



Familie & Evidens Center

Systems Leadership: Exceptional leadership for exceptional times

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Systems Leadership for Children's Services in Denmark

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Systems Leadership for Children's Services in Denmark

1. The provision of services for children, young people and families in Denmark

In Denmark, services for children, young people and families are primarily provided by public sector organisations – be it within the so-called 'normal' area comprised of day care institutions and schools for children and young people whose service needs are covered by standard prevention, care and education services, or be it within the 'specialised' area comprised of services involving care, education, prevention and treatment for families with special needs. Private players may be involved in the provision of services but this will also be at the initiative of public authorities and typically based on an operating agreement or similar between the public entity ordering the services and the private supplier.

In general, the provision of services to Danish citizens by the public sector can be divided into three political/administrative levels: state, region and municipality. **At state level**, Denmark currently has 19 ministries, of which the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration and the Ministry of Children and Education are two key ministries working within the area of children, young people and families. The overall responsibility for legislation and initiatives relating to the development of services for families with children and young people rests with these two ministries along with the responsibility for introducing important development initiatives in this area. Most of the initiatives to support families with special needs will be taken by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration, but also the Ministry of Children and Education will touch upon a social agenda in parts of its work, for example in relation to children and young people with special needs at school. The legislative and political agendas of the two ministries thus overlap in certain areas.

The main task of **the five Danish regions** is to administer the specialised Danish health sector but the regions are also responsible for tasks in the social sector, which makes them co-suppliers of social services to children, young people and families.

In Denmark, the actual service production takes place at **the municipal level**, which in recent years has undergone extensive reforms. Until late 2006, the Danish municipal sector consisted of a total of 271 municipalities. These municipalities were partly responsible for a number of social tasks targeting the citizens within the area of children, young people and families; a responsibility they shared with the then 14 counties, which were mainly responsible for providing specialised social services to the citizens. **The 2007 municipal reform** changed this structure. One of the effects of the municipal reform was to reduce the number of municipalities in Denmark from 271 to 98. Of these, 65 municipalities were the result of a merger between two or more municipalities, while 33 municipalities remained unchanged. At the same time, the county authorities were abolished, and the previously mentioned five brand new regions were created.

In connection with this new geographical division, the municipal reform also led to a redistribution of the responsibility for a large number of tasks handled by the state, the municipalities and the new regions. As regards the municipalities, one of the main cross-sectorial purposes of the new distribution of responsibilities was to make the municipalities the main public sector entry point for citizens and companies and to establish a more logical and well-defined distribution of tasks and responsibilities between the different authorities, thus placing the overall responsibility for defined tasks with a single authority. The 2007 municipal reform was a huge and comprehensive reform, also from an international perspective. The reform created a new map of Danish municipalities and regions, it changed the distribution of work between public authorities, and it created new rules for financing and cost sharing.

The municipal reform also made the municipal council responsible for all citizens' advice services and for deciding and financing offers and services under the Danish Social Services Act. When the municipal reform came into force, the municipalities decided from the very beginning to take over approximately 80 per cent of the services previously provided by the counties, and today they are responsible for the following tasks relating to children, young people and families: in the social services area, the municipality is solely responsible for the financing and supply of services in addition to having the regulatory responsibility. In addition, the municipalities are responsible for childcare and primary and lower secondary schools, including remedial instruction and special assistance to young children with learning difficulties. Compared with the municipalities, the regions handle tasks best solved in a decentralised manner and demanding a

larger population base than that of even large municipalities. The regions were therefore left with highly specialised relief services to people with disabilities, and the regions with their remaining, specialised social services thus assume the role of suppliers vis-à-vis the municipalities. This role is defined in annual framework agreements negotiated between the municipalities and the counties.

2. Management debate and literature: public sector management between NPM and new management models

The 'management' topic has played and still plays an important role in the reform work of the Danish public sector and the associated public and scientific debate (the Danish Ministry of Finance, 2001, Goldschmidt & Fogh Kirkeby, 2005; Torfing, 2008; Dahl & Molly-Søholm, 2012). Similarly, 'public management' and 'welfare management' have been important topics in the Danish debate on how the welfare state should and must develop in the coming years in the light of scarce resources and the need for strict control (Greve, 2001; Digmann, 2004 & 2006; Schmidt-Hansen, 2005; Klaudi Klausen, 2006 & 2008; Melander, 2008; Pedersen, 2008; Sløk & Villadsen, 2008; Thuesen, 2010; Rennison 2011). In this regard, a survey from 2007 by the Epinion consultancy firm carried out on behalf of the Danish Ministry of Finance (Epinion, 2007) among the heads of institutions working within care for children and the elderly as well as the health sector showed that the managers across the sectors replied that they expected change management, motivation and involvement of employees as well as the development of employee skills to be the three major challenges in the coming years.

