Measuring and Evaluating Determinants of Public Administration Productivity

Bureaucracy Lab

Development Impact Evaluation | Global Governance Practice

October 22-25, 2019, Brussels, Belgium
Civil Service Surveys as Tool for Evidence-Based Public Administration Reform: Lessons from Surveys in 21 Countries

Jan Meyer Sahling (Nottingham University)
Christian Schuster (University College London)
Kim Mikkelsen (Roskilde University)

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Lessons from one decade of surveying civil servants in 21 countries

• New EU member states survey (2007-08)
  – 7 countries, 2,500 responses, as part of SIGMA/OECD project on post-accession sustainability of civil service reforms

• Western Balkans plus new member states survey (2010-11)
  – 9 countries, 10,000 responses, as part of SIGMA/OECD project on civil service professionalisation

• Developing and European countries (2016-17)
  – 10 countries, 23,000 responses, as part of UK DFID/British Academy project on what works in civil service management
First wave: New member states after EU accession

- Concerns regarding
  - Reversal of pre-accession reforms
  - Persisting politicisation
- Lack of evaluation standards
  - European principles of administration? EU pre-accession conditions?
- Lack of systematic evidence
  - Run first civil service survey against all odds
  - Identify:
    - Major variation in reform pathways and management practices across the regions
    - Inform reform and amendment of civil service law in Lithuania
Second wave: EU Accession states

• Concerns regarding
  – Reform stagnation
  – Discrepancy between formal rules and actual practices

• Replicate civil service survey
  – Identify
    • Variation within countries across ministries
    • Poor quality of implementation

• Challenges
  – What it takes to implement civil service surveys
  – New questions: What works in civil service management?
    • E.g., is politicisation a problem? If so, how can it be curbed?
23,000 civil servants, ten countries, four regions
Survey of civil servants

• Main focus: administrative arm of central government
• 5 countries: online population surveys
  – Entire civil service: Estonia (3,555 respondents, 25% response rate), Albania (3,655, 47%), Kosovo (2,431, 14%)
  – Select institutions: Chile (5,742, 37%), Brazil (2,830, 11%)
• 5 countries: in-person informal quota sample surveys
  – Ghana (1,645), Malawi (1,232), Uganda (1,441)
  – Bangladesh (1,012), Nepal (1,196)
• 100+ cognitive interviews with public servants to gauge respondent understanding of survey measures
Learning about the Nature of the Civil Service

Data vs. Conventional wisdom

Two examples
Public servants perceive some performance incentives in all surveyed countries, but typically for promotions, not pay.
Within countries, differences between institutions are often larger than differences across countries

Example: job satisfaction by institution in Estonia
Implications

⇒ Civil services are reformed institution-by-institution
⇒ Requires appreciation of institutional realities, identification of strengths and weaknesses at institutional level, rather than country ‘templates’
⇒ Intuition and conventional wisdom need not reflect civil service realities
⇒ Surveys of public servants one key tool for an evidence-based, institution-by-institution diagnostic of reform priorities
Thanks for your attention!

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