

General policy alienation of public professionals: Identifying structural causes at the government level

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ABSTRACT

Previous research on policy alienation of public professionals focused on alienation towards one specific policy. The present paper complements these studies by investigating *general policy alienation*, as notions of path dependency suggest it is valuable to understand feelings of strategic (national), tactical (organizational) and operational (personal) powerlessness and societal and client meaninglessness towards policies in general, instead of focusing solely on the experiences of public professionals with specific policies. We aimed at identifying main causes of general policy alienation at the government level. A review of the literature suggested that experienced trust from the government, policy consistency and informing are negatively related to general policy alienation. To test the hypotheses, we adopted a multi-method approach. On the basis of 21 semi-structured interviews we first determined that these three factors were experienced by the respondents as predictors of general policy alienation. Since policy alienation is a multidimensional concept, consisting of multiple dimensions, we then undertook a survey among 1.183 Dutch education professionals in order to determine the relative strengths of the relationships and to estimate for each dimension of general policy alienation which factors were most relevant. Theoretical contributions to the policy implementation literature concerning the attitudes and behaviours of public professionals, as well as directions for future research and practical implications, are discussed.

Keywords: General policy alienation, public professionals, government, trust, autonomy, policy consistency, informing

INTRODUCTION

Many public professionals have problems with governmental policies. U.S. health care professionals, for example, are having difficulty with the constant flow of policy changes in primary care, resulting in tensions, conflicts and burn-outs (Nutting et al., 2011). Yet, it is essential for policy effectiveness that implementers identify with a policy (Duyvendak et al., 2006; Freidson, 2001; Leicht & Fennel, 2001; Noordegraaf & Steijn, 2013). This is not only a necessary requisite for successful implementation, a low level of identification might also affect the quality of interactions between professionals and citizens, which was, for instance, at risk when 550.000 pupils in Israel were not receiving education as their teachers went on a strike to protest against a large-scale education reform (Berkovich, 2011). Such actions may ultimately result in diminished legitimacy of the government (Bekkers et al., 2007).

Why professionals do not identify with a policy, can be understood with the policy alienation framework developed by Tummers, Bekkers and Steijn, (2009; 2012b). The authors (2009:688) define policy alienation as “a general cognitive state of psychological disconnection from the policy program being implemented by a public professional who, on a regular basis, interacts directly with clients”. The framework considers possible reasons why professionals are not supporting new policies, and consists of two main dimensions: powerlessness and meaninglessness. In the realm of policy formulation and implementation, powerlessness relates to the degree of influence public professionals have over shaping policy programs. Meaninglessness refers to a professional’s perception of the contribution the policy makes to a greater purpose (Tummers et al., 2009).

Until now, the policy alienation framework has been used to analyze whether professionals feel alienated from a specific policy (for example the degree of policy alienation of Dutch mental healthcare workers implementing the new financial DRG-policy, see Tummers, 2012). The more meaningless the policy is considered by professionals and the less perceived influence they had over the shaping of the program, the higher the level of policy alienation towards that policy. However, as we will argue in this paper, one important notion is not fully acknowledged in these studies, namely that (new) policies or policy measures are not developed in a vacuum. New policies are rarely written on a tabula rasa, but rather on a tablet of existing laws, organizations and clients (Hogwoods & Peters, 1982). This interdependency of policies has received considerable attention previously, and is referred to as policy layering (by Thelen, 2004), policy succession (by Hogwood & Peters, 1982), or more broadly speaking, path dependency (by Pierson, 2000). Regarding the concept of policy alienation, this notion suggests that when analyzing the experiences of public professionals with a new policy, earlier experiences with other policies are likely to be reflected in their attitude. Besides that, factors that are relevant in explaining

alienation towards one specific policy, are likely to be relevant in explaining alienation towards other policies too. As a consequence, in the present study, we decided to investigate what we will refer to as *general policy alienation*: a cognitive state of psychological disconnection from policies in general by a public professional who, on a regular basis, interacts directly with clients. We added 'general' to reflect that we aim to investigate a more institutional form of policy alienation that is embedded in the relationship between the actors involved, against the background of (negative) past experiences and ingrained practices and manners.

The first objective of this paper is thus to introduce the concept of general policy alienation and determine whether and to what extent public professionals experience this. The second objective is to identify what causes these feelings of general policy alienation. More specifically, we aim to gain insight in structural factors that affect feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness towards policies in general, i.e. factors that are not unique to experiences of public professionals with one specific policy, but that influence the experiences of professionals with all policies. Structural factors can be identified at three different levels, namely at the governmental (for instance political stability or the position of professional associations), organizational (for instance leadership in the organization or organizational culture) and personal level (such as big five personality characteristics). For this paper, we decided to focus solely on structural factors at the governmental level. As we feel that combining it all in one paper, would come at the expense of generating usable scientific and practical knowledge.

Another measure we took in order to truly provide insight in structural causes of general policy alienation at the governmental level, is that we adopted a mixed method approach. Combining qualitative and quantitative empirical research methods will provide us with a better understanding of research problems than either approach by itself (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Perry, 2012). Surprisingly, in their examination of the use of quantitative methods in public administration research, Groeneveld and colleagues (in press) noted that only very few studies in the public administration field employ a mixed methods design. This study does. The relationship between three structural factors at the governmental level and general policy alienation is firstly qualitatively analyzed by conducting semi-structured interviews. Next, we quantitatively tested the proposed relationships in a survey among 1.183 Dutch education professionals. This makes it possible to say whether or not significant relationships exist between the concepts, and increases the generalizability of the results found. Besides that, it enables us to say something about the relative explanatory strength of each factor.

Hence, the following outline for this paper is adopted. We first discuss the theoretical framework. We start this section with a brief discussion of the literature on path dependency in policy studies and the introduction of the general policy alienation framework. Next, we consider what factors at the

governmental level are relevant in explaining general policy alienation. The third section presents the results from the empirical part of this study. We first report our findings from 21 expert interviews, followed by the results of the survey. Finally, we will discuss the contribution of this study to the policy implementation literature concerning the attitudes and behaviours of public professionals.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Relevant backgrounds

Path dependency in policy studies

When studying policies, history matters (Pierson, 2000). According to Sewell (1996) path dependency broadly means that what happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time. Applying this notion to the present topic under study, the experiences of public professionals with previous policies, a ‘policy’s past’ should not be neglected.

Hogwood and Peters (1982) noted that in the study of policy making and policy analysis, scholars often speak of creation, birth, and innovation as though policies came new into the world. In reality, they argue, policy making is mostly policy succession: the replacement of an existing policy or policy program by another. Also in the study of institutional change attention has been paid to the path dependency notion. Thelen, a leading scholar in the field of incremental institutional change, described a number of mechanisms of this type of change. One of these mechanisms is policy layering. She uses this concept to explain institutional transformation through a process in which new elements are attached to existing institutions, and thereby gradually change their status and structure (Thelen, 2004). The institution is not replaced, but new layers, for instance policy processes, actors or rules, are added to it (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). What can be learned from this, is that when introducing a new policy it should be taken into account that the outcome of this introduction is shaped by (the interactions with) existing policies which the proposed policy is intended to replace or complement (Wildavsky, 1979).