In the last five to ten years, a reaction to the previously prevailing New Public Management (NPM) discourse has dominated large parts of the debate and welfare management literature (Greve, 2007; Pedersen & Greve, 2007; Melander, 2008; Smith & Smith, 2010; Koss Rasmussen, 2010/2011; Pedersen, 2012).

One of the issues highlighted in this context is that the NPM management logic taken over from the private business sector cannot be adopted and implemented as is in the public sector whose *political nature*, particular *structure* – characterised by complex and fragmented political, administrative and interest-based networks as well as user and professional networks – and *task complexity* call for a different management

logic and different models compared with the ones underpinning NPM (Rennison, 2000). The overall message in this debate and literature is that NPM-based reforms carried out within the last decade may have succeeded in creating a more efficient public sector with improved conditions for strategic management and a focus on achieving results, but the NPM reforms are also considered to have fragmented the public sector, prevented genuine involvement of stakeholders in the welfare production and created a control-focused system that has forced public sector employees to document processes and outputs without keeping an eye on whether the system was efficient and achieved its objectives of producing welfare for the end users: the citizens (Pedersen & Hartley, 2008; Sørensen, 2005).

In relation to the management task, in particular, it should be noted that tight financial control, increased focus on failures to meet quality standards, new needs and expectations among citizens, growing skills requirements, and organisational change processes cause welfare management to be steeped in dilemmas, contradictory requirements and 'far-out' issues. These 'far-out' issues have no obvious source and are not likely to be solved by a system that imposes a bureaucracy on the heads of institutions by insisting on different forms of documentation. Instead, what is needed is new management models that leave room for **co-management** (Danelund & Sanderhage, 2011) and a new form of **authenticity** resulting from control from within the organisation (Majgaard, 2012) and which create a new management figure in the form of **the welfare strategist** (Pedersen, 2012).

However, two specific angles are missing in this literature. Firstly, there are no publications that focus on management tasks within the area of children, young people and families. The majority of the publications adopt a cross-sectorial approach and do not distinguish between management tasks within the technical field and the environment and management tasks and those that occur in the social sector or in connection with other forms of **human services**.

Secondly, this literature makes no call for 'system leadership', defined as "an activity that maximises the effect of leadership across a system, and that is based on principles such as joined learning, professionalization of operations, continuous quality assurance and improvement, networking and collaboration among different stakeholders in order to operate, learn and improve itself for the benefit of end users". In any case, the English concept of 'system leadership' plays no role in current Danish

management literature.

One exception is Digmann, who in a short article from 2004 describes his understanding of system leadership as follows: *“In this article, system leadership is understood as the type of management practised explicitly in a coded management language. System leadership is often practised consciously in written notes, which is why it is capable of conquering time and space. System leadership implies a requirement for describing visions and defining strategies; for planning and setting goals; and for measuring, controlling and documenting the effect. System leadership is therefore based on theories and models as well as documentation (often quantitatively). Examples of system leadership tools include management of budgets and objectives, the EFQM model and balanced scorecard. System leadership often adopts the perspective of the Board of Directors/top management. Anything is good that is good for the company as a whole and that supports and increases the possibilities of top management to achieve results, provide a comprehensive view and ensure coherence. However, the requirement that managers at all management levels must act as company managers has increased the need for all managers to be capable of adopting the system perspective.”* Digmann’s understanding is very different from the implicit understanding of the concept, which formed the basis of the project “System’s Leadership for Children’s Services”, and it therefore makes no sense to further pursue this track in literature.

2.1. New Public Governance as an alternative management logic

Literature critical of NPM does, however, search for ways to make the public sector more efficient in other ways than *“by simply trying to squeeze the very last drops out of NPM”* (Torfing, 2012: 13). This requires thinking along the lines of New Public Governance or Public Service Motivation paradigms in order to create *“a more innovative public sector producing quality and shared responsibility”* (ibid.). The focus in this context is on:

- Better policy execution – that strategic management increasingly involves the implementation level and private stakeholders in the drafting of new policies
- Strengthening of horizontal coordination by drilling holes in and breaking down organisational and mental silos

- Mobilising society's resources through collaboration in networks and partnerships and with volunteers
- Promoting the inner motivation of public sector employees through a review of the systems of measurement to ensure that the systems support rather than control and through development of a new form of self-critical and open professionalism that welcomes debate
- Promoting public innovation that develops and realises new creative solutions that break with traditional perceptions and common practice

'Polyphonic management' is characteristic of this understanding of management. It describes a position in which the parties operate across diverse, often contradictory, considerations and rationales, all of which claim to have a legitimate voice and of which no one is given precedence. The core task consists in **negotiating** an understanding of reality that can indicate a direction for the action that needs to be taken, knowing full well that other points of view are always possible since the world by definition is contingent. According to this post-modern understanding, management involves on the one hand the **reduction** of the complexity by adopting a specific rationale as a premise for decisions and management work in a given situation and at the same time the **production** of complexity by acknowledging and maintaining a choice between different decision alternatives to ensure a broad basis for decisions (Brink, 2011; Rennison, 2011).

