The Effects of Covid-19 on Students' Empowerment and Policy Implementation in School: A Study with Street-Level Approach

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Abstract

In this study, we will try to investigate the category of teachers and educators through a street-level approach. This approach recognizes teachers and educators as members of street-level bureaucracy characterized by the use of discretion in their daily work. The role of SLB in organizations, such as school, is essential. The professionals of SLB work both as bureaucrats, respecting rules and procedures and as people, ensuring the good of users. This dualism creates a "dilemma" between organization values and individual aspirations. The workers of street-level bureaucracy make decisions in difficult situations: they try to mediate the dialogue between the management, who prescribe services and policies and the users to whom services and policies are addressed. Covid-19 had generated a profound lack of interest in education. In school, thanks to informal relationships with students, teachers and educators can work for student's empowerment. Teachers and educators, using discretion, produce a constant innovation of rules, which involves students and activates policy implementation processes. The pandemic revealed contradictions and problems of the work of teachers and educators, but our premises remain solid. Teachers and educators are valuable professionals to rebuild the global community after Covid-19.

1. Introduction

The concept of street-level bureaucracy receives a systematization in Michael Lipsky's "Street-Level Bureaucracy. The Dilemmas of the individual in public services" [10]. Lipsky clearly states that educators and teachers fall into the category of SLB. According to Lipsky, SLB professionals are characterized by face-to-face and direct interaction with users and the freedom to use discretion, if the activities they have to carry out require it. The definition of "bureaucracy" seems inappropriate. SLB members are social workers with an "institutional face". They must, therefore, abide by regulations, rules and guidelines, but daily practice requires greater flexibility in their actions and less rigidity of their prescribed roles. The situations in which the SLB works often require responses related to the human dimension, which involve personal observations and judgments and develop new and informal ways of dealing with users. Discretion is a tool, sometimes the only one, for dealing with complexity and uncertainty [6], [10], [12]. The specificity of the SLB is also revealed within another dimension. The work at the street-level is influenced by organizational mechanisms and values which, to a greater or lesser extent, condition the decisions, attitudes and choices of the worker. From the sociological point of view, the school is an organization, but at the same time an institution, pervaded by a universally accepted rationality. The work of teachers and educators is always guided by an implicit rationality. The rational and formal attitude of school is the common will to encourage the education of children.

The SLB is the mediation between the tension towards adhering to strict rules and the will to act in altruistic way. They try "to humanize" the bureaucratic relationship, even if the institutional culture never fails definitively. [5], [12]. In order to understand the SLB, it also necessary describes some changes that have affected the SLB phenomenon. Firstly, the advent of managerial policies has translated public services into companies dedicated to productivity, effectiveness, efficiency and cost containment [2]. Secondly, the introduction of ICT, or information technologies which have changed the requests and needs of the user and the work of the SLB: the activities are reduced to the compilation of application on virtual devices. The SLB has considerably left the discretion [3] and transformed front-line social workers of SLB into public officials. The school, as a street-level organization, represents a particular case that we are going to investigate.

2. Methodology

According to the scholars, there are two ways of studying the topic of the SLB. The SLB as an approach. The street-level approach is configured as a set of techniques and characteristics specific to certain categories of workers and which they use to interact with users. Discretion and immediacy of contact are key aspects of the street-level approach. The SLB as a

category. The workers of the SLB share the street-level approach, but they also belong to different professional fields. Studying SLB as a category means to understand how the street-level approach is declined in every profession. These two ways are absolutely interdependent for the purposes of our study. The street-level approach makes an abstraction of the three variables that we will apply to the work of teachers and educators: the use of discretion, the empowerment produced in the user and the impact on implementation of the policy. It was carried out a mixed investigation. The first part is a quantitative survey which aims to understand the impact of discretion on the work of teachers and educators, the circumstances in which discretion is more frequent and how the use of discretion has been affected by the imposition of anti-Covid rules. The second part is a qualitative survey that reports concrete experiences of changes in the work of teachers and educators during the pandemic. A particular focus will be placed on the implications of Covid-19 on school and we will try to understand if Covid has reduced the potential of empowerment and the implementation of school policy.

