T06P06 / Observing the Policy Implementation in the Field: A Closer Look at the Street-Level Bureaucrats

Topic : T06 / Policy Implementation

Chair : Gizemnur Özdinç (Sciences Po Grenoble)

Second Chair : Manon Pesle (University of Grenoble Alpes and Research Center PACTE)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Use of the methodological and conceptual tools of sociology is neither new nor unproductive in public policy analyses. On the contrary, problems in the implementation process of public policies have long been subject to studies of those who come from the tradition of sociology of organisations. Organisational ethnography masterfully demonstrates the distortions between different institutional and hierarchical levels in the implementation of formal decisions. Yet, those who privilege the ethnography of policy implementation remain in minority within the community of public policy analysts.

The difference between the input (decision) and output (delivery of services) can be, on one hand, explained through a top-down approach. The hierarchical levels through which the decision is diffracted are often put forward as explanation, alongside of scarce resources and means. On the other hand, the lower rank participants', or as we now all use as a reflex "the street-level bureaucrats", of policy implementing institutions discretionary power is no secret to the scholarly arena. These participants at the front line do not only shape the organisational rules and norms through daily practices, but also have an active relation with norms. The law or simply organisational rules deviate from the text in the hands of street-level bureaucrats. They determine the quality of services by taking strategic decisions such as speeding up or delaying the process. As any strategic actor of collective action, they make use of their expertise, the advantageous position that allows them to access to critical information, and relations with the organisational task environment.

A closer scrutiny of daily exchanges amongst the lower rank participants, of relations between them and their organisational superiors and with the users of public policies would help understanding the latent dynamics of many other problems that find their place in policy analyses; e.g. horizontal and vertical accountability of implementation processes, the factors that shape public perception of policies, and bottom up reformulation and production of norms and public policies.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Public policy analyses often focus on policy-making and decision-making processes at the international, national and local levels. Yet, in-depth understanding of public policies and their outcomes requires an analysis of implementation processes. Sociology of public action and sociology of organisations and institutions provide us with a tool box to understand the interactions on the field of implementation through observations. These daily exchanges are also subjects to political analysis for the fact that they demonstrate how the political or institutional decisions are interpreted and reproduced by the street-level bureaucrats in their daily work.

In this panel, we seek to discuss the discrepancies between formal decisions and implementation of public policies in the hands of the agents on the field. Can these street-level bureaucrats be considered as norm-makers and/or policy-makers? What are their sources of power and their degree of manoeuvrability? What are the different usages of discretionary power by these lowest rank participants? How the higher rank participants use the tools of organisational control as a response? How the interaction between the lowest rank participants and the users transform not only the professional practices but also the public policies themselves?

The panel attaches a great importance to papers based on empirical evidences through a concrete and rigorous fieldwork. Nevertheless, papers that present methodological aspects in the study of policy implementation by the street-level bureaucrats will be also taken into consideration.

Key words: street-level bureaucrats, implementation, organisational ethnography, discretionary

power

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Session 1

Wednesday, June 28th 14:00 to 16:00 (Block B 3 - Lecture)

Street-Level Bureaucrats and Accountability: A case of delegated primary care commissioning in the National Health Services (NHS) in England

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The NHS in England went through a radical overhaul when the UK Coalition Government was elected in 2010. The Health and Social Care Act (HSCA) 2012 gave GP-led Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) responsibility for commissioning (or purchasing) the majority of health care services for their registered population, apart from primary care services. The responsibility for commissioning these services was given to a new national body, NHS England (NHSE), due to concerns that giving responsibility for commissioning GP-based services to GP-led CCGs would give rise to conflicts of interest. There was also a perceived need for a standardised and consistent approach to commissioning. It soon became apparent that lack of resources and local knowledge meant that NHSE struggled to take a strategic approach to commissioning, focusing instead on payments and contract management. From April 2015, the responsibility for primary care commissioning was transferred from NHSE to CCGs. It was suggested that the policy represents a 'sticking plaster' to repair the damage done by the HSCA, requiring 'workarounds' to accommodate legislation which was not designed for the present situation. With healthcare policy in England characterised by 'manipulated emergence' (Harrison and Wood, 1999), regulatory guidance is ambiguous hence requiring CCGs (constituted as 'membership' organisations with local GP practices as members) to reformulate and execute the very policies that regulate their members. This move sees the bulk of policy implementation, specification, and operationalisation moving from central government towards local organisations, placing 'street-level bureaucrats' at the centre of the policy process.