Parts of the new public governance debate therefore focus on a so-called 'control network' – a collection of mutually dependent players who collaborate about negotiated objectives – which in this context is the means to create correlation, flexibility and the power to act within public sector control (Sørensen, 2005). The perception is that the networks activate resources, promote mutual knowledge sharing and create broad ownership, thereby creating the foundation for a more democratic service production (as it involves service production stakeholders), a more effective service production (as the members of the network choose cheaper and better solutions if these are accepted by the stakeholders), and a greater degree of innovation in this service production (as the broad involvement of stakeholders makes for a process rich in ideas). In this perspective, management becomes meta-control in which the core challenge consists in drafting framework conditions for the previously mentioned management networks.

Elsewhere, the theory about the 'leadership pipeline', originally developed for private organisations, has

been adapted to the public sector. This is also a reaction to the NPM's implicit presumption that it is possible to make the public sector more efficient by 'simply' transferring control processes from the private sector. The theory about the 'public leadership pipeline', on the other hand, is based on the above-mentioned presumption that public sector management requires a special combination of eight different skills: political flair, professional management, communication skills, the ability to create management space, strategic work, process management and navigation on the public stage, all of which are markedly different from the management competences that characterise the private sector. Public sector management should therefore be developed in a special space based on genuine public sector rules and requirements (Dahl & Molly-Søholm, 2011: 14) while being adapted to the different needs for management skills existing at four different management levels: top manager level, functional manager level, managers of managers level and managers of employees level (ibid.). What is good management therefore depends on who and what is being managed with the result that each management level requires new skills, priorities and values. A move from one management level to another implies a transition process that requires that a manager can unlearn former skills and learn new skills, priorities and values. The key task of the organisation is also to define clear expectations to what the individual manager should know and be capable of at the respective management levels and to create coherence between these management roles in order for the total management need in the organisation to be covered and coherent.

2.1.1. The CLIPS research programme – Collaborative Innovation in the Public Sector

CLIPS (Collaborative Innovation in the Public Sector) is one of several university-driven projects aimed at promoting new public governance thinking. CLIPS is a research programme, which is based at Roskilde University and financed by the Danish Council for Strategic Research. Within this programme, collaboration-driven innovation is defined as the creation and implementation of new knowledge and creative ideas generated through mutual learning from interaction between users, professionals, public sector managers, politicians, consultants, stakeholder organisations and private companies. Over the four-year period between 2009 and 2013, CLIPS is to uncover the driving forces of and barriers to collaboration-driven innovation and develop models for organising and managing collaboration-driven innovation. The aim is to promote innovation in the public sector that can improve service levels and create new public policies while at the same time highlighting the importance of institutional design and management to innovation processes. Innovation of the public service production rather than management is therefore the

focus of the programme, but models for interactive management of complex innovation processes play a key role in the programme – a form of management akin to the definition of system leadership that appears to be the basis for this project.

2.2. Conclusion – Management Literature

The most obvious conclusion after studying Danish management literature on the topic of “system leadership in the area of children, young people and families” is that the literature does not offer any theoretically or empirically based descriptions of what system leadership should be and how it can be developed in the welfare sector in general and in the area of children, young people and families in particular. On the contrary, the concept appears to be absent in the Danish debate on the development of welfare management. There is, however, a strong tendency to demand new public management paradigms following the dominance of the New Public Management paradigm over the last one to two decades, and in the context of that debate new forms of management are being discussed which, according to the description of their content, overlap the idea of system leadership without being based on the same concepts as is the case in the English language literature and debate. This discussion is part of the debate on the general New Public Governance management paradigm, which “puts much greater emphasis on citizen participation and third sector provision of social services than either traditional public administration or New Public Management. Co-production is a core element of NPG that promotes the mix of public service agents and citizens who contribute to the provision of a public service.” (Pestoff, 2011: 2). The involvement of users and collaboration partners across the public/private divide within service production is thus at the core of this view of the issue and an interest in system-oriented leadership is therefore logical.

A search for specific projects and cases would normally follow in the wake of a study of relevant literature, so it was necessary to think in terms of alternative search terms that could capture efforts to practise system-oriented leadership across and beyond traditional administrative and/or organisational structures, fields of competence, roles and interests. Terms such as ‘across’, ‘interdisciplinary’, ‘cross-sectorial’ and ‘multidisciplinary’ appear to best match these needs in terms of language. These concepts are frequently used in management literature and management debates and form part of the large number of further education offers available to public sector managers in Denmark. The search included cases and projects

that typically connect systems more closely and create learning processes and coherence across entities, professions and user groups.

