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How is the impact of public guidance policies constituted?

– Local experts' views on elements of impact

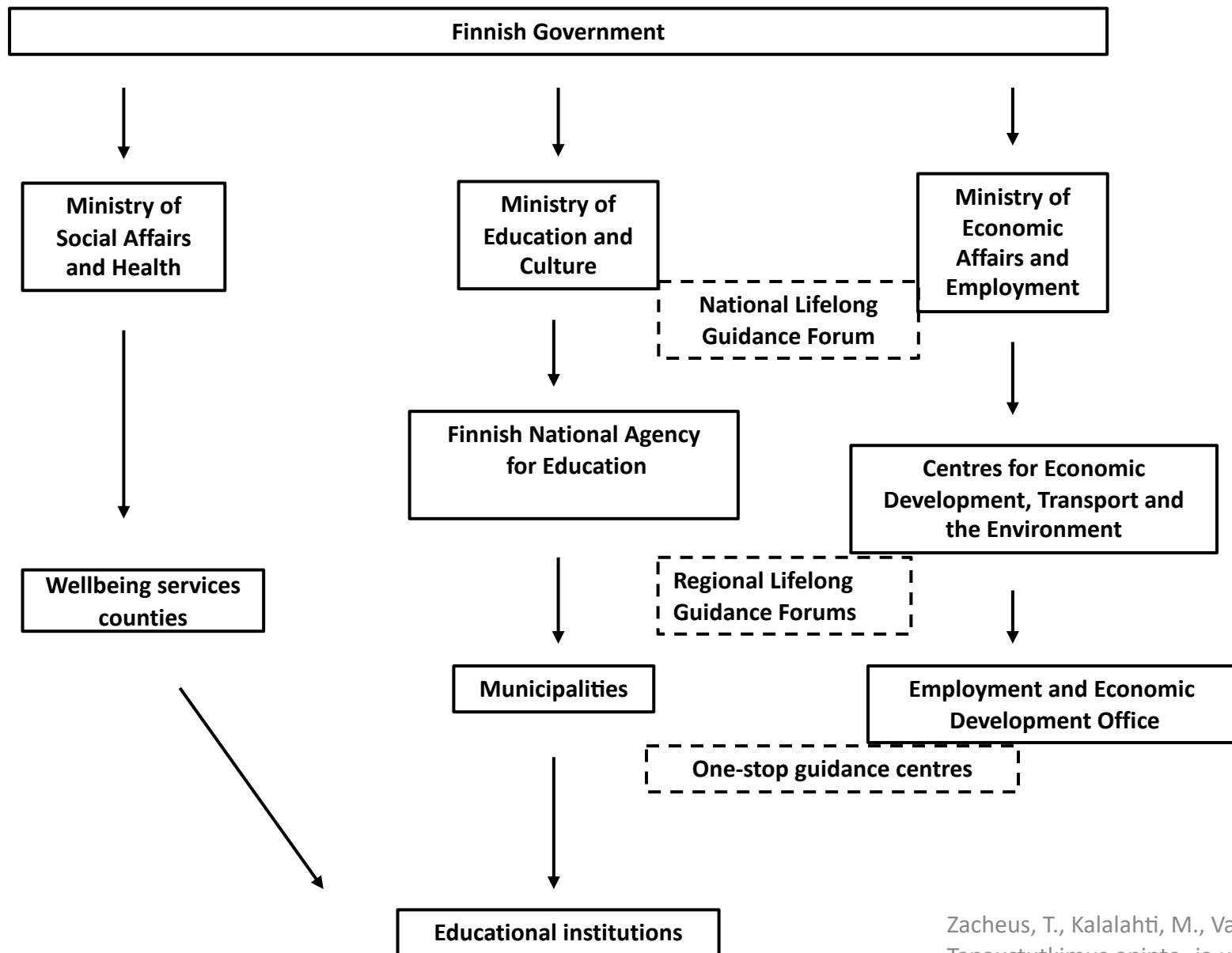
How can we reach shared understanding on impacts on educational policies?