This paper draws on an ethnographic study into the management practices of primary care commissioning in CCGs in order to reflect upon the power of street-level bureaucrats, especially as it pertains to issues of accountability. With performance management duties, statutory liability, and resource control divided between CCGs and other public bodies, managers at the lower levels of the system find themselves negotiating their day-to-day activities on a piecemeal, contingent basis having to answer local needs. The paper discusses how street-level bureaucrats grapple with pressures 'from above' as they deal with the intensity of contact between managers and their delegators around funding requests, guidance updates, and changes to national policy directions. It equally discusses how managers engage with pressure 'from below' as they manage relationships with their GP members and local partners, not always able to claim full ownership of their decisions.

Drawing on understandings of decision-making and accountability as distributed (Goodwin, 2014), this paper examines the landscape of accountability relations and raises particular issues in relation to how street-level bureaucrats are controlled and governed and the tensions stemming from their dual position as both policy decision-makers and implementers. By analysing CCG's Terms of Reference and juxtaposing it to ethnographic insights, the paper also highlights the invisibility of managerial work needed so that accountability demands from street-level bureaucrats are met and how accountability is rendered, and often reduced to, legal and financial obligations.

The street level bureaucrats: the policy-makers of local international actions

Mary GELY (Université Toulouse 1 Capitole)

To coop with the permeability of territories and to face the growing movement of globalization, many local authorities have implemented "local international policies". This is the case in various countries and so embraces many different forms, purchase different goals and have different denominations. This presentation will be based on the French case and will concern local international policies conducted by the four levels of local authorities (municipalities, municipalities groups, departmental and regional councils). Furthermore it is to notice that, even if we "only" considered French local governments, these policies are really diversified. This diversity can be seen through the fields which are concerned (economy, education, earth, tourism...), through the existence or not of a partnership (bilateral actions, multilateral actions or unilateral ones) or also through the argument put forward (solidarity, reciprocity or only purchase of impacts in France).

Despite the existence of these policies (more than 5000 French local authorities are implementing local international policies), local authorities do not really communicate about this topic. Moreover, only very few local authorities have built and adopted international plans of actions (even if they actually have international actions). That means that street level bureaucrats, who are leading these actions, have a capital role in the constitution and the implementation of this public policy. Their daily concrete decisions and actions give body and sense to this policy.

Even if this type of actions can be seen as at the margins of public policy, it is rightly relevant to closely analyse this process of implementation since, in this field (which is not perceived as strategic), street level bureaucrats have a high degree of manoeuvrability.

This contribution will be based on a research conducted with a process of "participant observation", added to a qualitative study (52 French bureaucrats of local authorities have been questioned) and a quantitative one (150 organization charts of French local authorities have been analyzed).

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES UNDER THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE STREET LEVEL AGENTS IN EDUCATION: HOW EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS HAVE INFLUENCED PUBLIC SCHOOLS ORGANIZATION IN BRAZIL?