3. The Role of Street-Level Bureaucracy in Organization

The SLB assumes a fundamental importance in the context of the sociology of the organization. The SLB's workers can be members of organizations and institutions. They have to carry out different activities, depending on the organization. For example, social assistant work to provide and to deliver services for disadvantaged people; teachers and educators work in school to promote development and education of pupils and students; cops take care to maintain the order and to intervene in dangerous situations. All these professionals are at the front-line of organizations and institutions: they are the first to interact with users. The specific nature of the SLB's workers derives from what Lipsky called "dilemma" [10]. The *focus* of dilemma is the ambiguity of SLB's behavior. On the hand, SLB's workers are professionals who must work towards objectives consistent with those of their organization. On the other hand, SLB's workers have personal attitudes and values that may differ from those of the organization.

The individual always needs to interfere in the realization of SLB's activities. Professionals have an important need to satisfy their attitudes and to work for their self-realization. In turn, the organization has values very different from individual ones. The organizational values and structure represent a threat because they risk alienating and destroying the personality of the worker. Formal organization always expresses rationality, but the individual needs are often unconscious and, therefore, not rational. The personality of the individual could be inhibited in the face of the requests of the formal organization. In order not to succumb, the employee puts in place "adaptation processes" [1] through which avoid incongruity, dissatisfaction and conflicts.

Furthermore, the organizations attempt to reduce the dilemma of SLB's workers. Personal aspirations are taken into account by organization. The leader of organization must evaluate requests of workers and also take care of the psychological health of employees. The organization achieves a process of "institutionalization of needs" [1]. The work must be redesigned, and the leader also deals with psychological success without reducing work to the dualism of duties-responsibilities.

The issue of inconsistency between individual needs and organizational values is manifested mainly in decisions. The choices are always the result of a compromise. The employees must maintain an organizational loyalty, but also not give up on personal expectations and take care of users. The SLB, more than other categories of workers, combines in their work an ethical dimension (conferring value or establishing a scale of preferences) and a technical dimension (dealing with the means and procedures) for the performance of duties and activities. Every decision has to agree with a presumed rationality of organization. The organizational rationality is very pervasive and stable. It produces another paradox: the future needs and the individual preferences can change. So, the decisions taken before may not be suitable now. The governance of organization prescribes the ways of acting and responses for each situation and foresees that they will also be suitable in the future. The rules in the organization try to standardize individual conduct of employees: the governance prescribes the solutions for every request. The SLB can use discretion. Discretion is a choice between several possible courses of action. The discretionary choice is always oriented to organizational values, but allows to circumvent the rules. The main problem is that discretionary action can produce unexpected results. The world of administration which is not a "cage" of regulations and procedures, but a place of relationships and conflicts in which they try to cooperate [4]. The unexpected results can become real solutions for the individual and if they have a positive resolution can be apply for similar situations.

The SLB lies between bureaucratic rigidity and administrative flexibility. The lower levels of administration especially are subject to uncertainty. With discretion the SLB personalizes the action and escapes the unitary management of the bureaucracy that always imposes a certain *modus operandi*. The bureaucracy is endowed with a certain stability and the behavior of workers takes place in a bipolar context. The organization consists of a center that innovates the mission and prescribes the indications and a fragmented periphery that manages the procedures day by day. The action of SLB, in particular, is an aggregate of heterogeneous special

interests: leader, organizational policy, colleagues and users. So, it is essential to create a dialogue between higher employees and lower employees. Selznick talks about "institutional incorporation of purpose" [15]. This can reduce the incompatibility between personal needs and organizational conditions. The leader should reshape the general goals of the organization. The organizational values must be adapted and instilled in the individual to encourage the self-realization of workers. The process of institutionalization transmits values and makes them shareable, without weakening the technical importance of organizations. The institutionalization promotes social and psychological functions as well.

