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Coproduction investments: Street-level management perspective on coproduction

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Abstract: Although public managers are considered to substantially influence coproduction, current research concentrates on service users and communities' perspectives, whereas the contribution of the public workers is understudied. Because direct-delivery interactions often depend on coproduction, this study explores coproduction from the perspective street-level management, that is, those who are overarchingly in charge of, and accountable for, the outputs and outcomes of the direct-delivery phase of service provision in street-level organizations. To allow for analytical and conceptual accuracy in characterizing coproduction management, analysis draws on in-depth semi-structured interviews with street-level managers in three different policy sectors: policing, education, and social services (N = 78). Managing coproduction emerged as threefold. First, clients' coproduction during direct-delivery interactions with frontline professionals, known as co-delivery, is considered the essence of the street-level organization and requires additional, ongoing, facilitating efforts. Second, securing clients' co-delivery emerged as an investment: routine efforts that are exercised with the expectation to enhance clients' long-lasting willingness to co-deliver with all the programs provided by the street-level organization, termed here "coproduction investments." Third, coproduction investments entail both voice and action

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

To better understand what public services provision entails on-the-ground, this paper focuses on the managerial perspective of street-level managers, who are overarchingly in charge of, and accountable for, the direct-delivery of public services to a local target-population, such as principals of primary schools, chiefs of police-stations, and heads of social-services bureaus. This study is important mainly for two reasons. First, the perspective of these specific public managers is rather overlooked despite their key contribution for the community they are embedded in. Second, it reveals that in an attempt to establish, maintain and nurture a long-term relationship with the local public clientele they serve, street-level managers invest ongoing, extensive efforts, termed here as "coproduction investments." Coproduction investments go beyond service delivery activities, differ for higher and lower socioeconomic clienteles, and stress that long-term relationships with the local clientele are the hidden foundations on which public services provision rests upon.



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organizational activities, which differ according to the socioeconomic level of the community served. Coproduction investments demonstrate how public managers transform coproduction principles into managerial activities, and shift attention to street-level organizations as the interstices between “what’s right” and “what works” in coproduction.

Subjects: Public Services; Street-level Implementation; Coproduction

Keywords: street-level management; public managers; coproduction; street-level organizations; co-delivery

1. Introduction

Although coproduction definitions vary (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016; Nabatchi, Sancino, & Sicilia, 2017; Paarlberg & Gen, 2009; Thomsen, 2017) they all refer to the involvement and participation of citizens in the provision of public services (e.g., Alford, 2002, 2016; Bovaird, 2007; Nabatchi et al., 2017; Ostrom, 1996; Pestoff, 2006; Thomsen, 2017). Following conceptual and analytical vagueness, different forms and types of coproduction have been distinguished, for example, in order to reconcile whether coproduction is of high importance, however, optional (e.g., Bovaird, 2007; Pestoff, 2006), or, in contrast, as intrinsic in delivering services, therefore, inevitable (see Osborne, Radnor, & Strokosch, 2016 for a systematic discussion). Additional distinctions refer to the phase of service provision, that is, differentiating co-planning, co-design, co-delivery, co-monitoring, and co-evaluation (e.g., Bovaird, 2007; Sicilia, Guarini, Sancino, Andreani, & Ruffini, 2016), or to the level of coproduction, that is, differentiating individual, group, and collective levels of coproduction (see Nabatchi et al., 2017 for a systematic review and comprehensive typology). In practice, coproduction “is currently one of the cornerstones of public policy reform across the globe” (Osborne et al., 2016, p. 640) and applied “to a wide range of areas and activities” (Nabatchi et al., 2017, p. 766). Moreover, coproduction is valuable both for public services effectiveness and for active citizenship (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014; Osborne, Radnor, & Nasi, 2012; Thomsen, 2017).

Among the wide range of actors that are involved in coproduction (Nabatchi et al., 2017) public managers are considered to have substantial discretionary power to elicit or hinder coproduction (Alford, 2016; Andrews & Brewer, 2013; Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Chaebó & Medeiros, 2016; Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016; Loeffler, Parrado, Bovaird, & Van Ryzin, 2008; Parrado, Van Ryzin, Bovaird, & Loeffler, 2013; Sicilia et al., 2016; Thomas, 2013; Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2015). Nevertheless, a recent review emphasizes that most coproduction studies tend to concentrate on the contributions of users and communities and much less on the contribution of the staff who coproduce: “there is much less research and focus in the literature on the contributions made by staff [front line staff, managers, or commissioners] who co-produce with service users and communities” (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016, p. 1008). Concentrating on the effects of coproduction and its contribution to the organization’s success, coproduction studies that use the organization as a unit of analysis also often overlook how managers address coproduction challenges (see as exceptional, Chaebó & Medeiros, 2016; Sicilia et al., 2016). Hence, although the ways through which managers can elicit or hinder coproduction are well-documented (e.g., Thomas, 2013), there is limited research about what coproduction management entails on the ground. This conclusion accords with the general argument that despite extensive research and worldwide practice, the empirical evidence base about coproduction is relatively weak (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016; Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016; Nabatchi et al., 2017).

This study explores what coproduction management entails on the ground by focusing on street-level organizations (SLOs, such as schools, health agencies, social services bureaus, police departments) for two interrelated reasons. First, coproduction is extremely important to direct-delivery interactions, which take place in SLOs. Specifically, the production and consumption during direct-delivery are inseparable (Alford, 2016; Bovaird, 2007; Edvardsson, Gustafsson, & Roos, 2005; Osborne

& Strokosch, 2013; Pestoff, 2006; Verschuere, Brandsen, & Pestoff, 2012). Moreover, direct-delivery is the “moment of truth,” in which the provider and the client meet (Normann, 2002). Indeed, SLOs depend on “clients for co-productive work to achieve purposes or complete tasks” (Alford, 2016, p. 678) and therefore are portrayed as “potentially more suitable for exploiting co-production” (Sicilia et al., 2016, p. 13; see also Bovaird, 2007; Verschuere et al., 2012). Second, the longstanding street-level implementation research, which explores direct-delivery interactions between professionals and clients (e.g., Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010; Smith, 2012), often refers to clients’ participation in direct-delivery interactions mostly as *taken for granted* (Gofen, Blomqvist, Needham, Warren, & Winblad, 2018), thus, overlooks coproduction in general, and coproduction management in particular. Specifically, street-level studies focus on the implementation actions of frontline professionals, such as teachers, police officers, social workers, health workers, and public lawyers, and their implications for clients (e.g., Brodtkin, 1997, 2012; Favero & Molina, 2018; Lipsky, 1980, 2010; Sandfort, 2000). Moreover, the client is often portrayed as the powerless side of the interaction being subject to street-level delivery actions of the professional frontline worker, who is often portrayed as the side holding the discretionary power (e.g., Brodtkin, 2011; Tummers, Bekkers, Vink, & Musheno, 2015).