Breynner Oliveira (Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto)

This paper analyzes the implementation process and the outcomes produced by external evaluations in public schools that participated of a teacher-training program funded by the Brazilian Ministry of Education under the coordination of the Federal University of Ouro Preto. In the 1990s, a series of educational evaluations emerged in Brazil to monitor the quality of education, promote the incorporation of external evaluation into school daily life, and guide the formulation of educational policies for the public education in the country. These results have been synthesized in global indicators of education quality, among which the most important is the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB), created by the Brazilian Ministry of Education in 2006, widely used by subnational education secretariats to assess their school systems. When analyzing the consequences that this indicator have generated in the daily action of the teachers attended by this program, this research is based on the premise that the complexity existing between the context of the practice and the context of the formulation of educational policy affects the schools and the daily life of the professionals who work there - the street-level bureaucrats according to Lipsky (1980). The questions that guided the interviews with 20 teachers, coordinators and principals in eight public schools of four municipalities were: how do these individuals perceive the policies of evaluation in large scale? What strategies do they use to fit the evaluation culture? How have external evaluations changed the daily work of professionals working in these institutions? The interviews were transcribed and categorized into three analytical dimensions: (1) the IDEB and the school, which deals with the representativeness of the IDEB to the school, as well as its objectives and purposes; (2) the IDEB and the management, focusing on how to deal with the data in the school and the pedagogical consequences induced from it and (3) the IDEB and the educational system, which favors the perception of the education system on assessments and how the managers act in the schools. The data shows that agents interviewed consider themselves responsible for the performance of the students. As the results of external evaluations became publicly disclosed, ranking and accountability strategies are increasingly being used by managers, impacting at the local level, on the work of teachers and school principals. Induced by the indices, the interviewees reveal that staff meetings have increased, that they are more committed to the planning of the pedagogic activities and that they have oriented the formation towards what the external evaluations advocate. However, the appropriation of external evaluation results is viewed with resistance by a small portion of teachers, who feel guilty about the poor quality of teaching. In analyzing the implementation at the micro/local level, the research reveals that the action of the streel-level agents reinforces Lipsky's (1980) thesis, serving as a contribution to both formulators and public policy implementers in order to comprehend how educational policies operate in the baseline on a daily basis.

Key words: Policy Implementation, Street-level Bureaucracy, External Educational Evaluations, Educational

Policy.

The Challenge of Public Participation in Public Policy Implementation: Case Studies of Child Friendly Integrated Public Space (RPTRA) Development Process in DKI Jakarta, Indonesia

Daisy Indira Yasmine (LabSosio FISIP UI)

Riena Surayuda (Sociology Department, University of Indonesia)

Public participation has been regarded as a crucial indicator in democratic system. In the local government level, public participation has also become one of the requirements in planning and implementation of public policy. Many studies have showed that public participation would result in effectiveness of public policy implementation. Previous studies had also explored that various degree on how people would participate in developmental process affects directly on how much people would be involved in higher degree of public participation, namely partnership. Thus, it creates a paradoxical relationship between actors and the goal of inclusivity of public participation. Another problem relies on conflict of expectations between actors, since many actors were involved in the policy process. Although public participation is good in terms of policy, it needs to be carefully designed when put into practice. Actors have important role to make public participation useful in policy process. What is important is not only the degree of participation but also management of relations between actors. Therefore, this article explores how the relationship between actors and its dynamic to fulfill the goal of public participation in policy process occurs. This article, based on the case study of DKI Jakarta RPTRA policy, which had been launched since 2015. On 2016, DKI Jakarta province involves several actors such as private sector, university, and local community to build 52 RPTRA. The university has a role to facilitate public participation in local community and private sectors have a role to provide infrastructure as a means of their corporate social responsibility. DKI Jakarta local government, thus has the responsibility to provide regulation, infrastructure, and sustainability of the RPTRA. Although, this could be a synergy model of public participation, there were in fact certain points that need to be taken into consideration, such as ritualization of public participation, vested interest among actors, and conflict escalation in local community. In practice, policy being process and negotiated by the street-level bureaucrats and creating conflict among actors.

