How Do Government Initiatives Affect Citizen Coproduction?

by

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The overall aim of this paper is to examine whether and how increased service from the government affects citizen inputs to and participation in the public service production – that is citizen coproduction. If government and citizen inputs are complementary, as assumed in most theories of coproduction (i.e., a mix of public and citizen inputs leads to a higher output than each one of them alone), increased government inputs will increase the marginal product of citizen inputs. Thus, if citizens perceive inputs to be complementary, an exogenous increase in government inputs should induce citizens to increase their coproduction efforts. On the other hand, if citizens perceive inputs to be substitutes, increased government inputs may crowd out citizen inputs. Most likely, different groups of citizens react differently to changes in government inputs.

Questions of this sort have only to limited extent been empirically tested within the coproduction literature. This may be due to endogeneity problems due to problems with two-way causation, self-selection into coproduction activities or difficulties with separating the effect of government initiatives from other causes that also influence citizen inputs to the public service production. We address these questions and methodological issues using a randomized field experiment within the field of children´s education, where government inputs were increased by assigning co-teachers to school classes during one school year. The experiment involves around 10,500 students from 231 schools, and measures citizen coproduction by the amount of time parents spend doing homework with their children. We estimate overall effects for all children together and heterogeneous effects for subgroups of children (girls/boys, high/low SES families and high/low performing children). In particular, we investigate whether increased school resources facilitates inclusion of vulnerable families in coproduction efforts.

Preliminary empirical results from the study suggest that increased government inputs in form of assigning co-teachers to school classes do not have a significant overall effect on parents´ coproduction efforts. However, when testing for heterogeneous effects, we find two interesting
moderator variables. First, there is a significant stronger effect of assigning co-teachers to school classes on coproduction efforts among parents with boys than girls. Second, the co-teacher initiative has a stronger effect on coproduction efforts among parents with low performing children. Due to a delay in our data delivery, we have not been able to produce a complete paper on the deadline of submission of the paper. During the panel presentation we will elaborate more on our theoretical framework and research design as well as present further results from the study.