Specifically, analysis considers the perspective of the chief executive officers of SLOs, namely, street-level management (Gassner & Gofen, 2018), following their sole and highest position in the organization, their responsibility for the design, execution, and assessment of direct-delivery arrangements, and their accountability for service outputs and outcomes. To allow for analytical and conceptual accuracy in characterizing the ways through which managers transform a coproduction approach into action, analysis draws on face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with police station chiefs, school principals, and heads of social services bureaus (N = 78), who work within three policy sectors that reflect on different public services, work settings, and professions; however, within all three, coproduction “seeks to go beyond an attempt to attune public services to the wishes of passive recipients. Its aim is to empower users to take greater control over, and responsibility for, their lives” (Martin, 2005, p. 194).

Managerial perspective on coproduction emerged as threefold. First, clients’ participation in direct-delivery interactions with professional frontline workers, referred to in the literature as “co-delivery” (Nabatchi et al., 2017) is considered by street-level managers as the essence of the SLO, and securing it requires designated, distinct ongoing efforts. Second, securing clients’ co-delivery reflects an investment, that is, street-level managers routinely devote resources which expected to enhance a long-lasting willingness of clients to co-deliver with all current and future programs and activities of the SLO, thus termed here *coproduction investments*. Third, coproduction investments entail both voice and action organizational activities, which differ according to the socioeconomic level of the community served. Some patterns of coproduction investments uncover overlooked practices such as reaching out to disadvantaged populations (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016), whereas others echo well-documented coproduction types, such as co-design and co-planning (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012) as well as the importance of communication with the local community (Bovaird, 2007; Meijer, 2014; Nabatchi et al., 2017; Needham, 2008).

The article proceeds as follows. To suggest that coproduction management in practice is rather overlooked, especially in street-level implementation scholarship, the following section starts by employing a coproduction perspective on street-level literature and then reviews how coproduction scholarship portrays the contribution of managers to coproduction. After presenting the methods, findings elaborate on coproduction investments and their strategies. The last section discusses contributions of coproduction investments and their implications for theory and practice.

2. A coproduction perspective on street-level organizations

Street-level organizations (SLOs, also referred to as frontline organizations and as human service organizations) are the organizational setting in which public services are *directly* delivered to locally defined target populations, such as police stations, schools, health-care clinics, social

service organizations, and child protection agencies. Long lasting scholarship documents the key roles of SLOs as serving the loci of organizational initiatives (Smith, 1965), as “the face of government to many people” (Smith, 2012, p. 442), and as having “intrinsic importance to social well-being” (Lynn, Heinrich, & Hill, 2001, p. 5).

Coproduction is especially relevant to SLOs for several reasons. First, as mentioned above, coproduction is an inescapable element in SLOs following the inseparability of production and consumption during direct-delivery (Alford, 2016; Osborne & Strokosch, 2013), which manifest the “moment of truth”: “At that moment they are very much on their own.... It is the skill, motivation and the tools employed by the [provider]...and the expectations and behavior of the client which together will create the service delivery process” (Normann, 2002, p. 21). Second, SLOs provide services that are often “individualized, site-specific and of sustained importance to people’s lives, requiring ongoing dialogue between many people and agencies and frequent review” (Needham & Carr, 2009, p. 7). Third, the well-documented constant resources insufficiency inherent to street-level delivery (Lipsky, 1980, 2010; Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010) further increases the significance of coproduction as a means by which additional resources to public service delivery can be levered (Osborne et al., 2016). Fourth, because direct-delivery actions “become the public policies” (Lipsky, 1980, p. xii; original italics), SLOs play a key political role which holds major implications for citizens’ trust; thus, for citizen–government relationships: “[t]o the extent they [citizens] are discouraged from using public service or receive poor service, they may become alienated from the political system in general” (Smith, 2012, p. 442). Lastly, by facilitating citizen-government communication, SLOs serve as the infrastructure for an additional essential element of coproduction (Needham & Carr, 2009; Pestoff, 2006).

Despite the high relevance of coproduction to SLOs, street-level studies tend to take as given clients’ participation in direct-delivery interactions (Gofen et al., 2018). Indeed, street-level research portrays direct-delivery interaction between frontline workers and individual clients as involving an imbalance of power: the frontline workers hold considerable discretionary power, and as such they represent the powerful side of the interaction, whereas the individual clients are subjected to the actions of the frontline workers, and so are framed as the powerless side of the interaction (e.g., Loyens & Maesschalck, 2010; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Siciliano, 2017). Not considering the possibility that clients’ coproduction is not granted in general, and questioning the ability of clients to rise above self-interest and contribute to coproduction (Glaser & Denhardt, 2010; Parrado et al., 2013) results in relinquishing a coproduction perspective in street-level research.

3. Coproduction from public managers’ perspective

The coproduction approach emphasizes that public services provision is no longer considered a task entrusted exclusively to the professionals and administrators, but rather a joint effort with individual clients and local communities (Bovaird, Van Ryzin, Loeffler, & Parrado, 2015; Frieling, Lindenberg, & Stokman, 2014; Thomas, 2013; Verschuere et al., 2012). Among the wide range of actors that are involved in coproduction (Nabatchi et al., 2017), public managers are considered to have substantial discretionary power to elicit or hinder coproduction, which derives from their ability “to manage co-productive fatigue, nurture co-productive behaviors, and facilitate their continuance even when public funding ceased” (Sicilia et al., 2016, p. 23). Public managers therefore serve as “the main element for guaranteeing... the sustainability of co-production” (Sicilia et al., 2016, p. 23) and in general “play an active role in making judgments about what is best for the community, becoming in effect democratic principles” (Andrews & Brewer, 2013, p. 25). Indeed, coproduction is more likely to succeed when managers believe in the advantages of the relationships with citizens (e.g., Etgar, 2008; Frieling et al., 2014) and in citizens’ ability to contribute (e.g., Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Loffler et al., 2008) and when they trust the decisions and behaviors of service users and the communities they serve (e.g., Bovaird, 2007; Fledderus, 2015). Coproduction success is also linked to managers’ skills and tools, which include an ability and willingness “to listen to users and community groups, to mobilize collective resources and knowledge in order to meet the public interest, and to exercise a meta-governance role with a view of the public sector that is systemic and oriented toward final