Also in other literature streams one can witness a shift in focus, when past events are taken explicitly into consideration. Within the field of organizational change, for example, a great deal of research attention is devoted to understanding factors that affect employee receptivity toward organizational change (see for example Jimmieson, Peach, & White, 2008; Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994; Oreg, 2006). Traditionally, this research has largely focused on understanding employee reactions to one particular event of change, thereby ignoring that past events play an important role in shaping

employee responses to current events (Pettigrew, Woodman & Cameron, 2001). Recently, Bordia and colleagues (2011) aimed to fill this gap by proposing a model of the effects of poor change management history on employee attitudes. They found that poor change management practices not only hurt current changes being implemented, but that they have detrimental effects on attitudes towards future change initiatives as well. Poor change management may, for example, result in change cynicism. That is, a real loss of faith in the leaders of change in response to a history of change attempts that are not entirely or clearly successful (Reichers, Wanous & Austin, 1997).

What the evidence presented above points out, is that when investigating policy alienation towards one specific policy, the notion that experiences with earlier policies and policy implementation processes will be reflected in public professional's attitude, is an important one. Besides that, we argued that new policies are only unique to a certain point, as, for instance, many new policies are introduced to complement existing policies. This suggests that general experiences of policy alienation strongly influence experiences of policy alienation towards specific policies. In order to increase identification with new policies, it is a good starting point to first understand what structural factors influence the degree of general policy alienation, thereby recognizing the importance of path dependency in policy studies.

General policy alienation

Tummers, Bekkers and Steijn (2009) were the first to conceptualize policy alienation. In line with other scholars, who see powerlessness and meaninglessness as “the key psychological ingredients of alienation” (DeHart-Davis & Pandey, 2005:133), they distinguish two main dimensions of policy alienation: policy powerlessness and policy meaninglessness (for a more elaborate explanation of policy alienation and its dimensions, see Tummers et al., 2009, 2012b). In the realm of policy formulation and implementation, policy powerlessness relates to the degree of influence public professionals have over shaping a policy program (Lynch, Modgil & Modgil, 1997). This influence may be exercised on strategic, tactical or operational levels. Strategic powerlessness refers to the perceived influence of professionals on decisions concerning the content of a policy, as is captured in rules and regulations at the government level. Tactical powerlessness refers to professional's influence over decisions concerning the way a policy is executed within their own organization, and operational powerlessness relates to the influence of professionals during actual policy implementation. As such, while the tactical level looks at the influence of the professional on the way the organization executes the policy, operational powerlessness examines the influence professionals perceive themselves to have while actually implementing the policy.

The second dimension of policy alienation is meaninglessness. Meaninglessness broadly refers to an individual’s sense of understanding of the events in which he or she is engaged (Seeman, 1959). In the context of policy making and implementing, meaninglessness refers to a professional’s perception of the contribution a policy makes to a greater purpose. One can distinguish between two types of policy meaninglessness. First, on a societal level, it refers to the perception of professionals concerning the added value of policies to socially relevant goals. For instance, a professional may perceive that a policy program is not actually providing desirable public services or outcomes, such as security (Van Thiel & Leeuw, 2002). When this is the case, a professional may experience high societal meaninglessness. Second, on the client level, meaninglessness reflects the perception of a professional regarding the value added for their own clients. If professionals perceive they are not helping their clients with implementing new policies, they are likely to experience a high level of client meaninglessness.

As noted, in earlier research the policy alienation framework has been used to analyze feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness toward specific policies. In this study, we apply the framework to analyze feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness towards policies in general, thereby explicitly paying attention to the notion of path dependency. We thus investigate a more institutional form of policy alienation, that is embedded in the relationship and ingrained practices and manners between the government, and implementing organizations and public professionals. Figure 1 shows (in a simplified manner, as we ignored for instance factors at the personal level) how the concepts of policy alienation and general policy alienation complement each other, and what is investigated in the present study.

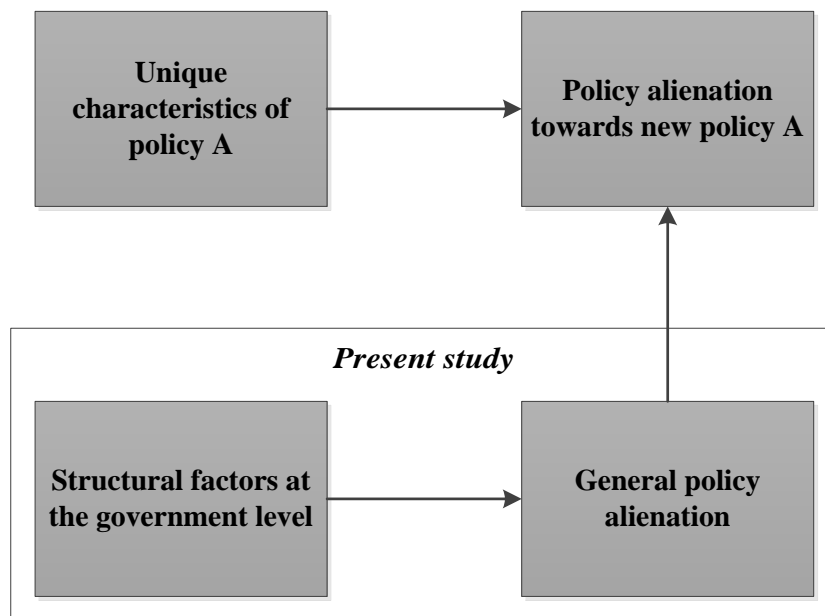


Figure 1. Policy alienation and general policy alienation

To make the distinction between the concepts more explicit, table 1 shows the definitions of the dimensions of policy alienation and general policy alienation (in the table we use the DRG-policy as an example for specific policy alienation, see Tummers, 2012).