The basic pattern in this 'cross-disciplinary way of thinking' appears to be that the tasks handled by the public sector are becoming increasingly complex. For the welfare society to be able to meet the challenges of the future there is a need for alliances, networks and partnerships that ensure effective collaboration across disciplines, organisations and sectors. The main question from a management perspective is therefore how management can support good intentions for broader collaboration about action that enables organisations to create noticeable added value for its citizens.

It is interesting in this context that according to a management survey from 2010 that marked the beginning of the research project's work to create collaboration-driven innovation in the public sector, the above-mentioned CLIPS project concluded that only 20 per cent of the 12,000 Danish public sector managers interviewed are of the view that users can contribute relevant ideas for improvement of the quality of public sector service.¹

These figures may have inspired the way of thinking that is reflected on the website of the Knowledge Centre for Welfare Management²; the development centre that is currently one of the most important players in the field within the development of public sector management in Denmark. The website states: "The increased focus on a holistic approach and coherence between the services provided by the public sector increases the need for managers capable of spearheading a multidisciplinary approach to tasks and who break away from silo thinking, institutional egotism and sub-optimisation. Effective, cross-sectorial solutions focusing on the citizens require managers who can work together; managers who understand different rationales and considerations and are capable of combining them with a view to the big picture, across different disciplines and self-governing professions."

With this in mind, the following Danish development work and projects were identified as relevant to

¹ See also <http://www.ruc.dk/institutter/isg/forskning/samarbejde-og-projekter/clips/arbejdsplanen/> (in Danish only)

² See the centre's online presentation at <http://www.velfaerdsledelse.dk> (in Danish only)

develop system leadership within the area of children, young people and families:

3. Projects focusing on cross-disciplinary and system-oriented management

In general, literature on cross-disciplinary, system-oriented management within the area of children, young people and families is non-existent. In other words, there are no books or scientific articles in Danish that describe the specific challenges associated with system-oriented, cross-disciplinary management in this area. In fact, available literature adopts a general perspective, which, as mentioned in the introduction, is based on an interest in public sector management and welfare management and does not discuss individual sectors in any depth. To identify specific projects for the development of system-oriented management of welfare production in the area of children and young people, it is therefore necessary to consult both professional organisations and stakeholder organisations representing the social service providers and important development initiatives within the provision of social services in Denmark as well as organisations focusing on promoting the public sector management discipline. These include:

- Local Government Denmark
- The Danish Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration
- The National Board of Health and Welfare
- Danish Regions
- The Danish Ministry of Children and Education

A study of the websites of these organisations in addition to telephone conversations with key employees revealed two initiatives as being essential for an understanding of the Danish approach to cross-disciplinary, system-oriented management. Both initiatives are comprehensive, important efforts to develop public sector management. The first initiative is the Knowledge Centre for Welfare Management, which supports a number of local projects for development of public sector management practice. The other initiative focuses on research into modern, public sector management as part of the 'SLIP' (Strategic Leadership Research in the Public Sector) programme. Both initiatives are briefly explained in the following. A total of four of the sub-projects involved in these initiatives are described, as they contribute to the development of cross-disciplinary management in the public sector.

3.1. The Knowledge Centre for Welfare Management

The Danish 2010 Appropriation Act set aside DKK 20 million for establishment of the so-called Knowledge Centre for Welfare Management, which is based on a collaboration between the Danish regions, the Danish Agency for the Modernisation of Public Administration, (part of the Danish Ministry of Finance), and Local Government Denmark. The purpose of the centre is to collect, accumulate and communicate knowledge about welfare management in practice by introducing and monitoring concrete municipal and regional development projects on good management in the welfare sector and user-focused service production. The corresponding specific objectives for the centre's work are:

- To introduce and monitor ambitious and innovative projects on good management in the welfare sector
- To develop new ways of thinking and new methodologies for public sector management and to create and test new forms of management practice
- To support a holistic view of the management task, for example across sectors, areas, professions, etc. in connection with the implementation of projects and ongoing knowledge sharing
- To strengthen the coherence between practice, education, research and development activities. It is therefore a result in its own right that the projects initiated incorporate different perspectives on welfare management
- To distribute available funds to public institutions via specific development projects in municipalities, regions and the state
- To develop activities focusing on change and practice
- To ensure that coherent communication of gathered knowledge is easily available both during and after the completion of the projects
- To develop products and projects of a type and relevance that has general application and can be used in general practice by other managers in the public sector