outcomes” (Sicilia et al., 2016, p. 23; see also Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Parrado et al., 2013). Indeed, management capacity is required “to devote more resources to creating valuable opportunities for including community stakeholders in service production and thus create more public value” (Andrews & Brewer, 2013, p. 25). Managers can proactively enhance coproduction by following a few guidelines such as defining in advance the desired assistance from the public and activating social norms (Thomas, 2013), as well as by providing organizational resources that were found to enhance coproduction (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Voorberg et al., 2015), such as creating sufficient communication infrastructure with citizens (Chaebo & Medeiros, 2016; Meijer, 2014; Meijer & Torenvlied, 2016; Thomas, 2013) and establishing inviting organizational structures and procedures within the organization (Alford, 2016; Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Sicilia et al., 2016; Voorberg et al., 2015). Managers can also work with citizens to set priorities, such as “when police departments work with residents to identify priority or target areas [and]...when school officials work with parent groups to determine educational priorities” (Nabatchi et al., 2017, p. 771–772). In the same manner, managers might inhibit coproduction, following, for example, professional reluctance to lose status and control (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Ryan, 2012; Voorberg et al., 2015), risk aversion (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016; Pestoff, 2006) or lack of training (Andrews & Brewer, 2013). Managers inhibit coproduction when working in conservative administrative culture, which considers citizens merely as service receivers rather than associates and allows “no ‘institutional space’ to invite citizens as equals” (Voorberg et al., 2015, p. 1342).

The managerial role in enhancing coproduction also stems from possible public refusal to coproduce, such as when communities do not want to run their own services (Bovaird, 2007) following low social capital (Andrews & Brewer, 2013; Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016), burnout of community members (e.g., Bovaird, 2007), or simply because they are “powerless” (Mulgan, 1991). Citizens might also experience coproduction barriers, such as lack of power, lack of motivation, or lack of trust (Fledderus, 2015; Loffler et al., 2008; Voorberg et al., 2015), which further imply the necessity of managerial efforts to enhance coproduction. Interestingly, despite being skeptical about whether and how citizens can contribute (Loffler et al., 2008), evidence indicates that public managers are increasingly eliciting citizens’ participation in service delivery (Andrews & Brewer, 2013; Bryer, 2009; Pestoff, 2006). Exploring what coproduction management entails on the ground, our intention is to contribute to the understudied managerial perspective on coproduction (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016) and in general to the empirical coproduction research (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016; Nabatchi et al., 2017). By focusing on SLOs to explore coproduction management, our intention is also to emphasize that a coproduction perspective in street-level research, although highly relevant, is overlooked, as elaborated in the following section.

4. Research design

To explore the scope and dynamics of coproduction management in SLOs, including managers’ perceptions and considerations in addressing the participation of clients in service provision, this study employs a grounded theory approach of social inquiry (Charmaz, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Because “[p]ublic administration is less about finding formal connections than about telling stories about beliefs, actions, practices, and their contexts” (Bevir, 2011, p. 190), analysis was complemented by narrative-based analysis of “program stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ospina & Dodge, 2005, see Appendix A). Analysis focuses on street-level managers following their critical structural position: occupying the top sole managerial position which is overarchingly in charge of the direct delivery of a public service to a local community and accountable for SLOs’ outputs and outcomes. Moreover, considering the independence of SLOs in performing their tasks and the difficulty in directly supervising them (Smith, 1965), street-level managers hold major managerial discretionary power, including with respect to the ways they approach and apply coproduction with the clients served by the SLO.

To allow for analytical and conceptual accuracy in characterizing management of coproduction, the analysis considers three different SLOs—police stations, schools, and social services bureaus—which, while differing in their work settings and professions, involve coproduction that is not

merely lip service, but rather coproduction that aims at citizens' empowerment and taking more responsibility for their lives (Martin, 2005; Smith, 2012; Roberts, 2004, see Appendix A, which describes these policy sectors in Israel).

Data were collected by face-to-face, in-depth interviews (N = 78) with police chiefs (n = 32), school principals (n = 25), and heads of social services bureaus (n = 21). About half of the interviewees had experience serving more than one SLO, which allowed them to provide more detailed and comparative explanations about the considerations guiding the selection of efforts in different localities. The selection of participants was done for the purpose of sampling each service in its most diverse deployment, including large and small organizations in urban and rural locations as well as rich and poor localities. Informants with at least one year of experience were interviewed (see Table 1). Interviews were carried out by the authors during 3 years of data collection. Interviews were open-ended and only semi-structured to allow participants to identify and discuss the ways they understand their experiences. For each quoted testimonial, we specify E(education), P(policing) or S(social services), and the identification number of the informant.

After providing a brief description of their professional background and career track, interviewees were asked to define their role, elaborate on their vision and aims, and specify their main responsibilities. Next, interviewees were asked to describe their daily work and refer to rewarding aspects, main dilemmas, challenges, as well as the ways through which they try to resolve them. When participants provided only general insights, they were asked to elaborate and exemplify as much as possible.

4.1. Analytic procedure

Atlas.ti software was used to assist in the coding process of transcribed interviews. By means of grounded theory, the characteristics, components, and dynamics of a managerial approach to clients' involvement in the provision of the service by the SLO were gradually identified within the data. Narrative-based analysis (Schwartz-Shea, 2006; Yanow, 2000) allowed for identifying the variance in efforts for lower and higher socioeconomic status (SES) communities. To address validity concerns (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001), mainly as per description, interpretation, and theorization (Maxwell, 1996), the interviews (lasting between 90 and 150 minutes) were recorded and transcribed, and field notes were written during and immediately after each interview. In addition, all data were coded by both authors, which allowed us to discuss and reach consensus when coding discrepancies occurred. Lastly, each informant provided official policy documents and media reports for a few stories of programs (see Appendix A for the recurrent programs), which allowed triangulating findings with multiple sources of data.

