

Public Values in Service Innovation Management: Case Study in Elderly Care in Danish Municipality

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Abstract : Background: The importance of innovation management has traditionally been ascribed to private production companies, however, there is an increasing interest in public services innovation management. One of the major theoretical challenges arising from this situation is to understand public values justifying public services innovation management. However, there is not single and stable definition of public value in the literature. The research question guiding this paper is: What is the supposed added value operating in the public sphere? Methodology: The study takes an action research strategy. This is highly contextualized methodology, which is enacted within a particular set of social relations into which one expects to integrate the results. As such, this research strategy is particularly well suited for its potential to generate results that can be applied by managers. The aim of action research is to produce proposals with a creative dimension capable of compelling actors to act in a new and pertinent way in relation to the situations they encounter. The context of the study is a workshop on public services innovation within elderly care. The workshop brought together different actors, such as managers, personnel and two groups of users-citizens (elderly clients and their relatives). The process was designed as an extension of the co-construction methods inherent in action research. Scenario methods and focus groups were applied to generate dialogue. The main strength of these techniques is to gather and exploit as much data as possible by exposing the discourse of justification used by the actors to explain or justify their points of view when interacting with others on a given subject. The approach does not directly interrogate the actors on their values, but allows their values to emerge through debate and dialogue. Findings: The public values related to public services innovation management in elderly care were identified in two steps. In the first step, identification of values, values were identified in the discussions. Through continuous analysis of the data, a network of interrelated values was developed. In the second step, tracking group consensus, we then ascertained the degree to which the meaning attributed to the value was common to the participants, classifying the degree of consensus as high, intermediate or low. High consensus corresponds to strong convergence in meaning, intermediate to generally shared meanings between participants, and low to divergences regarding the meaning between participants. Only values with high or intermediate degree of consensus were retained in the analysis. Conclusion: The study shows that the fundamental criterion for justifying public services innovation management is the capacity for actors to enact public values in their work. In the workshop, we identified two categories of public values, intrinsic value and behavioural values, and a list of more specific values.

Keywords : public services innovation management, public value, co-creation, action research

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