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Networking and performance in public organizations : a study of primary schools in the Netherlands

Bekerom, P.E.A. van den

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Public organizations are responsible for the delivery and provision of public services on which citizens rely. To maintain the quality of or improve these services, public organizations must exploit resources, such as monetary resources, raw materials, human activity, information, influence, and power, from the environment of the organization. To attain a predictable and controllable flow of resources, public managers must interact with a wide array of different organizations and actors in the organization's environment that are potential sources of support.

The main question of this dissertation concerns the conditions under which public managers' interactions with organizations and actors in the environments of their organizations contribute to organizational performance. The context of this study is Dutch primary education. Specifically, we study the networking activities of Dutch primary school principals.

One of the main conclusions of this dissertation is that specific managerial networking activities moderate the negative effect of specific environmental challenges. We find, for example, that the negative effect of red tape on school performance is attenuated by school principals' networking activities with external organizations, such as local- and national government organizations and interest groups.

The results of this dissertation provide valuable insights for researchers in the field of public management and organization studies. The results also have practical implications for managers and professionals in the public sector. Insights into the conditions under which specific managerial networking activities are beneficial can help public managers make strategic decisions about which networking activities to prioritize in certain situations.

Petra van den Bekerom holds a bachelor's degree in Communication from Fontys University of Applied Sciences and a master's degree in Sociology from Utrecht University. The present study was conducted at the Interuniversity Center for Social Science Theory and Methodology (ICS) at Utrecht University and at the Institute of Public Administration at Leiden University. Currently, she is employed as an assistant professor at the Institute of Public Administration at Leiden University.

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Petra van den Bekerom