Table 1. Conceptualization of general policy alienation: five dimensions

| Dimension | Definition | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|
| | Specific policy alienation | General policy alienation | Example high score on general policy alienation |
| Strategic powerlessness | The perceived influence of health professionals on decisions concerning the content of the DRG-policy as it is captured in rules and regulations | The perceived influence that a professional generally has on decisions concerning the content of policies as captured in rules and regulations | A professional feeling that the government drafts policies without involving implementing professionals |
| Tactical powerlessness | Health professionals' perceived influence on decisions concerning the way the DRG-policy is implemented within their organization | Professionals' perceived influence on decisions concerning the way (new) policies are usually implemented within their organization | A professional stating that the managers in the organization do not structurally involve them in designing policy implementation processes |
| Operational powerlessness | The perceived influence of the health professional during actual DRG implementation | The perceived influence of the professional during actual implementation of policies | Answering 'totally agree' to a survey question on whether the professionals feels that his autonomy during the implementation of policies is usually lower than it should be |
| Societal meaningfulness | The perception of health professionals concerning the added value of the policy to transparency in costs | The perception of professionals concerning the added value of current policies to socially relevant goals | A professional stating in an interview that the total of current policies in his opinion is not likely to lead to important social goals |
| Client meaningfulness | The health professionals' perceptions of the added value of their implementing the DRG-policy for their own patients | The professionals' perceptions of the added value of current policies for their own clients | A professional noting that, overall, current policies have detrimental effects for their own clients well-being |

Building the theoretical framework

General policy alienation will be influenced by several factors, both at the governmental and organizational level, as well as the personal level. In this paper we focus on three important structural factors at the governmental level. Based on a review of, among others, public administration, change management and political science literature, the influence of experienced trust from the government, policy consistency and informing (adequate communication and provision of information regarding policies) seem particularly relevant.

Trust

Earlier studies on policy alienation showed that characteristics of New Public Management (NPM) – a model encompassing a broad set of management approaches and techniques, borrowed from the private sector, now applied in the public sector - influence the degree of policy alienation of public professionals. The more prominent a policy focuses on NPM elements such as strict performance management and a focus on output controls, the higher the level of policy alienation towards that policy (Tummers, Bekkers & Steijn, 2009; 2012b). What is interesting here, in the light of this study, is that the NPM model is partly based on distrust: it is characterized by relationships based on audited performance, and on distrust between principals and agents. Or, as Bouckaert (2012:99) stated, that a result of NPM, “the adage ‘trust is good, control is better’ was replaced by ‘distrust is better, audit is best’.” What can be learned from this, is that signs of distrust positively affect the degree of policy alienation. What we expect is that this relationship also works the other way around, namely that trust is negatively related to policy alienation.

Cook and Wall (1980:39) defined trust as "the extent to which one is willing to ascribe good intentions to and have confidence in the words and actions of other people." In general, trust between actors in collaborative arrangements has been associated with, among others, more exchange of knowledge and information (Becerra, Lunnan & Huemer, 2008), better performance (Steijn, Klijn & Edelenbos, 2010), better and easier conflict resolution (Das & Teng, 1998), and better compliance (Davies et al., 2009). Within the public sector, Bouckaert (2012) distinguishes three types of trust relationships: citizen's and organization's trust in government and the public sector ('T1'), government and public sector trust in citizens and organizations ('T2'), and trust within the government and the public sector ('T3'). It is the last type of trust that seems particularly relevant for the present topic under study.

Two broad types of trust relationships can be distinguished within the T3 realm, namely the trust that the public sector has in the government, and the trust the government has in the public sector. In this paper, we focus on the last trust relationship; the trust the government has in the public sector. We define

this type of trust, based on the definition by Cook and Wall (1980), as ‘the extent to which public professionals perceive the government is willing to ascribe good intentions to and have confidence in the words and actions of public professionals’. What we expect is that the more a public professional experiences that the government trusts him and his colleague professionals, the more connected he will feel with the policies introduced by this government. Therefore, we propose our first hypothesis:

H1. The more public professionals experience that the government trusts them, the lower their level of general policy alienation

Policy consistency

A second possible cause of general policy alienation is the consistency of policies, or rather the lack thereof. A main aspect of human nature is that people have an inherent need for order and predictability (Sutton & Kahn, 1987). What we assume is that this is also of relevance in the policy domain, and thus for public professionals. Many policy changes, following each other rapidly, may be experienced in ways that contradict this basic need and likewise deplete public professionals’ adaptive resources, which makes it more difficult for them to identify with policies. This assumption is in line with findings in the business administration literature on ‘change fatigue’ or ‘change cynicism’ (DeCelles, Tesluk & Taxman, 2013; Judson, 1991; Reichers, Wanous & Austin, 1997). When the rate of change is perceived as too frequent, the potential for negative outcomes is particularly heightened (Huy, 2001).

However, we do not have the impression it is the number of policy changes per se that leads to feelings of general alienation, as, for example, also the type of policy change is a factor of relevance here (first versus second versus third order change, see Hall, 1993). Nevertheless, what we consider especially relevant for the present topic under study is the consistency of policies. What we assume is that when policies are, at least to a certain extent, consistent, it is easier to identify with them. Once public professionals have the impression that policies are introduced ad-hoc, and they do not experience them as consistent – both over time and in relation to other policy measures – it becomes more difficult to feel connected to these policies, as this is a process that takes effort and time.

We thus expect that the consistency of policies is negatively related to general policy alienation. The fact that introducing numerous policy changes, when one regards numerous policy changes as an indicator of an inconsistent policy program, increases the sense of societal meaninglessness, also supports this line of reasoning (Tummers et al., 2012a). Therefore, we formulate our second hypothesis as:

H2. The more public professionals consider policies as consistent, the lower their level of general policy alienation

Informing

Ineffective communication, is commonly cited as being the explanation for the failure of organizational change by many researchers, managers, and communication experts (Burnes, 2009; Qian and Daniels, 2008; Vuuren & Elving, 2008). Kotter (1995:63), for instance, argues that most change programs fail because they “under communicate by a factor of 10.” Effective communication and provision of information, on the other hand, is seen as a basic prerequisite for the attainment of organizational change (Bartunek et al., 1999; Jimmieson, Terry & Callan, 2004; Rafferty & Restubog, 2010; Saksvik et al., 2007). Change information as communicated to employees is, for instance, related to higher willingness to change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000), and less resistance to change (Oreg, 2006). One possible explanation for these effects is that timely and detailed information seems to have an anxiety or uncertainty reducing effect (Ashford, 1988; Miller & Monge, 1985). A second explanation offered is that information provision is a prerequisite of fostering goal clarity (Rainey, 2003). Ultimately, the goal of a public policy is to make a meaningful contribution to society. For implementers it is therefore important to understand what contribution a policy makes to obtaining this goal (Meyers & Vorsanger, 2003). Meaninglessness, for instance, occurs when implementers are unable to comprehend what goal a policy aims to achieve.

Robertson and colleagues (1993) stated that, especially if organizational change is about how to change the individual tasks of individual employees, communication about the change, and information to these employees is vital. Policies directly affect the work of public professionals, and therefore, communication about the policy generation and implementation process to these public professionals is vital. It is assumed that dissemination of information such as mission and philosophy, and the provision of a course of action and plan for achieving policy goals (Arnold et al., 2000), increases the identification of public professionals with policies. Consequently, we develop the following hypothesis:

H3. The more the government is informing public professionals about policies, the lower their level of general policy alienation

As the three factors described above are governmental level indicators, we expect them to be especially influential in explaining the governmental level policy alienation dimensions, that is strategic powerlessness, societal meaninglessness and client meaninglessness.