Table 1. Data sources				
		Police-Station Chiefs	School Principals	Heads of Social-Services Bureaus
N		32	25	21
Organization's size¹	Small	8	7	10
	Medium	17	10	8
	Large	7	8	3
Years of experience as chief executive	Up to 5 years	23	9	3
	More than 5 years	9	16	18
# of Positions Held	1 st time	14	14	14
	2 nd or more	18	11	7
Area	Urban	22	17	15
	Rural	10	8	6
Locality	Poor (1-4)	14	9	7
	Middle (5-7)	12	11	9
	Rich (8+)	6	5	5

5. Coproduction investments: efforts to enhance clients' ongoing co-delivery

5.1. Managerial framing of coproduction in street-level organizations

In general, an explicit coproduction approach to service delivery emerged foremost with respect to clients' participation in direct-delivery interactions, often referred to in the literature as "co-delivery" (Nabatchi et al., 2017). Indeed, each and every interviewee emphasized that the core of the SLO is the participation of clients in direct-delivery interactions. Hence, the SLO "cannot exist" without clients' actual participation in direct-delivery interactions, and the "SLO functioning" relies on clients' willingness to co-deliver (see Table 2). Moreover, the success of the SLO is in terms of clients' co-delivery, as argued by one of the social services heads who emphasized that "the fact that today all the communities... participate in [our] activities indicates that the citizens recognize us, that we are the redress for many problems. This is a great success for us" (S16). The essentiality of clients' co-delivery is also reflected in the tendency of informants to refer to the community served by the SLO as "my public," "my community," or "my population," as well as in the explicit, straightforward referrals to the SLO and the community as interdependent, which echoes the interdependency dimension of coproduction (Alford, 2016). Even when the role of the community in service provision is viewed from a critical perspective, that is, as limiting, overloading, or hardening the course of work of the SLO, informants recognize that clients' co-delivery is inevitable and that the relationship with the community is essential to the functioning of the SLO: "without establishing relationships with the community, to get to know one another... I would have been able to do only a very few things" (P11).

Notably, informants did not refer to clients' co-delivery as assured or as taken for granted, as exemplified in the words of one of the social services heads: "It is not taken for granted that if we open up workshops for adolescent parenting, they will indeed arrive here. It demands extensive convincing, there are many reasons why parents wouldn't participate in activities under the term 'welfare services'" (S19). Furthermore, an opposition that will inhibit service delivery is always a possibility: "if the parents' committee objects to a specific curriculum, they will do everything that they can to put a spoke in the wheel" (E19). In accordance, many and varied routine efforts were described as means to secure co-delivery.

5.2. Securing clients' co-delivery as an investment

Managerial efforts to secure clients' co-delivery emerged as *coproduction investments*: a routine devotion of managerial efforts and organizational resources with the expectation of enhancing clients'

Table 2. Coproduction framings in street-level organizations

Clients' co-delivery essentiality	"Without the cooperation of the public, the ability of the [police] station to succeed and provide good service is more limited" (P5); "The school is not only mine, without the involvement of parents and students, it will be impossible to reach far [in terms of educational achievements]" (E16); "clearly, we have failing programs... [for example] we started a program .. but meanwhile [clients' compliance] is far from what we had expected" (S7).
SLO-Clients interdependency	"They [clients] need us and we need them; we need their collaboration. We are completely interdependent" (P30); "We [clients and the SLO] have to work together all the time" (E3); "It is not them and us. It is not two camps, on the contrary" (S10).
Despite critical perspective	"No doubt that providing good service to the citizen encourages the cooperation of the citizens [with the police], which is the basis for police work... But I think we have overreacted. We wanted to 'over' please the citizen. Today everyone is talking service, service and service" (P23); "Because schools fight for their existence, and a student is the existence, the relationship between school and parents is sometimes like 'walking on eggs'. Because without cooperating with them it is very difficult to succeed. You cannot really upset them" (E22); "Our ability to ask or receive more resources for programs depends on the extent of community participation in these programs" (S9).

willingness to co-deliver in a comprehensive, long-lasting way, that is, with *all, current and future*, services and intervention programs provided by the SLO. Four characteristics of these managerial efforts indicate that they are exercised as investments (see Table 3). First, efforts were often described as expected to bear fruit in the *future*, and at times even when the informant no longer will serve as the SLO head. Second, efforts were often described as aiming to influence clients' co-delivery with *all* policies and programs provided by the SLO rather than with a specific one. Third, efforts were seldom described in terms of coercion or sanction. Rather, informants often mentioned efforts to nurture clients' *willingness* by encouraging, reassuring, influencing, and convincing. Lastly, some efforts involve setting-up local activities that aim at improving community well-being in aspects that go above and beyond the formal responsibility of the SLO (see community-focused initiatives below).

6. Coproduction investments strategies

Four types of coproduction investments emerged, which differ by two dimensions: who is the community served, that is, higher versus lower socioeconomic level populations (SES), and voice versus action organizational activities. Specifically, coproduction investments that target higher SES populations include a) Reciprocal communication (voice), that is, facilitating bi-directional information flow to learn about the contextual characteristics of the community served, as well as to advocate current and future delivery arrangements; and b) Responsiveness (action), that is, setting up programs and services in order to meet demands and requests, often of specific community subgroups. Coproduction investments that target lower SES populations include: c) Reaching-out (voice), that is, efforts to communicate with those who do not express their needs or

Table 3. An investment approach to coproduction

Investment dimension	
Long-term devotion	"Cooperation of citizens with the police in the long-run doesn't occur just like that; it's a tremendous investment all the time" (P32); "It is important to establish a tradition of collaboration with parents. To create it, it takes time" (E7); "Creating trust between social services and [a specific community] is like running a marathon. It takes a long time" (S3).
Now for the future	"It will not affect my term, but our job is also to take care of the next generation" (P6); "It is easy for a principal to invest most of the work in better grades. It has immediate reward... [however] I insist... on educating to be engaged, to be active participants... it is a very important message. But these are future outcomes, which are difficult to notice" (E15); "The success of some programs can only be seen in a few years when [needy] families will become independent" (S18).
Clients' co-delivery with all services provided by the SLO	"Law enforcement and order on football fields also has an effect on compliance with the law as a whole" (P22); "Parent involvement is not only to be for or against a particular program; it is also that they care about how a school looks" (E17); "As we start working with a needy family, it is important that we have cooperation in all areas of intervention" (S7).
Targeting clients' willingness	"To persuade the public to take an active part in the police's activity is not self-evident. Some see us in a negative light, we have to prove to them that working together will improve their security" (P30); "I invest a lot in my relationship [with parents] ... It is important that they see that I keep my interest [in them] at all times, not just in times of need" (E18); "Attempts to cultivate populations that have lost trust in the establishment and do not 'knock on our door' require extensive 'courting' efforts" (S12).
Beyond SLO's responsibility	"To be a part of the community means not only to enforce the law, but also to help disadvantaged groups" (P1); "A school can't be an island... it is important to invest in projects that benefit the community as a whole" (E9); "We, as a bureau, are involved in the 'green cities' project, it is our contribution to the community and we want to be a model" (S21).

make claims; and d) Community-focused initiatives (action), that is, setting up projects and joint-programs to improve the life quality of the served community, which often go above and beyond the SLO’s responsibility (see Table 4).

