Conference abstract

Relational strategies for bridging and promoting cross-sector collaboration

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Abstract

Introduction: There is a growing consensus that the response to complex and difficult social problems—being the convergence of ageing and disability one of them– requires public agencies to be prepared to work in partnership with other public, civil society and business organisations. However, initiatives aimed at promoting health and social care providers working in partnership have had limited success so far.

Aim: To provide an analytical framework to assess the different kinds of organisational strategies to promote cross-sector collaboration.

Results: The paper draws on empirical research studies in the fields of organization theory and public governance. At a macro level, it refers to the changing role of governments in advanced democracies and the emergence of the relational state as a response to the crisis of the welfare state. At a micro level, it discusses the different modes of non-hierarchical coordination between organisations (or horizontal coordination) as well as the different types of partnerships, their governance forms (market, hierarchy or network) and their organisational and institutional implications (e.g. organisational values, resources and capabilities needed, legal framework and incentives for collaboration).

Conclusions: There are significant obstacles and barriers to cross-sector collaboration which arise from the nature of the different organisations involved (policy domain, public or private status, geographical scope of activity, dominant professional group), their endowment in terms of resources and organisational capabilities, and the institutional framework that regulates their interplay. There is not such a thing as 'one best way' to achieve effective collaboration; instead decision-makers have a range of alternative collaboration arrangements, hence the importance of making the right choices and designing context-specific relational strategies.

Keywords

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1