Conceptual model

Figure 2 shows the overall conceptual model representing the hypotheses developed above. Experienced trust from the government, policy consistency, and informing are all negatively related to general policy alienation, in particular to the strategic powerlessness, and societal and client meaningfulness dimensions. In the sections that follow, we present the methodology used to test this model and our empirical results.

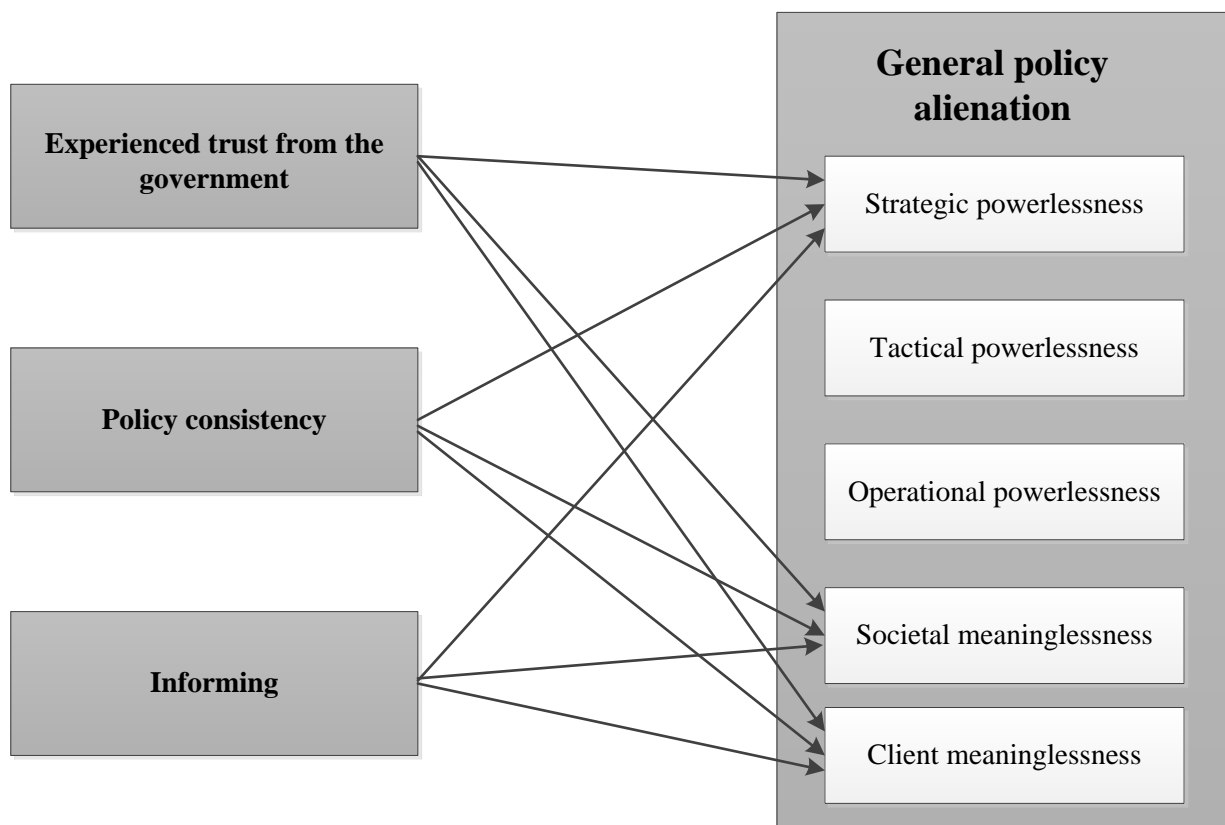


Figure 2. The proposed theoretical model (all relationships shown are negative)

EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

The case we selected to test our proposed model is the Dutch secondary education sector. This sector has experienced many problems, among else because of the reshuffling of authority and responsibilities across the Ministerial and school level (Pijl & Frissen, 2009). Next to that, the sector was characterized

by numerous policy changes over the past decennia (Bronneman-Helmers, 2008), thereby making it a promising context to investigate the concept of general policy alienation thoroughly.

As mentioned in the introduction, this study has two main objectives. The first is determining whether public professionals feel in general alienated from the policies they are supposed to implement. The second is to establish whether the three factors at the government level introduced in the previous section, namely experienced trust, policy consistency and informing are indeed important for explaining the level of general policy alienation. In order to best attain these objectives, we carried out the empirical work in two stages: a qualitative stage, involving expert interviews, and a quantitative stage, involving a survey.

There are two main reasons for this. The first is that general policy alienation is a relatively new concept. Although the review of literature suggested that the three variables under study are likely to be related to feelings of general alienation, we wanted to collect more convincing evidence why or why not this is the case by conducting expert interviews, instead of solely drawing conclusions based on quantitative data analysis. The second reason is related to the fact that general policy alienation is multidimensional, and consists of five dimensions. Not only did we use the interviews to test our main hypotheses (i.e. whether more experienced trust results in less general policy alienation), we also used the interviews to establish whether the interviewees considered the three factors, as we hypothesized, especially relevant for explaining the strategic powerlessness, and the societal and client meaninglessness dimensions of general policy alienation. As survey data would allow us to explore the relative strength of the various relationships more in-depth, we decided to adopt a multi-method empirical approach. We first tested our proposed hypotheses during semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders from the education sector. Subsequently, we tested the proposed (sub) hypotheses in a survey among 1.183 Dutch education professionals.

EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Method

In order to test our hypotheses qualitatively, we conducted in-depth interviews with representatives from three different groups of stakeholders in the Dutch education sector: Employees of the Ministry of Education, representatives of professional associations, and education professionals working in secondary schools, including school board members, school leaders and teachers. From each group we interviewed

seven respondents, resulting in a total of 21 interviews. The strategy adopted while selecting the interviewees was that they should provide us with a broad and reliable view on the topic under study. From the Ministry employees from different departments were interviewed, including the director-general of primary and secondary education, the director of the division of teachers, and policy makers of the division of knowledge and the division of secondary education. From the main professional associations we interviewed, among others, representatives of the educational council of the Netherlands, the council for secondary education, and the cooperative of leading educational professional associations. For the last group we interviewed one president of a school board, two school leaders and four teachers.

Interviews lasted on average an hour, but varied between 40 and 100 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed following Mergenthaler and Stinson's guidelines for transcribing (1992:129-130 cited in McLellan, MacQueen & Neidig, 2003). The topics discussed varied considerably, as a result of the different backgrounds and unique position each interviewee occupied within the system¹. However, in each interview we determined whether the three main hypotheses could be confirmed by the interviewee or not, and for which dimensions of general policy alienation the respondent considered each factor most relevant.