6.1. Voice investments

Voice investments emerged to have a twofold aim, which is similar to higher and lower SES communities and echoes the key role of bi-directional communication in facilitating coproduction and the consequent recommendation to allocate sufficient communication infrastructure (Chaebo & Medeiros, 2016; Meijer, 2014; Thomas, 2013). The first aim is *learning* about the community, including its concerns, overlooked needs, and potential inconsistencies between direct-delivery arrangements and the community’s particularities (see Table 5). Because the contextual characteristics of the served community are dynamic, learning must be continuously updated and the SLO staff must have “a finger on the pulse”: “in order [for the service] to be relevant you have to examine what are the [community] needs all the time, whether they’ve changed. Are there new problems? What new groups have arrived in the city? What events have happened?” (S17). Learning thus demonstrates how clients’ “outside-in’ perspective enables state actors to better understand how public services could be designed to be of greatest use and benefit for individuals and communities” (Nabatchi et al., 2017, p. 772).

Voice investments also aim at *advocating* current and future policies and programs by explaining, clarifying, and justifying the ways through which direct-delivery is currently designed while elaborating

Table 4. Coproduction investment strategies

	Higher SES Community	Lower SES Community
Voice	Reciprocal Communication Setting up direct interactions with community members; Utilizing media channels; Providing direct and virtual communication channels for community members	Reaching Out Setting up direct interactions with clients and (in)formal leadership
Action	Responsiveness Providing tailor-made services and programs that clients and subgroups of the community ask for	Community-focused Initiatives Setting-up local projects and joint-programs in areas that exceed SLO’s responsibilities

Table 5. Voice investments aims

Sector/Aim	Learning	Advocating
Policing	“I hear what citizens have to say, what disturbs them... one needs to listen all the time—each has different complaints and requests” (P3).	“I had to give precise instructions [to citizens in order to improve neighborhood security]: to make sure that bars are installed on the higher floors, to make sure to have lighting in a stairwell, what to do when they see someone suspicious in different situations” (P4).
Social Services	“The better we understand [the community’s needs], the better we can match a treatment” (S1).	“Before we start therapy with a family [in a family rehabilitation program which utilizes extensive resources], we explicitly tell [the family members] what they are required to commit to, and if they don’t, they will be excluded from the program” (S8).
Education	“I try every morning to meet the parents and children when they arrive at school. This is a great opportunity to get a lot of information about what they are satisfied with, and about what they are less satisfied with” (E23).	“When I meet parents, I make sure to indicate what the school needs from them... also in areas that are not directly linked to learning. For example, the request we discussed this week is not sending candies to school” (E21).

and specifying what is expected from the clients in co-delivery, as explained by one of the police chiefs: “It is important not only to hear what they want from us, but also to clarify what is expected from them” (P16). Advocating voice is required because a simple general call for participation and cooperation, without going into details, is often insufficient for clients’ co-delivery. Clients need explicit, specified instructions as to what is expected from them (see Table 5). Despite its significance, voice investment to advocate co-delivery is often overlooked: “The centrality of encouraging willingness to coproduce recasts the basic question in client focus. In addition to asking ‘What do our clients want from us?’ the organization needs to ask another key question, which has hitherto been completely unaddressed: ‘What do we want from our clients?’” (Alford, 2016, p. 683).

Whereas the aim of voice investments is similar for higher and lower SES communities, the ways these investments are practiced often differ.

Reciprocal communication which targets higher SES communities includes interactions between an SLO’s staff and members of the community, which are initiated either by the SLO or by the community members. For example, the SLO initiates interactions by inviting clients, volunteers, and community representatives such as neighborhood associations to participate in intra-organizational meetings, and organizing local conferences, open community days, and citizens’ panels. Reciprocal communication, though, emphasizes not only the setting up of interactions but also providing community members with channels to initiate interactions with the SLO, which is relevant when targeting higher SES communities. Moreover, this reciprocal communication is what facilitates “co-design” and “co-planning” types of coproduction, during which “the experience of users and their communities” (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012, p. 9) is incorporated into the “creation, planning, or arrangements of public services” (Nabatchi et al., 2017, p. 772).

Reaching out, which targets lower SES communities, includes interactions that are initiated by the staff of the SLO in order to communicate with members of disadvantaged or marginalized communities (see Table 6). Notably, despite the availability of a variety of communication channels and opportunities, communication with lower SES communities is almost always traditional, that is, face-to-face or by phone. Reaching out is also exercised by initiating interactions with local leadership, which is often the only gateway to more conservative communities, such as ethnic, religious, or immigrant groups: “The problem is how to reach populations that don’t come here and knock on the door. If you don’t go to [their leader] and talk to him and convince him to help... they will remain distressed... but if you manage to create a dialog... the whole community will look differently” (S13). Although reaching out allows a better

Table 6. Voice investments practices

Sector	Higher SES: Reciprocal Communication	Lower SES: Reaching Out
Policing	“I meet all kinds of forums: house meetings, neighborhood committees, employee organizations ... there is also twice a week an ‘open-door’ from 16:00–18:00—when every citizen can come to meet me” (P3).	“I send community officers knocking on the doors of the poorest neighborhood in the city, in order to tell residents: ‘we’re here for you,’ and explain to them how and when they can contact us” (P27).
Social Services	“Parents of autistic children are not only weak. Some of them are very strong and active... You must be in contact with them, otherwise they will go to the higher-ups” (S6).	“I have a number of [staff] whose job is to visit the elderly community to hear about its needs. They [senior citizens] will not come here, and also will not pick up the phone or write an email” (S20).
Education	“Today through the school’s website parents receive ongoing information about what is going on in each classroom, and they can respond almost in real time” (E13).	“With children of poor families who need more help, we do need to approach them specifically... and more than once do we need to convince the parents to allow their child to participate in the program” (E16).

understanding of the capacities, needs, and barriers of those who do not tend to voice their requests and needs, it is rarely referred to in coproduction studies “[b]ecause co-production is widely believed to be particularly characteristic of educated and better-off citizens, the potential contributions of other groups, particularly the disadvantaged, are being systematically overlooked” (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016, p. 1016).