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Session 2

Wednesday, June 28th 16:15 to 18:15 (Block B 3 - Lecture)

Individuals or teams as unit of analysis in street-level bureaucracy research

Kim Loyens (Utrecht University)

Street-level bureaucracy literature focuses on how frontline officers, like teachers, social workers and police officers, deal with their discretion (Lipsky, 1980), and thereby implement public policy, possibly leading to a distinction between policy in theory and policy in practice. Previous research has identified at least four types of factors that influence street-level bureaucrats' decision-making: individual decision-maker characteristics (e.g. level of professionalism, beliefs, moral values, educational background), organizational characteristics (workload pressure, rules, organizational structure and culture), extra-organizational factors (media, national policies, community) and client attributes (Prottas, 1979; Hasenfield, 1983; Scott, 1977; Vinzant & Crothers, 1998; Loyens & Maesschalck, 2010). As for the latter, street-level bureaucrats tend to make an assessment of clients' deservingness, which is often conceptualized as street-level bureaucrats' perceptions of clients' neediness and attitude towards them or government in general (Kallio & Kouvo, 2015; Belabas & Gerrits, 2015). Street-level bureaucrats are, for example, less empathic towards clients whom they perceive to abuse the system (Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010; Oberfield, 2014) or lack motivation (Križ & Skiveness, 2014), and willing to go the extra mile when clients are considered deserving (Maynard-Moody & Leland, 2000).

Much less is known, however, about how street-level bureaucrats' decisions are influenced by their peers. Previous research has shown that co-workers have a supporting and advisory role in street-level bureaucracies (e.g. Hatmaker et al., 2011; Van Kleef, 2016), but has not yet fully explored how on-the-spot interactions with colleagues affect decision-making nor has it studied interactive effects between client-official and various types of collegial interaction. This becomes even more important in a networked society where semi-professionals of various agencies increasingly work together to avoid fragmentation and enhance quality of service (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2011; Noordegraaf, 2011). In some sectors, multi-disciplinary teams are formed that operate on the basis of shared discretion (Rutz et al., 2015). These various types of intra/inter-agency collaboration complicates decision-making processes and asks for more in-depth research on the social dynamics within such teams and how they influence frontline decision-making, which is still underexplored (Raaphorst & Loyens, 2016).

This paper argues that street-level bureaucracy literature can be brought further by more explicitly using insights from literatures on networks and intra-organizational interaction, as well as from adopting methods that enable 'thick description' of on-the-spot decision-making by street-level bureaucrats (Geertz, 1973). The central questions that are addressed are: what kinds of insights do the literatures on networks and intra-organizational interaction have to offer for street-level bureaucracy research? And what implications can be identified for the way such interaction is conceptualized and measured? The proposed implications will be illustrated by means of empirical data collected in a doctoral study on ethical decision-making by Belgian police officers and labour inspectors (Loyens, 2012) and a recent study on how semi-professionals in the Netherlands tackle criminal exploitation of minors in the Netherlands (Bos, Loyens, Nagy & Oude Breuil, 2016).

Propensity to be Prosocial: Understanding Street-Level Bureaucrats' Performance through a Public Policy Lens

Shuchi Srinivasan

Ankur Sarin

A decentralized, multi-tier policy implementation process is offered as a popular solution to provide public goods. One such tier in the implementation infrastructure is populated by frontline agents. Policy implementation entails a joint effort of policy making principal and policy implementing agents akin to a principal-agent relationship in

organizations (Eisenhardt, 1989). However, under policy implementation, the principal-agent relationship differs due to the goals and the nature of tasks performed. These distinguishing factors make the agents- street-level bureaucrats (SLB) (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2000).

A potential influence on SLBs' performance is their prosocial motivations or the inherent tendency to engage in behaviours that benefit others (Grant & Berg, 2012). Prosociality circumscribes behaviours such as helpfulness, caring, comforting, etc. Prosociality can be inherent to the individuals, implicit within contracts or conditioned by the environment in which SLBs function. Their work demands a high degree of public interface; hence display of prosocial behaviours is potentially important due to the sensitivity of issues that are dealt with (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2000). While prosociality may not be explicitly stated as an entry requirement for field-level roles, it is often assumed to be a critical determinant of task performance in such roles.