Results

Experienced trust

The level of experienced trust from the government indeed seems an important factor when trying to explain a public professional's level of general policy alienation. All education professionals we interviewed considered this an important reason. During the interviews they repeatedly pointed out that they experience a lot of policies as an absolute sign that the government distrusts them. They underscored that there currently is a lot of rhetoric about the professionalism of teachers, but that at the same time a lot of policy measures suggest the Ministry does not see teachers as professionals at all. This finding is underscored by some employees of the Ministry of Education too, as the following statement by a policy maker shows:

"... I think we build in 'escape routes' in our policies. So that if something goes wrong, we can use them as control instruments. Maybe, ever. Apparently, we do not trust our teachers enough. In the ideal situation, we would all trust them. They are the

¹ In this paper we report only the information obtained from the interviews relevant for the topic under study.

professionals. Yet, not all of them are. So till that time, we need to control them. That line of reasoning is definitely followed in our policies.”

Throughout the interviews it was emphasized that the concept of trust, or rather the lack of experienced trust, is definitely affecting whether or not public professionals identify with policies. Often professionals have the impression that the Ministry is not taking them seriously, and that politicians have other interests than improving educational quality, such as electoral motives. A lack of trust makes professionals less susceptible towards new policies, as they are not confident measures are taken in their own, or their students, best interest.

Yet, this is not something unique to the education sector. The interviewees emphasized that they saw signs of distrust in other policy domains too. Or as one respondent commented: “Distrust is a trend. You notice the growing influence of distrust throughout whole society. It is not something that is unique to the education sector, or to the behaviour of this Ministry only.” When we asked the interviewees what advice they would give to the Ministry in order to improve the relationship between the Ministry and implementing professionals, ultimately resulting in public professionals' increased identification with policies, many answered:

“I would invest in rebuilding trust.”

Summarizing the above, based on the interviews we conclude that experienced trust indeed seems to be negatively related to general policy alienation. The more a public professional has the impression that the government trusts and respects him, the lower his level of general policy alienation. Next to relevant in explaining strategic powerlessness and societal and client meaninglessness, the analysis of the interviews also suggested that experienced trust might be related to operational powerlessness, as several interviewees indicated that a government that is trusting professionals, is more likely to grant these professionals autonomy during the implementation of policies. Therefore, we develop the following sub hypotheses, that will be tested with survey data:

H1. The more public professionals experience that the government trusts them, the lower their level of general policy alienation, in particular: strategic (H1a) and operational (H1b) powerlessness, and societal (H1c) and client (H1d) meaninglessness.

Policy consistency

Policy consistency, or, again, rather the lack thereof, was discussed extensively in each interview. In the education sector there seems to be a strong need for consistent policies, that focus on the long term. Inconsistent, continuously changing policies are considered an important reason for general policy alienation:

“Please stop these continuous policy changes and dare to set an agenda till 2020. Where do we want to go? What vision should we connect to that? And how shall we best organize it?” (school leader)

Inconsistent policies may also result in a passive implementation attitude of education professionals and schools, when new policies are introduced. Several interviewees indicated that, taking into the 'lifetime' of recently introduced policies, immediately starting to implement new policies is not the wisest thing one could do. Or as one teacher stated, this often turns out to be a “waste of time, money and other scarce resources”.

Based on the information obtained during the interviews, we conclude that policy consistency is negatively related to policy alienation, as it takes time to identify with, and satisfyingly implement a new policy. This is highly difficult when policies or policy goals continuously change. The interviewees emphasized that policy consistency indeed seems relevant in explaining strategic powerlessness, as continuous policy changes can be seen as an indicator that the government does not take into consideration what professionals clearly wish: stable policies with a long-term view. The same is true for the societal and client meaningfulness dimensions: most respondents had the impression that in order to improve educational quality and create added value for students, policies need to be, at least to a certain extent, consistent. Therefore, we specify our second hypothesis as follows:

H2. The more public professionals consider policies as consistent, the lower their level of general policy alienation, in particular: strategic powerlessness (H2a) and societal (H2b) and client (H2c) meaningfulness

Informing

A basic prerequisite for identifying with a policy, is knowing what a policy is about. When a public professional lacks knowledge about the specific aims of a policy, identification becomes more difficult. Interviewees indicated that when it comes to the formulation, introduction or implementation of new policies, professionals need to be provided with sufficient information. From the start, it should be clear

to them what goal a policy measure aims to contribute to, what decisions have been made, and what exactly is the intention of the policy. Next to that, it should be clear what the government exactly expects of the professionals who are responsible for actual policy implementation; what rules and procedures should be followed, and why. Otherwise, according to the interviewees, it will be very hard for professionals to identify with policies, resulting in feelings of general policy alienation. Or, as a representative of the Dutch national institute for curriculum development stated:

“Very often decisions are being made by policy makers that are only partly recognizable for the field. They do not always see the relevance... That could have to do with communication, with an information deficit. Why do we need this policy anyway? What is the reason the government wants us to do this?”

What was also highlighted during the interviews is that it is very often experienced that when policies or policy goals are formulated, a direct connection to what happens in the classroom is not always made. A clarifying example is related to one of the goals the previous Minister of Education formulated, namely that Dutch students should perform better in the PISA rankings (Programme for International Student Assessment, that is assessing the competencies in reading, mathematics and science of 15-year-olds in several OECD countries). Some respondents indicated that such vague, abstract goals, are difficult to relate to the everyday work of education professionals. Or, as one teacher stated: "Is a high PISA score really the only thing that education is about? I do not see how this is of relevance for my students."

Based on the information obtained during the interviews, we are reasonably confident that information about policies is necessary to increase understanding for, and thereby identification with policies. Respondents considered informing particularly relevant in explaining strategic powerlessness and client meaninglessness. Informing is related to strategic powerlessness, in the sense that adequate communication and provision of information, suggest that actors at the national level are aware that public professionals are indispensable in the policy implementation process. Provision of sufficient information, such as guidelines clarifying what consequences implementation of a policy has at the classroom level, could make it, according to some interviewees, easier to see the added value of the policy for individual students. Therefore, we develop the following sub hypotheses, to be tested with survey data:

H3. The more the government is informing public professionals about policies, the lower their level of general policy alienation, in particular: strategic (H3a) and client meaninglessness (H3b).

Now that we have qualitatively established that the three variables under study indeed seem related to general policy alienation, and formulated sub hypotheses for the separate dimensions, we can move to discussing the quantitative part of this study.

SURVEY

Method

Participants

Data was collected in June 2013 through a panel, which was established in 2006 at the request of the Dutch Ministry of the Interior. Currently, over 40,000 employees in the public sector are voluntary member of the panel. Members were invited to join based on random selection through the pension fund for all employees in the government, public and education sectors (ABP). In this way it is ensured that the panel is sufficiently representative for the whole population per sector. The part of the panel relevant for the present study is professionals working in secondary education, in total 3.126. Of this group 264 are managers with no teaching duties (school leaders), 271 teachers with managing responsibilities (such as section heads) and 2.592 teachers.