The adaptation process and the incorporation of organizational purposes do not eliminate the risk of strong inconsistency between personal needs and organizational conditions. The risk is that the organization due to its role may manipulate the action of those who work at lower levels. The SLB's workers constantly continue to carve out a slice of power to exercise discretion for the complex situations.

4. About Discretion: a Brief Literature Review

The discretion of the SLB is not to be seen as unconditional and unrestricted freedom. The professionals of the SLB never completely elude the application of the rules. They simply reduce the rigor of the bureaucracy and they work as long as humanly possible. The discretion, as the freedom to act, remains valid and exercisable within the framework imposed by the guidelines and the policy of the organization.

Dworkin [18] describes discretion by using the definition of "the hole of the donuts". Discretion is an area surrounded by constraints and restrictions. Discretion is a maneuvering room that can be more or less wide, therefore, depending on the other circumstances that influence it.

Evans [5] introduces a distinction between "*de iure* discretion" and "*de facto* discretion". De iure discretion refers to the legal recognition of a right or privilege to decide; while de facto discretion means having the power to act, even if it is not necessarily recognized.

Kazepov and Barberis [8] accept the assumption that there are limits to discretion. They distinguish between three types of discretion: discretion *intra legem*, discretion *extra legem*, discretion *contra legem*. Discretion *intra legem* occurs when the formal regulation instruments attribute responsibility to the operators to translate the general objectives into concrete actions. Discretion *extra legem* occurs when the decision-making responsibility of the operators is inserted in the gaps and overlaps between one formal rule and another. Discretion *contra legem* occurs when the autonomy of the operator goes beyond the constraints imposed by formal regulation.

Hupe [9] affirms the existence of a distinction between discretion as granted and discretion as used. The discretion as granted has a regulatory function and represents a source of legitimation for those unexpected results produced by an autonomous action of the SLB. The discretion as used refers to real experiences and has a wide margin of definition: from a simple different interpretation of the same rule to a strong deviation and disobedience. The work of the SLB is very far from the top of the hierarchy and the regulatory function of the rules imposed by managers. The SLB can maintain discretion and can legitimize the frequent misalignment between what the rules prescribe and what actually happens in daily work.

Buffat [19] tries to systematize the factors that affect the intensity of discretion, bringing back to the distinction between "strong discretion" and "weak discretion". The factors identified by Buffat are as follows: the type of activity to be carried out, the complexity of which depends both on objective factors, (resources of the organization, for example), but also on subjective factors (individual skills e personal attitude); the economic matter or the expenses required by client processing; the regulatory context in which discretion is required.

Figure 1 on the use of discretion in the schoolwork confirms the theory that school staff must be considered part of the SLB. For educators and teachers' discretion is necessary, albeit with different frequency and for various activities.
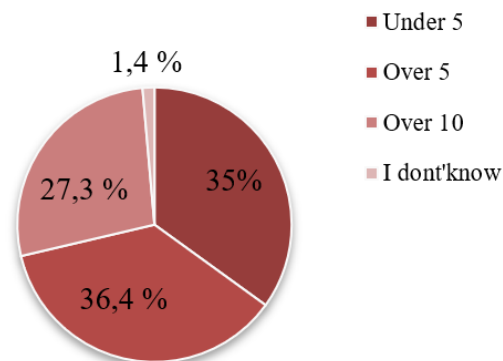

Figure 1. Incidence of discretion before Covid-19 (how many times per week)

According to the authors, the discretion of SLB is mostly used to face complex situations, as confirmed by the direct experiences of the interviewees. The main requests of discretion concern the need to extend the deadlines (54,5%) or to make "exceptions" (45,5%). These requests must be managed with professionalism, constantly mediating between a *minimum* of order and rules and discretion. The decision of application of

discretion is always built on the basis of other conditions such as the predisposition of users and the personal reasons that lead or not to accept the requests.