On the basis of an application process that was open to public players within the municipalities, regions and the state, the centre in 2011 allocated funds for ten projects of a broad nature covering key public sector welfare areas such as elderly care, day care, primary and lower secondary schools, upper secondary schools, specialised social services and the health sector. The ten projects aim to gather, accumulate and

communicate knowledge about good welfare management. According to the knowledge centre's own project description, the chosen projects focus on aspects such as innovation management, patient management, cross-disciplinary management in elderly care, management of inclusive learning environments and educational institutions, cluster and area management in relation to day care and management of the cross-sectorial collaboration about psychiatric patients. In connection with this article's focus on cross-disciplinary, cross-sectorial and system-oriented management and leadership in the area of family, children and young people, the following two projects are of particular interest:

3.1.1. Project 1: Management of inclusive learning environments

This is a development project within education that aims to further the inclusion of children and young people with special needs into mainstream schools. The project participants include four Danish municipalities: Hillerød, Aarhus, Ikast-Brande & Nyborg, *Skolelederforeningen* (the association of school principals) and *Børn- og Kulturchefforeningen* (the association of managers of children and culture), two nationwide industry organisations representing principals of Danish primary and lower secondary schools and managers of children and culture in the 98 Danish municipalities.

The project is based on the premise that children learn best if they have an opportunity to participate and exercise influence in different groups. The way inclusive learning environments are managed is therefore crucial to the development of a successful primary and lower secondary school in which all children regardless of their background are given optimum conditions for learning. There is therefore a need to focus on how the management of the school can create constructive collaboration in order to establish, implement and regularly adjust the school's general, inclusive pedagogy practice. A conference report thus stated that "...When we have to carry out strategic changes in the area of pedagogy, such as creating inclusive learning environments, we can only do it by creating close coalitions between politicians, parents, industry representatives and administrators. Facilitating such coalitions is the most important of all management tasks. It is a strategic management skill which municipal leaders at all levels have to possess."

The purpose of the project is to collect and apply knowledge about how to manage the development of inclusive learning environments at primary and lower secondary school. The sub-objectives of the project

are:

- To support school and administrative managements in their efforts to develop and implement inclusive learning environments
- To create a contemporary framework for all management levels in the municipalities in relation to the development of inclusive learning environments
- To establish laboratories where management initiatives can be developed, challenged and tested in practice
- To ensure that the different management groups support and challenge each other across municipalities and across core schools and catalyst schools within individual municipalities.

The project's management initiatives must be created and refined in a so-called 'management laboratory' with the purpose of establishing a framework for project participants to adopt a comprehensive view of own practice and the practice of others with the possibility of regular reflection on and adjustment of ongoing activities. According to the project description, the success criteria of the project are:

- Managements in participating organisations have acquired the courage and tools to transcend barriers for innovative thinking despite the risk of failing
- A more coherent management chain has been created which ensures a holistic approach to management's work with inclusion
- Managements have become able to independently apply the laboratory methodologies for continued co-creation and renewal of management initiatives

Center for School Leadership³, a collaboration between the Copenhagen Business School and University College Capital, facilitates leadership laboratories in which leaders develop their practice and undertake follow-up research on the project to create general knowledge for the benefit of other municipalities and schools:

³ See the centre's website here: <http://www.cbs.dk/en/research/departments-and-centres/department-of-management-politics-and-philosophy/center-school-leadership>

3.1.2. Project 2: Cluster management at day care institutions

The project is embedded in the day care sector where a couple of municipalities, especially Copenhagen Municipality, lately have begun introducing so-called cluster management, which is a new way of structuring the day care sector. The municipalities involved are Copenhagen and Roskilde municipalities in collaboration with a private firm of consultants. In the new structure, several day care institutions are gathered in a so-called 'cluster'; one layer of managers is removed and a joint management for the cluster established. The main reason for introducing cluster management is a desire to cut costs combined a wish to generate professional and management benefits in connection with the restructuring.

The purpose of the project is to harvest the management and professional potential inherent in the introduction of cluster management in the day care sector. Welfare management in the cluster management teams must be developed to derive optimum benefit from the new management scenario in terms of the quality of the services, employee wellbeing, recruitment and efficiency. The sub-objective of the project is to identify factors that impact on good welfare management through the inclusion of high-performance cluster management teams. Once these have been identified, the project will develop specific tools and processes that enable the cluster management teams to harvest the professional and management benefits of the new organisational structure.

The development of the project is based on anthropological field work carried out in 2011, which studied the challenges of good management in day care institutions via 32 qualitative interviews and observations of three clusters. Based on the material, it was possible to identify 22 key factors that were further reduced to four key development areas aimed at creating quality in the day care sector: (1) Meaning, (2) Sustainable structure in day-to-day life, (3) Developing relationships and (4) Reflection & evaluation. So-called 'lead users' in society were then identified who were known for working in these specific fields. These experts were then invited to a 'development camp' to develop tools that are now being tested in practice (Lockert Lange, 2012).