All 3.126 education professional were send an e-mail with an invitation to participate in the questionnaire. One week later, they received a reminder. In total 1.183 of them responded, a response rate of 38 percent. 87 respondents were managers with no teaching duties, 93 teachers with managing responsibilities, and 1.003 teachers (response rates respectively 33, 34, and 39 percent). On average the respondents were 52 years old, and of them 60 percent was male and 40 percent female. Dutch national statistics of the year 2012 on secondary school professionals show that the average age was 46, and 48 percent was male and 52 percent female (DUO, 2013). In our sample males are thus slightly overrepresented, and the respondents are on average slightly older than the national average. This difference is partly explained by the fact that in our sample the percentage of managers is higher than the national average (8,4 versus 4,4 percent). Managers are more often male and on average older than teachers. Our sample is thus reasonable comparable with the secondary school professionals population.

Measures

Here, we briefly report the measurement of variables. Although we aimed at using validated measures for the concepts, as far as the authors are aware of, no satisficing validated measurement scales for

experienced trust from the government and policy consistency exist. Hence, we developed measurement scales for these concepts ourselves. In doing that, we took measures in order to make our scales more reliable and valid, thereby obtaining initial evidence of construct validity² (DeVellis, 2003).

General policy alienation

The dependent variable in this study is the level of general policy alienation, that consists of five sub dimensions. To assess this level, the policy alienation measurement scale as developed by Tummers (2012) was used, slightly adapted to fit with the general policy alienation concept. The level of general policy alienation was estimated by combining the scores on the five sub dimensions of policy alienation.

Powerlessness. The powerlessness dimension of general policy alienation is divided in powerlessness at the strategic, tactical, and operational level, respectively the influence of professionals on the decisions concerning education policy at the national, school and personal level. All three dimensions were measured using six items. The cronbach's alpha's were respectively .79, .91 and .85. Sample items were 'Education professionals can not at all influence the development of education policy at the national level (Minister and Ministry of Education, Parliament)' for the strategic level, 'Education professionals are not listened to over the introduction of education policy in my school' for the tactical level, and 'When I work with education policy, I have to adhere to tight procedures' for the operational level.

Meaninglessness. The meaninglessness dimension is divided in meaninglessness for society and meaninglessness for the client. Again, the dimensions were measured using six items. For both scales the cronbach's alpha was .90. Societal meaninglessness reflects the perception of professionals concerning the benefit of policies to socially relevant goals, in this study improving educational quality. A sample item was 'In general, I think that current education policy will lead to higher educational quality. Client meaninglessness refers to the perceptions of education professionals concerning the benefits of policies for students. A sample item was 'In general, the current education policy is contributing to the welfare of my students'.

² Due to length limits, in this paper we do not discuss the steps we followed to develop valid and reliable measurement scales extensively. Nevertheless, we followed the recommendations for scale development by DeVellis (2003), including, for instance, the use of templates when applicable and discussing the initial pool of items with several experts from different disciplines. We followed the recommendation of Harvey and colleagues (1985 in Hinkin, 1998), of a minimum of four items per scale for testing the homogeneity of items within a latent construct.

Experienced trust

In order to quantitatively measure the level of experienced trust from the government, we developed a five point-measurement scale consisting of four items. The four items were formulated using general templates. The main advantage of this is that the scale can easily be used in other policy domains, which could be useful for future studies. Besides that, templates allowed us to specify the items so that they would better fit the current research context (DeVellis, 2003). Table 2 shows the templates for the experienced trust measurement scale. The cronbach's alpha of this scale is .77.

Table 2. Templates for experienced trust measurement scale

| Items in standard template | Items in present study |
|---|---|
| The trust the <u>Ministry</u> has in the functioning of <u>implementing organizations</u> is high | The trust the Ministry of Education has in the functioning of schools is high |
| The <u>Ministry</u> takes into consideration the opinion of <u>implementing organizations</u> | The Ministry of Education takes into consideration the opinion of schools |
| The <u>Ministry</u> promotes a 'blame culture' (R) | The Ministry of Education promotes a 'blame culture' (R) |
| The <u>Ministry</u> respects <u>public professionals</u> | The Ministry of Education respects education professionals |

Policy consistency

In order to measure perceived policy consistency, we developed a five point-measurement scale ourselves too. Table 3 shows this measurement scale. A high score indicates that a respondent considers policies as consistent, whereas a low score indicates a respondent has the impression policies in general lack consistency and long-term vision. The cronbach's alpha of this scale is .82.

Table 3. Policy consistency measurement scale

| |
|--|
| To what extent do you have the impression that <u>policy</u> from the Ministry of <u>X</u> ... |
| is consistent |
| focuses on the long term |
| is determined by 'the issues of the day' (R) |
| expresses long-term vision |

Note. Template words are indicated using underline type. These are policy (for this study 'education policy' was used), and X ('Education' was used).

Informing

To measure whether the professional has the impression that the Ministry provides sufficient information when introducing new policies or policy measures we made use of the subscale 'informing' of the empowerment leadership questionnaire, a scale developed for measuring effective leadership (Arnold et

al., 2000). The scale consists of six items, that were reformulated in order to fit our specific research context. Sample items were 'When introducing new policies or policy measures the Ministry explains how my work contributes to achieving policy goals' and 'When introducing new policies or policy measures the Ministry explains what they have decided'. The cronbach's alpha of this scale is .84.

Control variables

Alongside the variables described above, we included commonly used control variables. That is, any differences due to these variable are controlled for in the analyses. We took into account gender, age, and level of education.

Regression analysis

We used regression analysis to examine the influence of the anticipated factors and the control variables on the level of policy alienation of public professionals, a commonly used and appropriate method for examining relationships between a set of independent variables and a dependent variable. We also performed regression analyses for each sub dimension of policy alienation separately to test our sub hypotheses.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics and the results of the correlation analyses are presented in table 4 (on the next page). As can be seen, all bivariate correlations for the variables linked through our main hypotheses were statistically significant and in the expected direction. Experienced trust, policy consistency and informing are all negatively related to general policy alienation (respectively $r = -0.52$, $r = -0.50$ and $r = -0.34$; $p < 0.01$).