To what extent does SLBs' prosociality affect their task performance under various public policies, especially in the presence of weak contracts and vague goals? In this paper, we construct SLBs' task performance as performance towards short-term and long-term goals within a policy. We analyze how SLBs internalize the implicit prosocial requirements of their roles and responsibilities. Further, how this internalization is practiced in their everyday work-life through the SLBs' propensity to be prosocial. Where, we define the propensity to be prosocial as the likelihood of SLBs to work in the interest of beneficiaries purely driven by prosociality.

Our analysis is situated in the context of field agents under three policies in India: the nutrition policy, health policy, and rural sanitation policy. We explore the questions through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with SLBs, mid-level bureaucrats, and beneficiaries under these three policies in an inductive enquiry. Our enquiry is influenced by implementation studies (Schofield & Sausman, 2004) bringing together organization theory and public administration research and is especially rooted in the theory of SLBs (Lipsky, 1980).

We argue that task performance is not only as a product of circumstantial and motivational factors but also cognitive aspects. Where circumstantial factors refer to the design of a policy /incentives offered, and motivational factors, refer to the affinity towards a cause. Finally, cognitive aspects derive from circumstantial and motivational factors and relate to how SLBs perceive task performance (we restrict our discussion to SLBs' prosociality). Our results suggest that SLBs are prosocially driven to perform regardless of the circumstantial factors. The results align with studies on public service motivations (Perry, 1996) and audience effects (Ellingsen & Johannesson, 2008). Further, we find that vague, distant goals are a stronger determinant of task performance than short-term, concrete goals. This finding contributes to research on construal level theory (Trope & Lieberman, 2010).

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Implementing labour market perspectives through talk – analysing institutional interaction in meeting talk between street level bureaucrats and hard-to-place unemployed

Dorte Caswell (Aalborg University)

The paper focuses on the implementation of active labour market policy, especially how labour market perspectives are talked into being in meetings between street level buraucrats and hard-to-place unemployed in

Danish jobcentres. Active labour market policy in Denmark has gradually been more and more focused on work placements as one of the main meassures for helping the unemployed clients to overcome barriers for labour market participation. The data for the analysis stems from a large research project (LISES https://lisessite.wordpress.com/) that includes ethnographic case studies in two municipalities (another four case studies to follow in 2017). Part of the data consists of naturally occuring interactions and the analytical perspective is informed by conversation analysis. The findings suggest that the patterns of talk on labour market participation consist of both a general and a concrete kind of talk. The general talk is broad and unclear but institutionally and politically legitimate. The general talk is focused on the willingness of the client to accept labour market participation as the ultimate goal. The concrete talk on the other side relate to specific opperturities and experiences for the unemployed client. This talk is caracterised by words that are specifically adressing work places, wishes and experiences of the unemployed client and sometimes the street level bureaucrat. Analysing the conversational patterns of general and concrete talk on labour market participation between street level bureaucrats in jobcentres on the one side and hard-to-place unemployed clients on the other enable research to contribute to the discussion on how active labour market policy in being translated in situ and talked into being in meetings at the front line of the welfare state.

Practising discretion under experimentalism

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Panel T06P06 / Observing the Policy Implementation in the Field:

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Abstract (452 words)

How do case workers allocate public services when there are little to no rules about eligibility? In recent years, scholars have recognized the rise of a form of governance in which provisional frameworks of goals are defined with little further (policy) rules (Ansell, 2011; Fossum, 2012; Sabel et al, 2011; Sabel & Zeitlin, 2012; Shang, 2015). To pursue those goals in local contexts, implementing bodies are explicitly authorized much discretionary power. This form of governance has been called experimentalist governance. Specifically for social services, experimentalist governance is believed to stimulate the adaptive capacity and, therewith, the responsiveness of service providers (Sabel et al, 2011). Studies about experimentalist governance have, however, not yet researched how caseworkers that implement policies actually make decisions and allocate services.