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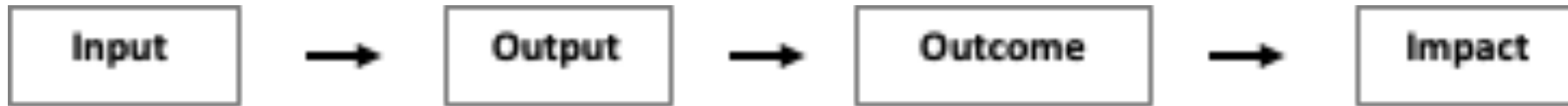
Zacheus, T., Kalalahti, M., Varjo, J. & Harjula, S. 2021. Tapaustutkimus opinto- ja uraohjauksen paikallisista yhteistyöverkostoista [Local cooperation networks on guidance: A case study]. Helsinki: Kunnallisan Kehittämissäätiö KAKS.

The conceivable impacts of public guidance policies?

Common policy objectives for the public guidance policies:

- First, the aim is to guide *individuals* to an education or employment, and services assist them with choice-making and developing skills, while supporting their participation in education and labour market.
- Second, the aim is to develop a guidance service *system*, for example by developing new working methods in order to make educational transitions more seamless.
- Third, guidance has also *societal* aims, such as securing participation and equal opportunities or promoting economic development. These goals are relatively long-standing.

The impact chain



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(Bertelsmann Stiftung, N.D.)

Research premise

- Process tracing method (Podestà 2022)
- Research questions:
 - How are the elements of impacts of public guidance policies constituted in local guidance experts' views?
 - How are impacts of public guidance policies constituted in their systemic, individual and societal contexts?
- The research data was collected by interviewing local experts (N = 16) on guidance in a mid-size Finnish municipality.
- Key informant technique (Tremblay 1982)
- The case municipality had multiple basic education and upper secondary institutions, as well in one-stop guidance and employment centres.



Method of analysis

- The data was categorised into two-dimensional matrix, of which the first dimension covered the three contexts (systemic, individual, and societal) of public guidance policies.
- The second dimension was based on the impact chain. The abstract sections of the impact chain (inputs – outputs – outcomes – impacts) were concretised into elements of impacts
 - **aims** given for guidance policies
 - chosen **measures** to achieve these aims
 - the ways in which they are **evaluated**



	Aims	Means	Evaluation
Systemic	Educational transitions, employment, life management	Flexibility, various forms of cooperation, personalisation	Indicators, target and development discussions
Individual	Holistic and individualised guidance and support	Everyday guidance work, counselee-centred work approach	Customer feedback, surveys
Societal	Standard of education, unemployment rate, social exclusion	Cross-sectoral cooperation, monitoring	Indicators, statistics

Aims given to public guidance policies at local level

- Systemic
 - Diverse, strongly bound to given sector
- Individual
 - Diverse, strongly bound to given sector
 - Holistic, individualised aims across different sectors
- Societal
 - Structural and abstract (standard of education, unemployment rate etc.)
 - Recognized mainly by interviewees at managerial positions

Means to reach the aims given to public guidance policies at local level

- Systemic
 - Flexibility, cooperation, personalisation
- Individual
 - Counselee-centred work approach
- Societal
 - Cross-sectoral cooperation, monitoring
 - Recognized mainly by interviewees at managerial positions, again

Evaluation of public guidance policies at local level

- Systemic
 - Diverse, strongly bound to a given sector
 - Indicators, target and development discussions
 - Informal discussions with colleagues and supervisors
- Individual
 - Customer feedback, surveys
 - Low response rate
- Societal
 - Statistics
 - Recognized mainly by interviewees at managerial positions, again

Lack of shared understanding on the elements of public guidance policies at the local level

- Sectorality / silo effect in public guidance policies
 - Different aims, means and evaluative practices
 - Regardless all cooperative endeavours
 - Rather three than one impact chain
 - Who could / should set the conceivable impacts for public guidance policies?
- Contradiction between individual vs. societal contexts
- Evaluative practices as the weakest link
 - Technically undeveloped
 - Evaluative practices (and the meaning of evaluation) unclear to interviewees in employee positions
- Incomplete comprehension of impacts of public policies
 - Emphasis on outputs and outcomes instead of impacts

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