

# **Teacher, Researcher... and Policy Actor**

***On the Role of Social Work Academics  
in the Policy Process***

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# Academic Policy Practice (APP)

- Why social work academics?
- Existing literature on APP - *Case Studies* (Chandler, 2009; Kaufman, 2004, 2011; Sherraden *et al.*, 2002; Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2013)  
*Quantitative Analysis* (Landry *et al.*, 2001; Mary, 2001)

# Influencing Factors

- Institutional - organizational structure of universities (Cherney *et al.*, 2012; Jacobson *et al.*, 2004; Walt, 2005)
- Individual – role perceptions (Burawoy, 2005); personal resources (Kaufman, 2004); academic status (Haynes *et al.*, 2011).

# The Current Study

**Aims:** To better understand

- 1) the level and form of engagement of social work academics (SWAs) in APP;
- 2) the institutional and individual factors associated with this.

# Hypotheses

- The higher the academic rank of SWAs, the greater their APP.
- The greater the perceived support for APP by their academic environment (institutional, school administration and students), the greater their APP.
- The more significant SWAs perceive the social role of academia, the greater their APP.
- SWAs that identify with the public, critical and policy roles of academia are more likely to be engaged in APP. The strongest association is expected to be between identification with the policy role and level of APP.
- The higher the SWAs' own level of perceived personal policy involvement competencies is, the greater their APP.

# Sample and Tools

- 143 faculty members of schools of social work in Israel (57% response rate)
- Web-based survey distributed via Qualtrics
- Seven questionnaires
- Three rounds of distribution between August and October, 2013.

# Levels of Engagement in APP: Means and Standard Deviations (N=143)

Form of APP	M (SD)	Frequently (%)
Protest activity	2.75 (1.04)	24
Press interview	2.65 (1.00)	20
Policy-related committee	2.54 (1.20)	28
Advise advocacy organization	2.43 (1.14)	20
Organize service-users	2.22 (1.05)	13
Work with students	2.21 (1.00)	9
Policy-related activity with social workers	2.18 (1.05)	9
Advise policy makers	2.16 (.1.16)	16
Advise policy committee	2.15 (1.13)	13
Formulate position paper	2.11(1.02)	10
Send publications to policy makers	2.10 (1.09)	11
Publish an article in the press	1.92 (1.02)	8
Testify in legislative committee	1.92 (1.04)	9
Participate in coalition	1.91 (1.09)	11
Policy analysis for policy makers or advocacy organization	1.80 (1.05)	8
Chair policy committee	1.64 (1.01)	8
Organize protest	1.57 (0.95)	6
Spoke at demonstration	1.37 (0.77)	3
Appeal to courts	1.37 (0/75)	2
Wrote blog	1.26 (0.74)	4

# Levels of Engagement in Policy Stages

The Stage	M (SD)	Extensively (%)
Placing a problem on the agenda	3.07 (1.27)	49
Placing a policy limitation on the agenda	2.65 (1.29)	28
Formulating policy alternatives	2.50 (1.36)	24
Planning policy	2.08 (1.28)	17.5
Evaluating policy	2.17 (1.27)	20

# Hierarchical Regression on Engagement in APP

- The predictor variables explained a total of 53% of variance in APP
- Tenure and academic rank were statistically significant
- The perceived role of academia was statistically significant
- Only the personal policy role was statistically significant
- Perceived competencies were statistically significant and contributed most to explaining variance
- Competencies appear to mediate between perceptions and APP

# Conclusions

- Public orientation and focus
- Distinctive policy engagement: “civic practice” (Harrington & Beddoe, 2013) ?
- Academic standing
- Importance of perceptions and competencies