The project focuses on the development of different forms of management in its approach to user involvement. The project tries to identify solution models for management barriers, dilemmas and challenges through an innovative process in which high-performing cluster management teams are involved in the work of identifying solutions for other sectors and converting them to easily available tools and processes capable of optimising welfare management in a cluster structure. The project is divided into three parts: innovation, implementation and communication. Methods will be used that support innovative user involvement, are capable of capturing examples from other work environments across sectors and of ensuring on site implementation. The project results in a tool box containing operational process tools and tools for change management and introduction of new forms of management. The tools are designed to support more effective and simpler processes that can be driven independently by a team.

Four of these tools are currently being tested in a pilot test at two clusters in Copenhagen Municipality and one cluster in Roskilde Municipality.

3.2. SLIP: 'Strategic Leadership Research in the Public Sector'

In the wake of the municipal reform, the Danish government in 2008 set aside DKK 10 million for strategic research into "Future leadership in the public sector" in order to finalise yet-to-be-realised parts of the municipal reform, including the efforts to create new contemporary styles of leadership and control. The programme was called SLIP = Strategic Leadership Research in the Public Sector.

The programme was announced in June 2009 to illustrate the leadership of the future on the basis of four strategic work areas and themes:

- Future employees and workplaces – what type of leadership will be required?
- Future organisations and types of organisations – what new requirements will leaders face?
- Effective competence development – how do we best provide continuing education for our leaders?
- Future forms of control – how important are they for the leadership role?

The notice announcing the PhD programme emphasised that the research was to be carried out jointly by researchers, practitioners and authorities. The notice stated, among other things, that “the project must improve the possibilities for dialogue between management practitioners and management researchers. The most interesting and valuable knowledge is often created at the interface between theory and practice. It is therefore essential that applications are prepared in collaboration between one or more research institutions and one or more public authorities. The research programme should thus give managers in the public sector and leadership researchers from the universities an opportunity to jointly analyse and identify answers to the challenges public sector managers are currently facing and will be facing in the future and thereby contribute to developing leadership competences in the public sector.” A cross-disciplinary approach was also emphasised: “It is important that the supported research activities, where relevant, are carried out jointly by different research areas in a cross-disciplinary manner”.

SLIP is part of a series of six PhD projects where experiences and results are combined in a visionary umbrella project that will attempt to define the common thread running through the PhD research. After the launch of the SLIP programme, another four sub-projects were associated with it, although the latter are not PhD projects in their own right. In the area of children and young people, the day care institutions are given particular attention in the SLIP programme via a PhD project and a further sub-project, both dealing with the potential for creating new opportunities for collaboration, control and innovation.

3.2.1. Project 1: The Meta Laboratory

One of the research projects, the ‘Meta Laboratory’, studies experimental and user-driven forms of innovation aiming to create new management models, control methods and competencies in areas such as the day care sector.

The project description states, among other things: “This project is a study of ‘*Styringslaboratorier*’ (Eng. ‘control laboratories’; Melander, 2008) as management innovation processes in the public sector conducted within an open innovation paradigm. The concept of ‘*Styringslaboratorier*’ is a theory-based model for how public sector institutions can employ local, dialogical processes with their stakeholders (i.e. professionals, local managers, citizens, politicians, public officials, unions, etc.) to develop new or modify existing management concepts. The goal of these processes is to find management concepts that reduce administrative burdens and create forms of management control that are more efficient and meaningful to

a wider circle of stakeholders, whilst allowing for greater interaction between citizens and public organizations and qualifying political decision making within specific policy areas (Melander, 2008). As such, *Styringslaboratorier* represent a conceptual alternative to the way management concepts have been developed under the reform agenda of New Public Management (Ejersbo & Greve, 2005; Hood, 1995), but have yet to be examined empirically. “ (...) “Through three explorative case studies of innovation processes modelled on the concept of *Styringslaboratorier*, this project seeks to examine the possibility and conditions of working with management innovations as open innovation processes and the potential of this approach. In doing so, it will provide insights into how public sector organizations might employ and learn from *Styringslaboratorier* as an innovation method.” (Koss Rasmussen, 2011: 1).

This project thus focuses on open innovation, a concept that characterises a user and cooperation model in which organisations involve external players such as users, external experts, researchers and intermediaries in their innovation processes (Koss Rasmussen, 2010/2011). It is expected that this type of innovation can result in services that are more innovative and relevant to their users, thereby acquiring increased legitimacy while being easier to use and implement.

3.2.2. Project 2: A dialogue on control and management in the public sector

The ‘Meta Laboratory’ project can be likened with another SLIP sub-project that also focuses on an experimental approach to the development of new forms of control in the day care sector, i.e. the project “A dialogue on control and management in the public sector – development laboratories across the day care sector”.

