as an economic category has been made by the domestic scientists, in particular Danylyshyn B.M., Kutsenko V.I. [1], Kocherha A. I. , Mazaraki A. A. [5], Sonko S. P., Skrynko M. M. [9] and others. It is necessary to point out the works by Plashchynsky N.A. [7], Trubitsyna T. I. [10], Sharipova A. Yu [13] and others among foreign scientists. As research activity is called to develop knowledge then enrichment of the content of the category “social infrastructure” remains the unsolved part of the problem and to which the article is devoted.

Task statement. The aim of the article is to research the content of social infrastructure as an economic category.

Presentation of the main material. Economic category in the science is the theoretical expression of existing in the economy relations. First of all let us define the concepts “object of cognition” and “subject of cognition”. “The object is what the subject’s cognitive and other activity is directed to” [11, p. 465]. “The subject is sides, properties and relations of the objects studied with specific aim in given conditions and circumstances” [11, p. 379].

Proceeding from these interpretations of the object and subject of theory we can consider concerning theory of social infrastructure that its object is just social infrastructure as a complex economic phenomenon. The subject of the given theory is studying specific sides, properties and relations of this object in the conditions of the country’s transition to sustainable development. The given condition anticipates deep transformations that must take place in Ukraine’s economy. National scientists prove the urgency of solution of pointed out problems. According to scholars Son’ko S. P. and Skryn’ko M.M. today “a difficult and important task is working out theoretical solution of those problems that were developed by economic science insufficiently because of inadequate attention to them in the past...” [9, p. 77].

The term “infrastructure” is mentioned for the first time in the researches of western economists and has several meanings of explanation of its origin. According to Marxian approach the most important components of human history are real individuals, their activity and material conditions of their lives, both those which they find ready and those made as a result of their activity”. Studying sphere of production directly, K. Marx

explains: “...all material conditions refer to the means of labor process... they are not a part of them directly, but without them it is either impossible at all or it can take place only in imperfect form...working buildings, canals, roads and so on can serve as an example” [6, p. 18]. So K. Marx considered infrastructure as material economic conditions.

Gradually this term became widely used for studying economic and later social life. The important point in interpreting “infrastructure” became not merely its material and technical embodiment, but people’s and population’s evaluation of its quality in what they understood the degree of satisfying their needs. Further development of infrastructure became the course for growing needs in creating necessary conditions for vital activity of not only employee himself but also his family. The problem of social aspects of infrastructure was still more accentuated. In 50-60’s of last century nearly in all the countries development of education was observed, which sharply raised the question about infrastructure of education. Besides, at the same time there was a situation when with the reduction of working time there was a possibility of more efficient organization of free time, fuller satisfaction of physical and spiritual needs that could be achieved in the presence of the conditions which already directly influenced the efficiency of production and were relatively of independent importance.

Genealogical approach to the essence of social infrastructure is characterized by double character. Some scientists connect this term with construction and architecture (the end of the 19th century). This stage in the development of the ideas of infrastructure is connected with the names of English urbanist E. Howard and French architect T. Garnier. Thus, E. Howard came up with the idea of town-garden that has complexes of industrial, service and residential housing system, surrounded by suburban zone of agricultural areas. T. Garnier proposed the project of industrial town which consists of specialized functional zones (industrial, service, rest and residential), divided by green zones. Both in the first and in the second conceptions development of infrastructure including social infrastructure was expected.

Other scientists consider borrowing of the term from warfare where it was used for defining complex of military living buildings that provided uninterrupted operations of military subunits and took out from there the notion about minor, subordinate role of infrastructure as for basic industries. Just because of that, in our opinion, more logical are approaches to understanding the essence of infrastructure which are based on the functions performed by it or composition of economic agents who perform pointed out functions. That is why two other approaches – functional and structural-logical – are more substantial. The former is based on the idea that the essence of the concept of “social infrastructure” to the greatest extent is defined by the functions performed by

this constituent of the economy and place of indicated constituent in the economy. Structural-logical approach to the determination of place and role of social infrastructure in the economy is based on the determination of pointed out parameters of infrastructure in the structure of social production. Thus, V. Zhamin notes: “First of all, infrastructure meets the objectives of the fullest satisfaction – physical and cultural needs of all society members” [4, p. 13]. In “Modern economic dictionary” composed by Russian scientists infrastructure is characterized as “totality of industries, enterprises and organizations which belong to them, kinds of occupation called for satisfying conditions for normal functioning of production and human vital activity” [8, p. 540]. “Large economic dictionary” and other editions give similar definitions. Given definitions focus attention on a technological aspect of infrastructure.

Other view is that infrastructure is interpreted as totality of units whose activity is directed to providing normal functioning of national economy. Thus, “Economic encyclopedia” edited by S. Mochernyi considers infrastructure “as totality of enterprises, institutions, organizations that provide steady development and functioning of market mechanism of economy regulation, perpetual movement of goods and services in different spheres of social reproduction” [2, p. 704].

Further development of infrastructure problems gradually led to the consolidation of infrastructure division into industrial and social in scientific literature (B. S. Khorev [12], A. A. Mazaraki, A. I. Koherha [5] and others). Considering the essence of social infrastructure in scientific literature different points of view are expressed. Most points of view concerning interpreting the content of this concept can be reduced to two main positions. In the context of the first of them social infrastructure is considered as a complex of industries identifying them directly or indirectly with service sector. Especially N.A. Plashchynskiy understands social infrastructure as totality of industries connected with formation of society’s intellectual potential. This author perceives the result of its functioning in providing social services that promote raising of population’s living standard [7]. A.Yu. Sharipov [13], Yagodka A. H. [14], let us say, consider social infrastructure as totality of industries, industry sectors and kinds of activity functionally directed to production and sale of services and spiritual blessings for population. Danylyshyn B. M., Kutsenko V. I. consider social infrastructure as a complex of objects which create general conditions of functioning of social production and population’s vital activity, formation of physical and intellectual development of a socially active individual [2].

According to T. I. Trubitsyna infrastructure operates at different levels of economy: at the level of state, region, enterprise, at the level of the world practical economic relations. It must be considered firstly as a system of economic relations in a service

sector that stipulates availability of similar and sometimes the same functions of different kinds of infrastructure; secondly, these relations are inherent at different levels of economic relations, that is why they cannot be equal and must perform different functions; thirdly, it depends on economic structure which it serves (that is why relations and functions are derivative and depend on areas of economy); fourthly, functioning of infrastructure is flexible, plastic, it actively reacts to those conditions in which not only infrastructure, but also areas served by it function. Fulfillment of infrastructure functions provides synergetic effect of ménage [10, p. 5].

Conclusions and directions of further researches. So, having generalized scientific approaches to the category of “social infrastructure”, we believe that it cannot be considered in isolation from aims, population’s evaluative orientations, its separate groups and associations. It can be represented in the theory as a system of relations of a service sector which exists in the area and is oriented to creating favourable conditions of functioning of service market, social institutions and other forms of population’s and economic agents’ vitality. In our opinion, social infrastructure is steady totality of material objects with which social subject interacts providing its harmonious development and which create conditions for efficient organization of all main kinds of activity. Expediency of the propounded definition is stipulated just by the importance of social infrastructure in providing conditions for human activity and also by the thing that it includes a complex of services with the aim of efficient social reproduction. Prospects for further investigations will be directed to the determination of the content of given economic category.

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