Discretion is not the absence of rules. The coexistence of rules and discretion becomes the new leitmotiv of SLB studies, especially with the advent of the Covid 19 pandemic. The pandemic has made some rules absolutely unavoidable. The anti-Covid rules were the manifestation of the greater need to prevent infections and contain the virus.

4.1. Discretion and Anti-Covid Rules: Some Experiences

In order to understand how the daily work of teachers and educators took place, especially in relation to the issue of discretion, we must refer to an epochal change taking place in institutions and in the management of services: the advent of managerial policies. The changes in the management of the school are evident, for example the principal is now called the "head teacher". The personnel, as the studies show, are considered as an interchangeable human resource. The end of the social prestige of teachers is one aspect that it has the quality of teaching or teacher effectiveness has significantly worsened, which we will return to.

For the purposes of our discussion, it is important to pay attention to a distinction introduced by Maynard-Moody and Musheno [12] relating to two different narratives about the SLB. The work of SLB can be carried out by a state agent or a citizen agent. In the context as school, it is very difficult for teachers and educators to act as state-agents, but rather as citizen-agents. The citizen perspective tries to free street-level workers from the pressures of policy and acts by breaking down the barriers of bureaucratic formality. However, the pandemic has challenged this thesis because teachers and educators had to continuously "monitor" the students so that the anti-covid rules were not disregarded. The Covid rules have provided for a strengthening of controls. The majority of interviewees (54.5%) said they were "very rigid" for the application of anti-Covid rules, recognizing the superior and necessary importance of preventing contagion (see Figure 2). Teachers and educators, who answered differently, refer to personal motivations, which we have not investigated.

Covid-19 has definitely produced a legitimate reduction of discretion. The anti-Covid rules which we considered are to maintain social distancing, wear face masks and other protective equipment, avoid gatherings.

The difficulty of respect social distancing is told by an educator. She cares for a child with an autism spectrum disorder who has frequent crisis and seizures. The crisis is calmed when the baby is held in the arms. One day, during a crisis, the educator says she was unable to hold him in the arms because she wore a surgical mask and not an
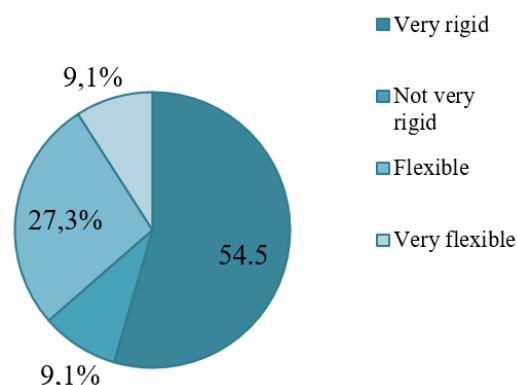
FFP2 mask which was mandatory.

Figure 2. Attitude of teacher and educator for application of anti-Covid rules

Another example related to the restrictions imposed by social distancing concerns the time of lunch. An educator, who works in a kindergarten says that, during Covid, it was not allowed to sit with children at the table for lunch. Lunch is a moment of joy and sharing, but the Covid-19 made it heavy. One day, a child asked an educator to sit at the table and to eat with the children. After the early enthusiasm, she became aware of the rules and she felt a lot of frustration. Many interviewees say that in order to maintain social distancing it was not possible to carry out work in pairs or in groups. In school, work in pairs or groups is useful for experimenting social skills and mutual help that allows the progress of the whole class.

Many testimonies collected concern the use of personal protective equipment. Several teachers and educators complained that during the pandemic it had been very difficult to get students to wear masks. A teacher says that students have almost completely abandoned the use of mask. Before, they paid attention to wearing masks in areas of the school outside the classroom (gym, bathrooms, corridors), for fear of receiving a reprimand from others, especially the principal. A teacher says that students are constantly with the mask lowered. He declares that he no longer blames them. This shows that even for teachers and educators it was difficult to respect many rules, and this can become the cause of the flexibility we referred to earlier. Another teacher says that when she enters the classroom only few students wear mask correctly or, instead, many students do not wear it at all. The rest of the rules, since she started working at school, have never been fully respected. The issue of protective equipment is not just about masks. One interviewee states that the use of antibacterial gel at the

entrance to the classroom was a practice which was not respected at all.

