viewer's report

Title: The impact of differing frames on early stages of intersectoral collaboration: the case of the First 1000 Days Initiative in the Western Cape Province

Version: 0 Date: 23 Aug 2019

Reviewer: Carole Clavier

Reviewer's report:

This paper proposes a reflection on the conditions for intersectoral collaboration in the field of health policy. Specifically, the paper seeks to confirm that intersectoral collaboration is faced with different understandings of the problem at hand, and different understandings of how best to act so as to solve the problem. Often noted in the literature on intersectoral collaboration, the coexistence of different frames can hinder public action. The paper is strong in several respects - the problem under study is well situated in the literatures on intersectoral collaboration and on framing; the methods and results are rigorous, convincing and very clearly written. It also very convincingly bridges political science/public policy studies literature and health policy research. My main comment on the paper is about the articulation between the empirical focus on eliciting the different frames present in early policy documents and the theoretical focus on intersectoral collaboration and framing.

Intersectoral collaboration and framing within the FTD initiative:

I found that the articulation of intersectoral collaboration in relation to the emergence of a policy on First 1000 Days was limited. The paper explains very well what the different frames underlying the First 1000 Days initiative are, as well as the distinction between the frames and the internal coherence of each frame (articulation of problem and solutions). However, the reader receives very little information as to who are the actors and institutions behind each frame. Which organizations published their position on FTD? For instance, who is behind the NIECD? Is it primarily the health sector? Which sub-sectors within the health sector? Have other sectors been involved in elaborating this policy? I understand that this is the case since you mention in the methods that you attended some intersectoral working groups. Can you associate one frame to one type of actors or one policy sector? Or, to the contrary, do some organisations propose different frames within one policy document? And what would be the implications? If your coding allows to link frames (as problems, as solutions, as worldviews) with the actors or organisations behind those frames, it would provide interesting insights into the articulation between frames and intersectoral collaboration. This also raises the following question: are these three frames competing each other or complementing each other?

p. 18 The missing 'how' of intersectoral collaboration. My impression after I read this section was that intersectoral collaboration is conceived of in two different ways throughout the paper. First, based on the abstract and introduction, intersectoral collaboration appears to be a characteristic of policy problems (problems - such as early childhood development - do not conform to sectoral sharing of responsibilities among government agencies and other actors) and a factor explaining why there are multiple frames competing in policy documents. Second, in the analysis of policy documents and in section 3.3 in particular, intersectoral collaboration also appears as a way to act on a problem, something that policy actors (in that case, actors from the health sector) think they should engage with
but have little idea how. Is my understanding accurate? In any case, it would be helpful if the conceptions of intersectoral collaboration were more explicit.

The discussion centres on the process of principled engagement of actors so as to facilitate intersectoral collaboration by making the underlying frames visible. As it is, I felt that this proposal only partially followed from results presented in the paper: as mentioned in the literature on intersectoral collaboration, the paper has shown that different frames coexist in early (and maybe not so early) policy formulation documents. However, the results have not emphasized how the coexistence of these different frames is a result of the involvement - or lack thereof - of actors and organisations from different policy sectors, nor how frames could be tied to different policy sectors.

In sum, it would strengthen the paper to clarify the ambiguity of the status of intersectoral collaboration in relation to framing and to give the reader some measure of the intersectoral collaborations at play in the emergence of the FTD policy. Finally, I wonder whether the original research question - namely "what is the role of framing in early stages of intersectoral collaboration" - is really the question that this paper addresses. Please clarify or adjust the research question.

Other comments:

1. Key message 2. Do you mean that different frames are necessary? Or that all frames contribute to intersectoral action in different ways?

2. P. 3, line 46. The definition of intersectoral collaboration given here is specific to health policy. It should be clearly stated in the sentence. «Intersectoral collaboration for health as been defined as…». There are other definitions of intersectoral collaboration that put greater emphasis on the theoretical component of sectors and intersectoral collaboration.

3. P. 4, line 86. Could you please situate the FTD initiative for readers who are not familiar with the subject? For instance, is it a global initiative? A South-African initiative? You give this information later in the paper but it would help to know as early as page 4.

4. P. 6-7. Several concepts are used in the theoretical framework: ideas, frames, narratives. Is it useful to refer to narratives? My concern is that it introduces other conceptual nuances that may distract from your main focus or confuse the reader.

5. P. 17 Is the socio-economic frame linked to FTD explicitly? I understand that this frame proposes a broader approach, linking early childhood within a social determinants of health approach. But it would be interesting to have a bit more context as to how it was presented in FTD policy documents.
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