6.2. Action investments

Action investments entail special efforts exercised by the SLO that aim at meeting the unmet needs of the community served with the expectation that these efforts will enhance clients’ willingness to co-deliver (see Table 7). In general, action investments reflect a broad perception of the SLO’s role in the community it is embedded in, and reflect the documented “mismatch between the goal and rhetoric of local input and top-down decision making, [which] can be very disempowering at the local level” (Smith, 2012, p. 439). Specifically, action investments

Table 7. Action investments: responsiveness and community-focused initiatives

Community/ Sector	Higher SES: Responsiveness	Lower SES: Community-focused Initiatives
Policing	Following requests to limit the reputational damage for families and the school, chiefs established alternative channels for filing complaints for minor juvenile offences: e.g., allowing principals to call their personal phone (P12); receiving complaints or executing initial investigation at a private zone in the station (P17); sending undercover cop to talk to teachers, parents, and students at school (P28).	“A community policeman invited children from the neighborhood school to plant a vegetable garden in a senior citizens’ home. <i>This is not written in the police roles.</i> But think what enormous investment it is in the relationships with the children as well as with the elderly. Now both the children’s parents and the family members of the elderly, they all talk about it” (P21); Policemen painting the homes of elderly residents (P9); Policemen “adopting” lonely elderly residents (P26); lonely ill residents (P13); or students in 1st grade from disadvantaged sub-groups (P20).
Social Services	Following the request of a high socioeconomic subgroup, which wanted to avoid being tagged as “needy families,” they were offered the opportunity to participate in a parenting workshop within an alternative treatment setting: through a community theater initiative (S19).	Convincing the Mayor to provide needy families with tickets to cultural events, that are typically out of their reach, and expected to create “a tremendous effect in the entire city” (S5); After realizing that women who had suffered from domestic violence did file complaints at the police station but avoided approaching social services for fear of losing custody of their children, a social services’ head asked the local police chief for permission to allow a social worker to provide these women with explanations about social services at police stations (S11); Starting a mediation center to resolve disputes between community members (S10).
Education	“Over a third of the population [has high socioeconomic status]. They invest money, lots of money... But they want something in return. [They] want this or that specific program” (E24).	A group of teachers and children that once a month visited children with special needs to read them stories (E8); Afternoon school for adults who wish to study: “this is a message to the whole community, that our role is beyond 12 years of schooling. The help I give them today comes back double, many of them come to volunteer in school activities” (E25); School children providing residents who live alone with holiday gifts (E14).

highlight the significance of devoting managerial and organizational resources to meet the needs, requests, and preferences of the particular community served. Analysis indicates that action investments differ when targeting higher and lower SES communities: For higher SES communities, action investments reflect a rather straightforward reciprocal approach of “give and take,” whereas, in lower SES communities, action investments demonstrate the extensive and wide-ranging efforts that are required from the SLO in order to “prove itself” to the community.

Responsiveness entails investments that follow requests, demands, or suggestions mainly of a higher SES community to meet needs that are unmet by the existing arrangements (see Table 7). Specifically, responsiveness might reflect customization of an existing program as well as starting a new program, which echoes an “enhanced co-production mode” in which a client’s innovative idea triggers a new form of service (Osborne & Strokosch, 2013). One example of an innovative program is an idea from a father to add an intervention program for violent fathers to an existing policy aimed at domestic violence cases that only treated mothers and children (S2). Responsiveness is significant to clients’ co-delivery because coproduction must be reciprocal, as stated by one of the police chiefs, “cooperation of the community cannot exist only as one-directional. If I want their cooperation they must see that we also cooperate with them... with their requests” (P23), and echoes that community members are less likely to coproduce “if they do not feel they are able to influence the eventual...goals and priorities” (Smith, 2012, p. 439).

This “give and take” approach of responsiveness implies a shift of perception from a paternalistic relationship based on implementers’ preconceived expectations and determinations of what citizen-clients should do, to a more participatory relationship that acknowledges the interdependency with clients. One of the police chiefs explained: “I want that the public here will come and complain in real time... so I have to give them what they want as well...I changed part of the work plan [to meet their demands]” (P7). Since total responsiveness is not possible, it often suffices to meet the needs of the clients as much as it is possible, as expressed by a school principal, “There is a constant gap between what they want and what I can provide... I cannot tell them about everything, ‘no, it’s impossible’. I make efforts to respond to at least some of their requests. And I always try, so that they see I care” (E2).

Community-focused initiatives entail proactively starting and carrying out local projects and local programs in which managerial and organizational resources are devoted to improve the well-being and the quality of life of the served community, in aspects that go above and beyond the SLO’s responsibility. Uncovering activities that are overlooked in current literature, community-focused initiatives reflect an investment per se, as clarified by the argument of a police chief who undertook building a soccer field in the poorest neighborhood of the city because “A police chief who makes sure that a soccer field is built in the poorest, most invisible neighborhood, which no one sees, will be able to clean it from drugs afterwards” (P15). Community-focused initiatives are varied and range from focusing on a very specific subgroup, such as painting senior residents’ houses, to broader projects such as starting up a mediation center for the community members. On one hand, community-focused initiatives imply a rather paternalistic approach: the SLOs’ heads decide which initiative to carry out, when, and how. On the other hand, community-focused initiatives often exemplify the personal dedication and professional commitment of the SLOs’ heads to the community they serve.

To conclude, managerial perspective on coproduction is threefold. First, the ways that heads of SLOs described their course of work reflects a coproduction approach in their managerial routines, functions, and decisions. Second, managerial and organizational resources are routinely invested in order to secure clients’ co-delivery, which was portrayed as vital to the SLOs’ function and success. Lastly, coproduction investments entail both voice and action strategies, which differ according to whether they target higher or lower SES communities.

7. Conclusions

The question of how managers address clients' participation in service provision has received modest empirical attention among scholars in the coproduction literature. Despite the significance of coproduction to SLOs, in which the direct delivery phase takes place, managerial perspective on coproduction is overlooked in street-level research as well. The main contribution of this study was to uncover how street-level managers address coproduction and what the management of coproduction entails on the ground. Uncovering that street-level managers distinguish between what is referred to in the literature as "co-delivery" (Nabatchi et al., 2017) and other, additional, designated efforts that are exercised in order to secure this co-delivery, this study shifts the focus to efforts that are exercised as *investments*. Coproduction investments, which were portrayed as an integral part of street-level managers' course of work, highlight the often overlooked "infrastructure" upon which direct-delivery provision relies.