The following example is significant of the daily difficulties of teachers and educators during the pandemic. A child asked for a rubber, but due to Covid it was not possible to exchange and/or lend anything. The educator says she allowed a child to lend the rubber. She takes the rubber and gives it to the child who asked for it. She decided with discretion and taking responsibility for any consequences.

Another difficulty experienced during Covid is avoiding gatherings. An interviewee doesn't believe in the effectiveness of social distancing because in the classroom the distance can be maintained, but it fails when the students go out or do physical education. Outside the classroom the teacher loses his power and the students gather already when they leave school.

The Covid and the large amount of rules imposed made the climate of the class very heavy and students, teachers and educators were more exposed to anger and prone to nervousness. This certainly had an impact on the reduction of discretion because school must guarantee safety as much as possible without room for freedom.

5. The Decision-Making Process in SLB's Work

Discretion always affects the decision-making process. The SLB acts with discretion and personalizes decision making process because the worker considers that it is appropriate to apply a different alternative to the one prescribed. The discretionary actions are always guided by organizational rationality. So, the decision-making processes of SLB are rational as far as possible. The main theories about decision-making process state that it is based on four assumptions.

1. The knowledge of alternatives. Decision makers have a set of alternatives to action.
2. The knowledge of the consequences. Decision makers know the consequences of alternative actions and their likelihood of occurring.
3. The order of preferences. Decision makers have their subjective values and they choice evaluating the actions based on their preferences.
4. The rule of decision. Decision makers have rules for every situation and they select the rule to apply based on consequences of actions and in relation to effects already verified.

The decision making is driven by the logical adequacy that assesses the action from time to time, its consequences and the convenience of their relationship. The rules can be seen as an implicit agreement to act appropriately. The existence and persistence of rules, combined with their relative independence from the personal contents of individuals, make it possible for societies and organizations to function rationally.

The main process through which the rules develop and self-validate is learning by experience. An organization or a company learns from the experience of employees. With the repeated application of rules and the feedback received from the context, the rules that will be used in decision-making will be those that produce the best results. However, the predetermined rules do not seem to take into account the complication of multiple factors. The rational approach provides for the strict application of the rules, but ignores discretionary action and unexpected results. The SLB is confronted daily with the organizational rules and the necessities of the user. The direct interaction of SLB with the user makes the decision-making process more difficult. The user informally confides their problems and the SLB's worker takes action based on listening and dialogue. For the SLB the moment of decision-making is very relevant. During the process of decision-making, the SLB uses discretion to search for the best solution for the user. The SLB is called upon to bring together the interests of the organization and the interests of the user.

5.1. The Theory of Bounded Rationality

The decision-making process seems to be managed through what Herbert Simon has called "bounded rationality" [14]. The thesis of bounded rationality states that every rational behavior evolves in a conditioned and, therefore, limited context. The list of technical constraints of a choice includes some unavoidable properties of the human being. The bounded rationality is an effort to rationalize the apparent anomalies of a behavior. The bounded rationality is a form of "slack" [13], that produces a mutual adjustment between rule and preference, between regulated context and free individual. The use of these concepts serves to discover and give the cognitive legitimacy to human behavior. The human behavior could deviate from the standard procedures of a calculated rationality. The bounded rationality is a theory of adaptation, which acts to go beyond the rule. The use of discretion demonstrates that there are no absolute rules for every situation.

For the issue of SLB, the theory of bounded rationality and the principle of integration represent two moments of the decision-making process. Firstly, the bounded rationality makes known to the worker the limits and the conditions within which it can use discretion. Secondly, thanks to the adjustments, make individual action as consistent as possible with the expectations of the organization.