Street-level bureaucrats literature has long emphasized the importance of studying the daily practices of street-level bureaucrats or front line (case-)workers (i.e. Brodkin, 2008; 2011; Dubois, 2009; Hjörne, 2010; Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). It is argued that these case workers informally construct and reconstruct public policies and norms through the decision they make on individual cases. How caseworkers employ discretion is not unbounded from how they are being governed. That is, scholars have shown that discretionary practices are different in traditional bureaucracies (Lipsky, 1980) than under managerialist governance (Brodkin, 2011; Hjörne, 2010). What lacks is an understanding of discretion under experimentalist governance. This paper fills that gap.

This paper analyses the everyday practices and processes of decision-making by caseworkers in the Dutch youth care. Case workers have the task to customize care to the child's need, promote the self proficiency of their families, and collaborate with other care providers when necessary. We conducted three months of organizational ethnography in which we shadowed caseworkers in their organizational and decision-making practices, observed meetings between caseworkers and beneficiaries, and mapped encounters of caseworkers with their superiors and policymakers. In addition, we conducted semi-structured interviews with all those actors involved.

By analyzing how caseworkers practice discretion under experimentalism, this paper provides a specific understanding of how discretionary power can be used. The fact that discretionary power is explicitly granted

makes it all the more interesting to analyze how this is employed and when, this way combining the debates about experimentalist governance and street-level bureaucracy. This paper discusses the considerations at play when there are no rules to apply, the use of guidelines, the role of deliberation among peers in decision-making, and the impact of interactions with beneficiaries. Moreover, it explains when and why caseworkers feel they can productively employ the discretionary power and when it actually inhibits them in allocating adequate care, thus nuancing the current praise of discretionary power that sounds in both theory and in practice.

Keywords: experimentalist governance, street-level bureaucrats, implementation, organisational ethnography, discretionary power

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"What is there for me" Opportunistic Behaviors of Street level Bureaucrats and Implementation Gap in India's National Health Insurance Scheme.

Dayashankar Maurya (T A Pai Management Institute)

Extensive literature has been devoted to examine discretion available to street level bureaucrats and resultant divergent behaviors, but most of these divergent behaviors are framed as coping mechanisms in response to rational, professional or ethical reasons. We know little about the discretion abusing behaviors of street level bureaucrats that goes beyond shirking and Sabotage. Also we know little about the contextual factors that drive these behaviors and effectiveness of governance mechanisms in controlling them.

This study explores the contextual factors that determine the discretion available to street level bureaucrats and provide opportunities for them to abuse discretion. The study also explored the use of governance mechanisms to control these behaviors and their effectiveness in developing country context. The study explores these issues by analyzing behaviors of street level bureaucrats responsible for facilitating implementation of National Health Insurance in India, which provides medical insurance to 41 million low income families across 28 states. A comparative case analysis of three states implementing the scheme with variation in discretion abuse behaviors was carried out using data collected through in-depth interviews (57), administrative data, official documents and reports.

The findings suggest that street level bureaucrats – District Administrators- responsible for facilitating implementation of the scheme, abuse their discretion by engaging in a number of rent seeking behaviors in return for proving implementation support to partner agencies. These rent seeking behaviors range from shirking, asking monetary and non-monetary favors and blame shifting for poor performance. Two contextual factors emerge as drivers for these behaviors, veto power available to the district administrators which provides them ability to abuse discretion and preference of state government to engage private sector hospitals in service delivery that determines prospects to engage in rent seeking behaviors.

The Hierarchical authority is the de-facto governance mechanism available to control these discretion abusing

behaviors but the implementation structures in the study states differ in the extent to which hierarchical authority could be exercised. Also the effectiveness of this hierarchical authority was found to be limited due to employment guarantee enjoyed by the street level bureaucrats. The findings suggest need to reform implementation structures that enhance discretion and provide opportunities for abusing this discretion, given the limited effectiveness of hierarchical control.