Specifically, coproduction investments fill three gaps in current coproduction scholarship. First, coproduction studies are mainly case studies of a specific service, thus allowing an in-depth understanding of the "nature and level of coproduction, and to a lesser extent, evidencing specific short-term impacts—but weak on wider, long-term impacts" (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2016, p. 1016). Shifting the focus to a managerial perspective on coproduction, and specifically, coproduction investments, allows a better understanding of the efforts that are exercised with the expectation to enhance long-term clients' willingness to coproduce. Moreover, coproduction investments emphasize efforts that refer to *all* services and programs that are coproduced by one specific SLO and the locally defined community it serves. Second, coproduction investments allow a more nuanced understanding of an existing discrepancy in the literature: on one hand, portrayal of public managers as skeptical about whether and how citizens can contribute (Glaser & Denhardt, 2010; Loeffler et al., 2008), on the other hand, they are considered to be "increasingly reaching out to citizens and other stakeholders and eliciting their participation in all stages of the service delivery process" (Andrews & Brewer, 2013, p. 20; see also Bryer, 2009; Pestoff, 2006). Coproduction investments suggest that coproduction motivations vary. Specifically, even when being skeptical about clients' contributions, street-level managers realize that they must invest in reducing clients' informational and cognitive barriers in order to secure their co-delivery. Furthermore, their action investments reflect an understanding that efforts are required in order to "prove themselves" to disadvantaged communities, and a reciprocal approach is essential in order to enhance co-delivery among more advantaged communities. Lastly, the routine voice investments with both higher and lower SES communities exemplify how the interactions between the SLO's staff and clients facilitate the opportunity for the client and community perspective to "trigger public service innovation" (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2013, p. 9).

Within street-level scholarship, which tends to take clients' participation in direct-delivery as given, coproduction investments shift attention to the fact that a coproduction perspective on clients-professionals' interactions in SLOs is by and large overlooked (see, as exceptional Gofen et al., 2018; Laitinen, Kinder, & Stenvall, 2018). Specifically, street-level studies often emphasize how organizational conditions ultimately shape policy outcomes for clients by restricting implementation arrangement options (e.g., Brodtkin, 2008, 2011; Brodtkin & Majmundar, 2010). In contrast, coproduction investments suggest that street-level management at times exercises managerial and organizational efforts in order to *expand* implementation options available for clients, according to the particularities of the served community. Moreover, by exemplifying efforts to articulate clients' voices to decision makers and efforts to win clients' long-term trust, coproduction investments further demonstrate the strategies that facilitate SLOs' political role (Brodtkin, 2013; Hoggett, 2006) and therefore support the re-centering of SLOs at the heart of the public sphere, for assuming "deep political importance, potentially building or undermining support for government as a vehicle for advancing social welfare, equity, and justice" (Brodtkin, 2012, p. 947).

To further explore coproduction investments, a few possible expansions are required, including additional public sectors and additional countries. Future research should address under what particular circumstances coproduction investments are exercised and why. Finally, additional

research is required to better understand the mechanisms that allow coproduction investments to bear their expected fruit, i.e., impact in the long run for all services provided by the organization as well as their potential contribution to the building of enduring, mutually trusting citizen–government relationships.

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Note

1. According to the number of policy clients: Police Stations and Social Services: Small: less than 50,000; Medium: 50,000-150,000; Large: 150,000+; Schools: Small: less than 300 pupils; Medium: 300-600; Large: more than 600.

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Appendix A. The Setting and Recurrent Programs

Police Stations

Israel's national police force, composed of 70 police stations, serves all the communities in the country. The Police Commissioner is subordinated to the Ministry of Public Security, which is responsible for the formulation, monitoring, and evaluation of public security policies. The General Police Headquarters is subordinated to the Commissioner and is responsible for professional policy- design, and the formalization of instructions and procedures, as well as the consulting, supervising and monitoring of all police units. The Headquarters include professional departments (in charge of intelligence, interrogation, patrolling, and traffic) and resource departments, such as human resources, logistics, and planning. The executive branch of the police has jurisdiction over seven territorial districts, each subdivided into two or three zones. In each, there are a few police stations. Each district supervises the provision of policing services of its police stations and provides them with additional professional services, such as forensic lab services.

Police stations are the basic policing units responsible for the provision of all policing services, such as patrolling and crime prevention, investigation, and prosecution in a geographically defined locality. Each station operates in collaboration with relevant civil authorities in its area. A police station is often divided into two branches, one in charge of interrogation and intelligence, and the other, of policing and operation. In addition, each station includes human resources and logistics units.

The National Headquarters provide the stations' resources and budgets, and all station employees are police officers employed by the police. The Commissioner appoints the Chief of Police Station with the approval of the Minister of Public Safety. Police stations carry out the operational instructions of the District Commander and the Area Commander, and the professional instructions of the National Headquarters' departments. The station's Chief is not formally subordinated to a Municipality and some of the stations provide services to more than one Municipality. However, except for two large urban centers, each Municipality has one police station. Size, according to the number of policy-clients: Small police station: less than 50,000; Medium police station: 50,000–150,000; Large police station: 150,000 + .

Recurrent Programs

The youth crime prevention program (The Israeli Police Force for Youth) aims both to prevent youth from falling into a life of crime and to provide an opportunity for a new beginning. Each station is required to locate the youth who committed minor offenses (not including drugs) and offer them to participate in an intervention program, which is provided by the station and includes about 32 meetings, where they listen to lectures, participate in study tours, meet with experts in various fields, and volunteer in activities that support local community. The contents of the meetings were determined by each station (with the approval of the Youth Department at the National Police Headquarters). After youngsters complete the entire program, their criminal files are closed. Active participation of the teenagers and approval of their parents were required.

Traffic enforcement policy is part of the national struggle against road accidents; it emphasizes the need to enforce traffic offenses that may cause driving accidents, such as going over the speed limit, failure to obey to stop signs, crossing over white lines, failure to respect pedestrian crossing rights, etc. Stations are directed to locate areas with the highest accident rates, to analyze their causes and characteristics, and invest enforcement efforts targeted to those offences that were found to cause the most accidents in a specific area. Volunteers were recruited to implement some of the activities and active participation of the community members was required.

Hot-Spots Policing is one of the most common policy tools to reduce crime; it focuses on criminal areas with the highest levels of criminal activities (burglaries, robberies, car thefts, etc.) This program introduces a crucial change that redefines Hot-Spots not according to the crimes committed but according to the number of emergency calls received. Each station is directed to map the hot-spot areas according to this new measurement method, identify their needs and problems, and design a plan to address their specific characteristics. Plans may include, for example, changing enforcement routines, prioritizing community policing, and starting new collaborations with local authority, such as improving street lights at night and providing youth with activities during the later hours of the day, all of which required active participation of the local residents.