6. Street-level bureaucracy and the Issue of Empowerment

Discretion shifts the nature of the relationship between bureaucrat and user within an informal dimension. The

bureaucratic interaction therefore becomes a "dealing with faces" [12]. The user perceives an openness to dialogue on the part of the SLB professional and feels free to express their needs and make their requests in an atmosphere of empathy and listening. The predisposition to help by the SLB positively affects the user's attitude. The user is not faced with a rigid system governed by the rules or algorithms, suited to productivity, similar to the iron cage described by Weber. The SLB can become the promoter of an individual empowerment process through discretion.

The empowerment, produced thanks to discretion, also improves the attitude of the SLB professional. If a practice produced by a discretionary action is effective, it can apply to similar cases and it can strengthen within the organizational policy. The street-level worker experiences an emotional and work satisfactions that can mitigate alienation and the risk of burnout, instead, increasing involvement and adherence to the company's mission.

The empowerment produced thanks to discretion involves both actors in the relationship. On the one hand, the user who receives a service compatible with his needs, increases their meaningfulness [16] and he will commit harder for their own self-determination. On the other hand, the SLB professional satisfies the human vocation that inspires the social work of the SLB, that also belongs to teachers and educators. The positive impact he will have on the user's life will increase his motivation to do a good job. Bekkers and Tummers highlighted that the mechanism of discretion mediates between the client's meaningfulness and the bureaucrat's individual motivation and can be defined as the "mediating effect of discretion" [16]. For SLB professionals, motivation increases on both levels in which they are involved. Discretion activates both the individual user empowerment and the organization's policy implementation processes.

6.1. Promoting Empowerment at School: Some Stories

Covid-19 has limited the use of discretion and, consequently, the knowledge of students, listening to their needs and the implementation of empowerment processes. However, we have collected some testimonies that enhance discretion and recognize it as a starting point for students and school progress.

The first experience is the story of a teacher, who dealing with the student with a behavior disorder. The student is hostile towards other teachers, but the interviewee tells of trying to build a dialogue with him, using the psychologist's mediation. The other teachers do not look favorably on the psychologist's action because they think that the student is "just lazy". The behavior disorder is stigmatized by teachers, and this affects the student's well-being and the quality of learning. The

interviewed teacher acts with discretion involving the psychologist and constructing personalized activities for the student and his empowerment, despite the reticence of the other teachers.

Another story of empowerment concerns a teacher, who deals with a student, suffering from a cognitive disorder. The parents asked the teacher to abolish the alternative program (with simplified activities) to avoid stigma in the classroom. The interviewee refused because she would get worse the quality of the teaching and her work. Also, in this case the discretion becomes the tool to support the growth of the student affected by the cognitive disorder. Thanks to the personalized program, he can realize his empowerment through his potential and skills.

Covid-19 reduced discretion and the margins and prospects of empowerment that are built in daily work. Of course, distance learning also had a strong impact on the possibility of creating an informal relationship, typical of SLB. However, through the study of the daily work of teachers and educators it is possible to find numerous examples of empowerment and to derive useful models for the future of the school after the pandemic.

7. The Implementation of Policy: Some Considerations

Lipsky [10] had defined the members of the SLB as "policy makers". They, with the constant re-elaborations of the rules, can produce effects on organizational structure and managerial values, breaking the prevalence of the top-down policy and introducing a bottom-up perspective.

However, the SLB lacks the economic and legal status to legitimize its innovations in policy. They are therefore not really policy makers, but actors (co-makers) involved in the policy implementation process [7], [9], [11], [16]. The priority of the SLB is a real resolution of problems which, thanks to discretion, produces new practices that solve the complexity of a situation immediately.