Regression results

Hierarchical multiple analyses were conducted to examine which factors predicted general policy alienation. We did this for both general policy alienation and its dimensions separately. In the first model, we regressed (the dimensions of) policy alienation on the control variables. In the second model, we added the independent variables experienced trust, policy consistency and informing. Subsequently, we calculated the change in R^2 between models one and two, and determined whether each change was significantly different from zero. As can be seen in table 5 (on the next page), for all six regression

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and correlations for the variables in the study

| Variable | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Gender (female = ref. cat.) | 0.60 | 0.49 | | 0.19* | 0.03 | 0.04 | 0.03 | -0.02 | -0.00 | 0.1* | 0.04 | -0.04 | -0.06 | 0.02 |
| 2. Age | 51.63 | 9.88 | | | -0.04 | 0.04 | -0.01 | 0.11* | 0.09* | -0.01 | -0.03 | -0.05 | -0.03 | 0.03 |
| 3. Education | 6.77 | 1.01 | | | | -0.03 | -0.06 | -0.07 | -0.06 | 0.04 | 0.06 | -0.02 | -0.09* | -0.02 |
| 4. General policy alienation | 3.43 | 0.57 | | | | | 0.68* | 0.68* | 0.73* | 0.78* | 0.76* | -0.52* | -0.50* | -0.34* |
| 5. Strategic powerlessness | 3.71 | 0.66 | | | | | | 0.35* | 0.38* | 0.44* | 0.43* | -0.54* | -0.47* | -0.34* |
| 6. Tactical powerlessness | 3.07 | 0.88 | | | | | | | 0.51* | 0.30* | 0.25* | -0.20* | -0.15* | -0.26* |
| 7. Operational powerlessness | 3.22 | 0.75 | | | | | | | | 0.39* | 0.41* | -0.33* | -0.25* | -0.18* |
| 8. Societal meaninglessness | 3.49 | 0.85 | | | | | | | | | 0.69* | -0.43* | -0.48* | -0.24* |
| 9. Client meaninglessness | 3.67 | 0.78 | | | | | | | | | | -0.45* | -0.50* | -0.27* |
| 10. Experienced trust | 2.34 | 0.73 | | | | | | | | | | | 0.54* | 0.28* |
| 11. Policy consistency | 2.18 | 0.77 | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.31* |
| 12. Informing | 2.84 | 0.70 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Note. * $p < 0,01$

Table 5. Hierarchical regression analyses for variables predicting general policy alienation and its dimensions

| | General policy alienation | Strategic powerlessness | Tactical powerlessness | Operational powerlessness | Societal meaninglessness | Client meaninglessness |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| | Model 2 | Model 2 | Model 2 | Model 2 | Model 2 | Model 2 |
| Gender (female=ref.) | 0.02 | 0.02 | -0.05 | -0.03 | 0.09* | 0.03 |
| Age | 0.02 | -0.03 | 0.12* | 0.08* | -0.06 | -0.06 |
| Education level | -0.07* | -0.09* | -0.08* | -0.08* | -0.01 | 0.02 |
| Experienced trust | -0.33* | -0.38* | -0.13* | -0.27* | -0.23* | -0.25* |
| Policy consistency | -0.27* | -0.22* | -0.01 | -0.07 | -0.33* | -0.34* |
| Informing | -0.18* | -0.17* | -0.22* | -0.09* | -0.08* | -0.09* |
| ΔR^2 | 0.37* | 0.37* | 0.09* | 0.13* | 0.27* | 0.31* |
| Overall adjusted R^2 | 0.37 | 0.37 | 0.10 | 0.14 | 0.28 | 0.31 |

Note. Only models 2 are reported here. Beta coefficients are presented. * $p < 0,01$

The following criteria are met: Criterion of independent residuals (Durbin-Watson 1.9, 1.9, 2.0, 2.0, 1.9. 2.0; $1 < \text{criterion} < 3$). Criterion of no multicollinearity (no VIF values above 10 and average close to 1, no correlations between independent variables above 0.9). No exclusion of influential outlying cases was required (using casewise diagnostics: 5.2%, 5.2%, 4.9%, 3.9%, 4.0%, 4.5% above standardized residual $>|2|$, All Cook's distance 0.00; criterion < 1). Criteria of normality and homoscedasticity met.

analyses the R^2 increased significantly from model one to model two. Thus, the three factors contribute considerably to the level of general policy alienation as experienced by public professionals. However, as expected, not each factor was as relevant for each dimension. Therefore, we will now consider the individual hypotheses in more detail.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that experienced trust is negatively related to the degree of general policy alienation experienced by public professionals. As table 4.2 shows, this hypothesis is supported by the data ($\beta = -0.33$; $p < 0.01$ with general policy alienation as the dependent variable). We expected experienced trust to be especially related to strategic and operational powerlessness, and societal and client meaningfulness. Analyses of the data revealed that this indeed was the case. Experienced trust is negatively related to all these four dimensions. Especially for the strategic powerlessness dimensions the level of experienced trust is a relatively important predictor ($\beta = -0.38$; $p < 0.01$). Experienced trust is also related to feelings of tactical powerlessness, however, as expected, this relationship is less pronounced than for the other dimensions ($\beta = -0.13$; $p < 0.01$).

Hypothesis 2 examines the influence of policy consistency on general policy alienation. In line with the (sub) hypotheses formulated, policy consistency is negatively related to general policy alienation ($\beta = -0.27$; $p < 0.01$), strategic powerlessness ($\beta = -0.22$; $p < 0.01$), societal ($\beta = -0.33$; $p < 0.01$) and client ($\beta = -0.34$; $p < 0.01$) meaningfulness. Especially for the feelings of meaningfulness of public professionals, policy consistency seems important. The higher the perceived inconsistency of policies, the less meaningful professionals consider them for society and their own clients.

Finally, the third hypothesis looks at the relationship between informing (i.e. adequate information provision by the Ministry) and general policy alienation. Informing is, as expected, negatively related to general policy alienation ($\beta = -0.18$; $p < 0.01$). We expected informing to be especially relevant in explaining strategic powerlessness and client meaningfulness. Data shows this is true for strategic powerlessness ($\beta = -0.17$; $p < 0.01$), and, to a lesser extent for client meaningfulness ($\beta = -0.09$; $p < 0.01$). Contrary to what we expected, according to the data, informing is relatively the most important in explaining feelings of tactical powerlessness ($\beta = -0.22$; $p < 0.01$), thus the perceived influence at the organizational level.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this paper we introduced the concept of general policy alienation. We conceptualized general policy alienation as a more institutional form of policy alienation, embedded in the relationship between the

actors involved, thereby paying attention to the notion of path dependency in policies and the consequences of ingrained practices and manners. The results of the study show that public professionals indeed experience this: in general they feel considerably psychologically disconnected from policies.

The second aim of this study was to identify structural factors at the government level that explain the degree of general policy alienation. In order to give a satisfactory answer to this question, our study included the following three steps. First, through a review of relevant literature we established that experienced trust, policy consistency and informing seemed especially relevant in explaining general policy alienation. Second, by conducting 21 semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders from the education sector, we established that these three factors indeed seem connected to general policy alienation in the expected direction. During the interviews, we also specified for which dimensions of policy alienation each factor seemed most relevant. Finally, we undertook a large-scale survey in order to test our (sub) hypotheses and determine the relative explanatory strength of each factor.