Social Services Bureaus

In Israel, there are 255 social services bureaus, one in each local authority. The Ministry of Social Affairs, and Social Services is responsible for formulating national policies, and for monitoring and evaluating social affairs, and social services. Policy refers both to professional aspects of intervention (such as prevention, assistance, and rehabilitation) and the determination of criteria for target-populations (such as poverty, risk, and function disorders). The Ministry's headquarters include professional departments (e.g., Personal and Social Services, Youth Services, and Intellectual Disability) as well as resources—units in the areas of planning, information systems, and budgeting. The Ministry has jurisdiction over four territorial districts—each being responsible for the implementation of policy and the attainment of policy goals, budgetary and professional supervision, as well as monitoring, consulting, and addressing the unique needs and demands of the field.

The Municipality is responsible for the provision of social services to its residents. The Mayor and the Municipal Council Director, who are locally elected officials, are responsible for policy formulation at the local level. Each council includes a member who is responsible for the local social services portfolio. The Social Services Bureau provides social and welfare services in the following areas: diagnosis, treatment, identification, prevention, and rehabilitation at individual, group and community levels, according to a variety of social work methods. Organizationally, the Social Services Bureau's structure varies according to the size of the municipality and its geographical distribution. In some bureaus, the structure is based on specific "topic" teams organized in units that cater, for example, the elderly, at-risk youth, and developmental disability. Whereas in other bureaus, the structure is more community-based, with teams of social workers overseeing the

social services within a specific neighborhood. Out of the total budget and resources of a social services bureaus, the Ministry provides 75% and the Municipality 25%. The Municipality can increase its budget according to its priorities. The bureau's employees are municipal employees, and the head of the bureau is appointed by the Mayor in consultation with the Ministry's District Supervisor. The bureau is subordinated professionally to the District Supervisor, who is also responsible for the financial monitoring of programs financed by the Ministry. Concomitantly, the bureau is under the supervision of the Municipality, which monitors the implementation of policies established by the municipality's formal work-planning. Size, according to the number of policy-clients: Small social services bureau: less than 50,000; Medium social services bureau: 50,000--150,000; Large social services bureau: 150,000+;

Recurrent Programs

The removal of children from dysfunctional homes is one of the bureaus' policies that has been on the agenda in public and media debates in recent years, especially among groups that adamantly oppose it. The Ministry of Welfare decided a few years ago that children who were removed from their homes up to the age of 8 would be handed over to foster families rather than to boarding schools—a change from a previous directive that established age 6 as the cutting age. The latter adds another level to the existing controversy, since some parents who agree that their children be removed from home as early as age 6 oppose they be sent to foster families, for these are perceived as competing their parenthood.

Assistance to needy families is a policy aimed at aiding families within the cycle of poverty. Titled "Relief in Breathing," this new policy by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services emphasizes aid to families who have "a chance to escape the cycle of poverty" according to the assessment of authorities; it provides a multidisciplinary program that includes training, help with job hunting, and the dispensation of individual care for parents and children. Social-services bureaus are entitled to decide upon the intensity and mode of the aid they provide.

Care for the Elderly is a policy aimed at the aging population; its establishment presents a new challenge for the Social-Services Bureau since any response to this diverse population would require a "specific way of thinking." Not all this population suffers from the effects of poverty; whereas some of the elderly are in a good economic position they do suffer from loneliness. Another problem is the growing violence against the elderly both within and outside the family. This policy aims at reinforcing positive social perceptions about the elderly by means of several projects that, for example, recognize the contributions of veteran community members preserve the community's history, enhance the intergenerational relations between youngsters and the elderly, or provide employment for the elderly.

Preventing the falling into poverty reflects on the overall prevention approach informing the Bureau's basic policies and the resulting allocation of resources. Its goal is to identify the issues and processes that may lead certain populations and groups into deteriorating conditions, and then provide adequate support to endangered groups in order to prevent these conditions. For example, adolescents who are at risk of experiencing a number of age-specific crises are provided with special support programs for youth and parents. Other programs for families on the economic frontier include family plans for "economic management" before their condition deteriorates. Social-services bureaus are responsible for selecting which specific programs to carry out and which families to prioritize as recipients of these services.

Primary Schools

In Israel, there are nearly 3,000 primary schools. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the educational system, which includes kindergartens, schools, higher education, and informal education, as well as all academic disciplines (humanities, social sciences, natural and physical

sciences, and arts). The Ministry's headquarters is organized by professional departments, each responsible for the pedagogic issues of different age groups, as well as resources departments in charge of personal, budgeting and safety issues. The Ministry has jurisdiction over six geographical districts, each responsible for implementing policy within the district's educational organizations, for budgetary and professional monitoring and consulting, as well as for addressing the specific needs of the field. Basically, the Ministry is responsible for primary education, whereas the local authority is responsible for students' registration and transportation as well as for facilitating the required physical infrastructures. In recent years, local authorities have been granted more authority and discretion, thereby extending the role of the education department's head, which every municipality has.

Primary schools are organized according to age groups and educational staff; viz., according to age and discipline. The Ministry provides most of the budget of primary schools, and the local authority finances the resources necessary for operating the Municipality's decisions and priorities. School teachers are Ministry employees, and the principal is appointed by the CEO of the Education Ministry, in consultation with the District Supervisor and a representative of the Municipality. School administrative employees are employed by the local authority.

District headquarters appoint a supervisor for each school, who is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the curriculum and all national educational policies and instructions. The school is also supervised by national supervisors for each academic discipline (math, history, language, etc.). In addition, the municipal education department is responsible for supervising the financial management and implementation of programs budgeted by the Municipality. Size, according to the number of policy-clients: Small school: less than 300 pupils; Medium school: 300–600; Large school: more than 600.

Recurrent Programs

Violence prevention in schools is a program that attempts to address behaviors such as online and physical bullying against peers, verbal violence, internet slander, and cursing against faculty. The Ministry of Education offers teachers' training and several specific intervention programs to prevent school violence and conducts surveys that measure violence indicators at schools. Schools can either choose a program provided by the Ministry or receive funds for creating their own school-based program.

Meritocratic Nurture is a policy of the Ministry of Education that reflects on the social values of achievement and excellence in learning; it also includes the more conventional measurement of achievements in schools by means of grades. Schools can send students to excellence programs provided by the Ministry or by non-governmental organizations that are subsidized by the Ministry.

Parental Involvement is a policy that refers to an assortment of activities—rather than just a single set of directives—in which schools and families interact. According to this policy, teachers are formally required to report to parents and update them specifically about their children's behavior (e.g., tardiness, failure to prepare homework, disruptive behaviors). Following social and technological developments, parents—either as individuals or interest groups—tend to demand more involvement and schools more often encourage parents to become more involved. Schools are entitled to decide upon the modes and extent of parental involvement.



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