The issue of policy implementation must also be seen from the point of view of the organization. DiMaggio and Powell describe the attitude of organization as a "institutional isomorphism" [3]. The values of society produce new organizational structures and change the physiognomy of organizations. The organizations are born to respond to the context and are nourished by it. The institutional isomorphism maintain compatibility with the characteristics of the context and increase the learning of appropriate responses. The institutional isomorphism occurs when the actors of an institution or organization begin to do similar things and increase them. There are three types of institutional isomorphism. The coercive isomorphism arises from pressures exerted by formal / informal factors and decisions are made within a legal framework; the mimetic isomorphism, which arises from the imitation of already established procedures to simplify

and remove uncertainty and the normative isomorphism, which translates the collective effort in defining conditions. The changes in organizations can occur if the context produces new needs, instills new values and changes procedures. The activation of policy can be imposed by those who have the decision-making power and hold higher roles (top-down implementation). It seems very important to break the monopoly of the top-down policy and involve the users and the actors really involved in the policy activation processes.

The recent theory of Van Berkel [17] recognizes the value of the SLB in those processes of activation of public policies which constitute prerequisites for the progress of welfare and workfare. Van Berkel considers that the actors involved in the activation process are the following. First, the formal policy created by a process of decentralization of decision-making power and the fragmentation into local, regional and national actors. The second actor involved is the so-called governance, that is the set of those principles that structure the interactions between the different levels of government and the SLOs (street-level organizations) that implement the policy directly. The third actor involved in the activation of the policies is the SLB. The professionals of the SLB know the orientations of governance, the resources available and the dispositions of the users and put them in contact.

Even at school, teachers and educators are responsible for policy activation processes and are called upon to deal with governance. Although the general anxiety caused by the need to respect the anti-Covid rules, have reduced the space for innovative initiatives, there was little room for policy implementation processes. A teacher says that the obligation to use virtual devices, such as tablets, computers, has made it possible to learn and experiment with modern ways of studying. However, the use of ICT requires that everyone have access to the devices and be able to use them: in this way an implementation process can be really activated.

8. Conclusion

The street-level bureaucracy is a group of very different professionals. They have in common the use of discretion. The organizations and institutions leave to street level bureaucracy workers a space of freedom. They work at the frontline and so, they are distant from the top of organization. Therefore, they can use discretion in their daily activities for complex situations. The organization has rules, but sometimes these rules are not eligible for specific requests of user.

When the SLB applies discretion, the decision-making process is affected. In an organization, the decision-making process follows a linear way: request, application prescribed rules, known result. Instead, the decision-making process is more difficult for the SLB because with the use discretion, the course of action is modified, and

unexpected effects are produced. The importance of SLB in organizations is their role as mediators between the institutional values, the individual aspirations and the good of user.

Educators and teachers have an institutional face because they represent the school as an institution and in general also their discretionary action must be consistent as much as possible with the aims and guidelines provided by the school policy. They are also social workers. Thanks to discretion and direct interaction with students, they give students the role of co-producers and increase commitment to self-improvement. This bottom-up production of empowerment constructs policies by creating new rules.

Educators and teachers work to implement school policy. Discretion belongs to the work of teachers and educators who have to face complex situations. It confirms that they must recognize it as an integral part of their professionalism. Covid-19 has made the rules and controls more pervasive. In fact, data show that before Covid, teachers and educators used discretion 5 to 10 times a week, but after Covid most of the interviewees maintain a "very rigid" attitude and the incidence of discretion decreases. The collected stories and experiences by teachers and educators have partly renounced the mission of teaching due to the greater need to prevent infections. They have become more "bureaucrats" and less "mentors". However, the examples of empowerment show that the role of teachers and educators remains fundamental in the progress of the community.

A teacher said:

"The discussion (in classroom) on the sense of instability created by the pandemic situation made the children less anxious. We shared our vulnerabilities with each other".

The study aims to demonstrate that a street-level perspective returns a real image of work at school, with contradictions and problems generated by the Covid-19. Discretion, empowerment, policy implementation are steps of a process of activation of school policy from bottom up. The analysis of these experiences can help in the regeneration and rebuilding of the school after the tragic experience of the pandemic.

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