The proposed theoretical model works adequately in that the three factors experienced trust, policy consistency, and informing together explain 37 percent of the variance in general policy alienation. This is a high percentage given the number of possible influences, not only at the government level, but also at the organizational and personal level. The high internal consistency values (Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.77 to 0.90) and the meeting of regression criteria strengthens the reliability and validity of the study.

First, the analyses revealed that the more a professional has the impression that the government is trusting him and his colleague professionals, the lower his level of general policy alienation. Of the three independent variables in this study, this was the most influential in explaining general policy alienation, and strategic and operational powerlessness. Experienced trust is also important in explaining feelings of societal and client meaninglessness. This finding is in line with the notion of Bouckaert (2012) that trust is increasingly becoming a crucial element of performance in the public sector of OECD countries. It seems thus a worthwhile strategy for governments to rebuild trust relationships throughout the public sector, especially with street-level bureaucrats who play an important role in effective policy implementation (Lipsky, 1980).

Secondly, we established that policy consistency is negatively related to general policy alienation. The higher the perceived consistency, or the lower the perceived inconsistency, the lower the level of general policy alienation. In line with the findings from the interviews, policy consistency is negatively related to strategic powerlessness, and in particular: societal and client meaninglessness. Recently, Tummers and colleagues (2012a) found that especially societal meaninglessness is negatively related to the willingness to implement policies. In order to increase identification with policies and make public

professionals in the future more willing to implement new policies, policy consistency deserves a prominent place on both current and future policy agendas. In order to increase our understanding of the exact effect policy consistency has on general policy alienation, we could compare feelings of alienation in relatively consistent and relatively inconsistent policy areas. Also studying the possible interaction between policy consistency, the number of policy, and measures of policy accumulation, seems an interesting line of research.

Finally, we found that informing is negatively related to general policy alienation. The provision of information about the policy goal, the process of policy formulation, and what, from a practical point of view, is exactly expected from professionals, reduces the level of general policy alienation. Informing seems relevant in lowering feelings of strategic powerlessness. This suggests that policymakers do not necessarily need to involve professionals more in the design of policies to increase identification and acceptance, instead they should focus on informing professionals during all stages in the policy cycle. Professionals might not consider it necessary to be actively involved in all stages of the policy cycle, what the results of the present study do seem to suggest, is that they expect to be informed. The provision of information will increase their identification with policies, which will make them more willing to implement these policies (Tummers et al., 2012). An interesting line of research would be to conduct experiments in which it is tested whether the level of experienced strategic powerlessness of public professionals is indeed influenced by the provision of information. Do professionals that systematically receive information about new policies or policy measures experience less strategic powerlessness than professionals that do not receive such information? This would not only provide us insight in the ‘staticness’ of policy alienation, as far as the authors know experiments are not that common in public administration yet (with few exceptions, such as Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2006), despite the valuable information on policy acceptance of public professionals (quasi-)experimental hypothesis testing could provide.

Somewhat more surprisingly, and contrary to what we expected, informing seems especially relevant in explaining tactical powerlessness, thus professionals' perceived influence on decisions concerning the way (new) policies are usually implemented within their organization. What can be learned from this, is that government behavior also affects feelings of alienation at the organization level: a level that they do not have direct influence over – in that school management can decide themselves to what extent they involve teachers in the actual implementation of policy at the school level. It has been noticed by some scholars that the emergence of polycentric governance network arrangements, that are characterized by more decentralized, multi-level decisional and implementation arrangements, has changed the conditions for successful policy implementation (Tollefson, Zito & Gale, 2012). With regard

to general policy alienation, instead of adopting a top-down implementation approach, the national government should focus on policy alignment, thereby ensuring the involvement and contribution of all actors at all levels in order to successfully implement new policies. In future studies on policy alienation, the role of the organizational leader should be studied thoroughly. Ideally by adopting a multi-level approach, as this would allow us to study how the degree of general policy alienation of a public professional varies according to the organizational context, including the effect of the attitude and behavior of the organizational leader, as well as the level of policy alienation of fellow professionals.

In this paper we discussed only factors at the governmental level related to general policy alienation. Given the fact that the policy alienation framework is subjective in the sense that it concerns alienation as perceived by the professionals (Tummers et al., 2009), in future studies on policy alienation more attention should also be paid to the personal-psychological forces at play. Why do some public professionals, within the same government or organizational context, do experience high levels of general policy alienation, whereas others do not? Literature on work alienation, a concept that is closely related to policy alienation, suggests locus of control, self-efficacy, and engagement are examples of variables that could be of relevance here (see for example Hirschfeld & Field, 2000; Ng, Sorensen & Eby, 2006). The same is true for factors at the organizational level; they should be investigated in future studies too. Investigating causes of policy alienation at the organizational level, such as the role of the organizational leader as suggested above, might especially be relevant in explaining the tactical (organizational) powerlessness dimension of general policy alienation.

The present study has, as the above discussion shows, important theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical point of view, we showed that the policy alienation framework is also applicable in a satisfactory manner when investigating the attitude of public professionals towards policies in general. The framework can thus be used in at least two regards. First, as we did previously, it can be used to understand why public professionals do not identify with a specific policy (Tummers et al., 2009). Second, by assessing the experiences with policies in general, the framework can also be used by government to estimate whether professionals in general can identify themselves with their policy agenda. As a result, governments could for example decide to measure the level of policy alienation at different points in time. A decrease in the level of general policy alienation would suggest an increased identification of public professionals with policies, whereas an increase suggests less identification. A longitudinal study of (changes in the level of) general policy alienation makes it also possible to investigate whether the interventions we suggested, ranging from easy applicable as systematically providing information, to more encompassing as rebuilding trust relationships, affect the level of policy alienation as anticipated.

As in all studies, this study has some limitations. The first limitation is that we made use of panel data. Despite some obvious advantages related to, for instance, the speed of data collection, self-selection problems might arise. Second, the results of this study should be interpreted in light of the study's context. On the one hand, we should be cautious in generalizing the findings to other public-sector domains. On the other hand, the multi-method approach, large sample size, and high internal consistency values (Cronbach's alpha ranging from .77 to .90), make us reasonably confident in the results presented in this paper. Nevertheless, testing the proposed model in a range of public domains in various countries, would increase the generalizability and validity of the results found, and is therefore highly recommended as an area for further research. A third limitation of this study lies in the fact that, despite the fact we established initial construct validity for the scales, we developed measurement scales for the variables experienced trust and policy consistency ourselves. In order to be sure that these scales truly measure the intended concepts, they should be tested again in another large-scale survey, preferably in a different country and policy domain.

Concluding, what the present study once again highlights is the fruitfulness of the concept of general policy alienation. Further increasing our understanding of why public professionals do not identify with policies, should result in the joint formulation of meaningful policies that are more readily accepted by public professionals, which would ultimately lead to more effective policy implementation.

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