
POSTER ABSTRACT

"Will the welfare state survive the future? - How people legitimize the welfare state."

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Background: Legitimacy of the welfare state is a requirement for efficient functioning. In the current political climate of Norway creating new co-governance models under the umbrella of New Public Governance (NPG). NPG draws resources from the public, the private as well as the volunteer sector. In the European welfare states pressure is building due to demographic ageing, globalization and disturbances in the social order which affect the social contract between citizen and state. This article aims to explore how citizens legitimize the Norwegian welfare state drawing on perspective of institutional theory. Why do or don't the participants support the current form of the welfare state?

The interviews were analysed focusing on the assumptions and reasons on which the participants based their view of the welfare state. Although the method has been used on exploring the epistemic dimension of discretion, it allows for identification of the cognitive aspects of decision making, hence the ability to identify core assumptions and beliefs. The findings from the interview are analysed using Schuman's analytical categories of pragmatic, moral and cognitive legitimacy create the framework for analysing the argumentation which the participants use to legitimize their current view of the Norwegian welfare state, and where it is heading. Contrary to most institutional research this paper does not attempt to see the big picture, but rather explore legitimacy through the informant's perception of the welfare state.

Methods: This is a qualitative study. We conducted individual interviews with one woman and one man in each 10-year, thus representing ages from 20 to 80. We also interviewed two senior experts at research centres and two politicians. These interviews were thematically analysed and coded in NVivo.

In order to analyse the informant's arguments further this paper utilizes Anders Molander's interpretation and use of Toulmin which sees discretion as a process in which a person legitimizes their own argument statements through expressing core concepts, values and understandings.

Results and Lessons learned: This is an ongoing study and the results will be presented and discussed at the conference. The preliminary analysis shows that moral legitimacy tends to outweigh pragmatic legitimacy. This implies that legitimacy is a key concept in achieving integrated services. This may indicate that cooperative models such as NPG in combination with people's perspective of "what is the right thing to do" is key to reaching ideals promised in tailoring of services from people's perspective.

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Limitations and suggestions for future research: Legitimacy as a concept on the micro level may be a key element in understanding how to integrate services and increase quality of services from people's perspective. Moral legitimacy tends to create support despite to achieving peoples wishes. To a certain extent, the upcoming results will be of relevance for a better understanding of the complexity of organising and supporting welfare services.

Keywords: Welfare state, legitimacy, NPG, Co-governance, integration,