

The Individual and the State: co-production and interdependency in the mixed economy of public service consumption

Call for contributions to a conference supported by the Joint University Council and the Public Administration Committee

Convenors

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Questions of Curiosity

This conference is stimulated by at least three related but distinct developments in the arrangements through which public goods and services are provided:

1. the increasingly mixed economy of public services in which service users are being offered if not required to enter into more wide ranging relationships with providers;
2. calls for service users to be regarded as “co-producers” especially in personal services;
3. inconsistent and ambiguous usage, in both the literature and practice of service provision, of terminology and concepts including those relating to the process of service production (co-production et al.) and the end user in this relationship (service user, consumer, client, customer as well as specific descriptors such as patient, student, prisoner).

From our respective and varied perspectives as researchers and advisors to the development of public services we note at least three sets of questions worthy of enquiry both for the enhancement of our state of knowledge and understanding and for the more effective development of service provision and public benefit.

Q1 Changes

What are the changes underway in the relationships of users with service providers?

Are these changes generic to public services or do they vary (and if so, how)?

Do non-governmental providers of public services (e.g. private companies, charities, social enterprises under contract) bring different assumptions and patterns of relationship to public service provision and consumption?

Do any changes identified indicate a shift in the relationship of the individual with the state?

Q2 Co-production and interdependency in service production and consumption

What is co-production of service?

What is its relationship to the interdependencies inherent in different modes of consumption, for example as citizen, client or customer?

Are these specific and novel variants of public service production and consumption or generic properties of public services?

Q3 Concepts and theories

Are the current concepts and theoretical underpinnings of the study and practice of service relationships valid and reliable for purposes of analysing and developing public services?

Do they provide constructs suited to analysing the occasions of service provision (e.g. need, want, population provision), the mechanisms that determine service allocation (e.g. markets, policy and professional hierarchies), and the relationships of service consumption itself (e.g. levels of dependency)?

Call for Contributions to Conference

We seek contributions to this conference from academic researchers, service providers and service users on:

1. The concepts, models and theories of the processes of public service provision and consumption in theory and in use;
2. The changing practices of service relationships in different service sectors (e.g. defence and security, economic development, education, environmental health, housing, law and order, mental and physical health, social care);
3. Emergent issues in changing practice and study of service relationships (e.g. coproduction, responsibilities and interdependencies between service provider and user, and the relationship of the individual with the state).

We intend to select up to 12 papers for the conference itself and support each academic paper with a contribution by a practitioner or user and vice versa. We then plan to select papers for one or two special issues of appropriate journals such as, but not limited to, *Public Money and Management* and *Public Policy and Administration*.

Timetable

April 30th, 2016: deadline for submission of abstracts of 500-1000 words to Clare Barton (clare.barton@nottingham.ac.uk). Applicants are encouraged to indicate when a full manuscript might be completed.

6th May, convenors will inform applicants of the result of their submission.

7th-8th July: conference from lunch on Thursday to the afternoon of Friday 2016, at University of Nottingham with accommodation in the campus Orchard Hotel.

Note that outline draft papers will be expected to be available to participants at the conference. A timetable for the production of full drafts will be formulated with authors and potential journal editors.