

Call for papers:

Symposium on Policy Entrepreneurship among Street-Level Bureaucrats

Manuscripts deadline: 15th May 2020

Symposium Guest Editors:

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Focus of the Symposium

In recent decades, the public administration literature has analyzed the influence of both street level bureaucrats and policy entrepreneurs on policy outcomes from various perspectives and in various domains. While the former affect outcomes and are considered players who influence policy outcomes mainly through *implementation* practices (Lipsky, 1980; Brodtkin, 1997; Hupe and Hill, 2007), policy entrepreneurs are considered players who affect outcomes by influencing the *formation* of policies (Minrom, 2000; Zahariadis, 2008), mainly due to their considerable discretion (Tummers and Bekkers, 2014). This symposium aims to link two active streams of research in public policy and administration: street level bureaucrats and policy entrepreneurship. By doing so, it will develop the conceptual and theoretical knowledge on street level policy entrepreneurship and will provide practical guidance on how to move forward – methodologically and empirically – in this new field of knowledge.

The public policy and administration literature has analyzed the influence of bureaucracy on policy outcomes from various perspectives and in various domains. The classical approach, which called for a clear dichotomy between politics and the

administration (Wilson 1887: 210), has long been challenged (Peters and Pierre, 2004). Today, bureaucracy is considered very much a part of the political process, because politicians frequently delegate to bureaucrats the formal authority to make value-oriented choices. Nevertheless, when analyzing the influence of bureaucracy on policy formulation, most studies concentrate on high-level bureaucrats. In parallel, due to the high level of motivation and skills required to accomplish their goals, the literature on policy entrepreneurs has focused mainly on high-level decision makers and ignored low- and middle-level bureaucrats (Arnold, 2015). However, in the last decade, several studies have linked professional bureaucrats at these levels with policy entrepreneurs (Arnold, 2015; Cohen and Klenck, 2019; Durose, 2007; Frisch Aviram, Cohen and Beerli, 2018; Lavee and Cohen, 2019; Petchey et al. 2008).

Scholars investigating street-level bureaucrats such as nurses, teachers and social workers have recently called for the expansion of their role in policy making from the formulation stage up through implementation, evaluation, and reform (Benton, Maaitah & Gharaibeh, 2017; Carnegie & Kiger, 2009; Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2013; Granruth et al., 2018; Lavee, Cohen, and Nouman, 2018). Using the metaphor of knowledge flow, street-level bureaucrats are asked to evaluate and give feedback on the successes and limitations of dictated policies. By doing so, they help bridge the gap between policy implementation and policy re-formation (Howlett, Ramesh and Perl, 2009). Indeed, there is a growing call for public sector innovation (De Vries, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2016; Osborne & Brown, 2011), specifically policy innovation (Berry & Berry, 2018). This need may be explained by a growing number of wicked policy problems (Head & Alford, 2015) but may also be attributed to flawed and misinformed policies dictated from above and causing an implementation deficit (Zacka, 2017).

This symposium intends to foster discussions aimed at exploring and conceptualizing the meaning of street level policy entrepreneurship and to propose an agenda for the future quantitative and qualitative research needed in this field. Among others, there are several key areas of interest upon which research is still only beginning to emerge:

- Under what conditions (organizational, political, etc.) will street-level bureaucrats act as policy entrepreneurs?
- What strategies do street level bureaucrats adopt in order to be active in policy formation?
- What explains the success or failure of street-level policy entrepreneurship?
- What are the pros and cons of street level policy entrepreneurship to public organizations and public policy?
- What is the normative role of street level policy entrepreneurship in general political science theory?

In the light of this growing trend and a lack of corresponding research, this symposium will gather theoretically-informed, rigorous empirical studies on this core area of Public Administration which, to date, as we have stated, is under-researched. All empirical methods including, but not limited to, qualitative, quantitative, meta-analytic, and mixed methods are welcome.

Review process and timeline

15 May 2020 – Manuscripts to be submitted to Public Administration's online editorial system.

Manuscripts will undergo the journal's normal peer review process as overseen by the Public Administration editorial team.

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