The aim of this project is to study and strengthen cross-disciplinary dialogues and forms of collaboration that are meaningful to the different players in the day care sector. The participants and researchers look for new links between children’s activities, professional pedagogy and public sector management and control through different types of ‘laboratories’. Other rules apply in this area: children, parents, childcare workers, managers, administrators, politicians and researchers jointly experiment with play and creative processes as tools to study the practice, reality and understanding of pedagogy, development, learning and management. The idea is that a multitude of meetings between the participants can result in other forms

of professional dialogue and collaboration on the quality of service in the day care sector, as well as new knowledge about ways to manage, plan and carry out the work with and around children and how to measure, evaluate and document the results of this work.

The project involves a large number of players including children, parents, childcare workers, childcare managers, administrative staff, union representatives and representatives of the municipal councils in the municipalities of Frederikssund and Ballerup, which is where the projects were based. To be specific, two childcare institutions were selected in each municipality where the children, parents, employees and managers work together with the administration in the two municipalities, political committees and industry organisations. The research is spearheaded by a cross-disciplinary team of researchers with expertise in development psychology, educational psychology, learning theory and management theory.

Systems Leadership Case study

EBP musketeers: The Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) partnership between Herning, Holstebro and Ikast-Brande Municipality in Denmark

Note: The following information is based on (a) a phone interview with Preben Siggaard, Head of The Center for Children and Prevention at the municipality of Herning, conducted in April 2012, and (b) the presentation “Cross-municipal partnerships – a lever to implement evidence-based practice in three Jutland municipalities” given by Preben Siggaard and Anton Rasmussen at the Danish National Conference on Evidence-Based Practice in May 2010

Introduction

Since 2002, the departments for children, youth and families in the three Jutland municipalities Herning (87,000 inhabitants), Holstebro (57,000 inhabitants) and Brande (40,500 inhabitants) have developed a cross-municipality collaboration around the implementation of evidence-based programs in their communities. This partnership is not based on a formal decision to create common formal structures of collaboration – there is no single official document that would describe the collaboration, or document any decision making process at the administrative or political level establishing a collaborative:

“The partnership is not a political project.”, explains Preben Siggaard. “It developed from the administrative level. But as the evidence-based programs have become more important, we have put EBP related issues on the meeting agenda of our political committee more regularly. So there is no doubt that our politicians know about this – but they have never been involved in forming the partnership.”

On the contrary, the partnership is solely driven by a recognition that the implementation of evidence-based practices - in order to get the most benefit from a maximum number of programs for the citizens of their municipalities - requires resources that single and relatively small municipalities would have difficulties mobilizing on their own. Therefore, the three children, youth and family departments – first slowly, and then with growing awareness – have gone down the road towards an EBP partnership since 2002. Today they are able to provide The Incredible Years Series (IYS), Parent Management Training – The Oregon Model (PMT-O), Multisystemic Therapy (MST), and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care to their families. By integrating the school departments in the partnership, it has also been possible to introduce the work with Positive Behavioural Interventions & Supports (PBIS) in 16 schools since 2008. The implementation of Functional Family Therapy (FFT) will begin in June 2013.

Ikast-Brande municipality has been highly engaged in transferring IYS to Denmark and thus is the one delivering all knowledge and services to everyone else on this program. The same role for PMT-O has Holstebro municipality, whereas Herning takes care of Multisystemic Therapy. The MTFC team is operated

by Holstebro and Herning together. The municipalities – once a service is established – buy and sell these services to each other, and at the same time develop, refine and extend them within the framework of their partnership. In addition, research related interests, and strategic planning are part of the partnership work. To the degree, this collaboration depends on the input and engagement of staff and end users, they get involved in the planning processes.

How did the partnership evolve, and what are the results?

The EBP partnership – in a sense – evolved by coincidence before the administrative reform of 2006 - at a time when counties still existed. At this time, the responsibilities for special education were shared between the municipality and the county level, and therefore - in this particular area - there already was some cooperation between the three municipalities – in 2002 dominated by growing concerns about the steadily rising curve of expenses that went to special education.

The same concerns characterized the area for child, youth and family services, where it had become more and more important to find ways that could help breaking the steadily rising curve of growing expenses to families in need, especially costs to place children and youth in residential care. At the turn of the millennium, these residential institutions typically were fully occupied with children and youth, many of them even over-occupied, and there existed waiting lines. Not only the municipalities and the counties searched for new answers, also the Ministry of Finance joined the public debate and called for a reduction of costs in social services. A few years before, Norway already had begun implementing evidence-based practices, and a few key people at the consultant and management level in the Jutland municipalities therefore showed a growing interest in evidence-based programs, and in the change of direction that seemed to show in Norway. They started talking to each other and gathered information from their neighbour countries.

