

Interaction of the Public Professionals-Civil Servants and the Citizens-Clients while Implementing the Public Policy

Abstract

The research is focused on three main questions: how public servants make sense of their own professionalism in their relationship with citizen-clients; how public professionals-civil servants categorize the clients of Lithuanian Employment Agency and what factors and at what levels determine the policy alienation of civil servants. The study is based on these theories: street-level bureaucracy, professionalism and policy alienation.

This study is based on a case study. As the main object of the study is to explore the activity of public professionals in implementing public policy during the interaction with citizens-clients, it has been chosen to analyze Lithuanian Employment Agency as the main Lithuanian Agency of employment policy. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather research data. A total of 28 interviews were collected (19 civil servants, who are working with unemployed clients, 6 civil servants, who are working with employers and 3 civil servants, who are in management positions).

The results: the present study point to hybrid professionalism. The research data revealed that professionalism of civil servants is related to formal and practical knowledges. Public professionals noted that during the interaction with clients there are important these professional factors: the identification with client, building relationship based on trust, listen to the client and his problems, ethical norms, values, specifically knowledges, reflection and empowerment of clients. The data of the empirical research on policy alienation revealed that civil servants experience powerlessness due to the following factors: insufficient coherence of employment policy objectives with objectives of other social and welfare policies, lack of inter-institutional co- operation, and autonomy in implementing internal institutional requirements.