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2. Summary

Five years after Germany's labor market reform "Agenda 2010," the German Bundestag introduced and implemented two new clauses into social security law, paragraphs 48a and 48b SGB II. With these changes, German legislators introduced benchmarking ("*Leistungsvergleiche*") and institutional objective setting ("*Zielvereinbarungen*") into the work routine of their local offices, the so-called *Jobcenters*, as a mandatory part of the implementation process. In this way, the German state made clear which institution and which type of employee is responsible for finding employment for each individual long-term unemployed person. The vague legislative aim became a quantitatively measurable task for *Jobcenters* and their staff. The task cannot be achieved at the strategic level of the agency, instead it is achieved on the operational level by street level bureaucrats ("SLB") in daily interaction with their clients and employers. SLB are "public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work" (Lipsky 2010:3). In accordance with this contextual background, this study asked **three research questions**:

- (1) How do SLB deal with the situation that, through the implementation of paragraphs 48a and b SGB II, their agencies were made responsible for the labor-market integration of long-term unemployed persons and that their performance is now measured using quantitative objectives?
- (2) Which work identities emerge out of interaction between SLB and the new environment?
- (3) What do the results mean for the legitimacy of the modern state facing the problem of long-term unemployment?

In order to answer these three questions, 21 SLB in four *Jobcenters* were interviewed on the basis of a problem-centered interview. The data were transcribed and afterwards coded. On this empirical basis, the three questions were answered in the following way.

First, SLB avoid the new responsibility for labor market integration through quantitative goal setting by regulating pressure using seven different kinds of “vents” depending on the situation. **Second**, the study constructed four types of work identities along two axes—1) the extent to which the new objectives are internalized in one’s professional norms and 2) the assumption of causality between one’s work activities and their effect). **Third**, the strategy of pressure regulation means that SLB avoid taking full responsibility for the labor market integration of individual unemployed persons. Therefore, the key promise of initial reform, based on the dual principle of giving support while insisting on the fulfilment of obligations, is not fully implemented on the operational level in the way apparently intended by legislators. Indeed, three of the four constructed types of work identities describe individuals who are skeptical about whether they can contribute to the achievement of the objective at all.

Based on this analysis, the study **recommends** shifting the means of legitimacy production away from merely applying rules (Weber 2006:218) to a legitimacy production through applying scientific knowledge (Klatezki 2005:260). Consequently, SLB would act legitimately not only when they apply the letter of the law but also when they develop and apply professional norms. The suggested concept of legitimacy production would imply a paradigm shift from responsibility for results to a responsibility for the application of professional standards. A model can be found in the health care system and the shift there to evidence-based medicine.

3. Key words

- Street Level Bureaucrats
- Hartz IV
- Labor market reform
- New Public Management
- Discretion