One of the first evidence-based programs that caught their attention was Multisystemic Therapy (MST), and in 2002 a steering group was established between the three Jutland municipalities, and the county of Ringkjøbing in order to implement MST in the area. From here it was a significantly smaller step to launch the next joint project in 2004 – the implementation of Parent Management Training (PMT-O) that was supported by The Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration, and in 2005 – inspired by a joint study trip to The Oregon Social Learning Center and several meetings with Carolyn Webster-Stratton in Seattle, Washington, the work to implement the Incredible Years Series (IYS) began. In 2007 then, The National Board of Social Services initiated a project to implement Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care in Denmark, and the three Jutland municipalities joined the program by establishing an MTFC treatment team together. These are the most important milestones of the collaboration, which also has led to a translation of the IYS-book “The Incredible Years” into Danish, the systematic use of the Eyeberg Child Behavior Inventory in all three municipalities, a research and literature review on IYS studies financed by the partnership, and a close collaboration with The National Board of Social Services around the national

implementation of especially PMT-O and IYS, since the board depends on the expertise of the practitioners in the three Jutland municipalities.

Who is the partnership, and how does the partnership operate?

The top level of execution of the partnership is a steering committee consisting of the three municipalities' heads of department in the child, youth, and family services administration. They meet quarterly, and have made an important decision, explains Preben Siggaard: "Right from the beginning, we promised each other that we will prioritize our meetings, that we won't send anyone else instead, and that we won't accept the collaboration to water out. Once a year we also meet with our directors, and we seek to involve relevant sector managers as well - the head of the school departments for example."

Preben Siggaard describes the strategic role of the steering group in the following way: "The Steering Committee is responsible for developing strategies for evidence-based work in our municipalities, for creating joint PR and networking or for bigger projects such as the translation of the Carolyn Webster-Stratton book about The Incredible Years. So in this sense, there are – and always have been – clear objectives for the partnership - in addition to the citizen-focused objectives at the municipal level. In the beginning we focused very much on pure development – to make it possible to establish a spectrum of evidence-based programs in our municipalities, or to lay the groundwork so to speak. Now, the focus is on operation. For example, it has become more important to us that we can respond quickly when staff leaves or is on long-term sick leave. Then we need to be able to train a new PMT-O therapist very quickly, and how can we ensure that without experiencing significant disruptions of our service production? Research is another important strategic area for us - and thus the question of how to join and support research activities, including those at a high level of the evidence hierarchy, without research threatening our daily routines and operating procedures that carry our work with evidence-based programs."

He continues: "In addition to the steering committee we have appointed a coordinator for each of the programs and this coordinator operates across our municipal borders. The program coordinator is responsible for maintaining daily contact with the practitioners, and the program developer, to coordinate and gather resources needed to train and supervise staff in all three municipalities, to make critical implementation decisions and so forth. In this way, the Holstebro coordinator is responsible for all our work with PMT-O, Ikast-Brandø is in charge of The Incredible Years Series, while Herning – in close collaboration with Holstebro – runs the MTFC treatment team. So here we are consciously breaking with the usual Weber-inspired classical hierarchy in our organizations and let people operate beyond the boundaries of their own organization to the degree that is necessary to ensure a good implementation of our programs."

What are the challenges the partnership meets?

A successful cross-municipal partnership depends on continuity and perseverance, explains Preben Siggaard: “ If I were to point to barriers or challenges, it's especially the ability to stay focused in a politically steered system and a busy every day work life. As I said before, we - the steering committee – have promised each other to prioritize our meetings and collaboration – so that's one part of the commitment task. Another one is to prepare yourself and your organization for a long haul and not a project that is finished after 14 days. So it's about being in it for a long time, sticking with it and finally, it's about creating personal relationships – that's something that should not be underestimated, I think. The personal relationships come with the professional ones - you learn to know each other, you share experiences and stories, you get to know the person behind the role - and all this helps to make your partnership more sustainable and in a sense even more binding. If one underestimates that dimension, you will get into trouble in a partnership, and I am totally sure that the study trip we all participated in in 2005 – the one to Seattle – had a tremendous impact on what was possible for us to do when we came home because our group was so much more of a group.”

He also stresses the need to coordinate positions and perspectives within the partnership as something that can be challenging: “Surely, not all our discussions are quiet ones - sometimes we need to cross swords, weigh the specific local interest against the partnership interests, and see if we can reach an agreement. For example, we have not always agreed on how to handle our collaboration with The National Board of Social Services - as one of the key players in this field - but these are discussions we would always have in the partnership first, then find a common position and act on the basis of it. Maybe it's a bit like being EBP musketeers.”

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